

The Four Phases of Discipleship

Our Four-Phase Discipleship Program coincides with Jim Putman’s Spiritual Stages 2-5. Since discipleship at GPC necessitates spiritual life (faith in Christ), we do not disciple those in Jim Putman’s Spiritual Stage 1 (spiritually dead), but rather we evangelize them.

5 Stages (Jim Putman)	4 Phases (GPC)
1. Spiritually Dead	0. --
2. Spiritual Infant	1. Phase 101 (Spiritual Infant)
3. Spiritual Child	2. Phase 201 (Spiritual Child)
4. Spiritual Young Adult	3. Phase 301 (Spiritual Young Adult)
5. Spiritual Parent	4. Phase 401 (Spiritual Parent)

Here is Jim Putman’s Discipleship Diagram:



Below are the four phases of discipleship at GPC as well as a thorough description of each:

I. Phase 1 (Spiritual Infant)

New believers who are excited and eager to learn. However, this phase is characterized by ignorance. Those who are in this stage may know many things but are ignorant of the rules in their new spiritual life.

- a. How to recognize their beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors
 - i. Ignorance about what they need spiritually and what the Bible says about life and purpose of a Christian.
 - ii. Ignorance about or frustration toward Christianity and the church.
 - iii. Belief that Christians make no mistakes; unrealistic expectations of themselves and others.
 - iv. A belief that they are defined as the culture would define them.
 - v. A worldly perspective about life with some spiritual truth mixed in.
 - vi. Mixing some of Christianity with some of other religions but not knowing it.
- b. Phrases that reveal who they are
 - i. "I believe in Jesus, but my church is when I'm in the woods."
 - ii. "I don't have to go to church to be a Christian."
 - iii. "I gave my life to Jesus and I go to church, but I don't need to be close to other people."
 - iv. "I don't have time to be in relationship with another Christian."
 - v. "My spouse is my accountability partner; I don't need anyone else."
 - vi. "I pray and read my Bible; that is good enough for me."
 - vii. "My ministry is my secular work; I don't have time for the church."
 - viii. "I didn't know the Bible said that."
 - ix. "We were born as spirit children in heaven before we were born down here as humans, correct?"
- c. Needs of the spiritually infants
 - i. Individual attention from a spiritual parent.
 - ii. Protection and care.
 - iii. To have the Word of God explained to them.
 - iv. To have the habits of a believer explained and modeled.
- d. Truths disciple-makers need to teach spiritual infants
 - i. Teach them about the spiritual battle that surrounds them.
 - ii. Teach them how spiritual transformation works in our lives.
 - iii. Teach them about the stages of spiritual growth and the discipleship process.
 - iv. Teach them what new habits they need to develop.
 - 1. Personal bible study plan or method.
 - 2. Meet with other Christians and are a part of the church.
 - 3. Serve others.
 - 4. Pray.
 - 5. Give to others.
 - 6. Are in relationship (marriage, children and other believers).
 - 7. Are humble.

8. Share our faith with all who will listen.

II. Phase 201 (Spiritual Child)

They understand the basic language of faith. However, they are characterized by self-centeredness; may do the right thing but it's usually to avoid an outcome they dislike or to get something they want.

- a. How to recognize their beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors
 - i. Excitement over having deep relationships, which they might not have had before.
 - ii. Remembering who they were as unbelievers, so they appreciate how God has changed them.
 - iii. Understanding much of the Christian language.
 - iv. Disillusionment because of their high expectation of others.
 - v. Belief that feelings are most important, which leads to spiritual highs and lows.
 - vi. Lack of wisdom about how to use what they are learning – for example, too aggressive when sharing their faith or too legalistic in their approach to dealing with their friends and family.
 - vii. Belief that people are not caring for them enough.
 - viii. Mimicking mature Christians' behaviors in order to look good and gain praise.
 - ix. Serving others in a ministry as long as the benefit outweighs the cost.
 - x. Enthusiasm about new teachings.
 - xi. Confusion and being black-and-white on complex issues because they have an incomplete view of biblical subjects.
 - xii. Knowing more about what Christians say than about what the Word says.
- b. Phrases that reveal who they are
 - i. "I love my small group; don't add any more people to it."
 - ii. "Who are all these people coming to **my** church? Tell them to go somewhere else!"
 - iii. "**My** small group is not taking care of **my** needs."
 - iv. "I don't have anyone who is spending enough time with **me**; no one is discipling **me**."
 - v. "I didn't like the music today. If only they did it like..."
 - vi. "I am not being fed in **my** church, so I am going to a church that meets **my** needs better."
- c. Other ways spiritual children reveal their spiritual immaturity
 - i. They believe things about life and faith that are biblically inaccurate.
 - ii. They do the right things but for the wrong reasons.
 - iii. Their service is conditional.
 - iv. They are "sophomores," meaning "wise fools." They are wise enough to know the truth but foolish about how to use it.
- d. Needs of spiritual children

- i. Being part of a spiritual family.
 - ii. Feeding themselves.
 - iii. Who they are in Christ (identity).
 - iv. Having relationship with Christ.
 - v. Having relationship with other believers.
 - vi. Appropriate expectations concerning other believers.
 - vii. Giftedness and what part the Lord has prepared them to play in the body of Christ.
 - viii. Timing (just because they have leadership skill sets doesn't mean they are ready to lead).
- e. What to do with spiritual children
- i. Give them a solid biblical foundation (Head): What every Christian should know.
 - ii. From head to heart: From head understanding to heart change.
 - iii. From heart to hands: From heart change to action.

