

INTRO

ORIENTATION GUIDE

Introducing Life-on-Life Missional Discipleship

WELCOME TO *THE JOURNEY!*

You are about to embark on an exciting opportunity for spiritual growth. No matter where you are in your own spiritual journey, *The Journey* will provide you with an opportunity for real, meaningful life change through *life-on-life missional discipleship* (LOLMD). This orientation will introduce you to the LOLMD process and to *The Journey* material that supports it.

WHAT IS LIFE-ON-LIFE MISSIONAL DISCIPLESHIP?

Life-on-Life Missional Discipleship (LOLMD) is a process of one person, a Journey Group leader, working with a small group of 5 – 10 people, a Journey Group, *for the purpose of seeing them grow spiritually and mature in their walks with Christ.*

LOLMD can be described as: *Laboring in the lives of a few with the intention of imparting one's life, God's Word, and the gospel in such a way as to see them become mature and equipped followers of Christ, committed to doing the same in the lives of others.*

LOLMD requires

- ▶ a qualified leader
- ▶ a faithful few, willing to follow
- ▶ the intention to make mature and equipped followers of Christ
- ▶ doing the right things that make mature and equipped followers of Christ

The life-on-life process includes a commitment to you and others in the group by the leader, as well as a commitment by you to the Journey Group. Your involvement in a Journey Group will result in you working through an intentional plan for spiritual growth, maturing in your spiritual life, and being equipped to share these principles with others. By the time you have completed *The Journey*, you will have been exposed to the necessary skills that will allow you to invest your life in the lives of others.

Your Journey Group will meet regularly in weekly meetings. These meetings have a relaxed, come-as-you-are atmosphere. Your Journey Group leader acts as a coach, guiding the group in creating a supportive, confidential environment that fosters camaraderie and openness. Group members encourage one another as they share honestly about the challenges they face and support one another through the hard times (and victories) as they grow spiritually.

WHAT LIFE-ON-LIFE DISCIPLESHIP IS NOT

It's important to clarify what LOLMD is *not* because there are so many different approaches to spiritual growth that are sometimes labeled discipleship, yet miss the mark.

- ▶ **LOLMD is not curriculum-on-life.** Discipleship happens because of relationships, not because of books or materials; so it is not primarily about pen, paper, reading, and studying. Although there is a learning component to discipleship, it is more focused on living and sharing truth, not merely learning it. Thus, *The Journey* is designed to support a life-on-life process of growth, not a curriculum-on-life process.
- ▶ **LOLMD is not merely a person's church activities and experience.** However, a disciple will certainly be active in church.
- ▶ **LOLMD is not merely about serving.** However, a disciple will certainly develop the heart and skills of a servant and put them in action.
- ▶ **LOLMD is not only about mission.** Yet, a disciple will develop and pursue a specific life plan that is fruitful in mission.

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

Simply put, a disciple is a follower of Jesus Christ. S/he is growing in love for, and trust in, Christ. As a member of a Journey Group s/he will covenant together with the other group members to meet weekly for the purpose of growing toward spiritual maturity as a follower of Christ.

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL MATURITY?

Maturing spiritually involves having both the *spiritual life* and *spiritual skills* of a disciple. This is what it means to be a mature and equipped follower of Christ.

We define a *mature and equipped follower of Christ* as a person who:

- ▶ Lives consistently under the control of the Holy Spirit, the direction of the Word of God, and the motivation of the love of Christ
- ▶ Has discovered, developed and is using his/her spiritual gift(s)
- ▶ Has learned to effectively share his/her faith in both word and deed
- ▶ Gives strong evidence of being
 - A faithful member of God's church
 - An effective manager of life, relationships, and resources
- A willing minister to others, especially "the least and lost"
- An available messenger to non-kingdom people
- ▶ Demonstrates a life striving to be
 - Gospel-driven
 - Worship-focused
 - Morally-pure
 - Evangelistically-bold
 - Discipleship-grounded
 - Family-faithful
- ▶ Is socially responsible

WHAT SPIRITUAL MATURITY IS NOT

Spiritual maturity is the desired life product of LOLMD. There is, however, some confusion. Here are two illustrations.

- ▶ **Spiritual maturity is not just having a lot of Bible knowledge.** Although understanding the Bible is a significant factor that drives spiritual growth, simple head knowledge is not *sufficient in itself*. There is a difference between *knowing* and *living* God's Word. Therefore, LOLMD is focused on *applying* God's Truth, not merely understanding it (head knowledge).
- ▶ **Spiritual maturity is not merely having high commitment.** Commitment is an integral attribute of a spiritually mature life, but commitment, even combined with abundant biblical knowledge, doesn't equate to being a mature Christian.

