



Planning Guide

Chapter One: Coordinating DiscipleNow

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Coordinating DiscipleNow in Your Church

Student ministers across the country have witnessed the life-changing effects of DiscipleNow weekends. They have seen students and adults accept the challenge to grow as disciples of Christ issued during the intense format of a weekend focused on their walk with the Lord. DiscipleNow has grown to be one of the most effective tools in youth ministry. Over one-half million students have participated in one of these life-changing weekends. Some of the most successful student ministers in the country claim that DiscipleNow has had more impact spiritually on their students than any event they do all year.

The Role of DiscipleNow in Youth Ministry

DiscipleNow is a weekend retreat where small groups of students meet in the homes of church members for studies in discipleship. The studies are led by trained adult leaders with the goal of beginning or strengthening the ongoing process of discipleship in each student's life.

DiscipleNow can provide students a great experience in their spiritual growth, but it doesn't replace the need for a week by week strategy for discipling students.

DiscipleNow can serve as either an entry point for or an emphasis point in your overall discipleship program. It can be (1) the beginning of a discipleship program for youth, (2) an annual boost for your existing discipleship program, or (3) the introduction of new elements of discipleship such as quiet time, evangelism, tithing, or more in-depth studies.

DiscipleNow features concentrated Bible study with an emphasis on discipleship, fellowship, recreation, and evangelism. DiscipleNow supports the ongoing ministry of the local church; it doesn't attempt to take their places.

Determine the Coordinator

This planning guide is designed for the person who will coordinate DiscipleNow in your church. If you're not planning on being the coordinator yourself, get this book into the hands of the coordinator as soon as possible.

As you read through this guide, identify the sections you can use as they are. Jot down suggestions for adaptations. Discuss DiscipleNow with other youth leaders in your church. Above all, saturate every point along the way with prayer. Seek God's directions and power to carry out His plans for your church and its youth.

Objectives

Individual church's objectives for DiscipleNow may vary, but six overall objectives are recommended.

- 1. Each student will consider and know if there has ever been a time in his or her life in which a personal relationship with God was begun through an encounter with Jesus Christ.**
- 2. Students will be challenged to make Jesus Christ Lord of their lives.**
- 3. Students will experience a spirit of community and love in every host home.**
- 4. Leaders will identify specific needs of each student and begin to minister to those needs.**
- 5. Leaders will encourage spiritual growth and model spiritual disciplines as an ongoing part of a believer's life.**
- 6. The total church will become aware of what discipleship is all about.**

Get Your Church Involved

One of DiscipleNow's strongest points is the way it draws upon, and unites, the entire church through using adults to contact youth, to serve on committees, to provide meals, to host a group in their home, and to pray for students. Any size church can do DiscipleNow. If your church is small or has a limited budget, use a little creativity and your students will have an amazing experience with God.

Involve the Church Leadership

Enlist the support and involvement of your church leadership. Talk with each member of your church's staff and the key leaders in your church. Ask them for help related to their own area of ministry. A children's director may help with child care. A minister of education or Adult Sunday School leader may help you enlist host families. Find out who you need to talk to about using the needed space at the church. Make sure you contact these key leaders:

- **Pastor**—Make an appointment with your pastor to discuss your dreams. Carefully explain every detail to him. In most cases his primary responsibility in DiscipleNow will be to lead the commitment service. His support and encouragement will be a valuable asset to you.
- **Business Administrator/Finance Committee**—Whoever is responsible for budget and paying expenses will have a great deal to do with DiscipleNow and its success. Make sure to work out all budget details ahead of time.
- **Minister of Music**—Involving those who plan worship is vital for a successful weekend. Worship experiences are foundational to the success of DiscipleNow.
- **Minister of Recreation**—Recreation helps build a team spirit among the small groups. If your church has someone in charge of recreation, ask his help in planning and carrying out the recreation on Saturday.

Key Leaders

The leadership for the weekend is the key to DiscipleNow's success. Begin enlisting leaders early. If you want to enlist a speaker and/or musician, you should contact them at least six months before the DiscipleNow event. If you plan to enlist group leaders from outside your church, you will need to contact them at least three months before the event.

Worship Leaders

Many churches enlist worship leaders to lead DiscipleNow worship experiences. A church with a large budget may wish to enlist a speaker, a worship band, and even a drama team. While this may create an exciting experience for students, it is not necessary. Your church may use worship leaders from inside your church, or you may bring in outside persons. For most worship experiences, you will want a speaker. This person could be your pastor especially if your pastor communicates well with students. You may invite a pastor or youth minister from a near-by church. Or you might enlist a youth speaker your students have heard at youth camp.

You may also want to enlist a musician and worship leader. Many churches have praise bands that lead music in some of their worship experiences. If your church has a youth praise band, consider asking them to lead singing at the worship experiences. Another church might be willing to loan you their praise band for the weekend. There are also many experienced worship leaders that you can invite to come to your church for DiscipleNow.

If you use persons outside your church, agree on an honorarium and travel expenses prior to the event.

Group Leaders

The group leaders are the backbone of DiscipleNow. They will be responsible for leading the small group of teenagers for the weekend. You will need at least one group leader for each small group.

Many churches enlist youth ministers, workers from other churches, or college students to come and serve as group leaders for the weekend. Some churches use leaders within their church. Whatever the case, DiscipleNow group leaders must practice and uphold the concepts of discipleship they are teaching. For the purpose of this guide we will call group leaders enlisted from outside your church membership **guest group leaders**. Group leaders who are members of your church will be referred to as **in-house group leaders**. When no distinction is needed and referring to both we will use **group leaders** or **leaders**. If you choose to use group leaders from outside your church, agree ahead of time on whether or not they will receive an honorarium and how much it will be. Also, agree ahead of time on what travel expenses you will pay. There is nothing wrong with asking people to come as a gift to your students, but you should be clear that they are not being paid from the outset.

Issues such as qualifications and responsibilities will be the same with in-house group leaders as with guest group leaders. The process of enlistment is different, however. If this is their first year, enlist the leaders personally and help them to understand the philosophy of DiscipleNow, how it fits into the process of youth ministry, and what their role will be. You may find it helpful to have a coleader from your church in each group.

