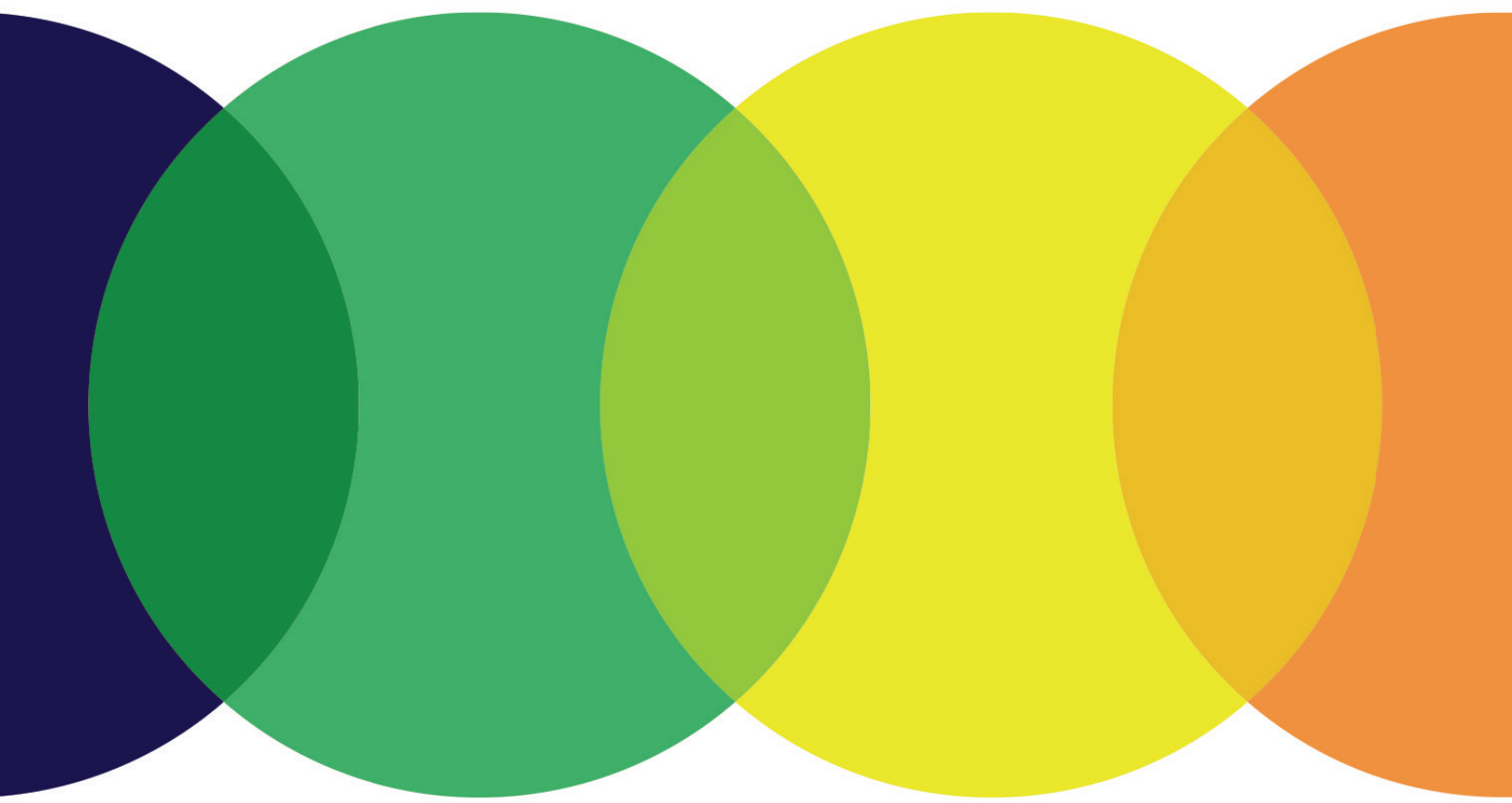


Free sample
chapters eBook

Barna

Growing Together

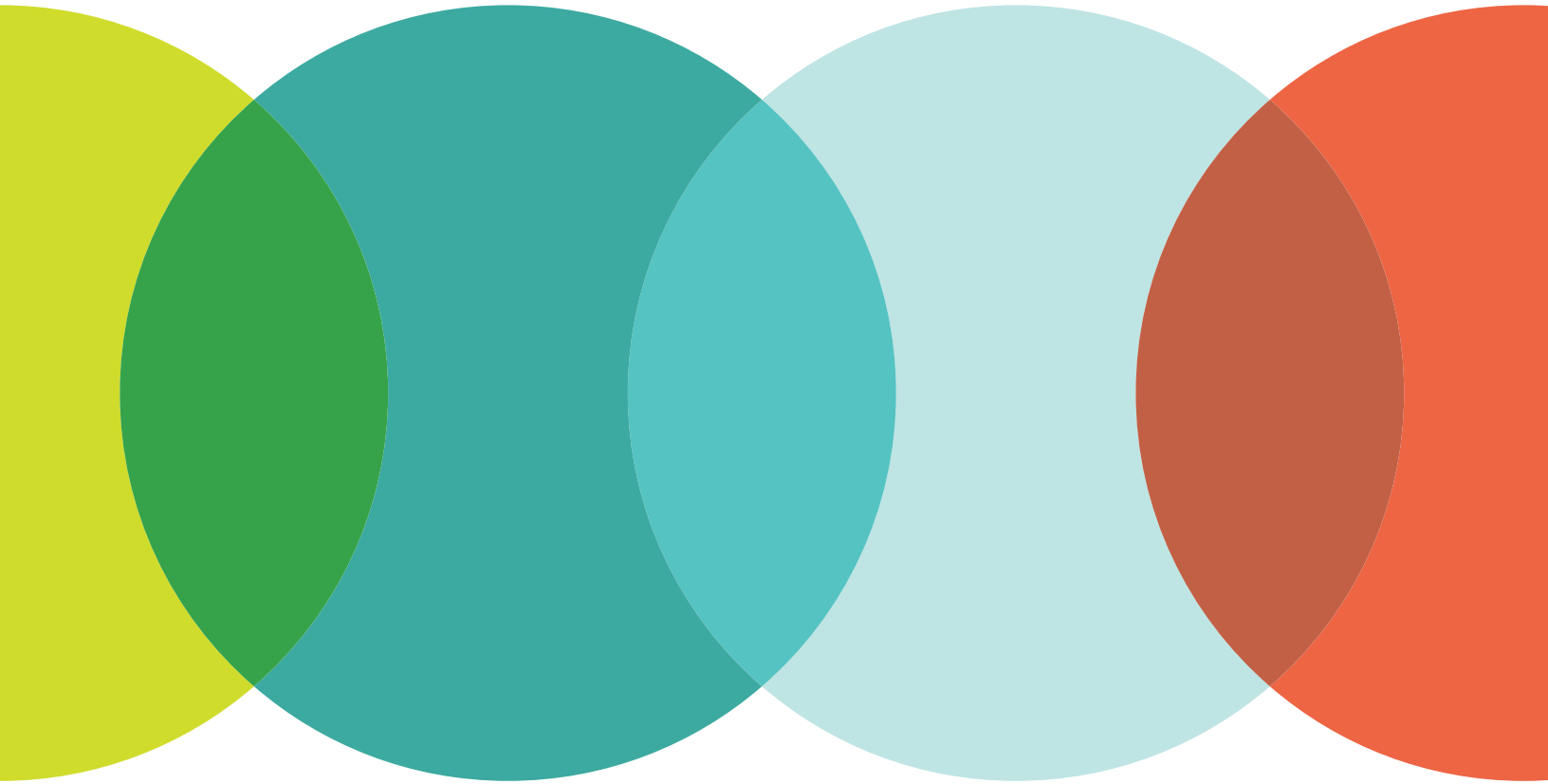
A three-part guide for following Jesus
and bringing friends on the journey



Grounded in research from Barna,
in partnership with The Navigators

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You have what it takes to grow in Christ and help others do the same. It takes your gifts, heart, and relationship with God to get started. This is what discipleship is all about and we can help.

Navigators has teamed up with Barna Group to unpack the obstacles and opportunities to help you fit discipleship into your everyday life. In this *Growing Together* eBook, you will receive exclusive free sample content from the NEW book, *Growing Together: A Three-Part Guidebook for Following Jesus and Bringing Friends on the Journey*.

Discover new research insights that address the key obstacles and opportunities that every disciplemaker faces. Also included are practical ideas for beginning discipleship today and creating natural rhythms of discipleship throughout your week.