WHAT IS THE JOURNEY?

The Journey is a three-year collection of weekly materials, spanning roughly seven months each year. Journey Groups use *The Journey* as a guide for LOLMD. Over the course of the material, group members will learn to apply the most significant lessons related to spiritual growth, biblical understanding, life management, relationships (including marriage), and spiritual

skills. Since the material is designed to support the life-on-life model, the most important growth and learning will come from interactions with the leader and members of the Journey Group.

Each week, *The Journey* follows the **T.E.A.M.S.**© outline based upon the five essential ingredients that foster life change:

T

TRUTH

Truth is what God has revealed for His people to know, understand, and obey. Truth is critical. However, finding, learning, and knowing truth alone does not change lives. A disciple must also be shown how to implement what s/he knows, and to do so in the context of loving relationships.

E

EQUIPPING

Equipping is massaging God's Truth until it becomes understandable and usable. Not only does a person need to hear and learn Truth, but s/he must also be shown how to use and apply the Truth. This is discussed extensively in your Journey Group.

A

ACCOUNT- ABILITY

Accountability is asking (or being asked) hard questions in order to promote godly living. Even though a person is equipped to apply truth, that doesn't mean s/he will do it. Accountability questions are used to encourage each group member in their spiritual journey. This happens in the context of a proper understanding of the gospel to ensure that accountability doesn't devolve into behaviorism. The ultimate goal is to discover the sin beneath the sin. The questions may move you a bit out of your comfort zone, but be assured that the goal is to support and help, not to shame.

M

MISSION

Mission is engaging with the lost world through word and deed with the intention of imparting the gospel. Mission enhances the hunger to put Truth and Equipping into use. Each week you will take small steps in learning to effectively relate to, and share the gospel with, those who are without Christ.

S

SUPPLICATION

Supplication is engaging in conversation with God. This will include praying with and for the other members of your Journey Group. Truth, Equipping, Accountability, and Mission must all be supported by prayer because ultimately, spiritual maturity and equipping is a result of God's work, and we must not presume that any material or process is the secret to spiritual growth.

EQUIPPING SEMINAR

In addition to the material covered in *The Journey*, additional training is encouraged in the area of evangelism. If you are participating in a Perimeter Church Journey Group, you will have the opportunity to attend an evangelism equipping seminar designed to provide you with skills and knowledge that require a deeper focus:

Express Your Faith (www.expressyourfaith.com).

You will be asked to commit to attend this seminar. For churches using *The Journey*, you are always welcome to attend the seminars held at Perimeter Church – or look for opportunities being held in your area.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE JOURNEY

SEMESTER I		
1 week	ORIENTATION	An introduction to LOLMD
6 weeks	GOSPEL LIVING	Pursuing glory, grace, and truth
4 weeks	GRACE COMMITMENTS	Spiritual commitments motivated by grace
3 weeks	KNOWING GOD	Understanding God's being and character
SEMESTER II		
4 weeks	HEALTHY MARRIAGE	Developing the spiritual center of your marriage
7 weeks	BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW	Living in the world with a biblical perspective
4 weeks	GOD-HONORING PARENTING	Raising children with a gospel focus

THE VALUE OF BEING IN A JOURNEY GROUP

Life-on-life missional discipleship (LOLMD) is the most effective means of progressing toward spiritual maturity. This is the model Jesus used with His disciples. He spent time with them. It was interactive, one-on-one, in small groups, and out in the field serving together. He took them as they were, with no pre-qualification except that they wanted to follow Him. Through LOLMD you can come as you are, wherever you

are in your spiritual journey, and become what God has designed you to be, with nothing more required than your simple desire to follow Christ.

In addition to this, there is tremendous value in belonging to a brotherhood or sisterhood of believers. The bonds that are developed through LOLMD reach beyond the three years of *The Journey*.

DISCIPLESHIP AND GRACE

Does being involved in discipleship make God love you more? You may be tempted to think that God loves you and accepts you more because you've been memorizing verses, learning about the Bible, and even sharing your faith. But, don't believe it! Let's make it very clear that engaging in discipleship activities *is not* a means of earning God's favor. Being a Christian means that you've stopped trying to earn God's favor. Instead you follow Christ because you trust that He has earned God's favor for you.

And remember that becoming a mature and equipped follower of Christ doesn't win you any more of God's love. Rather, God's love and grace gives you the freedom, power, and joyful motivation to follow Christ with all of your heart.

Through LOLMD you may well understand God's character and will better. You may even feel more intimate with Him. But all this doesn't put you in a special class of God's favorites. His love is just as real (and just as undeserved) as when you are not involved in discipleship.



