

Discipleship at New Life

An Overview

PURPOSE

Help regular attendees of New Life find their place in the congregation and live an overcoming life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In order to meet this purpose, we focus on two phases of spiritual growth. While there is some overlap in instruction for the two phases, they are distinct enough in focus to warrant separate discussion:

1. Assimilation

- a. The goal of the Assimilation phase is to help establish new attendees as faithful regular members of New Life.
- b. This applies to all new members, including new believers, transfers from other apostolic churches, and those renewing their commitment and experience with God.
- c. We have two classes in place currently directly focusing on Assimilation
 - (1) Introduction to New Life
 - (2) Life in the Spirit

2. Maturity

- a. Once members are established and comfortable as faithful members of New Life, our ongoing discipleship instruction is intended to help them appropriate the power of the Holy Spirit to live a victorious life in Christ.
- b. This victorious life will include involvement in the life of the Church and a commitment to service.
- c. For this stage of growth, we have several classes available. These classes are typically offered as “breakout” sessions on Wednesday nights.
 - (1) Conformed to His Image (two parts)
 - (2) Vessels of Honor
 - (3) Essential Biblical Doctrines

Discipleship at New Life

Current Assimilation Process

PURPOSE

Help establish new attendees as faithful regular members of New Life

This process involves a wide range of ministries and volunteers, including hostesses and ushers, Care Groups, etc. If there are inaccuracies or things that aren't clear in the process below, we should correct and clarify those things as part of this meeting.

1. **Visitors are greeted by ushers/hostesses as they enter our service**
2. **If they are a first-time visitor, we ask them to fill out a visitor card so that we have a record of their attendance and contact information**
3. **Office staff enters the contact information into our database, and they are assigned to a Care Group based on their address (if they reside in the Austin area).**
4. **Pastor Bernard sends a follow-up letter thanking them for their attendance.**
5. **Periodically, we send announcements of upcoming special events to all those for whom we have valid contact information.**
6. **When a visitor expresses a desire to make New Life their home church, their status in the database is changed to "Regular" (signifying that they are no longer considered a visitor).**
 - a. As "Regular" members, Care Group leaders commit to pray for them weekly and actively follow up after absences from service.
 - b. Care Group leaders are provided with a weekly report of absentees within their Care Group
 - c. Care Group leaders are also made aware of new members in their group so that they can meet them as quickly as possible.
7. **Care Group ministry hosts quarterly "New Member Potluck" luncheon following a Sunday AM service.**
 - a. All new members who have not attended are invited
 - b. All Care Group leaders with new members are invited
 - c. Care Group leaders each introduce new members from their Care Group
 - d. Ministry leaders present are introduced so that new members know them
 - e. Pastor Bernard welcomes new members and provides brief introduction to New Life
8. **Discipleship ministry offers *Introduction to New Life* twice per month for all new members**
 - a. Place announcements of upcoming classes in the weekly bulletin
 - b. Bro. Bernard and/or Bro. Shaw announce class on night of offering with brief explanation and encouragement to attend.

When someone is water baptized and/or receives the Holy Spirit

9. **Pastor Bernard sends a letter of acknowledgement and congratulations.**
 - a. This letter also encourages the new believer to continue church attendance and to take advantage of Discipleship training opportunities, including the *Life in the Spirit* class

Discipleship at New Life

Current Assimilation Process (continued)

- 10. Pastor Bernard e-mails the “follow-up” team to notify them of the event**
 - a. This e-mail goes to the Pastoral team, the Outreach director, Discipleship director, and Bible Study and Altar Worker coordinators
- 11. Discipleship team follows up (typically after the believer has been both water- and spirit-baptized) to encourage the new believer to attend the *Life in the Spirit* class.**
- 12. Following completion of the *Life in the Spirit* class, the new believer begins/resumes attendance in the appropriate Sunday School class.**
- 13. As Discipleship breakout classes are offered throughout the year, those having completed Life in the Spirit are the prime candidates to attend these more advanced classes.**
- 14. As members are faithful in attendance, and their spiritual growth is apparent, ministries often approach the member regarding involvement in different areas appropriate to the member’s growth.**
- 15. Periodically, we have surveyed our congregation systematically to determine areas of interest, ability, and willingness to serve within the congregation**
 - a. Most recently, this was done in conjunction with our Ministry Fair
 - b. Results are provided to ministry leaders, who are encouraged to follow up with those expressing an interest in involvement.