Coleaders

Coleaders are most helpful when assigned to help guest group leaders, since they know the students. A coleader would be involved in the total DiscipleNow experience, help the group leader, and lead follow-up and training of students after the guest group leaders go home. Additional responsibilities for consideration include:

- Participate by reading the curriculum provided and teaching one of the sessions.
- Assist the group leader in leading the session(s) as determined by you, the group leader, and the DiscipleNow coordinator.
- Help in the logistics of the weekend in whatever way requested by the group leader.
- Play a major role in the Saturday afternoon recreation time as assigned by the host.
- Spend time with every youth in your group.
- Be involved in the follow-up time.

Only one coleader per home is recommended. The coleader should meet the qualifications set out for the group leader and have a clear understanding of his or her job description. Coleaders should be involved in orientation with the group leaders. Enlist coleaders the same way as the in-house group leaders.

Enlistment Guidelines

The following guidelines and responsibilities are presented as suggestions and can be adapted according to the needs of your youth group. As you begin enlisting group leaders, committee members, host families, and volunteers, you will be looking for responsible and dependable people you can count on to get the job done.

You will want people with the initiative to carry out the work assigned but with the discretion to inform you of significant problems.

Enlist persons with experience in the work assigned, as well as a servant attitude. As a rule, leaders should be at least four years older than the youth they will lead.

Take advantage of any planned church mailings and include a request for volunteers. Also, use the church newsletter to get the word out.

Decide on who you want to enlist for group leader positions. Choose from:

- (1) guest group leaders,**
- (2) in-house group leaders, or**
- (3) a combination.**

Once you have thought through the qualifications and responsibilities of weekend leadership, begin enlisting. Use personal contact as much as possible. Don't forget to ask about fax or e-mail information. They will be handy in the following weeks when you need to send updates to a lot of people in a short time.

You may use individuals or couples as leaders. If a group is composed of youth of the same sex, a person of that sex or a couple should be used to lead that group. In selecting group leaders, consider both per-

sonal and ministry qualifications.

Give leaders a list of the youth in their groups as soon as you assign them to their groups. This will allow leaders to personally pray for students by name.

Consider enlisting mature older students to be apprentice leaders in the younger youth groupings. They would serve as assistants to the group leaders. They should be given opportunity to minister to the younger youth through relationships, personal influence, and counseling. They could share their testimony or lead in a specific part of a session such as a group activity, ice breakers, or group building activity. Clear their involvement with the group leader and give students the opportunity to meet the group leader prior to the weekend.

Guest Group Leaders

Guest group leaders can make DiscipleNow more exciting for the students. Often a new leader can help a student to hear God in a new way. If you are enlisting guest group leaders, it is usually best to enlist adults you know and trust.

- Make it clear to guest group leaders that they are to delegate the logistical and discipline issues to their host families and in-house group leaders. The guest leader must be free to teach and counsel.
- Be sure the guest leaders have transportation for the weekend.
- Be sure their travel meals and expenses are taken care of, including mileage on their car.
- Just prior to the leaders' arrival, send fruit baskets or other goodies to the host homes for the leaders.
- Consider hosting a "get acquainted" reception Friday afternoon for guest group leaders, church staff, and host families.
- Try to provide guest leaders with separate quarters in the host homes. They need rest and privacy.

In-house Group Leaders

A proven and very productive approach to staffing the DiscipleNow weekend is the use of in-house group leaders. Some of the advantages of enlisting group leaders from within your church membership include:

- The leaders already know the students, their families, and their background situations.
- These leaders are able to lead the follow-up themselves. They can continue the training process from the weekend through the follow-up period. This will help DiscipleNow be a part of your ongoing discipling process.
- Some of these leaders will discover gifts in working with youth that they were previously unaware of. They may decide to take other leadership positions in youth ministry.
- The experience of the weekend provides a new sense of motivation and vision for all involved. This carries over into the overall atmosphere of the total youth ministry.
- You will save on expense money and honoraria.

College DiscipleNow Teams

Many Christian colleges and Christian collegiate organizations (such as the BSU) have teams of students that will go to a church and lead DiscipleNow. While many of these leaders are young, there are some advantages to using one of these teams. Contact your state Baptist office or a local Christian college to find out about teams that might be available.

- These leaders may have appeal to students because they are only a few years older than your students.
- These leaders are usually hand-picked and trained. Inquire about the preparation of the team. You may find that they have been better prepared than many older youth leaders.
- Often, these teams will provide group leaders who also provide worship music and preaching.
- Teams can be much less expensive. They will often travel together in a van and may not expect any honorarium.

Group Leaders Personal Qualities

Use the following list of suggestions as a starting point as you consider potential leaders.

- Is this person responsible and will he or she reflect well the Lord and the youth ministry of your church?
- Does the person have a life of integrity?
- Does this person have the spiritual maturity to qualify for this work? As far as you know, is this person practicing spiritual disciplines such as quiet time, Scripture memory, prayer, Bible study, and a witnessing lifestyle?
- Is this person able to share his personal testimony with others? Is this person able to communicate effectively?
- Is this person of like-heart with you? Does he or she share your basic ministry philosophy? Will this person work within your goals and be a team player?
- Is this person experienced in working with students?
- What is the person's ministry like presently? Is it Spirit-led and productive?
- Is this person a creative teacher?
- Is this person able to relate to the age group with which he or she will work?
- Is the example of this person's life such that you would want him or her to influence the youth?

Dear Leader...

Prayerfully prepare for your leadership role. You will be an effective leader if your youth become more like Christ after spending the weekend with you. Commit yourself now to follow the schedule and teach the assigned study curriculum chosen by the DiscipleNow coordinator. Your responsibilities include the following:

- Be present for all of the weekend. Be early to the leaders' orientation and stay until the final commitment service.
- Send the Getting to Know You form to your host family so you can get acquainted with them ahead of time.
- Your major responsibility is teaching. But the individual counseling time is the most important time you will spend with the youth. Circulate a sign-up sheet for individual con-

ferences. Twenty minutes per person is a good time frame. Share insights gained during this time with the DiscipleNow coordinator in writing for further follow-up after the weekend.

