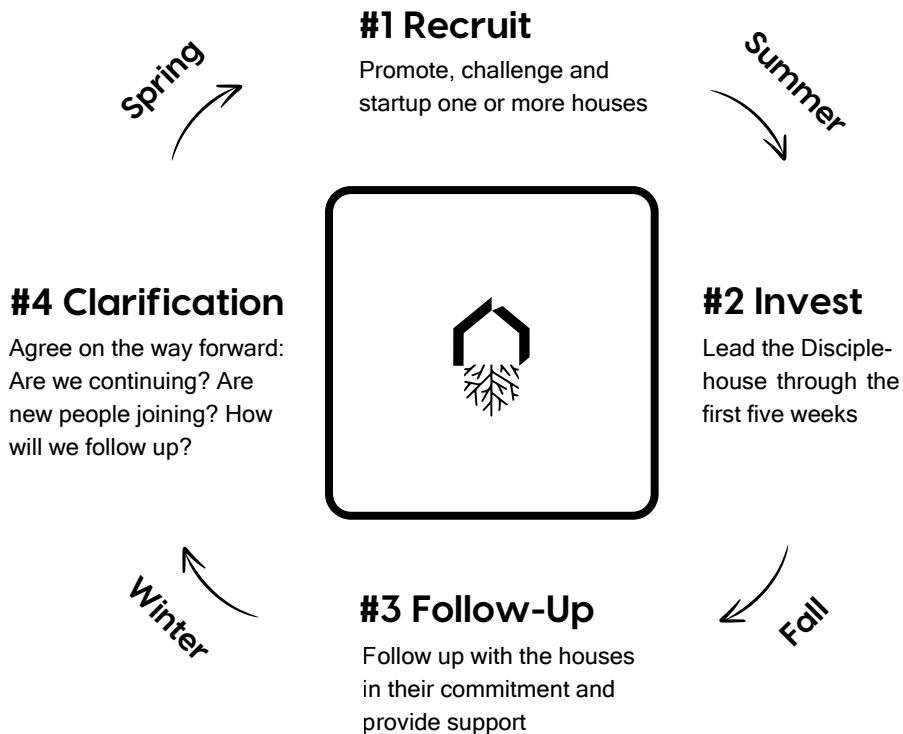


Disciplehouse Leader Primer

Rhythm, Community & Mission





An investment tool

There are many young adults living in shared housing in your area and around your church — student housing or not. Through Discipleship House, you're invited to invest in young adults who are learning to find their daily rhythm of following Jesus.

*Note: A Discipleship House can begin at any time.
The yearly rhythm simply illustrates the different seasons.*

What is a Disciplehouse?

A disciple is united with Jesus and His concerns in the world (Edin Løvås). In Disciplehouses we use the words Rhythm, Community, and Mission to express how following Jesus takes shape in everyday life.

The purpose of a Disciplehouse is to create an environment where more people can get to know Jesus and learn to live as His followers in their daily lives, together with others. A shared home where each person, and the group as a whole, practices healthy, biblical rhythms in ordinary life. The goal is that participants grow as followers of Jesus and are able to lead others into the same life.

A Disciplehouse forms naturally: the residents find each other and arrange their own place to live. The group commits to a weekly gathering. Every Disciplehouse needs a house mentor and a clear connection to a local church or organization.



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#1 The purpose

Introduction

Young people today long for authentic and radical lives where they can see and experience discipleship in practice. Where the platform of speech becomes too simple and falls short, Disciplehouse becomes an arena for shared, everyday discipleship of Jesus in everyday life.

The challenge

Our churches and organizations are experiencing a gap between the longing for a life of discipleship and what we actually see among our youth, students, and young adults.

We're noticing that trends among young people shift so quickly that the church's methods often end up lagging behind. The challenges we're trying to solve are frequently based on outdated research and approaches that no longer match the reality young people are living in today.

The opportunity

With Disciplehouse, we want to spark a cultural shift — moving from passive listening to active discipleship, shaped by rhythm, community, and mission.

Research points to relationships and biblical literacy as decisive factors for a faith that lasts (Roald Zeiffert). Platform teaching is often too general to meet the deeper nuances of faith and the unique challenges young adults face in everyday life. It rarely builds an active relationship with Scripture and is not relational in form.