Discipleship at New Life

Introduction to New Life

PURPOSE

Introduce new attendees to our congregation, including its history, active ministries, and vision for the future. (Assimilation)

OFFERING

One-hour class typically offered on two Wednesday nights per month

For this class, we use the website as our course material. This provides a ready reference for people after the class is over, and also gives us the ability to introduce ministry leaders (through photos) without their being present. We emphasize the active ministries as a means to both receive and be a blessing.

- 1. History of New Life (About Us)**
 - a. Our Vision (Who We Are...)
 - b. Our History (Who We Are...)
 - c. Introduction of Pastoral team
 - d. Discussion of what we believe and how we worship (if appropriate or needed)
- 2. Ministries at New Life (Ministries)**
 - a. Geographically based (Care Groups, Daughter and Sister works)
 - b. "Life Stage" based (Sunday School & Children, Youth, Singles, Families)
 - c. Other ministries (Music, Men, Women, Outreach, Discipleship, etc.)
- 3. Resources**
 - a. Calendar
 - b. Memory verses
 - c. Podcasts
 - d. Books
- 4. Facility tour (if time allows)**

Discipleship at New Life

Life in the Spirit

PURPOSE

Provide new believers with an understanding of their new “life in the Holy Spirit” so that the “abundant life” of Christ can be a reality for them. (Assimilation)

OFFERING

Offered continuously on Sunday mornings at 10 am.

The curriculum for this class is based partially on the tract from the Pentecostal Publishing House entitled “Six Things to Grow On.” In this class we cover the following main topics:

1. The Holy Spirit

- a. Address common questions about the experience of receiving the Holy Spirit
 - (1) What does it mean to have “received the Holy Spirit”? Do I need the Holy Spirit? How do I know I have the Holy Spirit?
- b. If I have the Holy Spirit, then why can't I walk on water?

2. Living by faith

- a. This is the essence of the “new rules for life” once we come to Christ
- b. But what does this mean?

3. Habits for a stronger and deeper walk with Christ

- a. If you want this change you've experienced to become a permanent way of life, here are some basic habits you should integrate into your life:
 - (1) Attend service regularly
 - (2) Read your Bible
 - (3) Pray
 - (4) Fast
 - (5) Give of your resources (time, energy, and yes, money) as a reminder that God is the source of these things

4. Share your testimony with others

- a. It will be a source of strength for you
- b. It will help those that you tell

Discipleship at New Life

Conformed to His Image (Two Parts)

PURPOSE

Provide believers with an understanding of how we are molded into the image of Christ, and how this contributes to an overcoming life. (Maturity)

OFFERING

Two 4-hour classes offered in one-hour breakout sessions (4 weeks per class)

1. Life after the Holy Spirit

- a. Receiving the Holy Spirit is not the end of God's work in our lives; it is the beginning of a level of relationship.
- b. Paul expresses his fervent desire for Christ to be formed in those he had won to Christ (Galatians 4:19)
- c. As in Jeremiah 18, God desires to shape us according to His will.

2. God desires to use us for his purpose, and he created us with that purpose in mind.

- a. God created us with both our strengths and our weaknesses
- b. Much to our surprise, it is often our weakness God uses to perform his will (II Corinthians 12:7-10)
- c. We learn to accept the things about ourselves that we cannot change, and to trust that God knows what he is doing.
- d. True humility is forgetting ourselves, and allowing God to work through us, recognizing that he is not limited by our limitations.
- e. Psalm 139 and Jeremiah 1 describe God's "prescribing" us.
- f. If we were given the power to change something currently unchangeable, would we do it? Why? Is it significant that God has the power to change that, and has not?
- g. God is perfectly satisfied with what he has started with.
- h. He will give us power to change what needs to be changed.
- i. We need to accept everything else.

3. How does God shape us and change us?

- a. Through interaction with others (i.e. relationships)
- b. Through circumstances of life (see Job).