- Challenge each youth to get an accountability partner. Set the pace by having one yourself.
- Look for youth in your group in whose lives God is really at work and who are able to communicate. Encourage them to share in the service Sunday.
- Spend time one-to-one with each youth in your group and counsel as needed. Ascertain their spiritual condition and seek to meet their needs as the Spirit leads. Use the Private Conversation Record forms to evaluate each youth. Turn forms in on Sunday.

- Work with the host family and comply with their wishes concerning the use of their home.
- Support and encourage the host family during the weekend.
- Work with the host family in keeping the group on schedule during the weekend.
- During the weekend, challenge youth to make public in the commitment service any decisions they make during the weekend.
- Assist with receiving youth during the invitation in the commitment service.
- You will receive several forms before and during the event for you and your youth to fill out. Please complete your forms and ask the youth to complete theirs. Turn the evaluation forms in to the coordinator Sunday during evaluation time.

Getting to Know You (Can be adapted and used for both group leaders and host families.)

Getting to Know You

Name _____ Church Position _____ How long? _____

Daytime Phone _____ Fax _____ E-mail _____

Single Married: Spouse's Name _____ Children's Names/Ages _____

Hometown where you grew up: _____ Your high school or college: _____

• How long have you been a Christian? _____ Have you ever participated in a DiscipleNow weekend? Yes No



• Hobbies/Interests:

• What age group of youth do you enjoy the most? Why?

• Share your hopes and dreams for DiscipleNow.

Group Assignments

Make every effort possible to honor the age group preference of your group leaders as you assign groups. Do your best to put them where they feel most comfortable. Group youth with a great deal of prayer and sensitivity since this will affect every aspect of the weekend.

Youth like to be grouped with their friends. Allow youth to indicate on their registration card one friend with whom they would like to be grouped. Often dating couples will request to be in the same group. If these youth are always together it may be healthy to give them a weekend apart to listen to the voice of God. Sometimes a senior will ask to be in the same group as a seventh grader. Unless yours is a very small church group, this should be avoided. When a leader has to speak to such a wide an age span, learning is hindered. Age span may also need to be viewed, not only in physical age, but spiritual maturity.

Grouping youth takes hours. Don't turn this task over to anyone else. Make the assignments based on your knowledge of the youth's personality and your goals for individual youth. Consider grouping youth with the curriculum in mind. Grouping youth according to spiritual readiness or special interests allows you to customize the curriculum.

Consider the following steps in grouping the youth:

- a. Group size—The ideal size for a DiscipleNow group is 6 to 10 youth per home. Keep the groups small since each group leader is expected to spend individual time (about 20 minutes) with each youth.
- b. Group makeup—Group registration cards according to grade and gender. Combine age groups with great care giving consideration to developmental traits, especially those relating to social and intellectual maturity. Place youth and their guests together. Place friends together as requested, if you've agreed to this. Identify youth who will be gone during the weekend at certain times for certain reasons.
- c. Group leaders and hosts—Assign leaders and host homes once you have organized the youth in groups. It is imperative to group together a leader, host family, and group with compatible personalities.
- d. Group evaluation—When you feel good about each group, write "final" on the top card and stick with your decision. Keep the assignments secret until the opening DiscipleNow activity. This raises a sense of excitement and anticipation when the youth do not know who they will be with. Stand firm with your prayerful decisions that you made days before.



Curriculum Decisions

Choose the study that will best help you to accomplish your purpose for the weekend. LifeWay offers many options for the selection of curriculum for your DiscipleNow. Resources specifically designed for Disciple-Now are shown in the current *Youth Ministry Catalog*. You can get a free copy of the catalog by calling Student Ministry Publishing at LifeWay Christian Resources at 615.251.2834. Plan for about five sessions of study during the weekend. If you have grouped students by age or spiritual maturity, you could choose a different study for each group. Some coordinators have found that studying the same curriculum lends an air of community to the weekend. Others have found it beneficial to seek to meet each group's particular needs. Once you have settled on the curriculum, order enough books for each leader and each student to have one. If you choose a curriculum that has reproducible student pages such as *Vital Truth*, develop a notebook for each student that contains all of the study material for the weekend. Mail the leaders a copy so they can begin preparation. Most DiscipleNow studies from LifeWay include suggested guidance for each session in the back of the book.

Curriculum options to consider:

- Begin with overviews of basic topics such as assurance of salvation, quiet time, sharing your faith, Bible study, prayer, and Scripture memory. These basic areas need to be studied by all youth who hope to maintain a lifetime of discipleship.
- Choose just one of the basic topics mentioned above and do a deeper study of that topic. Choose another basic topic each year. Your students will study each of the six basic topics during their junior high and high school years.
- Divide your students by spiritual readiness and assign them topics accordingly. Your newest Christians would study the basics. You could then customize your curriculum for all other groups. The difficulty with this option is that you can never be certain of the makeup of your groups until registration closes two weeks before DiscipleNow. Decide ahead of time on topics that you can send to the leader months ahead.
- Divide students according to their grade in school. Then have a different study for each grade. You could then repeat the same studies year after year so.

Work Teams

Work teams are essential to a successful DiscipleNow. The involvement of a network of volunteers will determine your “mental health” after DiscipleNow. If you do all of the work yourself, the DiscipleNow weekend might be successful; but all of your other ministries will suffer. The only way to adequately prepare is to involve committed adults and mature youth.

The suggested model used throughout this guide is for you to enlist a **steering committee** comprised of the chairmen of each of the different work teams. The DiscipleNow coordinator usually serves as chairman of the steering committee. After much prayer, choose a chairman for each work team and trust that chairman with the task of enlisting members to serve with him or her. The following work team descriptions and job duties are presented as a place to start your preparation and may be adapted and duplicated as needed. You may choose to combine committees or divide responsibilities.

Host Family Work Team

Chairman

Someone who has been a long-time member of the church and is familiar with the entire town and the homes of many members will be best suited as chairman of the host family work team.

The chairman will select three or four people to assist with responsibilities, especially regarding host family selection. They should personally enlist each host family. Host families have the potential to invest in the youth of your church and the youth ministry for some time to come. When enlisting the host families, help them to understand how important they are and to see the need they can meet. Once families have agreed to accept the challenge, send a confirmation letter including the job description (see p. 9). Share all potential names with the host work team.

