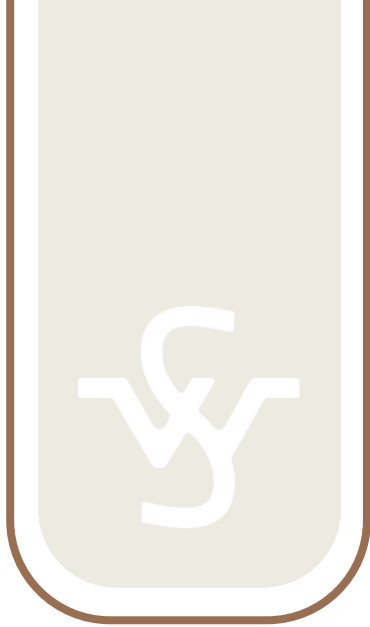


# FIRST & BEST

DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY SERVE GROUP GUIDE



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# Serve Group Vision & Values

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At StoneWater Church, we believe that groups are God's provision for you and those you do life with. Forming relationships and being connected in our church family is a gift that ensures that we are cared for, loved, encouraged, prayed for, and spurred on as believers of Jesus Christ. Being part of a group is also an incredible opportunity to be used by God in someone else's life.

Your Serve Group gathers 15 minutes before serving begins for a brief 10-12-minute meeting, ensuring everyone has a couple of minutes to get to their designated spots on time.

Each week, we will circle up around God's Word through a short devotion led by someone in your serve group, God's Spirit by praying for one another, and God's people through your time interacting and encouraging each other. As our serve groups grow, finishing on time will become a challenge, so we encourage you to continue the connection throughout the week.

As you grow more intentional with your Serve Group, you might wonder how much impact such a small amount of time can make. Be encouraged! Time and time again, we've seen that prioritizing and participating in Serve Group creates small weekly deposits that add up to something far greater than we often realize. So, buckle up and watch God work in ways only He can. You'll witness prayers answered, needs met, lives transformed, and together, we'll praise God for His faithfulness.

Thank you for being faithful in serving our church family and your fellow leaders. You are such an important part of what God is doing at StoneWater Church!



# Growing your **SERVE GROUP**

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What a privilege it is to have a front-row seat to watch God work in and through others as they experience connection in Serve Group! Remember, as you lead your group in a new direction, it may take time for everyone to catch on. Be patient, celebrate progress, pray for your group, and continue to lead with excitement.

## **GAINING MOMENTUM IN YOUR SERVE GROUP**

- **Make a personal invitation**

Share your excitement about walking through the Discipleship Journey and your expectancy for God to show up in incredible ways with every person in your group.

- **Choose a consistent space and start on time**

Your role as a Serve Group Leader is to create a space for others to gather. Arrive a few minutes early and stand in the place where you'd like your group to meet (be careful not to appear busy during this time). Starting on time, even if there is only one person there, communicates that you are ready for your people and that their time is valuable to you.

- **Model God's Word, God's Spirit, God's People every time you meet**

Prioritizing this layout will show others that you have something FOR them and will give them an opportunity to be seen and cared for during your time together. It may be tempting to want to share about logistics, but remember that our goal is to help people connect with each other. Share logistics in your weekly email or via a text before their arrival.

- **Care for each person outside of Serve Group time**

Checking in on each person once or twice a month communicates care and belonging. A simple text or phone call to follow up on a prayer request, to ask, "how can I pray for you?" or "how's it going with \_\_\_\_\_?" goes a long way in developing meaningful relationships!

**Celebrate what's happening with those in your group, your Campus Pastor and/or leadership team!**

# WELCOME TO THE DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY

"Am I giving God my first & best, or are there areas of my life that I have not fully surrendered?"

## WHAT IS THE DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY?

- Our Discipleship Journey aims to help us grow as mature disciples of Jesus who prioritize spiritual growth.
- Over the next two years, we will take practical steps to give God our FIRST & BEST in every area of our lives.
- All StoneWater ministries will align, and every message series will offer a clear action step to help us hear the Word and live it out, transforming our daily lives as we deepen our faith and grow in maturity as disciples of Jesus.

## WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

A disciple is someone who follows Jesus, is being changed by Jesus, and is committed to the mission of Jesus. Our journey reflects that discipleship isn't a destination but an ongoing process that God uses throughout our lives and isn't complete until we are with Him.

## CORE TRUTHS OF THE DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY

- God is first & best.
- God gave His first & best (Jesus).
- We worship Him as first & best.
- As an act of worship, we give Him our first & best in every part of our lives.

## WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THE JOURNEY?

- Grow in biblical knowledge
- Deal with emotional baggage that holds us back
- Learn to walk in the Spirit
- Give God our first & best in all every aspect of our lives

## MILEMARKERS ARE STOPS WE WILL MAKE ALONG OUR TWO YEAR JOURNEY →

With every mile, we will have an action step requiring us to practice what we are learning. The purpose is to become "doers" of the word and not "hearers" only. These action steps will be shared on Sunday mornings and celebrated and supported through all church ministries.

