

FOLLOW

NEXT STEPS – LEADER’S GUIDE

Thank you for your commitment to being a disciple of Christ and discipling others. We are excited for you to join us on this incredible journey of teaching believers how to follow Christ.

You might be thinking, “What are the next steps I should take?” We’re here to help! This guide can be a useful tool as you reach out and begin this new relationship.

Before diving into this Leader’s Guide, we want to remind you that discipleship relationships should always be a male working with a male and female working with a female. It should not be a female working with a male or male working with a female. This is a close relationship and this is one boundary that must be set in the beginning.

In addition, we encourage you to be engaged and active in your local church. If you’ve yet to take that step and connect, please do that soon. There are so many benefits that come with being a part of a local church.

KNOW THE MATERIAL - FOLLOW

We would love for all of our disciple-makers to walk through FOLLOW online. This includes an Introduction to discipleship and the Online Discipleship version of FOLLOW. Just go to follow.lifeword.org and create a login and password and begin the lessons. Soon, you can take your own disciple through FOLLOW, using your laptop or your phone. There’s lots of ways you can use this resource – with a small group, one on one, virtual, Sunday School, and more! If you’ve already gone through FOLLOW, just use the username and password you’ve already created to login.

We utilize the Good Soil Evangelism and Discipleship curriculum in our online discipleship. It’s easy to follow and understand and realistic in length and material. If you’d like to go further in your training with Good Soil, we would love to get you registered for an up-coming course! Just email us at valanda@lifeword.org for more details.

MAKE CONTACT SOON

Connecting with your disciple/follower soon is very important. You don’t want them to wait too long to hear from you because that could leave them feeling rejected or unworthy of your time.

Start with a phone call, text, or email, whichever they have indicated as their preference. Set up a meeting that feels comfortable for both of you, whether that's in-person at a coffee shop, via zoom or google meet. Here's an example of a text you could send:

Hi Sheree! My name is Yalanda Merrell! The folks at Lifeword gave me your contact info and said you've joined Follow and are ready to be connected to a group of fellow believers. That's awesome! I would love to meet with you soon and get to know one another and continue to lead you on a closer walk with Christ. I'm free Tuesday night, would you want to grab a coffee or tea at The Daily Grind at 6:30?

Up until this point, we've used the terms "Christ Follower" and "Follower of Christ" as a better way of saying disciple. You may want to use the same as you begin discussions with your new contact.

However you decide to construct your conversation, remember to keep it inviting and encouraging. It's always a good idea to let them know what you look like or that you'll be wearing a certain hat or something to identify you.

What if they don't message back, answer the call, or respond to the email?

People are busy and of course we can all relate to that missed call or message that got lost in the shuffle. Give it a day or two and try again. If you are unable to get in touch with them, reach out to us at yalanda@lifeword.org and we will see if we can help.

1ST MEETING

It's your first time meeting one another. You're nervous, they're nervous. But you can help set the tone and the comfort level of the conversation by being warm, personable and of course a good listener. Start off with some basic getting to know you type questions and find some commonalities. It's easy to strike up a friendship with someone you can relate to.

Talk about the reason you are meeting and set a weekly time that will work for the both of you to get together. Here's an example of how to begin that conversation:

Sheree, I am really glad you've decided to take this next step in following Christ. It can really get us out of our comfort zone, but I'm excited to walk with you! I'd love to meet weekly with you on Tuesdays at 6 right here if that works for you? I've got some great things I'd love to share with you. Would that be ok?

Once you've picked out a date and time, just spend the rest of the time getting to know one another or if you want, you can begin with the first lesson.

HEAVY TOPICS/ASSISTANCE

When you deal with real life and real people, there will be real problems. Sometimes discussions on controversial topics can derail your conversation and progress. We encourage you to try to keep your disciple on the lesson/task at hand and address that topic at another time or offer help. However, if this is a personal issue they are dealing with and you are not comfortable or don't feel qualified to help, we encourage you to reach out to your pastor or a counselor in your church.

Here's an example of a conversation:

(disciple) Sherree: I'm thankful for this friendship we've developed. I'm glad I have someone I can talk to, confide in and just someone that won't judge me. My whole life, I've struggled with acceptance. I've sought approval through drugs, alcohol, men, you name it. Sometimes, I find myself still struggling in these areas. I now realize it's wrong, but sometimes, it's hard to fight the temptation.

(leader) Yalanda: Sheree, I know what it's like to try to fill a void with the wrong things. God wants to be the One we go to, not the things of this world. If you are really struggling and need help, I'd love to help connect you with someone that is more qualified to help in this area. Let me get some information and connect you with them. In the meantime, let's look at this week's lesson about...

YOU don't have to have all the answers. If you are stumped with a question or topic, it's ok to say, "you know, I'm not sure. Let me look that up this week and get back to you." In addition, Lifeword offers resources to help with answering some of these tough topics and issues. Click on the Resources tab at follow.lifeword.org.

MISSED SESSIONS/MEET-UPS

Send out a text or call your friend to encourage them to be there at your designated time each week. If something comes up, because it will, don't say, "ok, let's reschedule". Instead, pick out a time and say, "Thursday at noon will work for me. Can you make that time?" Try to make sure you have a new time for that week scheduled before ending the conversation. If the circumstance is a difficult one such as the death of a family member, a sudden illness or something of that nature, tell them you are praying for them and will check on them later in the week. Set a reminder in your phone and when you do your check-in, see if there is a good time for you to meet up again.

We know issues can arise. If you are worried about your disciple, reach out. If they become disinterested try to encourage them. If they continue to ignore your texts and efforts to talk, pray for the situation and let us know if we can help.

PROGRESS/TRACKING/REPORTING

Lifeword is thankful for the work you do, but you are not required to track your progress for us. If at any time you would like to share a success story, an update on how things are going or if you have questions, reach out to me, Yalanda Merrell, at yalanda@lifeword.org.

QUESTIONS/HELP

We know questions will arise and there will be a time when you need to reach out to someone. Start by chatting with your pastor or discipleship coordinator in your home church. If there is further assistance needed or a technical issue, contact us at help@lifeword.org.