III. Phase 301 (Spiritual Young Adult)

They are eager to serve, think independently, and look much like adults; however, they still have much to learn about responsibility and how to care for the spiritual needs of others. They are characterized by service, God-centeredness and other-centeredness. They serve intentionally but don't make disciples intentionally. They want to be independent but still need coaching/parenting.

- a. How to recognize spiritual young adults
- i. Desire to serve for others' good and the glory of God.
 - ii. Feeling responsible for how others respond to the gospel message; possible pride if a person accepts the message and possible discouragement if they don't.
 - iii. Desire to serve but not strategic about how to train others.
 - iv. Naivety about how well other believers are doing – for example, they believe that others are on fire for Jesus because everyone seems to be "fine" at church.
 - v. Being black and white about what should happen in a church.
- b. Phrases that reveal who they are
- i. "I love my group, but there are others who need a group like this."
 - ii. "I think I could lead a group with a little help. I have three friends I have been witnessing to, and this group would be too big for them."
 - iii. "Look how many are at church today – it's awesome! I had to walk two blocks from the closest parking spot."
 - iv. "Randy and Rachel missed group and I called to see if they are okay. Their kids have the flu, so maybe our group can make meals for them. I'll start."
 - v. "In my devotions, I came across something I have a question about."
 - vi. "I noticed that we don't have an old folks' visitation team. Do you think I could be involved?"
 - vii. "I am ready to make disciples, and I will let you know if I need some help."

- viii. "I am so exhausted. This week I called all sixty men from men's breakfast to see how they were."
- ix. "I really blew it. One of the women in our group left the church. I must have done something wrong."
- c. Needs of spiritual young adults
 - i. Help in finding an appropriate ministry in which to serve within the church.
 - ii. A spiritual parent who will debrief with them about ministry experiences.
 - iii. Ongoing relationships with other believers that offer encouragement and accountability.
 - iv. Help establishing healthy boundaries for their families.
 - v. Guidance regarding appropriate expectations of the people they will serve.
 - vi. Assistance in identifying their gifts.
 - vii. Help navigating complex ministry situations.
- d. What to do with spiritual young adults
 - i. Help them understand ministry (Head)
 - 1. Defend the Gospel
 - 2. Work under and with the leadership of the church
 - ii. Help them to be ministers (Heart)
 - 1. Equip them to be courageous
 - 2. Help them learn to work with a team
 - 3. Teach them how to be disciplined and responsible
 - iii. Give them opportunities to do ministry (Hands)
 - 1. Help them lead a small group
 - 2. Help them lead a leader
 - 3. Teach them proper boundaries

IV. *Phase 401 (Spiritual Parent)*

Parents are able to reproduce, but that does not mean they are reproducing. They may not yet have prioritized their lives around the mission of Christ, which is to make disciples.

- a. How to recognize spiritual parents
 - i. Thinking in terms of what a team (rather than an individual) can do.
 - ii. Having a coaching mindset.
 - iii. Wanting to see the people they work with mature and become fellow workers who love them but aren't dependent upon them to complete the mission.
 - iv. Thinking in terms of how to help a younger believer take the next step in his or her development.
- b. Phrases that reveal who they are
 - i. "This guy at work asked me to explain the Bible to him. Pray for me."
 - ii. "We get to baptize someone from our small group tonight. When is the next 101 class? I want to get her plugged into ministry somewhere."
 - iii. "Our small group is going on a mission trip, and I have given each person a different responsibility. Where do you think we should go?"
 - iv. "I realized discipleship happens at home, too. Will you hold me accountable to spend time discipling my kids?"

- v. "I have a person in my small group who is passionate about children. Can you have the children's ministry people call me?"
- c. Needs of spiritual parents
 - i. An invitation to make disciples and some direction
 - ii. To be released and supported
 - iii. Ongoing relationships with co-laborers
- d. What to do with spiritual parents
 - i. We treat them as a "grown-up" by releasing and encouraging them.

V. Skills

- The purpose of this emphasis is to teach each Discipleship Program members specific skills to help them mature in their faith. These skills will include but not be limited to prayer, Bible study, financial responsibility, etc.

VI. Theology

- The theological emphasis will focus on the doctrinal truths of Scripture; Who God is, how the Bible describe salvation, the Holy Spirit, Jesus as fully human and fully God, etc.

VII. Worldview

- How do we live in our culture as redeemed, forgiven, and adopted, children of God? This emphasis will help each Discipleship Group member understand how to have a biblical worldview, which will help them live out their calling as part of the Church body as well as their individual God given calling in their day to day lives.

VIII. Devotionals

- Our devotional life will look different from our brothers and sisters, but it must be consistent as we seek God and his ways. Each person will receive resources to help them in their devotional time with God. Members of the Discipleship Groups will also be held accountable as they meet together.