The work team will enlist **one home for every 5 to 10 youth anticipated** to attend DiscipleNow. Plan back-up homes in case of sickness or some other situation which would disqualify one of the homes.

The host homes used during the weekend need to be considered as you look at potential host families. The physical characteristics of the house may seem minor but are actually a governing factor in whether or not the home is usable for the weekend. The home must have enough room for the group sessions to be held. These sessions may involve as many as 15 people, counting the adults involved. Adequate floor space, (not beds), for guys and girls to sleep in separate areas is needed. A separate room for the group leader to call his or her own would be desired. The distance in getting to the home should also be considered.

If a family offers to host a group in a really small home, consider asking them to be cohosts with a family in a larger home. If a family offers to host a home that is just not clean or healthy, don't use it. Help the family feel valued by using them in some other capacity such as recreation or transportation.

The Host Family

The host family is as important as their home. The weight of the logistical and discipline issues must fall on the host families and not the guest leaders. The host families may also lead the follow-up after the DiscipleNow weekend. They should know the curriculum being taught. If a guest leader radically departs from the assigned curriculum, the host family should contact the DiscipleNow coordinator.

Many churches ask host families to provide some of the meals for the weekend. For example, the host home might provide a light breakfast and lunch on Saturday. The Saturday evening meal might be served at church prior to Saturday evening worship. Then, the church might provide donuts and juice at the church on Sunday. Other churches enlist cohosts to bring some or all of the meals to the host home. Try not to give your host family so many responsibilities for food that they do not have time to minister to and enjoy the students in their home.

Qualities you should look for in host families include:

- Responsible with an exemplary lifestyle and a servant's heart.
- Concerned about students and the youth ministry of your church.
- Interested in being involved in youth ministry. (There are no spectators in DiscipleNow weekends.)
- Able to affirm, encourage, relate to, and enjoy students.
- Supportive, but able to be constructively critical.
- Flexible to the point of allowing the students to feel at home. They should keep house rules to a minimum.

Additional chairperson job duties may include:

1. As host families agree to the job, send a letter of confirmation and appreciation. Stay in contact with host families; update them as new information is available.
2. Conduct host home orientation. This could take place at a pot-luck dinner the week before DiscipleNow.
3. Distribute and collect the Getting to Know You information forms; distribute to the group leaders.
4. Follow-up with a letter of appreciation after the event. You may want to take up a donation from the students, buy small gifts, and allow the groups to present them to their host families at the close of the weekend.

CoHosts

Some churches enlist cohosts to assist the host families with meals, logistics, and discipline. You can use either one cohost or a couple to serve as cohosts for each host home.

Cohosts are most helpful when you have guest leaders because they are aware of the youth and their individual needs. Should you use the cohosts in leading follow-up, they will need to be familiar with the curriculum taught during the weekend. If you choose to allow the host families to lead the follow-up, the cohosts could share the host's responsibility.

Host Family Guidelines and Duties

1. Begin now to pray for the DiscipleNow leader and each student that will be in your home.
2. Fill out the Getting to Know You form and give it to your DiscipleNow coordinator.
3. Attend orientation and leadership training meetings.
4. Supply the agreed upon meals and drinks in your home.
5. Weekend meals will be provided by a food team assigned to your home. Paper goods will be used for meal times. You will receive these Monday night or before. The youth staying in your home will bring the snacks for the weekend.
6. The youth will bring sleeping bags. If groups are co-ed, girls and boys must sleep in different areas of the house. Give the area with the most privacy to the girls. Encourage students to go to bed. They love to stay up, yet it is most important for them to be alert for study sessions.
7. Provide a separate place for the group leader to sleep.
8. Help the group assigned to your home to clearly know your wishes for their actions while in your home. Specifically tell them where they may eat, which bathrooms are to be used by whom, areas of the house that are off limits, and any other house rules.
9. Be responsible for the discipline in your home. It's very difficult for the DiscipleNow leader to be effective if he or she has to be the disciplinarian.
11. Be an important part of the ministry team for the weekend. Plan to sit in on the sessions and assist as needed. Do all you can to be sensitive to the students and the group leader. Participate in every activity of the weekend with your group. This will make you a part of the group. Be on time to the activities that are scheduled in your home and help the group be on time for activities at the church. Your example influences the youth.
12. Plan and execute a recreation activity on Saturday. Help with transportation to and from the recreation site.
13. Should you be out any expense for the weekend, save your receipts and turn them in to the DiscipleNow coordinator for reimbursement.
14. Conduct orientation on Friday night. Topics to discuss during this time include:
 - Your home and the guidelines.
 - A review of the DiscipleNow guidelines.
 - The recreation time on Saturday. Give youth two or three choices. Use this decision-making time to build group spirit and unity. Lead the group to choose a recreation option that will involve everyone in the group.

Frequently Asked Questions

- *What if a youth brings a banned item (CD, drugs)?* Depending on the item remove it until the end of the weekend or send the student home.
- *What if youth skip out on a session?* Deal with each individual realizing that youth will behave the same at your next event if skipping is allowed this time.
- *What if youth slip out of the house during the night?* Return youth to their parents immediately and exclude them from the rest of the weekend.
- *What if youth change homes without permission?* Once students are assigned to host homes, the decision is final. The host should help the student find a way back to the correct group or find a way home to his or her parents.
- *What if a youth is injured while at the host home?* Host families should be familiar with the nearest medical facilities. Assign an adult (cohost or coleader) to handle the situation allowing all others to remain with the group.

Follow-up

Stay in touch with your DiscipleNow group. Send notes of encouragement three, six, and nine weeks after the weekend. Letter examples are listed below. Plan and conduct a "family reunion" for your group 13 weeks after the weekend. Review how youth are growing in discipleship.

Three-weeks

Dear _____,
Wow! It hardly seems possible three weeks have passed since our DiscipleNow weekend. It was such a great time for us to have you spend the weekend in our home.

I hope you are continuing to have a daily quiet time. I want to encourage you to remain faithful in your walk with the Lord. Please give us a call if we can help you in any way (*phone*).

