

A large, stylized graphic of a flame or fire, rendered in shades of orange, red, and yellow, set against a black background. The flame is abstract and flowing, with a central dark void.

# SPARK

Discipleship Process  
Rev. Michael Downs

# Session 1



**SPARK**  
Discipleship  
Process

# Objectives Part 1 (The Why):

1. You will gain a working knowledge of why Spark was created as a discipleship and disciple making model.
2. You will understand the biblical foundation of the uniqueness of Spark and how it came to be.
3. You will understand the purpose of what Spark groups intend to accomplish.

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**Dallas Willard:**

***“Every church should be able to answer two questions***

- 1. What is our plan for making disciples?***
- 2. Does our plan work?”***

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## What is SPARK in a NUTSHELL?

Spark is a quest for transformation and wholeness in the life of every person in the church body. Equipping Churches to create a framework that aids in the heart of Jesus to make disciples who make disciples.



# We believe Discipleship happens...

- When we intentionally create an entire church culture to engage the people of God in the mission of God!
- When Pastors, leaders and congregations get excited about the desire of God! If it's important to God, it's important to us!

# We believe Discipleship happens...

- When we know what we are being discipled TO...instead of just FROM!
- When we begin to imitate Christ instead of the world.
- When we allow the Spirit to lead us out of the status quo and into a Holiness adventure!

## The importance of our training:

### **Matthew 28:18-20 (NLT)**

<sup>18</sup> Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, (all people) baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. <sup>20</sup> Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”



# **1. The Discipleship Problem**

- **Drop in church attendance**
  - Frequency of regular attendee is now hovering at or below once a month!
  - Boomers dying off and Busters leaving
  - New Gens and Millennials not coming
  - Churches expect people to come to them
  - People are increasingly busy
- **Decay in Biblical literacy**
  - People don't know Bible
  - Don't live Biblical lives
  - Culturally influenced, not influencing culture

# 1. The Discipleship Problem

- **Loss of community yet hungry for it**
  - Digital age / digital communities replacing person-to-person communities
  - Loss of “human” contact
  - People searching for Community
  - Hard to build real community in worship service alone
- **Churches not doing the work of the church**
  - Needs are great
  - Many churches seem to be sleeping
  - Culture marching on without a “voice in the wilderness”

# 1. The Discipleship Problem

- **Discipleship is always happening, yet how intentional are we being?**
  - People are shaped by something
  - Church culture slouching toward relativity
  - Attendance percentage is dropping
- **Discipleship training is mandated in the Bible**
  - Few have a plan to work on it

## Things that were partial solutions that we saw

- **Fixing “Stagnant” feel**
- **Creativity**
- **Lack of Serving**
- **Community Impact**
- **Fellowship**
- **Sharing Life Together**
- **Curriculum**



## **Working Solution**

- a. Simplify-life
- b. Community
- c. Authenticity
- d. Addressing the Partial Solutions



# Session 2



SPARK  
Discipleship  
Process

**““ 1 Timothy 4:7 <sup>(NLT)</sup> Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives’ tales. Instead, train yourself to be godly. <sup>8</sup> “Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come.”**

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## What We Hope To Accomplish in SPARK Groups:

**1. To get people talking instead of just listening to a lecture or lesson. This is built on dialogue.**

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## What We Hope To Accomplish in SPARK Groups:

**2.To get people serving together and planning ways to bless others.**

We believe groups continue long term ministries with things that fit their dynamic and passions. The members of the Spark Group take ownership by planning their own outreach activities each month. This allows them to choose things that are personal to them or they have hoped to be involved with in their sphere of influence.



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**What We Hope To Accomplish in SPARK Groups:**

**3.To form a group of people who trust each other and invest in life together.**

Sunday mornings are tough to build meaningful relationships. In the grind of busyness, this is a call to rest.



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**What We Hope To Accomplish in SPARK Groups:**

**4. To get a group of people to think theologically and Biblically together.**

**Answering *what* we believe and *why* we believe, and then *how* to live it.**

**5. To promote people to “risk” something for God! Getting people to put faith into practice!**

## Questions started forming

1. Are we inviting people to tangible ways to grow and connect with Kingdom Influencers?
2. Could it be that we sold the Good News for something easier to digest? Maybe, calling people to "Salvation" and low commitment in turn brought us low results?
3. Have we addressed the questions people in the pews may be asking?