## MILEMARKERS

Freedom

Idols

Relationships

Spirit

Truth

&

Be Loving

Eternal Perspective

Serving Others

Transforming Community

# January 12

# FIRST & BEST

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**Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people.”  
Matthew 4:19**

What is a disciple? A disciple is someone who chooses to follow Jesus wholeheartedly.

In Matthew 4:19, Jesus’ invitation to “Come, follow me” is more than a call to observe His teachings—it’s a call to live like Him, grow in relationship with Him, and share His love with others. Discipleship is an ongoing journey of transformation. It means giving God our first and best—our time, talents, and treasures.

In this First & Best series, we’ll explore what it means to prioritize Jesus in every aspect of life. Our time is a gift from God, and how we use it reflects what matters most to us. Our talents—whether creative, practical, or relational—are meant to glorify Him and bless others. And our treasures, the resources we’ve been entrusted with, provide opportunities to invest in God’s Kingdom.

Discipleship isn’t about perfection but daily commitment. It’s choosing to follow Jesus every day, surrendering our plans for His purposes. As we grow in discipleship, we’ll discover that giving our first and best to God not only honors Him but also transforms us and impacts the world around us.

## Discussion & Prayer

How can you intentionally give God your first and best in one area of your life this week—time, talent, or treasure? Who can support or encourage you in this commitment?

**Heavenly Father, thank You for calling us to follow You. Help us to give You our first and best in all areas of our lives. Show us how to use our time, talents, and treasures to honor You and to bless others. May our journey of discipleship draw us closer to You and inspire those around us to seek You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.**

# FIRST & BEST

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**Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit. John 15:4-5**

Jesus desired a deep, mutual, and intimate relationship with His disciples and followers during His time on earth. Throughout Scripture, we see over and over again how intentional He was in going where He was invited, meeting with people, and revealing who He truly is—through His teachings, developing relationships, showing kindness and gentleness toward their brokenness, and performing miracles.

Knowing He was about to endure the cross, Jesus used the imagery of a vine and its branches to reassure His disciples of their continued connection and relationship with Him, even after He was no longer physically present. He described a mutual relationship, emphasizing their choice to draw close to Him—to abide in Him. Just as He spoke to His closest friends, Jesus made a way for us to experience connection and mutual relationship with Him through the gift of the Holy Spirit—a free gift we receive when we accept Him as our Savior.

The vine and branches symbolize complete dependence and constant connection. As we begin to recognize our deep need for Him and commit to spending intentional, daily time with Him in prayer, in His Word, and through praise and worship, we experience a God who is not seeking a “check-the-box” relationship but who is kind and compassionate as we bring Him our pain and praise. He speaks to us personally, prompting us to faithfully live out what we learn in His Word. His desire to be with us becomes real and tangible.

Jesus says, “He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit.” Which areas of your life reflect love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—and which do not? This is a great starting point for identifying where we can invite Him into our daily lives. Imagine what could happen if we did.

## Discussion & Prayer

What happens in your day when you spend time with him, and what do you notice happens when you don't? Where can you prioritize and become intentional in giving Jesus your time each day?

**Lord, thank you for desiring to be in a relationship with us. You are a kind Father and Friend who deeply desires a connection with us. As we walk through our week, will you show us the areas that you desire to be invited into? Show us where we are putting other things before you and grow our desire to abide in you each day. Allow us to experience you in a new and personal way this week. In your name we pray, Amen.**

# January 26

# FIRST & BEST

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**The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him, all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him, all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. Colossians 1:15-18**

God's love for humanity is vividly demonstrated in the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. As the "firstborn over all creation," Jesus is not only the origin of all things but also the highest and most exalted of all. In giving us His Son, God offered His first and most precious gift, one that surpasses anything we could ever imagine.

Jesus was not only given as the Creator but also as the Redeemer. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus paved the way for us to have eternal life. God's willingness to give His first and best reflects His great love for us and His desire to reconcile us to Himself, no matter how far we have wandered.

This truth calls us to respond in gratitude and worship. If God gave His first for us, how can we not also give Him our best? When we make Him our priority, we reflect our deep gratitude for His unmatched generosity and lordship. How do we do this?

1. **Prioritize Jesus** - Reflect on areas in your life where Jesus may not have the "first place."
2. **Offer Your Best** - Consider how you can offer your time, resources, and talents in ways that honor Jesus and further His kingdom.
3. **Live in Gratitude** - Gratitude helps align our hearts with His will and opens our eyes to His constant provision. Take time to thank God for the gift of Jesus, who not only created all things but also redeemed you. Let your gratitude overflow into acts of worship and service.

## Discussion & Prayer

Identify one area of your life where you have not fully given Jesus the first place. Take a specific action this week to change that, whether it's prioritizing prayer, surrendering a worry, or serving someone in need. Share your progress with a trusted friend, mentor, or your group to stay accountable.