Where previous generations tried to adapt to the culture to lower the threshold for inviting new people in, today's young adults are looking for lives that are distinctly different from what they see around them. We want to invite them into a radical lifestyle rather than radical opinions, words, or presentations. They are tired of talk — they want hands-on experience and action.

A missional lifestyle is attractive (Barna Research). It comes to life through everyday practices such as Bible reading, prayer, community, simplicity, and Sabbath rest. Reading Scripture together significantly increases the likelihood that young people keep their faith (Roald Zeiffert).

Young adults today are drawn to what is shared and collective in an individualistic age. They see the value of doing life and discipleship together rather than trying to be everything on their own. Disciplehouse is about collective discipleship in a setting that requires authenticity — a way of living where the masks come off and people truly know one another.

Success factors for Discipleship house

- To develop a sustainable rhythm with God in the realities of everyday life
- To commit to a community and find your place in something bigger than yourself
- To understand your Christian mission – a life of service and everyday witness
- To grow confident in your faith: genuine, honest, grounded, and unafraid
- To be equipped to help others live as everyday followers of Jesus

#1 Recruitment

Introduction

Disciplehouse is a tool for churches and ministries that want to disciple young adults at a stage of life where many drift away from faith. The focus is not “What does the church get in return?” but rather “How do we equip people for a life of discipleship that lasts?”

How to become a Disciplehouse?

When your church or organization begins implementing Disciplehouse, **we recommend starting by connecting with an existing household of young adults** who already have relationships with one another and a desire to live together as a Disciplehouse.

Building healthy, close relationships takes time. It requires consistent follow-up. Make sure to allow space for people to grow together and find their roles in this new way of living. This process is far less demanding when the relationships already exist.

We recommend that **the household itself finds a place to live** and handles the formal aspects of the lease and living arrangements. This way, the church/organization/house mentor avoids any legal responsibility as a landlord and can focus fully on the main goal: relational follow-up and discipleship.

If the congregation/organization is the landlord/subtenant: See section on page 18.

Initiative

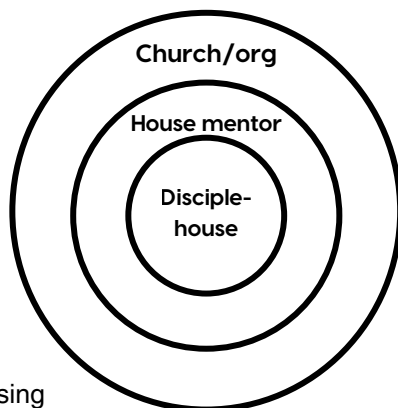
The initiative for starting a Disciplehouse usually comes from the church or organization, inviting a potential person, group, or existing household to become a Disciplehouse. The initiative can also come from the household itself.

Clarification

The church or organization provides clear leadership in making sure each participant understands what Disciplehouse involves and is committed to taking part. A household can still function as a Disciplehouse even if not everyone who lives there chooses to participate. The church or organization is responsible for finding and following up the house mentor.

The commitment is made one school year at a time. We recommend having a conversation right after Easter to invite the group to continue for the next school year or to open the door for bringing the commitment to an end.

RESPONSIBILITY OVERVIEW



THE DISCIPLEHOUSE

- Finds one another and arranges housing
- Shares practical everyday responsibilities
- Commits to the weekly gathering
- Commits to regular meetings with the house mentor

HOUSE MENTOR

- Leads the start-up phase (see start-up guide)
- Gathers the group for a joint meeting at least every other month
- Serves as the contact point between the Disciple House and the church/organization
- Receives regular follow-up from the church

THE CHURCH/ORGANIZATION

- Recruits its own Disciplehouses
- Ensures that each Disciplehouse has a house mentor
- Provides follow-up for house mentors
- Covers food costs for follow-up gatherings (see p. 11)

DISCIPLEHOUSE NATIONAL

- Concept developer (Disippelhus.no)
- Provides teaching resources and follow-up as needed

VALUES



Rhythm

Closeness to Jesus and prayer as a natural part of everyday life. Fixed breaks during the week where body, head and heart find rest.



Community

Share your faith, your life, and pray together with the collective. Be part of a church community.



Mission

Use your gifts to love God and people through practical actions. Share Jesus with those God has placed in your life.



#2 Investment

Introduction

The investment phase in a Discipleship House covers the first five weeks, when the household comes together and establishes its shared rhythms. See the separate startup guide.