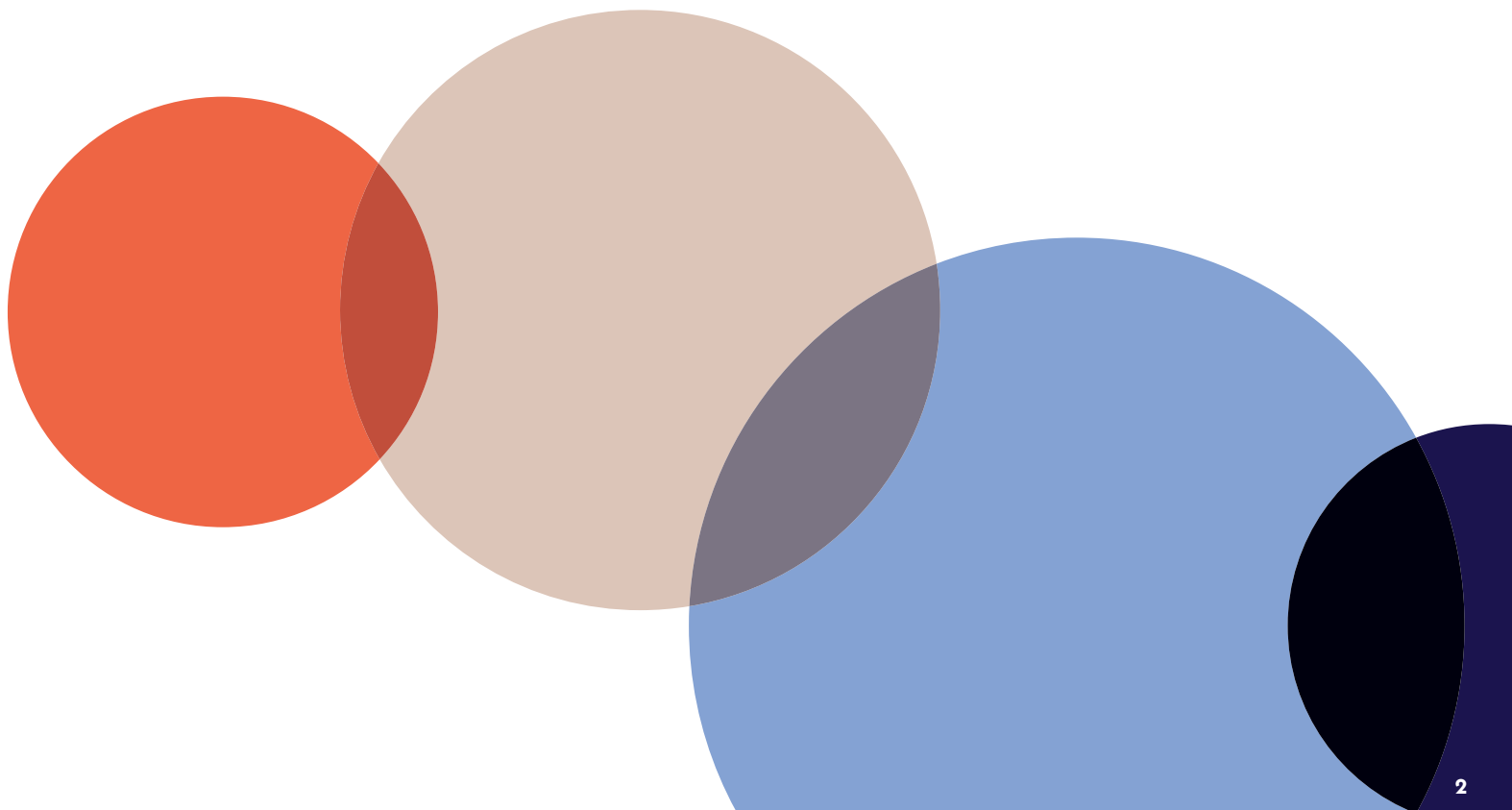
You have what it takes for discipleship! Let's get started.

Here are a few questions we will address in this eBook:

- What could discipleship look like?
- What's the biggest obstacle and opportunity to discipleship?
- Who could you invite into discipleship?

We pray this *Growing Together* eBook will help you see the opportunities for discipleship and inspire you to invite others to follow Jesus, too.

The Navigators





Friends for the Road

Excerpt from pages 35, 40-42.

To find the purpose for discipling, look outside yourself

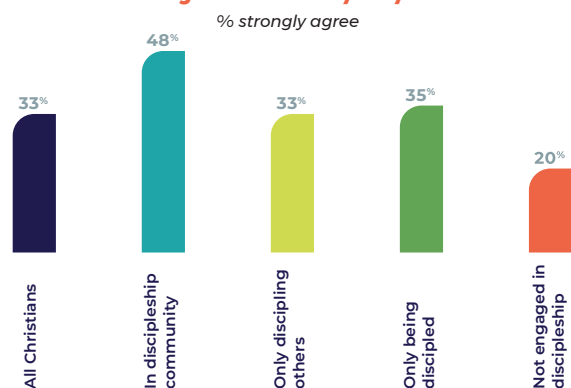
Spirituality Loves Company

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, individuals expressed feeling distant from others, and Christians are not exempt. Part of this can reasonably be attributed to the rhythms of our digital society. We have become accustomed to experiencing hyper-connection and disconnection all at once. Consider that, in a global study of 18–35-year-olds, Barna found that most young adults say events around the world matter to them (77%) and they feel connected to people around the world (57%)—even as only one in three young adults feels deeply cared for by those around them (33%) or that someone believes in them (32%).