Sincerely,
(*Signature*)

Six-weeks

Dear _____,
Our family has so many wonderful memories of the time we spent together during DiscipleNow. We just want to encourage you to continue having a daily quiet time, remain faithful to your commitments, and be active in the youth group at church.

Remember we care for you and want to help in any way. Give us a call (*phone*) and let us know how you are.

Sincerely,
(*Signature*)

Nine-weeks

Dear _____,
Here's a very special invitation and we hope you can come! We're planning a "family reunion" of our DiscipleNow group on (*day*), (*date*), at (*time*).

We would like for the whole group to get together for an evening of fun, food, and fellowship.

It'll be a great time. Call us if you can come (*phone*). Looking forward to seeing you!

Sincerely,
(*Signature*)

Host Family Enlistment Confirmation (Example)

Dear _____:

Thank you for agreeing to be a host family for our DiscipleNow weekend (*give dates*). We know that God has set aside your home along with others to do this special work. I can promise you this will be one of the most significant weekends of spiritual growth and ministry in your life.

Please make plans to attend two very important meetings in preparation for your responsibilities for the weekend (*give days, dates, times, locations*). These will be very important informational meetings. We are counting on you to be present. Thanks again!

(Signature)

Host Family Orientation

Review the suggested Host Family Guidelines and Duties and adapt them to your needs. Prepare a handout that spells out the host family guidelines that you choose. As you enlist your families, give them a written copy of their responsibilities. This will go a long way to ensure that no problems arise because of a misunderstanding. Schedule an orientation meeting for host families to clarify their responsibilities, to explain the logistics of the weekend, to answer questions they may have, and for prayer. This initial meeting should take place at least two months prior to the weekend. Have additional copies of the guidelines available. As you develop your agenda, consider including the following items:

- objectives and purpose _____
- schedule _____
- job description _____
- food arrangements _____
- paper goods _____
- cohosts (if applicable) _____
- what youth will need to bring _____
- student car use and time away _____
- evaluation sheets _____
- group leaders _____
- coleaders (if used) _____
- group assignments _____
- a challenge to ministry _____

Hold a final touch-base meeting or a host snack supper on Monday prior to the opening events of DiscipleNow. During the meeting discuss: (1) the schedule; (2) contingency plans; (3) other logistics; (4) their ministry; (5) discipline issues. At this meeting, hand out the Getting to Know You form and have each host complete and return it to you.

 **Publicity Work Team**

Chairperson

The publicity work team plays a vital role in a successful DiscipleNow event. Encourage the chairperson you enlist to enlist a variety of people for the team—adults interested in youth, parents, youth workers, and youth who are leaders. You will need creative, dependable, hard workers. Work team guidelines include: work with the coordinator and steering committee; use as many methods of publicity as possible; and work within the budget. Look for people with abilities in desktop publishing and a knowledge of how to use computers and church equipment.

Specific job duties include:

1. Serve on the steering committee.
2. Select a committee to serve alongside you in all your work.
3. Determine what promotional projects will work best for your church within the budget that you've been assigned.
4. Design and initiate a systematic plan of information dispersal and publicity on DiscipleNow. Refer to the countdown calendar and promotional project examples as you develop your promotional plan.

Examples of Promotional Projects

Letter or Church Newsletter Article

Dear Church Member:

I am writing with regard to a DiscipleNow weekend, which is coming (*date*), for the students of (*church*). This weekend begins with a Friday evening kick-off and concludes with the Sunday evening service.

Youth will be divided into groups of 5 to 10 and placed in homes throughout (*city*). We have speakers coming to lead these groups in sessions pertaining to areas of Christian discipleship (prayer, quiet time, Bible study, and witnessing).

The deadline for registration is (*date*). There is much that needs to be done in preparation for and during the weekend itself, and we need your help.

Listed below are some areas of need.

- Establishing a countdown prayer calendar and organizing prayer groups.
- Preparing, printing, organizing, and distributing forms and study materials.
- Publicizing the weekend.
- Planning the worship services on Sunday.
- Preparing and serving refreshments and meals for planning meetings.
- Providing food items for the host family, youth, and group leader in one host home.
- Hosting a group in your home.
- Enlisting and registering youth to participate in the weekend.
- Transporting out-of-town leaders to and from the airport and youth to and from host homes on Saturday.
- Setting up and taking down room arrangements.
- Planning and implementing actions for continuing discipleship training for youth.

Begin praying now for DiscipleNow! God is going to do great things with our teenagers, and your prayer support is essential! Call me if you would be willing to help with any of the above needs, (*phone*).

Sincerely,
(*Signature*)

Local Newspaper or Church Newsletter Ad

DiscipleNow—a weekend of spiritual growth for students in grades 7-12. Each student will be assigned a home for the weekend where a trained leader will lead in studies and fellowship.

Several words describe a DiscipleNow weekend: laughter, commitment, closeness, enthusiasm, sharing, caring, praying, excitement, and just plain fun! Registration begins on (*date*) and the registration fee of (\$) includes all costs of lodging and meals throughout the weekend and all notebook and curriculum materials. Scholarship money is available for anyone needing assistance; no one will be turned away for a lack of funds. Registration must conclude on (*date*).

For information on how you or your youth can be a part of this life-changing weekend call (*phone*).

Registration Reminder to Youth Workers

Dear Youth Workers:

The excitement continues to build as we press toward DiscipleNow. It's hard to believe that in two weeks it will be here. God is continuing to confirm the DiscipleNow experience in our hearts and minds as we see His hand at work in many areas!

Next week is the final week of registration. By now all of our students should have received a personal note from their teacher or director. Next week is our week to visit in the homes of those youth who have not registered.

Here is our visitation plan for next week:

- Monday: Middle School Departments
- Thursday: High School Departments
- Saturday: Everyone!

Your department may want to plan a visitation time other than these that would fit your schedule better. Even though we have designated times, you can visit anytime. Our purpose in going is to: (1) Explain DiscipleNow; (2) answer their questions; (3) sign them up!

Sincerely,
(*Signature*)

A Message from Our Pastor (for church newsletter)

Students are in the years of growth—physically, emotionally, relationally, intellectually, athletically. A vital part of this growth process is their relationship to Jesus Christ.