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**Do we fully grasp (beyond just knowing) that:**

1. We are a *Called* people
2. We are a *Redeemed* people
3. We are a *Gathered* people
4. We are a *Sent* people

**“Through relationships we get to offer course corrections where discipline takes place. Discipline in a healthy way is a counter balance to the extremes of law/legalism or lawless living.”**

**- Rev. Michael Downs**



# Session 3

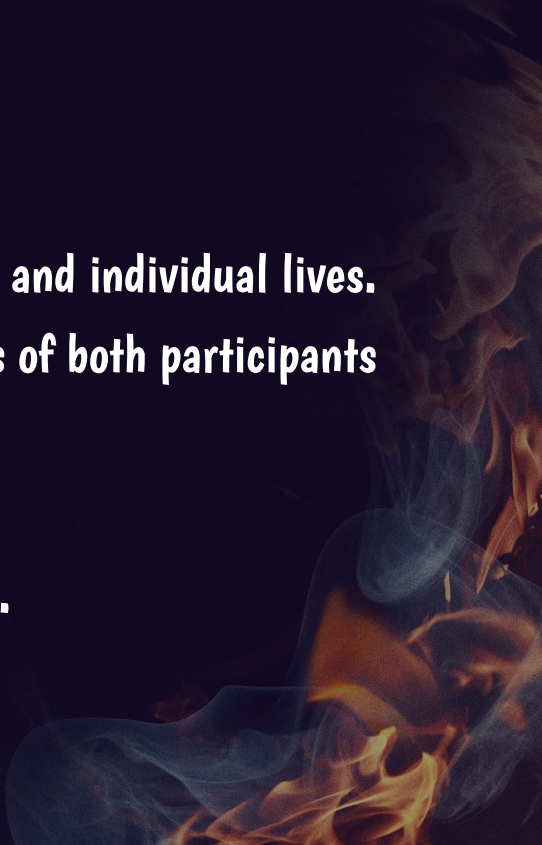


SPARK  
Discipleship  
Process



## **Part 2: The What**

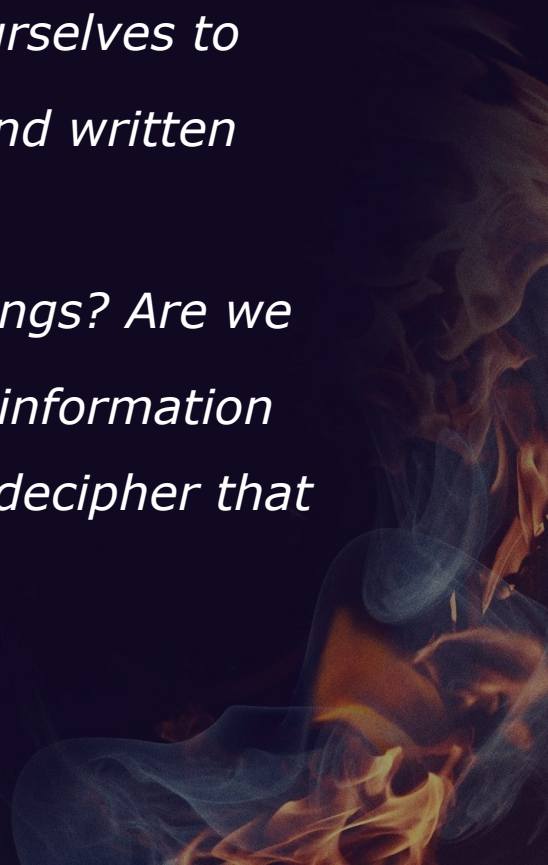
### **Objectives:**

- 1. You will gain an understanding of the format of Spark groups.**
  - 2. You will understand the big picture of the Spark format.**
  - 3. You will understand what discipleship looks like in Spark groups and individual lives.**
  - 4. You will understand how Spark groups work and the expectations of both participants and leaders.**
  - 5. You will understand what to look for in Spark leaders.**
  - 6. You will understand the various leadership roles in Spark groups.**
- 

## Elements of Discipleship Process (CIVIC)

·**Conversation:** *Talking out and allowing ourselves to work out our faith in action. Both verbally and written can help you work through it all.*

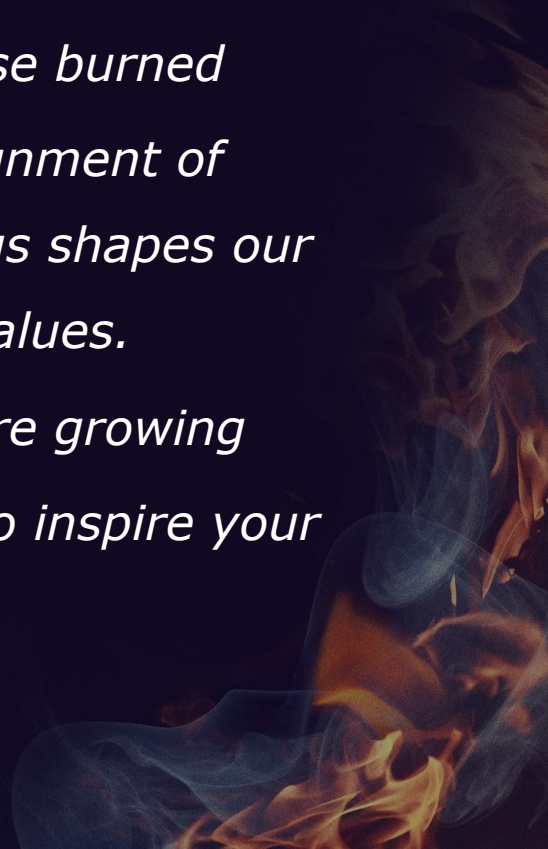
·**Information:** *Are we learning the right things? Are we processing the right things? We get a lot of information thrown at us. It's important to process and decipher that biblically.*