Every Disciplehouse needs a house mentor and a clearly defined ownership/connection to a church or organization. The house mentor knows the household and provides accountability in the Disciplehouse values.

What is a house mentor?

A house mentor is one (or two) adult(s) who, on behalf of and with support from the church/organization, follows up the Disciplehouse regularly throughout the school year. The mentor is closely involved during the start-up phase (see the separate start-up guide) and gradually less frequently as the Disciplehouse matures. The house is followed up based on the Disciplehouse values and the commitments they themselves have set.

A house mentor may be a volunteer or employed by the church/organization. One mentor can support several Disciplehouses. What we're looking for in a house mentor is not someone who brings lots of knowledge, experience, or expertise to the group, but someone who can stand in a relationship and walk closely with a group of people over time.

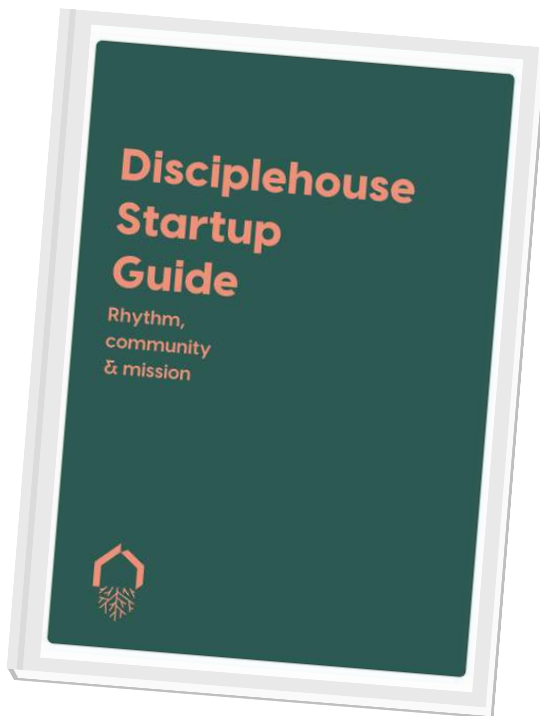
A house mentor can offer help and support when conflicts or challenges arise. The mentor also serves as a bridge to the church/organization, connecting participants into community and into opportunities for service.

Startup

“The start-up phase begins as soon as the Disciplehouse has moved in and is ready—usually at the beginning of the school year. The Disciplehouse Start-Up Guide (a separate booklet) takes the house through a process of weekly gatherings over the course of five weeks.”

5 week startup guide

A five-week conversation guide that, at the beginning of the school year, helps the Disciplehouse discover its shared rhythm. The guide is written in a way that makes it easy to read aloud as part of the conversation, and ensures that everyone can take part in the decisions that need to be made.



#3 Follow-up

Helping establish the Disciplehouse rhythms

The house mentor meets with the Disciplehouse at least every eight weeks. A house mentor can follow up more than one house. Meetings can take place in the Disciplehouse, in the mentor's home, or in the church. Several houses may join together for shared follow-up gatherings.

Living together comes with many practical challenges that often surface in the follow-up. Be ready to address issues like laundry routines, everyday responsibilities, and conflicts. When daily life in the house is difficult, it can be harder to share faith, life, and prayer with one another. At the same time, these situations create opportunities for growth and deeper closeness.

Follow-up of the Disciplehouse

We recommend meeting around an everyday meal (the church/organization can gladly cover the cost). Begin with something simple from the Bible or from your daily walk with God. If you bring a question or an icebreaker to the meal, it's a bonus in the getting-to-know-you phase.

The Disciplehouse Conversation Starter is a simple tool that makes it easy to have a meaningful conversation without much preparation. Let the participants look through the questions and choose one or two that feel challenging. Use these as a starting point for the conversation and any sharing of reflections or Scripture on the theme. End the gathering with prayer together, and finish by praying for, blessing, and sending the Disciplehouse into their everyday lives.

Follow-up of house mentors

House mentors may encounter many different challenges. In congregations with several Disciplehouses, or in areas where multiple Disciplehouses exist, we recommend semi-annual gatherings where house mentors can share experiences and support one another.

Rhythm

- Do I pray?
- Do I live as if Jesus is always there?
- I am looking for-novelty and inspiration?
- Am I happy?
- Do I have peace?
- Am I worried?
- Am I doing what God wants for me?
- Do I give fixed money for something?
- Do I eat healthily/
Am I sleeping enough?
- Do I have energy and stamina?

