

CLEAR PATH FOR DISCIPLESHIP



PREPARATION RESOURCE:

Building a Discipleship Visioning Team

What is a *Discipleship Visioning Team*?

A *Discipleship Visioning Team* is a group of 8-20 leaders chosen by the pastor (and his leadership team if he already has one) to begin the process of building a common understanding about what a culture of encountering Jesus and equipping disciples could look like in their parish. The size of this group will vary depending on a variety of factors (parish size, makeup of groups, whether it has a school, etc.) with the sweet spot being about 8-12.

Specifically, the group will join the pastor in **The Clear Path for Discipleship Process** which includes a one-day, discovery-based workshop called ***Base camp***, to help get everyone “on the same page” about the foundational realities of discipleship. This process also includes several pre and post workshop meetings. The entire process is guided by a facilitator.

The ***Discipleship Visioning Team*** will engage in honest dialogue and help discern where the Lord is leading the parish as they craft a clear vision for evangelization and discipleship tailored to their parish needs. They will help the pastor to make decisions about how to create a unique, Clear Path for Discipleship for their parish and help him implement this vision and plan.

Characteristics: Who should be on our Discipleship Visioning Team?

- **Positional Representation-** You will want representation from key groups in parish life and ministry (e.g., school principal and staff, youth ministry, elementary religious education, men’s groups, lay movements like *Cursillo*, evangelization efforts like CRHP/Welcome or Alpha, etc.)
(Example: A school principal who is not actively opposed to the mission of evangelization, but may have little training on how to make it happen.)
- **Bridge Builders-** You want individuals whom you can confidently trust to relate their experience back to their respective demographic groups and the community at large.
(Example: A dad who had a powerful conversion at a Cursillo retreat, who is a Knight of Columbus, volunteers in the school, and has a broad social network – he will be able to carry the vision faithfully to a variety of groups he is involved with.)

- **Maturity-** You want individuals who have the social, emotional, and spiritual maturity to handle the challenge of having their mindsets expanded. They will be exposed to new ways of thinking and must be able to gracefully handle having their current mental models stretched. They must have the capacity to discuss difficult issues.
(Example: A religious education instructor who desires excellence and is open to different approaches of ministry, who will not get defensive in conversations about new models.)
- **Demographic Representation-** You want to have a wide variety of demographics represented. Factors to consider include gender, age, ethnicity, state in life, school involvement, tenure in the parish, and type of spiritual journey (e.g., converts vs cradle Catholics).
(Example: A Hispanic leader who will be able to share about the unique gifts and challenges for evangelization from their perspective.)
- **“Doers”-** Although the primary purpose of these sessions is to cast vision and build a common understanding, it would be good to give some thought to individuals who will be tasked with the implementation of the initiatives that flow from these sessions. They will need the vision behind the new initiatives they will be leading.
(Example: A recent empty-nester who is ready to take action for evangelization in the parish, to be a catalyst for carrying the vision forward, and not just a passive recipient.)

What about those who cannot come (and who I hope won't)

People often feel included as long as they know their opinion matters and feel “in the loop” about the process. Not all will *want* to participate in The Clear Path for Discipleship Process, and some *should not* participate if they might derail the conversation.

Taking Action:

1. Pastor sits down with a trusted parishioner(s) to brainstorm a potential list of attendees with the above characteristics in mind. Ask yourself, “Who do we *want/need* in the room?” not simply, “Who do we *have* to invite?” Your facilitator can help you with this part of the process.
2. Cross off individuals who either cannot or should not participate for any reason and choose an alternate means for gathering their input.
3. Confirm a list of 8-20 participants with a few alternates should a significant number be unable to attend.
4. Work with parish secretary to send an invitation letter/email and make a follow-up phone call to each person you would like to participate in The Clear Path for Discipleship Process. See appendix I for sample letter.

Appendix I: Invitation Letter (or Email) for Discipleship Visioning Team

My fellow laborers at PARISH,

[DATE]

I am writing today to invite you to a series of three special gatherings to begin dreaming about where God wants to lead the community of PARISH. Specifically, this process, called The Clear Path for Discipleship, will focus on our call to participate – both as individuals and as a community – in the New Evangelization, that is, the call to live as missionary disciples.

The Clear Path for Discipleship process will involve attending a one-day workshop called Base camp on BASE CAMP DATE and several meetings before and after the workshop. They will consist of prayer, small group discussion, large group presentations, and interactive discovery activities aimed at facilitating our visioning of how God would like to use our parish to accomplish the larger mission of the Church in our neighborhoods, in the city, and in the world.

It is a chance for us to dream together about what the New Evangelization might look like in our parish.

Your commitment to this *Discipleship Visioning Team* would include your presence at the workshop day and meetings, as well as some preparatory reading ahead of time. No additional commitment is required following the BASE CAMP DATE gathering, but you may be invited to help carry the vision forward in more practical ways as this process continues to unfold in our parish. If you continue as a member of our Discipleship Vision Team there will be ongoing regular meetings and other opportunities to serve.

The meetings are scheduled as follows:

Outline of the meetings and workshop days/times/locations.

Our time together will be facilitated by FACILITATOR NAME and members of the Diocesan **Office of the Domestic Church and Discipleship**. Please RSVP to FACILITATOR NAME & CONTACT E-MAIL AND PHONE who is happy to answer any questions you may have.

I am sincerely excited to begin this process with you and the other members of the *Discipleship Visioning Team*. May God reward you for your generous service to PARISH and to our loving Lord.

Your Pastor,

[SIGNATURE]

[PASTOR NAME]