## Elements of Discipleship Process (CIVIC)

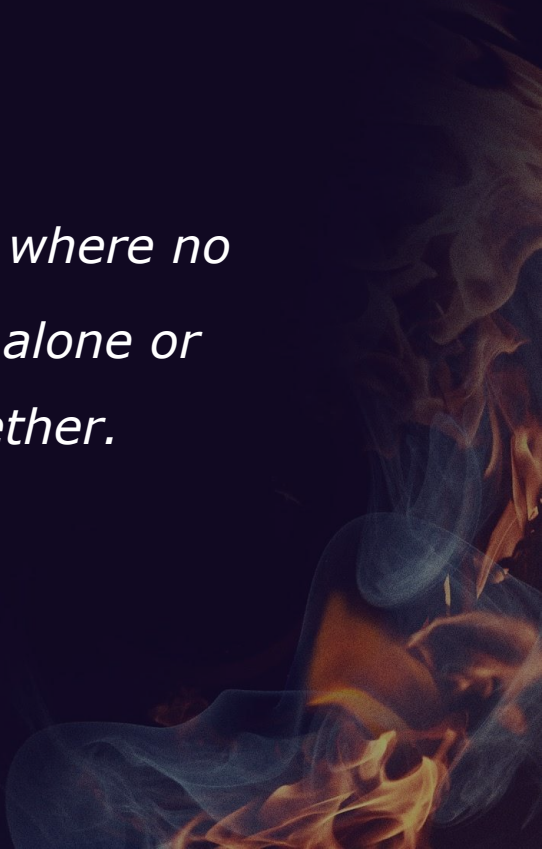
• **Value:** *What has value to you? If your house burned down, what 5 things would you grab? Realignment of what is valuable to us. What is valuable to us shapes our daily habits and living. We can assess our values.*

• **Inspiration:** *When we see the way people are growing and seeking it will inspire us. Find those who inspire your walk. Strive to be that for others.*



## Elements of Discipleship Process (CIVIC)

·**Community:** *A spiritual discipleship process where no one stands alone, struggles alone, develops alone or grows up alone. We are on this journey together.*



# Overview of Structure of the Group Meeting Process (Monthly structure)

- Week 1 – Group Leader Training
- Week 2 - Grow
- Week 3 - GO (Glocal Outreach)
- Week 4 - Gather





# SPARK Monthly Roadmap

Sermon and Lesson  
Development

1

GROW  
LESSON

3

GATHER

5

2  
GROUP  
Leader  
Training

4  
GO !  
Glocal Outreach

6  
REVISIT  
RISK

*\*Before launching groups, we gather for training sessions for the leaders and with host families and other leaders in the groups. This takes a few sessions of training to get everyone on the same page for how you will be discipling the entire church.*

*\***Do not skip this important step** of getting your entire group together and learning where you are going and how the pieces work in complementing one another.*

## SPARK's 7 Marks of a Discipled Person

1. **Obedient to Jesus**
2. **Growing toward real emotional health**
  - a. (*The Emotionally Healthy Church* by Scazzero)
  - b. Anchored, stable, loving, kind...
3. **Shows a Reliance on God**
  - a. (Prayer, Feeding on the Word, Spiritual Disciplines...)
4. **Active in the LIFE and HEART of the church**
5. **Is seeking balance of Running *"TO things of the Spirit"* and *"AWAY From the snares that so easily entangle"***
6. **Invests in Discipling others**
7. **Makes following Jesus attractive**



# Session 4



SPARK  
Discipleship  
Process



## 10 Rules for Spark Groups to Live By

1. Build Trust first.
2. Confidentiality- Our sharing is kept in confidence.
3. Listen with respect- we listen as others are sharing.
4. We walk together- we don't give advice, we share experiences.
5. Speak for self - We don't talk about others or project onto other people, we only speak for and about ourselves. Only "I" talk.



## 10 Rules for Spark Groups to Live By

6. Check in- we check in with each other and follow up on risks to help us move forward. Write down prayer requests to pray for each other during the week.
7. Avoid side conversations and cross talk.
8. Sharing- be sensitive to how much and how long you share to allow others time to share as well.
9. Commit to the journey and growth.
10. Be prepared to start and end on time.

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## Pastors/Discipleship Leader, What to look for in Potential Spark Leaders:

- Dedicated
- Able to connect with people
- A leader in the church (recognized by congregation)
- Comfortable leading when it is hard
- Person who can let others talk (or is willing to let others share)
- A person willing to be led
- Teachable Spirit

## Opportunities for other roles in SPARK Groups

- >Leader (Serves as Facilitator during meetings)
- Assistant Leader (Is being trained and can step in for the Leader if sick or on vacation)
- Go Coordinator (Keeps the monthly mission details planned and communicated)
- 1-2 Host Families
- As groups grow and people desire to lead something, you can also have: Prayer Leader, Go Coordinator and Gather Coordinator

## Host Family Responsibilities

- Ideally, opens their home on one Sunday night a month. This commitment is easier for some people to accomplish than weekly commitment.
- Either 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend for Grow night *or* 4<sup>th</sup> weekend for Gather night.
- Helps get 2 families involved that are not leading the group, but get an opportunity to practice hospitality.