Community

- Do I know my team well?
- Am I happy with them?
- Do I have time?
- Am I resting?
- Do I experience closeness to others?
- Do I keep my promises?
- Is it easy to trust others?
- Am I showing weakness?
- Am I making disciples?
- Do I have a mentor?

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Mission

- Do I care about those who don't believe?
- Do I share my faith?
- Can I explain the gospel clearly?
- Is there room in my life for non-Christians?
- Am I running the race with a goal in mind?
- Do I have a dream?
- Do I always have to be the best?
- Am I serving anyone?
- Have I discovered a key-person God has entrusted to me?
- Am I taking chances?

#4 Clarification

Introduction

By spring, different Disciplehouses can be in very different places; some are still struggling to establish their rhythms, while others are ready to begin new Disciplehouses. Some residents move on and new ones join. In the clarification phase, the house mentor focuses on discerning what the road ahead should look like and how the relationship between the Disciplehouse and the house mentor will continue.

Passing it on

A core goal of a Disciplehouse is self-sufficiency — that the participants themselves take ownership of their rhythm, their community, and their mission. Being united with God and His interests in the world is not for our own sake alone, but for the sake of others. At the heart of Jesus' message is loving God and loving the people around us by giving away what we have received from Him.

Challenge the house to think beyond themselves in this clarification phase. A goal of Disciplehouse is to be able to pass it on — that participants can help start and support new houses in developing their rhythms, community, and mission. Pray and reflect on whether there is someone you could pass Disciplehouse on to, and help them begin the same processes you have walked through this past year.

From Mentor to Companion?

If the house is functioning well as a Disciplehouse, it may be appropriate for the role of house mentor to shift into that of a companion. The house now owns its process and no longer depends on you in the same way. You can remain available to them, but at a lighter level. This frees you, as a house mentor, to invest in new Disciplehouses.

Questions for Clarification Meeting

Here are some suggested questions for when the house mentor and the Disciplehouse meet for the clarification conversation. This meeting should ideally take place in March, giving the house enough time during the spring to prepare for any changes.

- What has been good this year?
- Do you feel that you own your rhythm?
- Do you feel that you own your community?
- Do you feel that you own your mission?
- What could we have done better or differently?
- What does next school year look like for you?
- What would you like your Disciplehouse to look like next year?

What if someone joins halfway through the year?

It's not unusual for a collective to change and for new people to move in during the year. By that time, your house has already established its framework for community during the start-up phase, and this agreed-upon framework is what the new person becomes part of when they move in. It's important to be clear about this, while still leaving space to revise the framework in light of the new situation.

During the first weekly gathering with the new housemate, you can reuse the task from week 2 of the start-up guide: everyone introduces themselves by sharing something about who they are, using a physical object they bring with them.

Appendix

Challenges & opportunities

How to navigate conflict?

- Remember that conflict is good. It's what leads to being closer. Shallow relationships never have conflict; growing relationships do.
- You don't have to agree, only reach an understanding you can live with.
- Your relationship is more important than this single issue. Determine that you're going to stay committed to each other while you work through this issue.
- Keep talking to each other. Relationships dissolve when we isolate. Compromise and commitment come when we stay at it.
- Talk to each other, not everybody else. We want to validate our feelings by finding people who'll back our position, but this leads to gossip. Talk out conflict with the people involved, not people who aren't.
- Keep to the facts. Very often conflicts escalate to places that end up being all about hurt feelings and egos, not the actual issues. Recognize your feelings, even voicing them, but remember that the other person has been emotionally affected as well. Keep a cool head, or take a break until you are able to have one.
- It's okay to fight, but fight fair. Stay away from low blows or cheap shots. Respect the other person and speak in a way that expresses your concern without placing blame. It really goes a long way toward reaching a resolution.

<https://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2013/conflict-in-small-groups.html>

How to build close relationships?

In a time when it's easy to hide behind filters and crowds, authentic relationships have become rare. In a Disciplehouse, where the goal is to live with intention and authenticity, it is easier to build deep relationships that reflect Jesus, both in the everyday and to the world around us.

Vulnerability and Trust: Use the first weekly gatherings to share your faith stories and pray for one another. Take your time so everyone feels truly heard, has space to listen to God and listen to each other. This creates a culture where people speak honestly about their faith and everyday lives.

