

# What is a Healthy Discipling Community?

First Alliance Overview



## Context:

- The desire at First Alliance is that **every person who is part of FACT grows as a biblical, loving, Spirit-filled disciple becoming more like Christ.**
- A healthy, biblical disciple is **one who is totally committed to Christ, becoming like Him in supreme love for God, selfless love of others, and sacrificial love for the world.**
- Disciples grow when they **connect with Christ, grow with others, and engage the world**, resulting in the development of the **Core Competencies** (and their practical expressions) as a result of being in the **sweet spot of spiritual growth.**

We believe the best venue of growth is in the context of **community** built around **relationship, knowledge, and service.** Discipling Communities are the context and means of growing as, being, and making disciples at First Alliance. These are the primary means of disciple-making and connection at First Alliance Church.

A Discipling Community is **a smaller group of people that meets together regularly, shares life, and intentionally centers on Jesus. Discipling Communities provide the space in the larger congregational context for people to connect, grow, and engage personally, spiritually, relationally, and missionally to be and make disciples of Jesus. Members do life together to see the Core Competencies developed in one another and the gospel proclaimed.**

Discipling Communities take **many different forms** but are all **cohesively aligned.**

## ***A Healthy Discipling Community is aligned around 4 focal points:***

- **Upward** focuses on the relationship with God of individual group members as well as the group together. It is dynamic and growing because spiritual growth is an expectation for all. Spiritual next steps are encouraged and taken together, even if the pace of growth varies. Life change happens when becoming like Jesus isn't just something to study. The community **Connects to Christ** through prayer, worship, and wrestling through the truth of Scripture, becoming people who live like Jesus in every area of life, obeying all He has commanded.
- **Inward** focuses on knowing one another so that depth of relationship develops. Life changes happens when we're known. A healthy sense of family present in a Discipling Community is safe, loving, forgiving, grace filled, supportive, and willing to work through disagreements. Members feel like they belong and look for ways to care and share life as they **Grow with Others.** A healthy inward focus

is also evidenced by how the members engage with one another beyond the “official” meeting time.

- **Outward** focuses on the passion and purposefulness the group has to **Engage the World**. Life change happens when we live beyond ourselves. Making an impact is a normal and natural thing for healthy disciples, and happens in our church, neighborhood, workplace, school, town, and beyond both individually and by partnering together. Members bringing others in to experience what they are experiencing in healthy community and living compelled to reach those who are not yet biblical disciples of Jesus is a reality of group life.
- **Forward** focuses on the increase of leaders and ministry. The benchmark of effective disciple-making is both personal evidence of the Core Competencies, AND more disciples connected in new Discipling Communities. The goal isn't making existing groups large but starting **new groups for new people**. This is known as **multiplication**. Each community carries an inherent responsibility to disciple, train, and release members so ministry is multiplied.

Members of a Discipling Community value:

- **Regular Participation:** It's not okay to be a spectator or passive observer.
- **Intentional Growth:** Come as you are, but don't expect to stay there.
- **Authentic Community:** We pursue real community, not shallow relationships.
- **Transparent Relationships:** This can be hard, but communities are safe places where we can share freely and leave the mask at the door.
- **Mutual Responsibility:** We all are “all in” for the health and success of the community and each other.
- **Multiplication of Disciples:** Communities are not meant to be comfortable, stagnant clusters of church people, but places where new disciples are made.

Just like a family grows through birth, marriage, adoption, etc, so does a church. As a family grows, new subsets of that family are started that still see each other at reunions. As a church grows, **new** Discipling Communities **birth** that still gather for corporate worship and community fellowship. This is an expression of health.

The **Leader/Facilitator** is someone who:

- Is an engaged member of FACT.
- Is a disciple of Jesus Christ.
- Is fully committed to the direction of FACT.
- Embraces the Disciple-making Paradigm.
- Submits to leadership.
- Isn't afraid of the messy process of discipleship.
- Doesn't “do-it-all.”
- Keeps the group focused, moving forward together in alignment, and facilitates the participation of group members.