# Session 5



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Discipleship  
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## **SPARK:**

### **Keys to Leading and Facilitating Well**

- **Stick to the beginning and ending times**
- **Your goal is to get them talking**
- **Listen**
- **Be open and sensitive to the Holy Spirit**
- **Don't force people to share, pray or read aloud**

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## **SPARK:**

### **Keys to Leading and Facilitating Well**

- **No overtalkers. Don't let one person take over.**
- **Be prepared, small things make a big difference**
- **Don't be afraid of silence**
- **Encourage people to share their "RISK" for the Lord, and then bring that back later in the month, during the Gather Weekend.**

# Session 6



SPARK  
Discipleship  
Process

## *Part 3: HOW to Build Out a GROW Night*

### Objectives:

1. You will understand how Spark Grow lessons interweave with sermon themes.
2. You will understand how the sermon calendar comes into play when planning for Spark groups.
3. You will see narrative and topic examples that can be good starting points and brainstorming.

# Session 7



SPARK  
Discipleship  
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**Preaching  
Plan**

**Discipleship  
Groups**

**4 Areas of  
Biblical Text**

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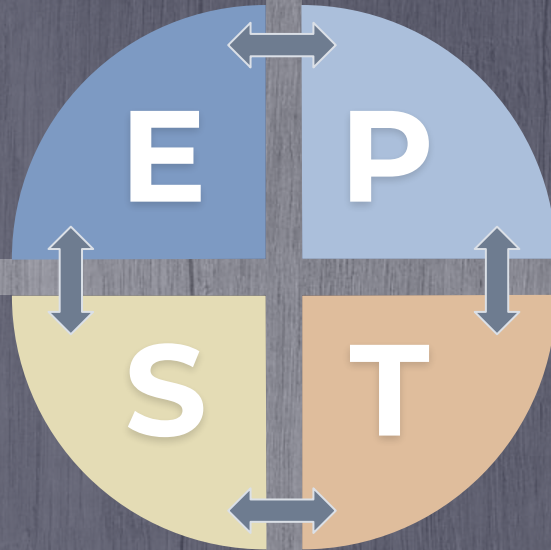
## **4 Areas of Biblical Text to build a Spark Discipleship GROW Lesson:**

1. OT Passage
2. NT Passage
3. Prophets & Wisdom Literature
  - Psalms and Proverbs
  - Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah
4. Saying of Jesus

# Overview of Structure

## EMPHASIS

Subject or Scripture to focus on.  
What you are trying to make the  
big picture of the month.



## PREACHING

Each Sermon fleshes out what  
will be studied in groups.

Persons gathering to learn and  
implement these Themes into  
their lives, through Study, Serve  
and Fellowship together.

## SPARK GROUPS

Pastor Trains and Disciples the  
Spark Group Leaders to Start  
Each Series.

## TRAINING

## Helpful Ingredients on How to build a Grow Night Lesson

- Short Lesson/Topic Overview (few paragraphs provided for our Spark Leaders)
- Scripture Overview - We build our monthly lessons using these four types of passages to show the Emphasis is a Narrative that has continuity across scripture over the years. This also helps us not take scripture out of context or be lazy in our preaching. We believe this teaches our people to fall in love with the entire Word of the Lord.



## Examples of Spark Monthly Concentration Narratives:

*The monthly concentration will stem from the current sermon series:*

- God of Miracles*
- Breaking out of our Prisons*
- Fellowship*
- Prayer*
- Worship*
- Stewardship*
- Hate Injustice*
- Redeeming Justice*
- Live Missional*
- Discipleship*
- Journey/Path*
- Battle*
- Peace*
- Hospital & Healing*
- Mundane*
- Adventure*
- Blessings*
- Love*
- Rescue*
- Holiness*
- Covenant*
- Salvation*
- Mission*
- Bearing Fruit*
- Redemption*
- Eternity*
- Justice*
- Forgiveness*
- Waiting on the Lord*