DiscipleNow is intended to foster and encourage spiritual growth. I strongly encourage all of our students to participate in this opportunity for growth. God's will is that each of us be growing in God's grace. I anticipate the good things which will be ours through the upcoming DiscipleNow weekend.

Sincerely, (*Pastor*)

Registration Deadline Reminder Card

This Is Your Final Reminder!

DiscipleNow registration ends this Sunday, (*date*). No one will be able to register after midnight Sunday! We already have (# *signed up*) youth committed to the most "awesome" weekend of their lives. We've got a place for you! Joy!

(*Signature*)

Food Work Team

Chairperson

The food work team chairman oversees the food preparation for the entire weekend. This includes all meals that students will have together as well as meals in the host homes. The chairman enlists one food team leader for each host home. The food work team coordinates the provision of meals in the host homes and any large-group gatherings that you plan.

You may choose to:

- (1) have the food prepared in the host homes with you purchasing all the food,
- (2) have one church member prepare and deliver an entire meal to a host home, or
- (3) give the host families money to buy the food.

Enlist food team leaders two months prior to DiscipleNow. Choose people who are able to guide the work of the team, able to respond in case of an emergency (if someone forgets to bring food), and willing to fulfill their job description from the time of enlistment through the entire weekend. Set one or two meetings with the food team leaders to discuss progress, questions, and further coordinating the work.

Specific duties include:

1. Design a menu for the DiscipleNow weekend. Once the menu is designed, consult the DiscipleNow coordinator for approval. Teens are not used to eating three well-rounded meals a day. Try planning a light breakfast. Plan menus that you know teens will like. Avoid including many sweets for the weekend.
2. Personally enlist a food team leader for each host home. Try to place food team leaders near their host homes.
3. Get a list of food team volunteers from each food team leader. Ensure a supply of volunteers for the food team leaders to enlist by using sign-up sheets in Sunday School and church publications. Make a master list to share with the steering committee.
4. Organize the collection and distribution of all paper goods needed for the weekend.
5. If the host families fix breakfast in their homes, give them money to cover the expense.
6. Communicate with the food team leaders who will in turn communicate with their food teams. Plan to hold one or two meetings with the food team leaders prior to the weekend for the purpose of input and communication.
7. Administrate and oversee the weekend, being available to help deal with emergencies.
8. Conduct an evaluation meeting following the weekend. At that time, encourage the food team leaders to share any concerns voiced by the food team volunteers.

Food Team Leader Duties

As a food team leader your chief responsibilities for the weekend are:

- see that the food is prepared and delivered on time;
- help serve and clean up after each meal; and
- assist with other food needs.

Special Note: This does not mean that you must deliver the food personally or be present for every meal.

Other duties include:

1. Contact your host family immediately to get acquainted with them. Ask your host family to provide drinks for meals in their home during the weekend.
2. Enlist people to serve on your food team. Enlist people in the vicinity of your assigned host home. Work with your food team chairman to ensure any one person is not being contacted by more than one food team leader. Try to make sure the volunteers you enlist understand what you will be asking them to do. Their failure to provide assigned food items will make it hard on you as you will have to fill in at the last minute.
3. Work out details about the menu (the chairperson will provide a master menu), food assignments, delivery times, and follow-through plans. You should begin this task no later than three weeks prior to the weekend and have your plans finalized no later than two weeks prior.
4. Decide what food you want the students to bring to the host home. Examples include:
 - Everyone: bring a 2 liter or six-pack of sodas
 - Girls: bring fruit and cookies
 - Boys: bring chips and dip
5. Develop a contingency plan in case someone fails to provide their assigned food. One option would be to order pizza or sub sandwiches. Be sure to keep your receipts and give them to the DiscipleNow coordinator.

6. Paper goods will be used for meal times. Deliver items to host families on Monday night or before.
7. Once you have composed your team, make a list containing names, addresses, and phone numbers of team members and give the list to the food team chairman and each team member.
8. Contact your food team to ensure they understand their responsibilities. No meetings are necessary. Each volunteer simply needs to know what to take, how many to prepare for, and when and where to take it. Ask that all food delivered be in disposable containers.



9. Contact your host family again on the Monday before DiscipleNow to establish delivery times, total number of people involved, and any special instructions that need to be passed on to the team. Then call the team on Thursday or Friday to discuss all last minute details.
10. Ask the food team volunteers to be involved in evaluation by directing their comments to you. Then communicate any concerns to the food team chairman.
11. If you have any questions, please call the food team chairman. Avoid calling the youth ministry office except in case of an emergency.

Examples of Letters

Food Team Volunteer Enlistment Letter

Our youth ministry needs adults who would be willing to help with meals during DiscipleNow weekend (*dates*). Should you accept this job, your responsibilities would include:

- Working with several people to provide one meal for about 15 people (maximum) at one of our host homes.
- Seeing that the food is delivered in disposable containers to the host home at a designated time.
- You will not have to stay and serve.
- You will not have to attend any meetings.

A food team leader will contact you about: (1) menu (which is already set); (2) delivery times; (3) any other questions you may have.

If you are willing, sign up by calling (*phone*). Once you sign up, you will be assigned to a food team and be contacted by a food team leader.

Sincerely,
(*Signature*)

Food Team Leader Enlistment Confirmation

Dear _____,

Thanks for your willingness to serve as a food team leader. Your commitment to DiscipleNow is of vital importance.

Enclosed please find a list of your responsibilities for the weekend. I hope you realize how important you are to the success of the weekend. We will be meeting (*dates, time, locations*), to finalize plans. At that time you will receive a menu and suggestions for amounts to prepare.

Please contact your host family and introduce yourself. They are expecting to hear from you. If you have any questions, please call me (*phone*).

Your host family is: (*Give first and last names of all family members living in the home, address, phone.*)

Yours for a great spiritual experience,
(*Signature*)

Evaluation and Follow-up Work Team

The vital responsibilities of evaluation and follow-up may be divided into two committees for larger churches. The first step toward evaluation begins with setting aside purposeful time to write out your personal goals for DiscipleNow. The most significant goal is to set students on a path of walking daily with Christ. For example, to see if a daily walk with Christ has been achieved look for the following indicators:

- Students have a consistent daily quiet time.
- Students are taking worship notes to help them remember what God is saying to them.
- Students ask for more in-depth times of prayer and Bible study.
- Students make a commitment to continue daily discipleship disciplines after the DiscipleNow weekend.