ONE-YEAR COMMITMENT

So, are you willing to make a commitment to your spiritual growth? Here's what it will take:

Joining a Journey Group will take time – around two hours a week (outside of your personal worship time) plus your Journey Group meeting. You will find that the payoff from your investment of that time will be quite high as your life is steadily transformed.

The Journey is a three-year collection of weekly materials and group meetings for 28 weeks each year. But Journey Group members are asked to commit only one year at a time. There is nothing magical about having a three-year plan. Practically speaking, it is short enough to be fully utilized, yet long enough to cover the abundance of subjects that need to be explored through the life-on-life experience. Life-on-life discipleship takes time. It cannot be done over a long weekend, nor can it be done well in a random fashion, so your commitment to regular weekly involvement is required.

At the end of your one-year commitment, you can tell your Journey Group leader whether you are interested in coming back the following year. Your leader then has the prerogative to invite you back or not, and will base this decision on your regularity of attendance, participation in the group, faithfulness in completing the assignments, and commitment to growing toward spiritual maturity and equipping. Some participants may experience different seasons of life that are not conducive to involvement in a Journey Group at that particular time. For such people, there is the freedom to withdraw from the group without criticism. If a group member consistently fails to live up to his or her commitments, s/he may be asked to discontinue during the discipleship year.

Joining a Journey Group also requires your willingness to move out of your comfort zone. Let's say you wanted to improve your physical condition. You might hire a personal trainer to move you out of your comfort zone by instructing you in good diet and exercise habits, and to help you stay disciplined. Your trainer shouldn't exercise you until you pass out, but s/he really wouldn't be doing their job if you weren't sore once in a while.

In a similar way, your Journey Group leader will help you develop a good spiritual diet by helping you cultivate the disciplines of prayer and Bible study. S/he will also coach you with spiritual exercises that might be uncomfortable at first, but will train and equip you to be involved in missional activities so that you can become an agent of change within the spheres of your influence where you live, work, and play.

Interested? Then turn the page and get started by making a note of your expectations and reservations on the next page. Then sign the Journey Group Member Covenant on the page following (an extra copy is included for you to keep).

As you begin your orientation, be sure to listen to "A Commitment to Spiritual Accountability" which is available with your Journey files. This audio message will help you understand spiritual accountability and how it can aid your spiritual journey.

Lastly, on page 12 you will find an exercise that will help you think about your own spiritual journey up to this point. Your Journey Group leader will discuss this page with your group, so you don't need to write anything down yet. But, please be thinking about the significant turning points in your spiritual journey that have brought you to where you are right now.

Expectations and Reservations

Name

What do I expect to get from joining a Journey Group?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

What are my reservations and concerns about joining a Journey Group?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

What do I want God to do in my life through this Journey Group?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Journey Group Member Covenant

In order to glorify God by pursuing this opportunity to grow in spiritual maturity and equipping, I covenant together with this Journey Group and commit, with God's help to the following:

.....
Initial **to attend all meetings, unless providentially hindered.** If I am unable to attend, I will call my Journey Group leader as soon as possible, and take responsibility to keep current with my group. As much as my schedule lies within my control, I will arrange work and other commitments so as not to conflict with Journey Group meetings.

.....
Initial **to be prompt in attendance.** I understand that this group will meet each from until
Weekday Start Time End Time

.....
Initial **to engage in daily personal worship.** This includes a commitment to spend time in prayer and Bible reading in order to grow in my relationship with God.

.....
Initial **to complete all homework assignments to the best of my ability.** I understand that this will usually require about 2 hours per week, not including time spent in personal worship.

.....
Initial **to participate in group discussion and activities.** I will be ready and willing to give an account of my spiritual progress on a weekly basis for the purpose of accountability and greater spiritual growth.

.....
Initial **to protect the confidentiality of my group.** I pledge to keep all discussions shared in this group confidential so as to intentionally create an environment of trust, openness, honesty, and safety.

.....
Initial **to pray for non-believers within my circle of influence** and to seek opportunities to win them to Christ through prayer, word, and deed.

.....
Initial **to attend at least one equipping seminar during this ministry year** that will improve my skills, knowledge, or leadership abilities.

I understand that the term of this group is for one year.