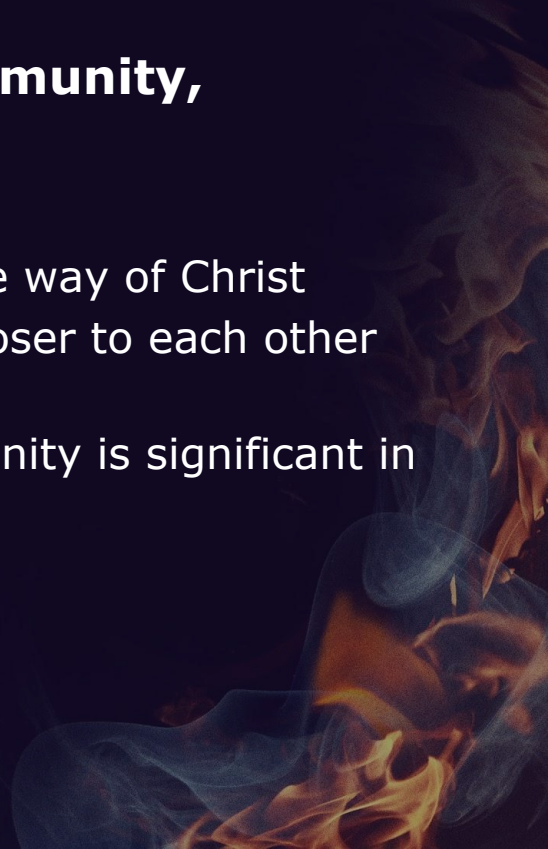
# Session 8



SPARK  
Discipleship  
Process

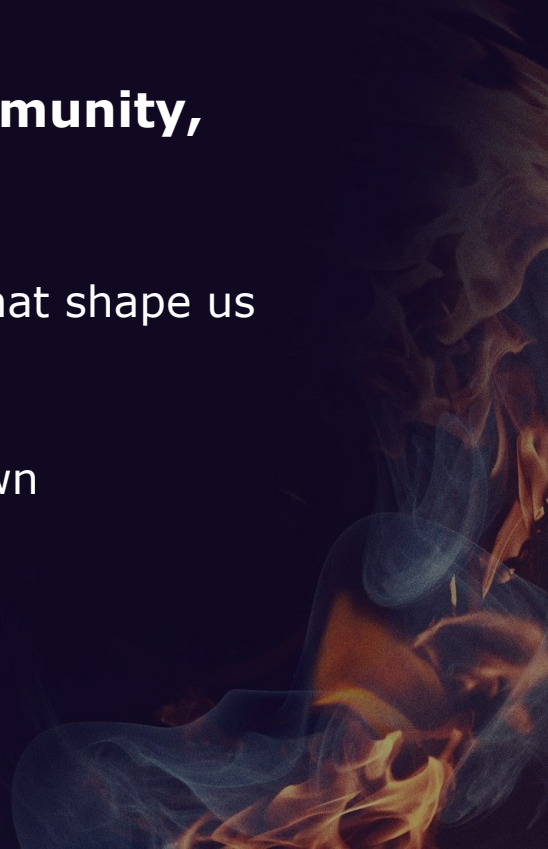
## How did Spark form? SPARK is a balance of **Community, Formation, and Mission**

- ❖ **Community** - developing common life together in the way of Christ
  - People growing closer to God and in turn growing closer to each other
  - w/o the church becomes individualistic
  - by itself the church becomes exclusivism, so community is significant in creating groups who share real life together



## How did Spark form? SPARK is a balance of **Community, Formation, and Mission**

- ❖ **Formation** - developing the practices and postures that shape us
  - People growing into the image of Christ together
  - A Holy intent of becoming like the Holy
  - Realizing we don't possess all the answers on our own



## How did Spark form? SPARK is a balance of **Community, Formation, and Mission**

- ❖ **Mission** - bearing witness to the love of Jesus & the reign of God
  - People sharing life together in a common place (neighborhood)
  - People impacting those neighborhoods
  - Go, Make, Do, Be ...
  - Without the mission, church can become consumeristic