4. The nature of relationships

- a. Leader-follower
- b. Peer-to-peer

Discipleship at New Life

Conformed to His Image (Two Parts) (continued)

5. Leader-Follower relationships

- a. Understanding authority
- b. Understanding authority within the Church (e.g. “by love serve one another”)
 - (1) The “great” in the kingdom of God are servants
 - (2) The “greatest” in the kingdom of God are slaves
- c. Proper leading
- d. Proper following

6. Peer-to-Peer Relationships

- a. Responsibilities to others
- b. Resolving conflicts
- c. Practicing forgiveness
- d. Practicing repentance
- e. Practicing thankfulness

7. Conviction or Condemnation? What is the difference?

- a. Conviction reflects the facts of what happened
- b. Condemnation is the “sentencing”, or punishment
- c. Christ interrupts after conviction to rescue us from the condemnation

Discipleship at New Life

Vessels of Honor

PURPOSE

Provide more practical instruction to ensure that our lives are available for Christ's use, and that our relationship with him grows consistently stronger.

OFFERING

Four hours of instruction offered in one-hour breakout sessions (4 weeks)

1. Why Spiritual Disciplines?

- a. As an athlete trains to excel on his chosen field of play, we should train to excel in our walk with God.
- b. This implies a separation from things detrimental to that relationship, so that we may give ourselves more fully to things helpful to that relationship.
- c. Our separation is not for the purpose of making us a spectacle or of drawing attention to ourselves, but rather to preserve our resources for dedication to a higher purpose.

2. What is salvation?

- a. Is it a free trip to heaven?
- b. Or is it an abundant life in Christ now, and security for the life to come?

3. How do we "possess our vessel in sanctification and honour"?

4. Disciplines of Abstinence

- a. Solitude
- b. Silence
- c. Fasting
- d. Frugality
- e. Chastity
- f. Secrecy
- g. Sacrifice

5. Disciplines of Engagement

- a. Study
- b. Worship
- c. Celebration
- d. Service
- e. Prayer
- f. Fellowship
- g. Submission

6. Discovering God's purpose for our lives

Discipleship at New Life

Essential Biblical Doctrines

PURPOSE

Provide systematic overview of fundamental doctrines of the Church.

OFFERING

Six hours of instruction, offered in one-hour breakout sessions (6 weeks)

The curriculum for this class is based on Bro. Bernard's booklet *Essential Doctrines of the Bible*. In this class we cover the following doctrines at a high level but in a systematic way:

- 1. The Bible as the Word of God**
 - a. The Bible is the inspired Word of God
 - b. The Bible is the authoritative doctrinal reference
- 2. Our approach to doctrinal study: prayerfully and humbly**
- 3. The Doctrine of God**
 - a. God is spirit
 - b. God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and everywhere present
 - c. God is eternal
 - d. God is uniquely and indivisibly one
 - e. God has revealed himself to mankind in the man Christ Jesus
- 4. The New Birth (or, the doctrine of salvation, or Justification)**
 - a. Sin separates from God
 - b. The new birth restores relationship with God
 - c. The biblical standard for the new birth includes repentance from sin, water baptism in Jesus name, and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit with the miraculous evidence of speaking in an unknown language.
- 5. The Last Things**
 - a. The Lord will return in visible form to earth
 - b. The dead in Christ will be raised from the dead to be with the Lord
 - c. A time of great tribulation will be upon the earth, culminating with the Battle of Armageddon
 - d. A period of peace will follow with God ruling the earth for 1000 years.
 - e. The unrighteous will be resurrected unto judgment and damnation
- 6. The Christian Life (or, Sanctification)**
 - a. Sanctification is the process of being set apart for a specific purpose.
 - b. We are to be separated from manners of living that would hinder our relationship with God.
 - c. We are to be dedicated to habits and manners that draw us closer to God.
 - d. Legalism is to be avoided, but we should consecrate our lives to God in a manner that is pleasing to Him.

Discipleship at New Life

Points of Note

- 1. There is an overlap of purpose between the two phases discussed**
 - a. In our Assimilation classes, we begin to introduce and provide instruction in living an overcoming life. This includes an introduction to fundamental spiritual habits.
 - b. In our Maturity classes, we lead people to involvement and service as they grow in their own lives.
- 2. We do not emphasize the “phases” to discipleship attendees.**
 - a. The typical attendee to New Life discipleship classes should simply sense a shift from more introductory to more advanced material as they progress through the offerings.
 - b. This could also be described as an increase in intensity of the instruction.