Discipleship is a powerful way to meet a communal need for vulnerability and companionship. “Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well,” Paul writes to the Church in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 2:7–8). Those who are part of discipleship community seem to share this delight. Discipleship provides meaningful, growth-oriented friendships, confronts loneliness and shows love and care for others. In short, a Christian has many reasons to expand their social-spiritual life.

Remember, as defined in this study, people who are in discipleship relationships have at least one connection marked by mutual accountability, encouragement, support and spiritual growth. Disciplemaking involves actively helping someone else grow closer to Christ. These are generous, intentional and intimate connections! Thus, friendship is often foundational for healthy discipleship, and deeper friendship may also be one of the positive benefits that comes from a discipleship relationship.

“Friends should challenge each other to grow in healthy ways”

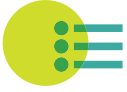


n=2,511 U.S. Christian adults, December 22, 2020–January 18, 2021.

Most Christians are aware of the need for this spiritual synergy. In fact, more than four out of five (82%) agree, one-third strongly so, that friends should challenge each other to grow in healthy ways. Unsurprisingly, almost half of Christians in discipleship community (48% vs. 20% of those not engaged in any discipleship) agree strongly with this idea.

The data suggest that, in general, American adults desire friendships that challenge them. That’s vulnerable territory, but we’ve been given a strong role model.

When Jesus disciplined the 12, the spiritual and day-to-day matters of their lives intermingled. Life was not private or compartmentalized. Meals and miracles, frustration and affection, sermons and naps, trials and celebrations—they shared it all. Christians should consider what it would mean to do the same today.



A Summary of Key Stats:

Most Christians feel their spiritual life is entirely private, though this belief softens among those engaged in making disciples.

Globally, young adults are more likely to feel connected to people around the world (57%) than to feel deeply cared for by those around them (33%).

More than four out of five Christians (82%) agree, one-third strongly so, that friends should challenge each other to grow in healthy ways.



Questions for Reflection:

Do you consider your spiritual life to be entirely or even just mostly private? Why or why not?

Do you struggle with feelings of isolation, loneliness or disconnection? If so, what aggravates those feelings? What calms them?

Past or present, how many of your friendships have challenged you to grow? In how many of your friendships have you challenged others to grow?

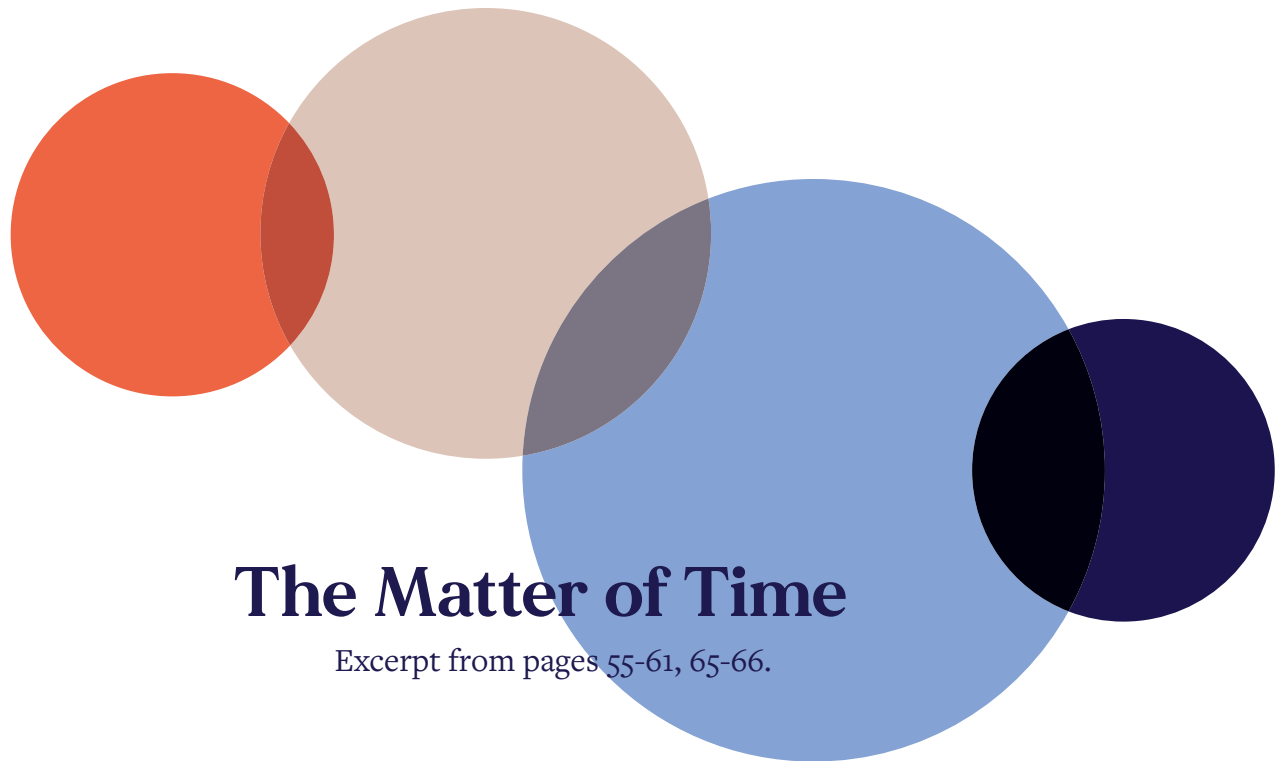


Questions to Ask Your Friends:

Do you feel drawn closer to God when you are with other people? How does that feel similar to or different from when you are drawn closer to God in moments by yourself?

Do you feel comfortable sharing spiritual things with me in this relationship? Why or why not?

Can you think of a time I have challenged you to change your mind or helped you to grow in some way?



The Matter of Time

Excerpt from pages 55-61, 65-66.

You aren't too busy to be in discipleship community

We lead busy, distracted lives. Amid work, social functions, school, church, keeping up with all that's going on in the world and still holding onto the dream of free time, the thought of adding another item to an already packed schedule may feel overwhelming. Lack of time and competing daily priorities seem like obvious obstacles to developing discipleship community.

That is, they seem like obstacles. Are these barriers actually that high?

Indeed, even Barna researchers were surprised to learn that our hyper-productive, constantly connected, over-scheduled culture may not be the primary reason discipleship doesn't occur.

Few Christians who aren't being discipled say the time commitment (7%) is a reason they don't have someone who disciples them. Fourteen percent are deterred by a vague understanding of discipleship, saying they just don't know what such a relationship would require of them. But overall, insecurities, lack of intention or absence of close friendships emerge as greater perceived challenges.

We also learned in the previous section that followers of Christ manage to find moments for their own private spiritual disciplines. This might look like having uninterrupted time with God each week or regularly reading the Bible, practices reported by the majority of Christians—especially those who also experience discipleship relationships and community.

Of course, people still view their time as something valuable to steward or, if needed, scrounge. For example, Barna's research shows that people are still looking for time-savers, such as brief Bible studies or quick lessons, when it comes to learning about discipleship. After all, roughly half of Christians, even those engaged in discipleship, admit to often getting distracted during time with God.

Further, people want time investments in discipleship to feel like a meaningful addition. One in three Christians who has interesting discipling worries about how to keep things engaging for the long haul (33%) or how to set discipling as a priority, considering all the other things they are juggling (32%). Some groups especially wrestle with how to add discipleship to their to-do lists—for instance, non-white Christians (48% vs. 30% white Christians), Christians who have young children (36% vs. 29% without children) and those with full-time jobs (37% vs. 30% part time employed, 26% unemployed).

Still, such concerns aren't guaranteed to be barriers.

Consider this: Who do you think are some of the people most likely to struggle with finding time for Christian community because their pace of life is so busy?

The answer: Christians who are already in discipleship community—those both receiving and giving discipleship in their relationships. They are actively prioritizing this spiritual exchange in their busy schedules, which isn't easy but, as the research has shown us, produces deep rewards. Thus, these disciples and disciplemakers are more likely than other Christians to know the struggle of prioritizing spiritual growth and friendship in their fast-paced lives—yet it doesn't stop them.

This is a key lesson in realizing the calling of day-to-day discipleship: Those who experience discipleship community have the time or will make the time. Or perhaps even reimagine or divvy up that time! Barna's findings suggest the decisive factor is not who has the hours in the day, but who is willing to creatively commit from the hours they do have to growing in their faith and becoming qualified or equipped to help others grow, too.



Questions for Reflection:

What life priorities—even ones that require regular effort or feel like a “time crunch”—do you manage to make room for in your schedule? How do you do this?

Is it a struggle for you to find the time or energy to cultivate intentional, accountable relationships with other Christians? What other logistical, practical hurdles get in the way of your discipleship and disciplemaking?

What does intentional, uninterrupted time with God need to look like for you? What disciplines and decisions does it require of you to make sure it happens?