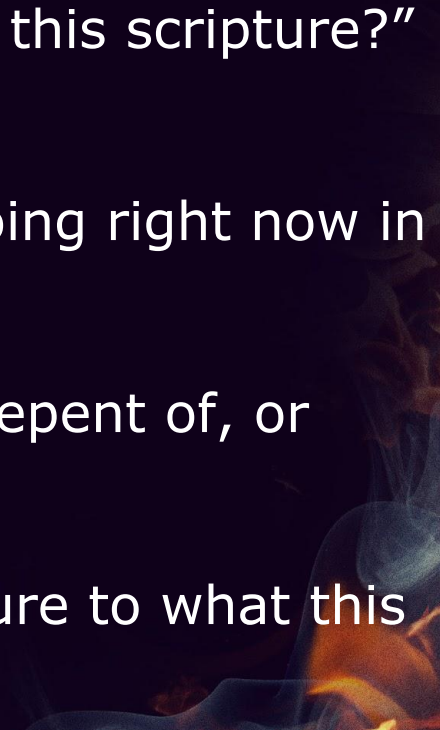
# Session 9



**SPARK**  
Discipleship  
Process

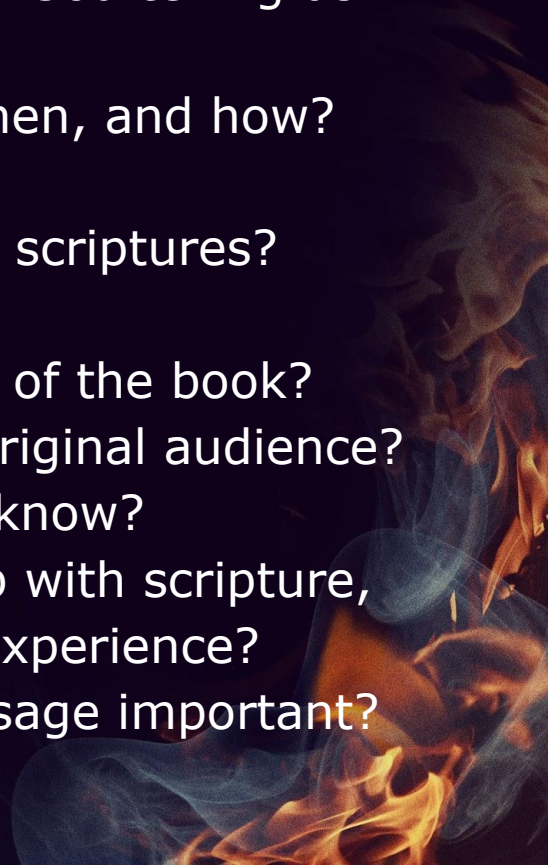


# SPARK CORE Questions Each Lesson/Theme:

1. **Comprehension:** "What is God telling us in this scripture?"
  2. **Attention:** "What sticks out to you?"
  3. **Telling ourselves the truth:** "How am I doing right now in these areas?"
  4. **Forgiveness:** "Is there anything I need to repent of, or seek forgiveness for?"
  5. **Life Change:** "How will I respond in the future to what this scripture is saying?"
- 

## How to write more types of Guiding Questions:

- ❖ **COMPREHENSION** - *Seeking the truth:* “What is God telling us in this scripture?”
  - 5 questions of context: Who, what, where, when, and how?
  - 2 questions of broader context:
    - How does this passage line up with other scriptures?
      - OT, NT, Wisdom Lit, Words of Jesus
    - What is going on in the historical context of the book?
      - What purpose would it serve to the original audience?
      - What context would be important to know?
    - How does this passage (scripture) line up with scripture, reason, tradition of the church, and my experience?
  - 1 question of contemplation: Why is this passage important?



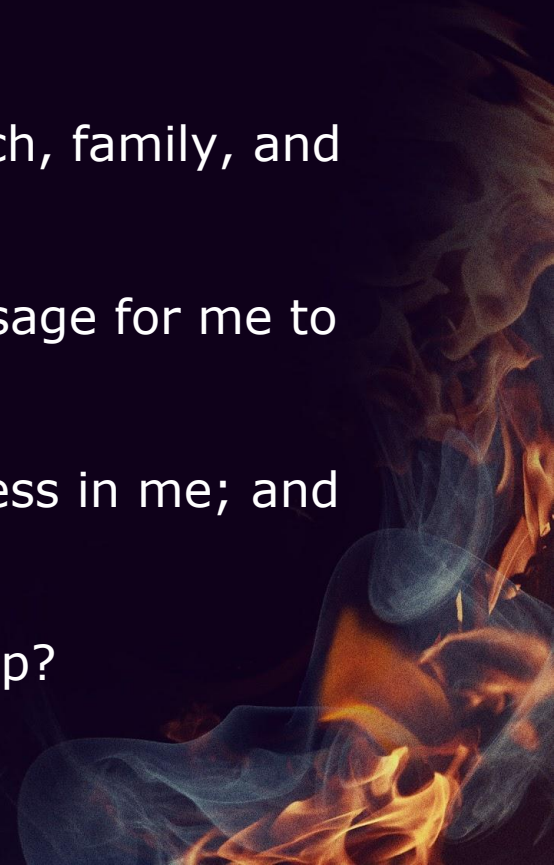
## How to write more types of Guiding Questions:

- ❖ **ATTENTION** - "Where do I see Jesus at work in this text?"
  - What invitation does He offer us in this?
  - Why does this passage speak to you?
  - Summarize: What does this passage have to speak to us about today?



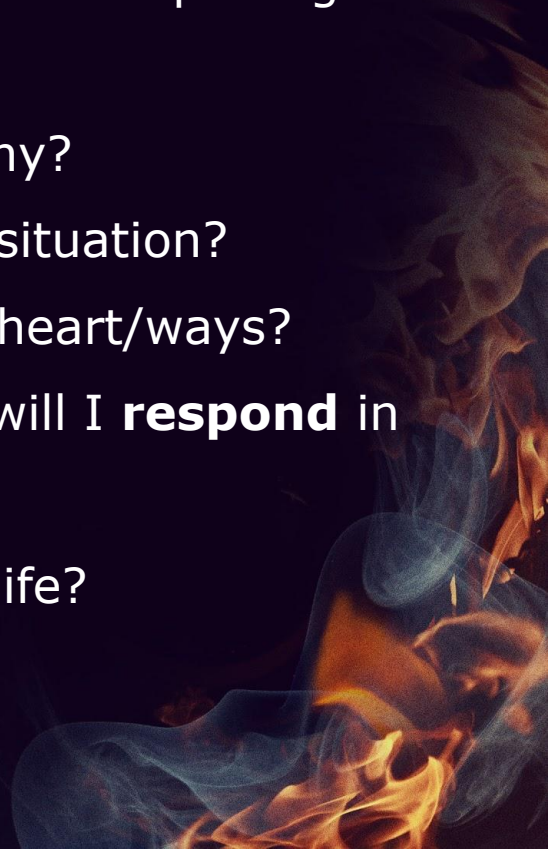
## How to write more types of Guiding Questions:

- ❖ ***TELLING OURSELVES THE TRUTH*** - “How am I doing right now in these areas?”
  - What difference does this make for our church, family, and lives?
  - Is there anything that is hard about this passage for me to apply?
  - Does this truth create a sense of defensiveness in me; and how may I better receive it?
  - Do I need help in this struggle from the group?