Time: Close relationships require time together. Agree on when and how often your Discipleship House wants to spend time as a group. Meals, prayer, Bible reading, and worship are good starting points. Be realistic so the group can experience success, not exhaustion.

Hospitality: Practicing hospitality builds community. When you create a space that others enjoy being part of, something relational happens both for those who host and those who are welcomed in.

Serving: Sharing responsibility and serving one another in the home fosters an environment focused on something bigger than ourselves. This can include both practical tasks in the house and outward-facing initiatives.

Celebration: We believe in a God who encourages us to outdo one another in showing honor. Talk together about how to practice this. (Examples: celebrating birthdays, spiritual breakthroughs, or meaningful milestones.)

Relationships That Endure:

- By practicing love of neighbor, healthy conflict resolution, and forgiveness
- By learning each other's strengths and weaknesses, communication styles, and boundaries

«A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.» John 13:34-35 (ESV)

What if it becomes difficult to participate?

Bring up challenges early and speak directly with the person or people involved. Show care, and make it easy for them to recognise and receive that care. Work toward a shared understanding and make a plan for the way forward, including how they will communicate their situation to the rest of the group. Consider whether the house mentor should be present when this is communicated to the others. The earlier you inform the whole house, the more likely it is that the community can continue as a Disciplehouse even when facing the challenge.

Clarify who should be involved in the situation (including potential external support), so that the other participants can continue functioning as a Disciplehouse and maintain equal relationships within the house.

What about house rules?

A Disciplehouse has no official behavioral rules, but it offers a values-based framework that sets direction for following Jesus in everyday life.

When it comes to rules/guidelines in the house, we recommend that the participants themselves decide what they want to commit to together. A house mentor can serve as a conversation partner in this process.

Areas where expectations may differ and that are wise to talk about early:

- Alcohol use and partying
- Guests and overnight visitors
- Food and shared groceries
- Handling shared expenses
- Division of household chores
- Quiet hours in the evening
- Use of shared spaces

The homeowner is responsible for general rules of order for the residence. Example: Vandalism, unpaid rent, neighbor complaints, etc.

What if the church/organization is the landlord?

We do not recommend that the church or house mentor acts as the landlord for a Disciplehouse, because the role quickly becomes more complicated and introduces a number of potential problems. If you still choose to do so, the following points should be considered:

- You are no longer relating only to the Disciplehouse participants as people you walk with in their relationship with Jesus — you also become legally responsible for the tenants and their contracts.
- If someone chooses not to live according to the Disciplehouse values, you as the landlord end up in a conflict of interest that can be difficult to manage.
- Some individuals may, for various reasons, be unable to live out the Disciplehouse values or function well within the collective, and you as the landlord may be held responsible for how you handle that situation.

If you only use a standard rental contract, you have no legal grounds to regulate or require the tenants to live as a Disciplehouse.

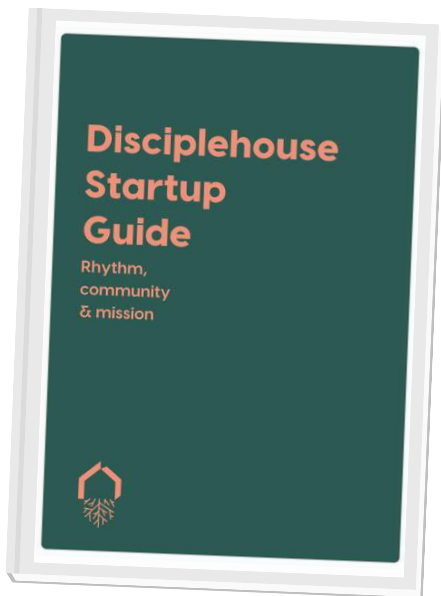
If you choose to specify and obligate tenants to live out the Disciplehouse values in the rental contract, you will need a clear expectation-setting process and a plan for how to handle challenges related to upholding those expectations. Many churches/organizations have statutes or mission statements that should guide how such a contract is formulated.

Before signing: Meet each potential tenant for a clarifying conversation/interview to ensure that both the landlord and the tenant share a clear understanding of the expectations involved.

See our Startup Guide

A five-week conversation guide that helps the Disciplehouse establish its shared rhythm at the start of the school year.

The guide is written so it can be read aloud as part of a group conversation, making it easy for everyone to participate in the decisions that need to be made.



disippelhus.no