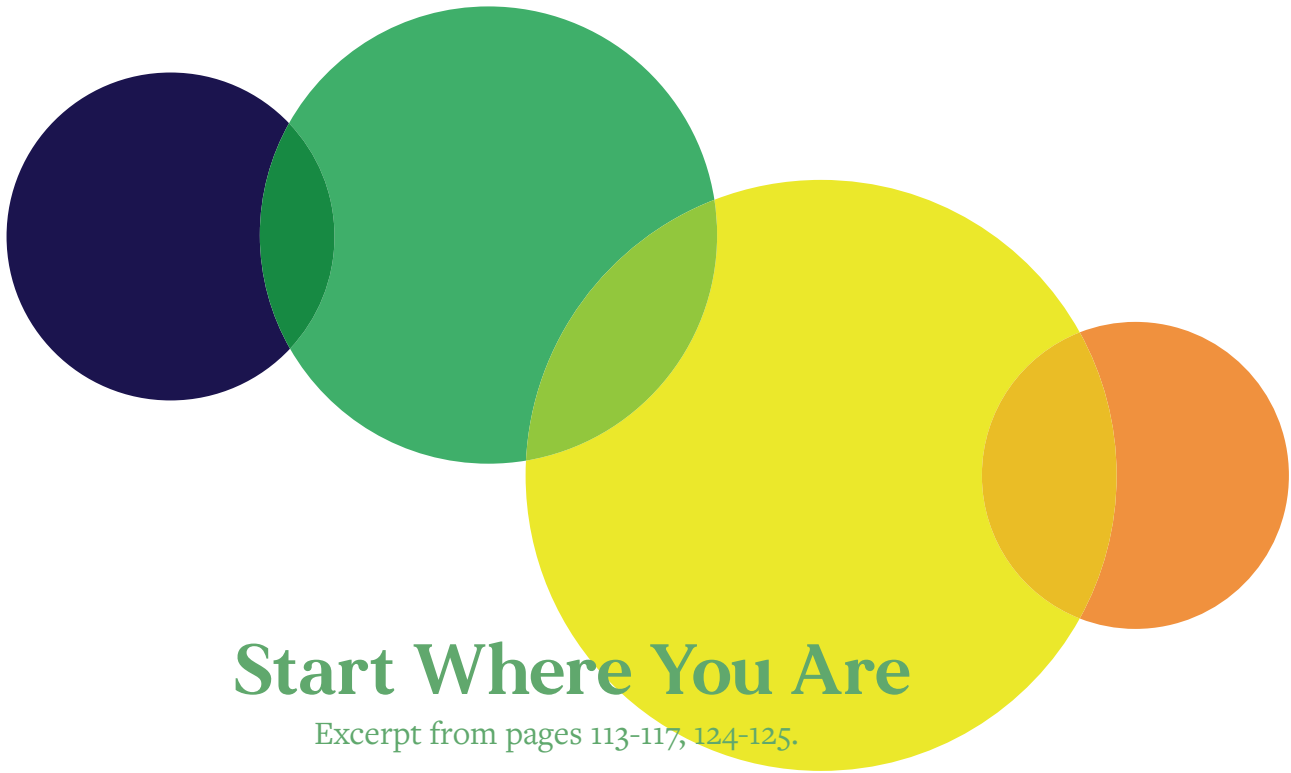


Questions to Ask Your Friends:

What do you always make time for in your schedule and routine?
When does spiritual growth get accounted for?

How can we prioritize time together to pray, study the Bible or talk about our faith journeys and questions?
Can we get something on the calendar, choose a plan or set a reminder?

How can I be respectful of your time and help you steward it well?



Start Where You Are

Excerpt from pages 113-117, 124-125.

The best people to journey with could be the people already around you

As you seek to disciple others, you may find enthusiastic company in people who have the following four attributes. These forward-thinking qualities and convictions tend to go together with an openness to spiritual growth. They are indicators of the postures of people—Christians and non-Christians—who are hungry for more, working on themselves and, accordingly, are more likely to see value in discipleship if it is offered to them.

1. PEOPLE WHO ARE OPTIMISTIC FOR CHANGE

People who are optimistic for change are convicted by their daily ability to impact the world and those immediately around them. We see this in their belief that their life and actions make a difference. They focus on positively impacting those around them, and they believe every day is an opportunity to grow. They agree that their life has a meaningful impact on the world.

2. PEOPLE WHO ARE ACCOUNTABILITY-DRIVEN

Adults driven by accountability know the importance of mentorship and give others the authority to lead them in various areas of their lives. They believe the best way to grow or change is to have accountability with another person, and thus value having a mentor, advisor, or coach to help facilitate that growth or change. This group looks for leaders to invest in them and, likewise, invests in the growth of younger people.

3. PEOPLE WHO ARE RELATIONALLY-MOTIVATED

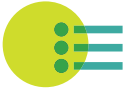
Being relationally-motivated means feeling bound to friends' growth and sharing what you have been given. People in this category are motivated to make an impact on others and invested in the growth of those they feel close to. They agree, "The more I grow personally, the more I can help others grow." In turn, they say their friends care about and contribute to their growth.

4. PEOPLE WHO ARE GROWTH-MINDED

Adults who are growth-minded know there is always more work to do, and they seek opportunities to challenge themselves in various parts of their lives. Sixty percent of those who qualify as growth-minded report experiencing vibrant spiritual growth in the past year (compared to 27% of all U.S. adults. They are hopeful for and committed to investing in their spiritual growth.)