## How to write more types of Guiding Questions:

- ❖ ***FORGIVENESS*** - *Wrestling with the truth*: “How is this passage calling me to change?”
  - What part of this truth do I struggle with? Why?
  - Do I need to be an agent of redemption in a situation?
  - Do I need to seek forgiveness or change my heart/ways?
- ❖ ***LIFE CHANGE*** - *Responding to the truth*: “How will I **respond** in the future to what this scripture is saying?”
  - What will I do to live this passage out in my life?
  - What is my take away?





## Different Types of Questions we use in SPARK GROW NIGHT: Outward-facing questions:

- What does the kingdom of God look like in this passage?
- What does the kingdom of God look like out in the world?

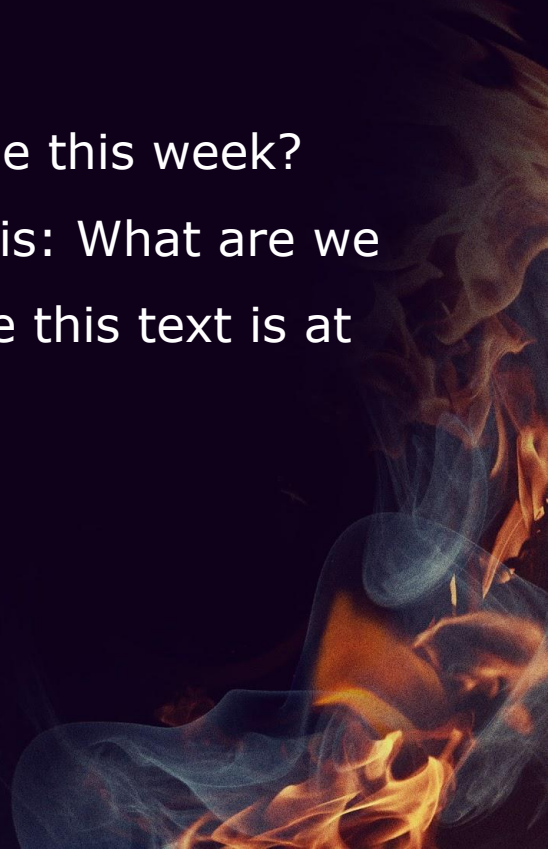
## Inward-facing questions:

- What are our barriers to this happening?
- What would a God moment look like?
- What does God use to get your attention? (*How did God get Naaman's/Elisha's attention in this story? 2 Kings 5*)
- How do we help people move from the "out" to the "in" focus?
- The next focus is from the "us" to the "others". How does this help the rest of the world?



**"Others" questions** *"Gaining wisdom in the story is huge":*

- What does the kingdom of God look like when it comes to our enemies (people who rub us wrong)?
- What is a tangible way you could bless someone this week?
- In reading and pondering each text consider this: What are we "for" and what are we "against", and am I where this text is at this point in my journey with Jesus?





## **RISK concept -**

What is something that you can RISK for God this month?  
Something that you feel the Holy Spirit is leading you to do  
that would honor Him and create growth in your life?

# Session 10



SPARK  
Discipleship  
Process

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## **Proverbs 2:1-14 (NLT)**

<sup>1</sup> My child, listen to what I say, and treasure my commands.<sup>2</sup> Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding.<sup>3</sup> Cry out for insight, and ask for understanding.<sup>4</sup> Search for them as you would for silver; seek them like hidden treasures.<sup>5</sup> Then you will understand what it means to fear the Lord, and you will gain knowledge of God.



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## **Proverbs 2:1-14 (NLT)**

<sup>6</sup> For the Lord grants wisdom! From his mouth come knowledge and understanding.<sup>7</sup> He grants a treasure of common sense to the honest. He is a shield to those who walk with integrity.<sup>8</sup> He guards the paths of the just and protects those who are faithful to him.<sup>9</sup> Then you will understand what is right, just, and fair, and you will find the right way to go.

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## Proverbs 2:1-14 (NLT)

<sup>10</sup> For wisdom will enter your heart,  
and knowledge will fill you with joy.<sup>11</sup>

Wise choices will watch over you.

Understanding will keep you safe.<sup>12</sup>

Wisdom will save you from evil people,  
from those whose words are twisted.<sup>13</sup>

These men turn from the right way to  
walk down dark paths.<sup>14</sup> They take  
pleasure in doing wrong, and they  
enjoy the twisted ways of evil.

