



IJS Church Discipleship Instructions

In Jesus Steps is a ministry whose purpose is to live out the gospel of Jesus Christ and make disciples locally, nationally, and worldwide. Jesus modeled the way for discipleship with a small group who practiced accountability, transparency, obedience, and total surrender to God. *In Jesus Steps* follows this model with 3–7 dedicated believers forming teams of men or women to follow in His steps daily.

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Team Coach and Disciple Description

Team Coach

This exciting journey of walking in Jesus' steps begins with a desire to develop more mature disciples in the church and the world. The pastor, leader, or someone with church authority selects team coaches. The church may compile a list of men and women they would like to serve as coaches or hold a general meeting to ask for volunteers. The team coach should be a committed Christian and church member. While keeping the process simple, the coach plans and guides the team toward its two goals: (1) being a fervent disciple of Christ, and (2) making fervent disciples. It is best to keep men and women in separate teams for transparency, accountability, and various other reasons.

Disciple

A disciple is a person who follows and obeys Jesus, placing Him at the center of their life. Jesus is the heart and spirit of the team, the true leader whom His disciples follow. Each person of the discipleship community is responsible for participating fully and helping others. God will speak through, and use each of His followers at various times and in various ways. This is the joy of working together and fulfilling Jesus' Great Commission of making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19).

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Note: There is no financial charge for participation. The Bible lessons may be downloaded from the website and printed as needed either personally from a home printer or commercially.

Description-Overview

Have you read the book *In His Steps* by Charles Sheldon? Written in 1896, it has sold over 50 million copies. The expression “What would Jesus do?” was popularized by this book and became widely recognized in the 1990s through bracelets and other items bearing the acronym WWJD. Charles Sheldon’s great-grandson revived this message with his writings and teachings.

The story centers around a pastor who challenges his congregation to live fervently and sacrificially for Jesus. Although few accept his challenge, those who do strive to live their lives as Jesus would. They meet weekly to report on their progress or lack thereof. The fictional narrative follows a handful of individuals who take up the pastor’s challenge to truly live for Jesus.

I read the book as a new believer many years ago and thought, “Wow, I’d like to be part of a group like that.” Instead, God had already led me to start Prison Alliance and I didn’t become part of a discipleship team. However, after 25 years of serving through Prison Alliance, God led my husband, Anders, and me to retire. When we made this decision, God placed the idea of a new ministry on our hearts—one dedicated to following Jesus fervently and sacrificially, similar to the characters in *In His Steps*.

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. 1 Peter 2:21

Jesus’ plan for expanding God’s kingdom was through disciple-making—making followers who obeyed and lived out His teachings. He modeled this method when He walked the earth with a small group who practiced accountability, transparency, obedience, and total surrender to God. The disciples received personal attention from Jesus and each other.

In Jesus Steps follows this model. Although Jesus is not with us physically as He was with the first disciples, He is with us spiritually. He lives inside believers by His and the Father’s Holy Spirit. Therefore, He is with us to lead, guide, and give us the personal attention we need.

Disciples form teams dedicated to becoming like Jesus and helping others to do the same. While serving and sharing Christ’s light in the world, we are never without a true discipleship community. This community of believers spurs each other on to truly know and abide in Christ. Each group is distinct because of the Holy Spirit’s guidance and the unique personality, talents, and life experiences of each member.

This inspiring journey of walking in Jesus’ steps begins with a team coach. This is the one who either accepts their church’s request to facilitate a team or starts a team by actively recruiting members. The teams are made up of either 3–7 men or women. Your group is a team because you are growing in and held together by the Holy Spirit to glorify God in Christ Jesus.

The size is intentionally kept small to foster close and transparent relationships. It’s important to share thoughts and feelings honestly, without fear of comparison, condemnation, or judgment. Your team is a place of freedom, acceptance, and accountability in serving God and reproducing followers of Christ. It’s intended to be an environment of grace, love, and encouragement.

For remote or virtual groups, we recommend using Canvas LMS. Canvas is the most popular learning management system (LMS) used by all major universities for their remote students. Canvas works perfectly on computers, tablets, and even smart phones. The bible lesson portion is accessible through Canvas as well as a video-conferencing feature. This allows teams to meet from anywhere in the world. This versatility allows missionary use as well as for those homebound with health or other issues.

Steps for Developing Discipleship Teams in Churches

Step One

Pray and have the church start praying about discipleship and discipleship teams.

Step Two

Explain In Jesus Steps to your deacons, elders, or church board and staff. Make sure they agree and are behind you and the discipleship plan for the church.

Step Three

Preach 1-2 sermons on biblical discipleship, it's importance, and benefits to members and church in becoming more Christ-like. Make the sermon motivational and inspiring.

Step Four

At the end of the sermon or sermon series, explain how the church plans to proceed to help in their spiritual growth and journey.

Step Five

- (1) Call a meeting for all those interested, explain the discipleship team concept, and have them divide into teams. The church can divide them into teams or they can form their own teams.
- (2) Or brainstorm with church staff or board members for potential coaches that the Lord places on your heart. The potential coaches can be contacted and asked to serve to either lead a team in place, or put together a new team. The church may have other ideas for putting teams together.