The door to meaningful spiritual conversations and spiritual growth is wider than you think. Invitations to discipleship community don't need to be formal; they can be personal, relatable, and authentic. They don't need to come from someone who has "already arrived;" they can arise between people who'd like to journey through everyday life together.

Classrooms, sidewalks, parks, gyms, offices, Zoom calls and all the daily spaces of our lives are wonderful places for Christians to cultivate this closeness and bear witness to the gospel in practical, consistent ways.



A Summary of Key Stats:

People who are optimistic for change, accountability-driven, relationally-motivated or growth-minded also tend to be open to being or having a discipleship mentor.

Christians who are engaged in discipleship community know what's going on with their neighbors (45%) and coworkers (62%).

Christians who are engaged in discipleship community value non-family discipleship (33% strongly agree they spiritually invest in non-family relationships), in addition to their primary focus on family discipleship (42%).



Questions for Reflection:

Based on the definitions that begin on page 114, do you see yourself as being optimistic for change? Accountability-driven? Relationally motivated? Growth-minded?

Do you feel attuned to the spiritual potential of relationships in the spaces you daily occupy—in your work, school, home or neighborhood?

How do you steward your spiritual investment or discipleship relationships inside and outside your household?



Questions to Ask Your Friends:

Do you ever feel God moving in small daily moments—conversations with a neighbor, a meeting with a coworker, an interaction online? If so, can you tell me more about a time you sensed this?

Are there people you are close to with whom you have never talked about your personal faith? If so, why not?

Do you have a family member who has made a strong impact on your spiritual growth? A non-family member? What did they do that encouraged you?



Next Steps for the Journey

Remember, discipleship doesn't have to be complicated. In this section, we offer a deeper dive into discipleship Scriptures, practical ideas for developing a discipleship habit, and even stories of everyday disciplemakers like you.



Next Steps: Friends for the Road

Go Deeper:

Read [Mark 6:30-44](#) about Jesus’ “Friends for the Road” and how they shared both meals and miracles.

Develop Your Discipleship Habit:

Here are three ideas for taking your next step in your discipleship journey.

- **Being intentional in relationships is an important aspect of cultivating those “friends for the road.”** Think of one or two friends with whom you could develop a regular rhythm of gathering together in person. Maybe it’s for a walk, a meal, or even enjoying a shared interest.
- **Discipleship relationships are a great way to meet our need for connection because they often deepen friendships.** Write down the names of three friends you would feel comfortable praying with or even reading the Bible together. Out of these friends, is there one you already meet with? Maybe you go to the gym with a friend or see one of them at work. What would it look like to create space for discipleship during those times you already meet together?
- **Think about one way you’ve grown in your relationship with Jesus.** Pray for the opportunity to share this with a friend. Watch for the opportunity and see what happens next. Your vulnerability may encourage a friend to share, too. Maybe these conversations become a weekly habit as you watch for God to show you your “friends for the road.” If you’re not sure what to share, use the “Questions to Ask Your Friends” section as a good starting point.

Life-to-Life® Discipleship Story:

“Their friendship and faith both grew—as Austin invested in Logan in the same way that Ethan had invested in his own life.”
Read about how these college friendships impacted the faith of three guys at South Dakota State University.

[Click here to read now! - navlink.org/austin](http://navlink.org/austin)





Next Steps: The Matter of Time

Go Deeper:

Read [Ephesians 5:15-17](#) about “The Matter of Time” and how we can be intentional.

Develop Your Discipleship Habit:

Here are three ideas for taking your next step in discipleship.

- **Imagine what you could do with seven minutes to grow in your relationship with Jesus.** Use our [“How to Have a Daily Quiet Time”](#) free resource (navlink.org/quiet-time) as a starting point for time with Jesus. Try this out for five days. You may want to invite a friend to join you for inspiration and accountability. After five days, unpack your discoveries with your friend and talk about your next steps.
- **Sometimes being intentional is really what we need to develop a discipleship habit.** Maybe you already have a way of connecting with the Lord during a daily quiet time. What if you took this time to a local café or coffee shop once a week and invited a friend to join you? There wouldn’t be anything extra to plan, just begin with what you’re reading or even a devotional you’re using. Notice how the Holy Spirit leads your conversation and what He highlights for you.
- **A common obstacle to building discipleship relationships is insecurity.** Maybe you aren’t sure who to invite to follow Jesus with you, or even what it would look like to follow Him together. First, take your insecurity to the Lord in prayer. Talk with Him about what keeps you from discipleship relationships. Then, as you name your biggest obstacle, who is one person you could share this with? Ask if they would pray for you and see where this conversation leads. See what happens as you repeat this process over the course of a few weeks.

Life-to-Life® Discipleship Story:

“Putting a table and chairs in our front yard has helped create an environment of connection.”