# GROW PRACTICE -

## Proverbs 2 - Practice Questions

- What is the first step in gaining wisdom?
  - How do you listen for God?
- What does it mean to you to treasure something?
  - Immediate use or in the future?
- How do we tune our ears?
  - What is a practice you have used that has worked to tune your ears to hear the voice of God?
- Have you ever cried out or plainly asked for wisdom in a certain area?
  - Does anyone want to share an example?
- Where does all knowledge and understanding come from?

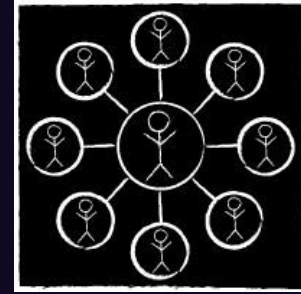


# Session 11



SPARK  
Discipleship  
Process

## **Part 6: GO & Gather**

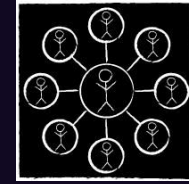


### **Objectives:**

- 1. Understand the process for GO and Gather nights.**
- 2. Gain an idea of successful GO night activities.**
- 3. Understand the purpose and layout of Gather nights.**



## **GO in a nutshell -**



This is where we get to “Walk the Talk.”

We are practicing laying down our lives and being servants like Jesus asks of us. Each group will go out into the community and complete a discipleship project that they have previously decided to do. Each group can do their Service on Sunday night or sometime that works for them that weekend.

Each month all SPARK groups serving different places in the community in the name of Jesus.

## Some **Go**'s in God's Word:

"Go and make disciples of all the nations"

"Go in peace..."

"Go and worship"

"Go and announce the Kingdom is near"

"Go in the power of the Lord"

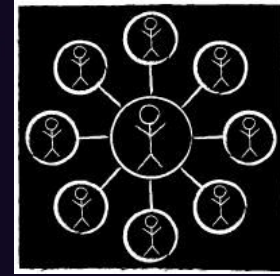
"Go and be reconciled to that person"

"Go down to Egypt"

"Go and sin no more"

"Go out to the street corners and invite everyone you see"

"Go into eternal life"





# GO

Putting our Faith into action in response to the  
love we have been shown by Jesus

# Session 12



**SPARK**  
Discipleship  
Process

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## Week 4: Gather :

On this night, the group will share a meal and fellowship, as well as reflect on how their GO Night project went from the week before.

- **Schedule:**
  - **45 Minutes** Eating and Fellowship
  - **5 Minutes** General Cleaning and moving to “circle up” after moving kids to babysitting area



## Week 4: Gather :

- **10 Minutes** Reviewing how everyone feels about “GO” night activities. Was it a success? What would we like to learn from this? (if time allows review how people are doing on reading plan too.)
- **30 Minutes** Following up with how we are all doing on “Risking for God”, the commitments we ended “GROW” night with making.
  - Also, could go over 5 questions from Hal Perkins on Jesus and Discipleship. “Discipled by Jesus” Book Listed in the Resources section.
- **5 Minutes** Closing Prayer

## **REVISITING RISK - Ways we encourage during follow-up**

- Victories
  - Celebrations
- Shortcomings
  - Revisit questions
  - Encouragement
  - Prayer



# Session 13



**SPARK**  
Discipleship  
Process

## GROW SAMPLE PRACTICE

### How this works:

- Assign a scripture text (example of Psalm 1 below) as homework (at least a week ahead of time).
- The next meeting they will share the questions they came up with (look back at core questions).
- Have others, being trained, answer the questions as they would as a group participant to get a feel for the 'real thing'.
- Have the leaders practice by adding follow up questions or statements.
- Because this is a practice, there is no stress of getting this right or wrong, just exercising the 'muscle' of knowing the text from a Facilitator point of view.

**REVIEWING Grow AGAIN through Practice:**

**Psalm 1:1-6 (NLT)**

Oh, the joys of those who do not  
follow the advice of the wicked,  
or stand around with sinners,  
or join in with mockers.

<sup>2</sup> But they delight in the law of the Lord,  
meditating on it day and night.

<sup>3</sup> They are like trees planted along the riverbank,  
bearing fruit each season.

Their leaves never wither,  
and they prosper in all they do.



A stylized graphic of a flame or fire, rendered in shades of red, orange, and yellow, positioned on the left side of the slide. The background is a dark, textured blue-grey.

**REVIEWING Grow AGAIN through Practice:**

**Psalm 1:1-6 (NLT)**

<sup>4</sup> But not the wicked!

They are like worthless chaff,  
scattered by the wind.

<sup>5</sup> They will be condemned at the time of judgment.  
Sinners will have no place among the godly.

<sup>6</sup> For the Lord watches over the path of the godly,  
but the path of the wicked leads to destruction.

# Session 14



SPARK  
Discipleship  
Process

A stylized graphic of a flame or fire, rendered in shades of red, orange, and yellow, positioned on the left side of the slide. The background is a dark, textured blue-grey color with small, scattered orange and red specks.

# Q and A