Once you have your personal goals set, you're on your way to a great experience. Read the following material before the event. Then after the event, answer the questions and file this information in next year's DiscipleNow folder. For evaluation purposes, the DiscipleNow event can be divided into three parts:

- (1) planning and preparation
- (2) the weekend itself
- (3) follow-up

Evaluating the Planning

Countdown Calendar

- How well did your countdown calendar work? Were there items on the calendar that you need to begin earlier next time?
- Did DiscipleNow complement the total church ministry? How can your plans for your next DiscipleNow support the work of the total church?
- Was the DiscipleNow weekend prioritized in your youth ministry calendar? Were there other significant events in your community, schools, or your church that caused the impact of your DiscipleNow event to be less than its potential? Is it possible to find a better time on the calendar?

Budget

For many youth ministers budgeting is the toughest part of planning an event, especially if it is the first time for that event. Because DiscipleNow impacts the whole church family, budgeting is even more important. As you look at your total church's youth ministry budget, ask yourself, the church, staff, and planning committee the following questions:

- Did we receive from DiscipleNow in ministry terms the percentage of our budget spent?
- How can we adjust next year to receive more benefit?
- What materials and supplies can we add or delete next year?
- Did we allocate the honorariums and travel expenses satisfactorily?

Personal Tough Spots

- What was the most difficult for you to do?
- What did not come together quite right? Jot some notes on your countdown calendar so you'll be ready for them in your next DiscipleNow.

Evaluating the Weekend

Get a minicassette recorder to carry with you throughout the weekend and record ideas you have, changes to make, needs you see, and feelings you have as you travel from place-to-place during DiscipleNow. Have someone transcribe the contents of the tape and file that for next year.

The People

One of the primary reasons DiscipleNow is so worthwhile is the people that are involved. Complete the evaluation forms and turn them in on Sunday. If you wait a week or two, those who are filling the forms out may forget a lot of valuable information. Summarize and save these to use in next year's planning. Talk with the group leaders about the host families and cohosts. They can give you insight into how those families were involved in the weekend. This can also help you with decisions regarding potential youth workers. Speak with the host families and cohosts about the group leaders. They can tell you what they feel was accomplished and what they feel their strong points and weak points were over the weekend. This will help as you choose your next DiscipleNow leaders. If, in evaluating the people, a problem or obstacle surfaces, it is very important that you contact that particular person and have a one-to-one conference as soon as possible. Great care must be taken not to offend the people who have given their time and efforts to assist you. At the same time your honesty with them will be a great asset in the future ministry that you have at that church. Each leader will fill out an evaluation form for every youth in his or her group. Look these over very carefully. If you see any needs that should be addressed in the life of a youth, deal with it yourself. Also contact that youth's Sunday School teacher, discipleship leader, and/or some other person that has worked with the youth. That will give you an opportunity to build youth through the lay leadership that you have in your church.

The Schedule

As you travel from home to home during the weekend, evaluate the schedule that you chose:

- Were things carried out as the schedule stated?
- Did I give the leaders the freedom to adjust the schedule if they sensed that was necessary?
- Were Saturday night sessions effective?

The Material

Evaluating the material used and your goals for DiscipleNow is very important. You will probably want to repeat certain sessions every two or three years. The makeup of your youth group changes from year to year. Answer the following questions to help you plan for next year.

- What topics have students studied in previous DiscipleNows?—Keep written records in your files detailing how your students were grouped and what they studied. Keep track from year to year what each youth has studied.
- What topics need to be used next year?—After reviewing the evaluation forms, you may see areas that need immediate study in your youth ministry. There may be problem areas that demand attention now. Others may be topics and issues that are best dealt with in the DiscipleNow setting. Make notes now what these are.
- Would students better learn and grow closer to God and one another by all students studying the same topics or by having each group study independent topics?
- What areas of the teaching/learning process need to be emphasized to group leaders next year? Have you heard of, or did you observe, a need for some teaching style to be stressed?
- Did group leaders mention any problems or concerns regarding curriculum? Did you mail the curriculum to your group leaders early enough for them to familiarize themselves with it and add their own personal study and teaching style to it?

Commitment Service

Sunday night is also a time of commitment for all youth and adults involved in DiscipleNow. Ask yourself these questions:

- Did the attendance for this night equal normal or better attendance for your church?
- Did some adults stay away this night thinking this was a “youth only” worship?
- Did worship leaders have enough information to lead with our goals for the worship service in mind?
- Did youth invite non-Christian and unchurched youth to this special worship service?
- Did all of our guest leaders, host families, committee members, and so forth sense the need to support this worship with their attendance?
- Were receivers and counselors ready to handle decisions that were made?
- Did the speaker(s) address the theme of DiscipleNow?
- Did youth who did not attend DiscipleNow feel a part of the commitment worship?

Follow-up

The time immediately following a DiscipleNow weekend is the most critical for follow-up. Plans must be made and materials secured before the weekend is over. Commitments made and the desires for new Christian habits must be nurtured like newborn babies. After reading over the following material, duplicate it and give it to the follow-up committee.

DiscipleNow Chairperson

As follow-up committee chairperson, enlist your committee members to be ready to begin an active follow-up campaign immediately after DiscipleNow. Evaluation forms are provided below. They may be duplicated or adapted. Review the count-down calendar for follow-up actions.

Specific duties include:

1. Collect and sort Commitment Forms completed by students at the close of DiscipleNow.
2. Plan for immediate follow-up of spiritual decisions made during DiscipleNow. Work with church leadership in planning and enlisting leaders for follow-up.
3. Make plans for promotion of continuing discipleship following the DiscipleNow weekend.
4. Provide a master list of DiscipleNow participants to Sunday School departments to identify prospects.
5. Secure a list of DiscipleNow participants grouped according to host families and provide mailing lists to host families to send follow-up letters.
6. Encourage each host family to plan a family reunion approximately 13 weeks after DiscipleNow.