**Father God, thank You for giving Your first and best, Your Son, Jesus Christ. He is the image of Your glory and the firstborn over all creation. We are in awe of Your love and generosity. Help us to make Jesus the priority in every area of our lives. Teach us to reflect Your heart by giving our best in return, living in gratitude for all You have done. Help us to trust in Your goodness and embrace Your plans for our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

# February 2

## FIRST & BEST

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**Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. Deuteronomy 6:4-9**

Time is one of our most valuable resources. Giving our first and best as a spouse, parent, sibling, child, or grandparent means showing our family that they are a priority. One of the best ways to do this is by spending intentional time with them.

We make time for what is important by placing it on our calendar. Does your calendar include specific times for being together as a family—sharing a meal, having a family game night, going on regular dates, or taking a vacation? Intentional family time can also include spending time in God's Word, singing a worship song (even if it's off-key!), or watching a video on RightNow Media.

Intentional time means putting others' needs above your own by participating in something a family member loves, even if it doesn't excite you. It's about learning more about your spouse, kids, or loved ones' personalities and experiencing new things with them.

Intentional time also means having serious fun, no matter the occasion. Deuteronomy 6 highlights key moments for creating intentionality—at home, in the car, at bedtime, and in the morning. God gives us plenty of time to be intentional; how we steward that time is up to us!

## Discussion & Prayer

What could change in our schedule to allow for more intentional time as a family?

**Lord, You have given me the gift of family, and I want to honor You with the time I have with them. Open my eyes to see the things in my calendar that have become a priority, and give me the courage to make changes so I can love my family well. Help me to see the people in my family the way You see them, and teach me to love them the way You love them. Amen.**



# February 9

# FIRST & BEST

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**Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. 1 Peter 4:10-11**

“For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10). God's Word tells us that we are each born with distinct talents and gifts that set us apart in Him. Giving our First & Best includes using these gifts to serve others as part of the church body. These “good works” and acts of service do not bring us to salvation but are instead the fruit that flows from the salvation we have already been freely given.

Our gratitude for this unmerited gift leads us to give our First & Best and to serve others with kindness, love, and gentleness. We use the gifts we've been given not to please ourselves but to honor God and walk in obedience to Him.

When we use our gifts, talents, and abilities as directed by God to serve others, people will see Jesus in us and glorify Him for the help they receive. In 1 Peter 4:10-11, Peter may have been reflecting on Jesus' words in Matthew 5:16: “Let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.” God's intention is that our salvation results in acts of service for others. We are saved to serve Christ and build up the church—all for His glory.

Are we giving God our First & Best with our thoughts, heart posture, and hands (works) in a way that points others to Him and honors the gifts we've been given?

## Discussion & Prayer

How is God glorified when we use our time, treasure, and talent to serve Him and grow His kingdom? What is one way you can better steward your time, treasure, and talent while serving?

**Lord, we praise You for Your goodness and come to You today with grateful hearts. Through the gift of salvation, we receive Your mercy and love. You have given each of us unique talents and gifts that we know are from You and for Your glory. We acknowledge that every good and perfect gift is from above, and we are here to serve You and others. As we walk in obedience to You, Lord, please deepen our faith, grow our gratitude, and let others see Your light in us. We praise Your name and thank You for Your loving hand in our lives. Amen.**



**STONEWATER**  
CHURCH

# FIRST & BEST

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February 16

**And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Acts 17:26-27**

As his ministry gained momentum, the Apostle Paul found himself in Athens—a city bursting with a love for learning and an insatiable curiosity for new ideas. While exploring, Paul noticed an altar inscribed “to the unknown god.” The Athenians acknowledged the possibility of a god beyond their understanding. Seizing this, Paul brilliantly connected their search for meaning to the ultimate hope: Jesus Christ. He explained that the “unknown God” they worshiped longed to know them personally.

Paul’s message challenges and empowers us to step into our schools, workplaces, and communities with the same boldness. He reminded the Athenians—and us—that God has intentionally placed us where we are, in this moment, for His purpose. God has a plan in Granbury in 2025, at your job, in your neighborhood, where you serve in the church, or even at the local coffee shop. Acts 17 shows us that He orchestrates our time and place so we might know Him and make Him known.

In Ephesians 2:10, Paul later tells the church that God has prepared good works in advance for His people to do. The question is not, “Does God want to use me?” but, “Will I be available for Him to use me?” Paul modeled this everywhere he went. Now, it’s our turn to boldly carry the message of Jesus into the world around us.

## Discussion & Prayer

How can you be strategic and intentional at your job, neighborhood, friend group, ministry, and community to wisely steward the time and place that God has you?

**Father, would you kindly reveal to us how You desire to deploy us? We are yours and want to do everything that You call us to do because, in faith, we believe that is where life is found. We love you because you first loved us, and we commit to humbly and consistently making you Lord in all areas of our lives and at all times.**