Read about how one couple changed up where they spent their time at home and how this intentionality created an opportunity in their neighborhood.

[Click here to read now! - navlink.org/frontyard](http://navlink.org/frontyard)





Next Steps: Start Where You Are

Go Deeper:

Read [2 Timothy 1:3-14](#) and how the apostle Paul expressed to Timothy, “Start Where You Are,” reminding him of important truths and challenging him toward the next step.

Develop Your Discipleship Habit:

Here are three ideas for taking your next step in discipleship.

- **In a typical week, where do you spend a significant amount of time?** Maybe it’s time spent at home, at work, a local gym, community sports, hanging out with friends, time outside in a local park, or even in your neighborhood. Pick one place and begin praying for God to lead you to a discipleship opportunity there. Watch for those opportunities to have conversations about your faith and invite someone to follow Jesus with you. Consider setting a phone alarm as a reminder to be watchful when you’re in that location during your week.
- **Look at the beginning of this chapter for the attributes of people who may be primed for discipleship.** Jot down the names of people in your life who would fit into those attributes. Pick one name and invite them to intentionally meet with you over coffee and share what you have been learning. Use this time to share your discipleship journey. Consider using the “Questions to Ask Your Friends” section as a conversation starter. Notice what questions worked well in this conversation. Can you think of more casual meetings with friends where you might be able to ask a question about faith in Christ?
- **Do you have a shared-interest with a friend where accountability would be helpful?** Maybe it’s training for a sport, a musical talent, a creative interest like writing or painting—there are many possibilities. Use this interest and the needed encouragement accountability as a starting point for your discipleship journey. Invite this friend to combine your time together and accountability with a commitment to pray for each other. What happens next? How does this prayer commitment to each other grow the relationship and your relationships with Jesus?

Life-to-Life® Discipleship Story:

“He started a Bible study during the lunch hour in his workplace. God has multiplied Kenny’s steps of faithfulness in amazing ways.” Read about how this New York City employee found an opportunity for discipleship in his workplace.

[Click here to read more! - navlink.org/nyckenny](http://navlink.org/nyckenny)





Conclusion

We hope this *Growing Together* eBook helped you imagine what discipleship could look like in the middle of your weekly routine and who might be primed to follow Jesus with you.

“As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. ‘Follow me,’ he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.” Matthew 9:9 (NIV)

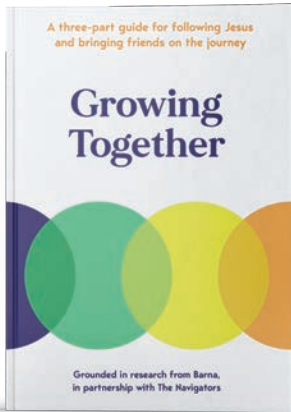
Jesus offered an invitation to those he met along the way. By following Jesus we are called to do the same ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)).

Remember, you have what it takes for discipleship! Your heart, gifts, and relationship with God are all you need to get started.

Want more practical tips and insights to equip you for the journey? Continue to the next page for additional discipleship resources, including getting your copy of *Growing Together: A Three-Part Guidebook for Following Jesus and Bringing Friends on the Journey*.



Continue growing in your faith with these Navigators discipleship resources:



Growing Together: A Three-Part Guidebook for Following Jesus and Bringing Friends on the Journey

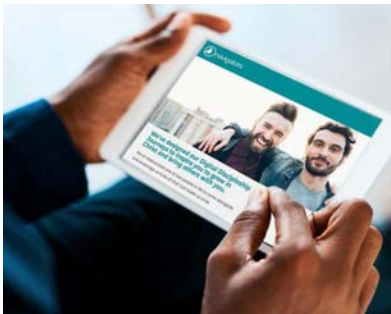
Want to continue growing as a disciplemaker? This new resource was specifically created for you!

Growing Together: A Three-Part Guidebook for Following Jesus and Bringing Friends on the Journey is a book grounded in research from Barna and The Navigators and includes:

- Practical advice on how to invest in others through our day-to-day lives
- Personal testimonies about what God has done through disciplemaking
- Questions for self-reflection and discussion with friends

Purchase your guidebook at a special 20% OFF discount using code NAVS20.

navlink.org/growing-together



Digital Discipleship Journeys™

How do I grow in Christ and bring my friends with me on the journey?

We have designed our Digital Discipleship Journey to inspire and equip you to grow in Christ and help others do the same. We want to come alongside you and offer a customized **FREE Digital Discipleship Journey**. This curated email series is designed to help you grow spiritually, based on your answers to some brief questions about your walk with God.

navlink.org/disciplemaking



The Navigators Disciplemaking Network

Looking to connect with other disciplemakers online? Join our private Facebook Group, *The Navigators Disciplemaking Network*, to find community with others.

navlink.org/disciplemaking-network