Step Six

Set up a meeting with confirmed team coaches.

- (1) Review In Jesus Steps team agenda
- (2) Questions and Answers
- (3) If you have not assigned team member names, ask the team coaches to provide the names of their team members by a certain date. Usually 2–3 weeks. The team coach is responsible for going to the IJS website to enter the names and contact information of the team members.

Step Seven

Accountability. Team coaches report to church and to In Jesus Steps. The pastor or church determines their own reporting system. In Jesus Steps requires a monthly report and is accessed on the website: Team Reports. Discipleship members are expected to periodically report praises and how God is working in their lives as a result of being part of a discipleship team.

Step Eight

After settling in on the day and time, set the first meeting for a week in advance. Ask the team members to *pray* for their first meeting. Let the team members know that the goal is an ongoing discipleship community but the commitment to the discipleship team will be for the completion of Unit 1: Who Is God?. After each Bible lesson Unit, each team member will pray and seek God's will in staying and recommitment to Christ and the team.

Team Coach Instructions

1. Jesus is the head and leader of each believer and each team.

And he [Jesus] is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,²⁰and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.
Colossians 1:18–20

2. Ask and welcome the Holy Spirit to lead at all times.

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me [Jesus] because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. John 16:13–14

3. Choose one platform to use during team meetings and a regular time.

Canvas, In-Person, or Zoom. Check with each member of your team to find a mutually agreeable day and time to be consistent.

4. After completing each lesson—celebrate with a gathering to praise God for how He is working.

(There are a variety of ways to gather. If part of church teams, you can meet at church with or without a covered dish. Each team can share how God has been working in their lives. Individual team can go out to eat or share a covered dish at someone's home. The church may choose to gather once a month for praise reports. Virtual teams can bring a snack for themselves. Be creative.)

I will give thanks to the LORD because of his righteousness; I will sing the praises of the name of the LORD Most High. Psalm 7:17

5. Encourage all team members to take turns facilitating the meetings.

It will help members to take ownership of the team's success, develop leadership skills, and take some responsibility off the coach. Bring up the subject after you have facilitated about 4 meetings and lessons.

6. Encourage team members to pray regularly for each other and to report back on status.

7. Make sure the team stays on course to be fervent disciples.

It's easy for a team to slip into a social group, enjoying each other's company, and forgetting about taking up their crosses. We need to pray for our team to not only love and enjoy one another *but* to motivate and spur each other on to follow in Jesus' steps.

8. Goal for each team member is to make at least one disciple in a twelve-month period.

Making one disciple[student and follower of Jesus] per year by (1) leading them to Christ and discipling them, (2) discipling a Christian, or 3) Instrumental in getting a Christian to start or join an IJS discipleship team. Pray for God to make this happen and all are obedient to share their faith and train as needed for this purpose.

9. Team commits to Christ and each other after each Bible lesson unit.

Let the disciples know they will have an opportunity to prayerfully consider their continuance periodically. Let them know how much you would like them to remain, but it should be God's will for them.

10. Check-In once a month and encourage disciples to check-in periodically for praise reports.

Please see the bottom of the homepage of the IJS website: injesussteps.org. Look under "Ministry" and click on Check-In Coach or Check-In Disciples. Fill out the form and submit it on the first of each month. IJS will send a reminder.

11. We welcome feedback and suggestions.

What is working for your church teams and what may benefit others?

Agenda for 2-hour Weekly Discipleship Meetings
(Follow suggested times as a guide, not a rule)

1. Welcome, WOW, and Prayer Time (40 min.)

Kneel, if able, in respect to God for the first opening prayer (Psalm 95:6–7).

WOW (words of worship)—Someone on the team shares briefly (1–3 minutes) how God blessed them in the past week.

Suggest facilitating prayers through ACTS— Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication. May want to combine Adoration and Thanksgiving and Confession and Supplication. Keep prayers short in respect of other's time to pray. Supplication: prayer requests for individual, church, ministry, country, and world. (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18)

2. Bible Lesson including Action Steps and Accountability (40 min.)

Disciples read and answer questions from the prior week's lesson and are ready for participation. Accountability is willingness to accept responsibility for one's actions. (2 Timothy 3:16–17)

3. Witnessing/Discipleship. What did we do last week to obey Jesus' command to make disciples? (10 min.)

Read a discipleship verse(s). IJS can provide a list if needed. (Matthew 28:19-20)

4. How did the Lord lead you last week? Also share personal joys, challenges, or issues (25 min.)

How did the Holy Spirit help you in good works (other than witnessing) to glorify God? A time for transparency, and not judgment, in sharing anything hampering our walk. Time for personal sharing. (Proverbs 17:22; Galatians 6:2)

5. Announcements, Confirm Facilitator and Location, Closing Prayer, and Benediction (5 min.)

Remind disciples of God's sovereignty, grace, provision, and power—He is the basis of our life. (Corinthians 15:58)

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