.....
Signature

.....
Date

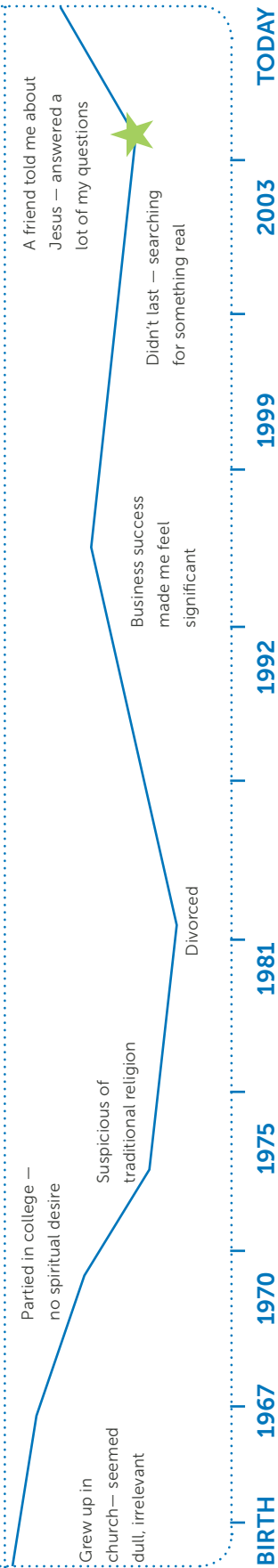
My Spiritual Journey So Far

Has it ever occurred to you that your life is a story in the making – a story that matters?

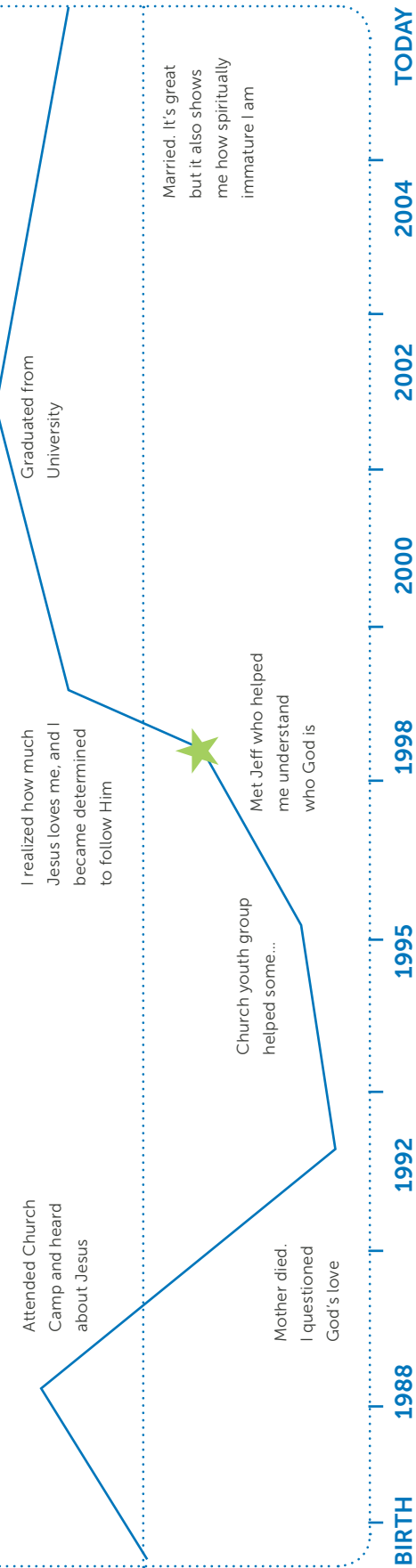
One of the foundational exercises of life-on-life missional discipleship is taking time to reflect on your life story up to this point; what we call your spiritual journey. This exercise is useful for helping you and your Journey Group understand where you are in your spiritual journey. It may be a difficult exercise for you, but rest assured, you will see the value of it the moment you begin thinking about the significant events and patterns in your life. It could take you a few moments to complete, or a few weeks depending on how deeply you begin mulling over your life.

Here's how to do it. On the next page you're going to have an opportunity to draw a picture of your life story. You will be drawing a line graph that plots how you think about the twists and turns of your life story. At each turn in the road, put a label. You can think of the labels as chapter titles in your life story. They can represent significant events, turning points, changes in your view of life, experiences, trials, or triumphs. What matters is that when you look at the picture, you recognize it as an honest representation of your spiritual journey so far. Place a star where you believe you became a true follower of Christ. A few examples are provided below. You can draw yours on the next page.

EXAMPLE A



EXAMPLE B



My Spiritual Journey So Far

Divide this timeline into segments that best represent your spiritual journey.
Place a star where you believe you became a follower of Christ.

POSITIVE
SPIRITUAL
EXPERIENCES

NEGATIVE
SPIRITUAL
EXPERIENCES

TODAY

BIRTH