Immediately after DiscipleNow:

- Meet with the DiscipleNow steering committee to go over the evaluation forms. Discuss ways to incorporate the information into the planning for next year.
- Personally visit new Christians and encourage them in their decision. Help them make plans to be baptized and to become active in the church youth ministry.
- Consult with your minister of youth about providing ongoing discipleship groups for students if they do not already exist.
- Assign adult leaders as encouragers to youth following the DiscipleNow weekend. This is especially important for new Christians.

Student Evaluation of the Weekend (Use the back of the page to explain your answers.)



Name _____

Group Leader _____ Host Family _____

- How did you like your host family? (circle one) Excellent Good Fair
- How would you rate your group leader as a youth minister? (circle one) Excellent Good Fair
- Did your group leader spend time with you alone on a personal basis during the weekend? (circle one) Yes No
- Did you feel your leader cared for you personally? (circle one) Yes No Why?

- What impressed you most about your leader?

- Did you understand the lessons? (circle one) Yes No Briefly explain your answer.

- What do you like best about DiscipleNow?

- What do you like least about DiscipleNow?

- What suggestions would you make for future DiscipleNows?

- Did you make any commitments to God this weekend?

- On a scale of 1-10 (10 being the greatest), how would you rate the weekend? (circle one) **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**

Leadership Evaluation of DiscipleNow (forms)

Group Leader Evaluation of Student (Name) _____ (Fill one out for each student.)

- How did this person respond to the weekend?
 - actively involved disinterested disruptive
 - interested, but reserved. Comments:
- Were you able to spend time with this person during the weekend? Yes No; why not?
- Is this person practicing daily Christian disciplines?
 - Bible reading prayer Scripture memory
 - quiet time witnessing Do you feel this person will bring daily disciplines? Yes No Explain.
- Were there any significant problems (family, drugs, emotional, etc.) revealed during the weekend you feel the DiscipleNow coordinator should know about?
- Did you offer any counsel to this youth? Yes No If so, what did you suggest?
- How would you rate the person's spiritual condition?
 - lost not sure about salvation very confused
 - growing Christian saved but distant from God
- Give your impression of the student's greatest need.
- Express your feelings (positive and negative) about the host family.

Group Leader Evaluation of the Weekend

Please share a few thoughts and feelings about your experience in DiscipleNow. It will help us in planning future events.

Name _____ Host Family Name _____

- What are some things you really liked about DiscipleNow?

- Were there any aspects of the weekend that you personally did not care for and feel we could have done without?

- How did you feel about the advance information and publicity you received?

- The snack supper/share time was:

- The reception for leaders was:

- The schedule:
 - I liked leader orientation because

 - During orientation, I didn't care for

 - The Sunday evening commitment service was

 - Some suggestions that I have for future DiscipleNows are

Host Family Evaluation of the Weekend

Please share a few thoughts and feelings about your experience in DiscipleNow. It will help us in planning future events.

Name _____ Group Leader Name _____

- What did you feel was most effective about this DiscipleNow? Why?

- What did you feel most needs to be changed to improve our next DiscipleNow? Why?

- Which session seemed to be most effective with the youth? Why?

Evaluation of the Leader

- How would you rate the group leader's ministry to youth? Poor Fair Good Excellent

- Did the leader spend time with each student? Yes No

- If you were enlisting leaders, would you invite this leader again? Yes No Explain your answer.

- Did the curriculum chosen for your group meet their needs? Yes No Explain your answer:

- Do you feel that the youth in your home sensed the group leader cared for them personally?

Other Work Teams and Duties

Other work team chairpersons will not need as many administrative skills but must be good with people. As you approach an individual for one of the following positions as work team chairperson, share with him or her the appropriate job description. You may choose to combine committee responsibilities.

Arrangements Work Team

1. Help set up and take down room arrangements for these activities: Friday afternoon leader banquet, Saturday afternoon dinner, Sunday morning Bible study rally room, Sunday snack supper/share time.
2. Clean up after all large-group activities.
3. Secure facilities for all DiscipleNow events. Ensure DiscipleNow events have priority.
4. Arrange for needs of large-group sessions including sound and light equipment.

Hospitality Work Team (duties may be assigned to the Food Team Committee)

1. Prepare and serve refreshments for the following meetings: Friday orientation for guest group leaders; Sunday afternoon snack supper before share time.
2. Prepare and serve a snack supper on Monday prior to DiscipleNow for the hosts, cohosts, and the DiscipleNow steering committee.
3. Prepare the banquet on Friday night for church staff, group leaders, and host families.

Packet Committee (duties may be assigned to the Publicity Team Committee)

1. Secure and organize materials needed by the coordinator for the following: students, leaders, food teams, host families, committee chairmen.
2. Prepare and print all forms needed during the weekend such as DiscipleNow weekend schedules, student worksheets, and evaluation forms.

Prayer Committee

1. Help establish prayer groups in preparation for DiscipleNow. Use existing church program organizations for the basis of these groups.
2. Establish a countdown prayer calendar for the church. Design a calendar that communicates a different prayer need for each day of the month leading up to the DiscipleNow weekend. Mention each host family, group leader, youth age group, and committee chairpersons by name.

Sunday School Committee

1. Maintain a high visibility campaign in enlisting all students in Sunday School to attend the DiscipleNow weekend.
2. Oversee registration beginning four weeks prior to the weekend. End registration two weeks before the weekend.
3. Organize and participate in the visitation blitz week the last week of registration.
4. Conduct a final Sunday night registration rally. Plan an all-out fellowship to register every youth on the last night of registration.
5. Create the structure for the Sunday morning worship rally. Communicate with all ongoing workers and with guest leaders their responsibilities.

Transportation Committee

1. Provide transportation for out-of-town group leaders during the weekend (pickup and return to airport, to host homes, and to recreation).
2. Coordinate transportation of students to host homes on Friday night; to and from the Saturday afternoon recreation, to and from the Saturday night worship rally, and to the church for Bible study and worship on Sunday morning.

Worship Committee

1. Work with ongoing worship team to provide a strong discipleship emphasis in the morning worship on Sunday.
2. Enlist counselors and direct the worship commitment time on Saturday night.
3. Maintain communication with the DiscipleNow coordinator and appropriate church staff in all matters relating to the Sunday worship service during DiscipleNow.

