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# Word of God Grows Fruitful Followers

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## Word of God Grows Fruitful Followers

by Aaron Cook '99

Discipleship Ministries is part of a deliberate strategy to produce maturing disciples of Christ on the campus of Cedarville University. We see ourselves in partnership with other divisions and as a place where students can build on the biblical concepts they are learning in the classroom.

The heart and soul of Discipleship Ministries are d-groups (discipleship groups): small, gender-specific groups of eight to 10 men or women who meet weekly throughout the fall and spring semesters to discuss the Word of God, talk about their lives, share struggles and joys, pray, and inspire each other to follow the Lord. Meetings alternate between bond-building activities and Bible study or biblical topics from a Gospel-centered book. Students sign up for d-groups early in the fall semester.

The groups are led by upperclassmen discipleship leaders, who in turn are built into by other upperclassmen in a weekly, Word-based meeting. These influencers of influencers are members of the Discipleship Council, which I pour into. As you can tell, we take seriously Paul's counsel in 2 Timothy 2:2, "And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

All of these groups have the Bible as their foundation. Psalm 1:1–3 illustrates very well what we hope to happen in the lives of students involved in d-groups:

*Blessed is the man  
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor stands in the way of sinners,  
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;  
but his delight is in the law of the Lord,  
and on his law he meditates day and night.  
He is like a tree  
planted by streams of water  
that yields its fruit in its season,  
and its leaf does not wither.  
In all that he does, he prospers.*

Disciples whose relationship with Christ is founded on His truth become resilient, fruit-bearing followers. That's what we desire to nurture.

Life transformation that leads to Gospel impact must be rooted in the Word of God. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory

of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." We behold the Lord by looking into His Word, learning His character and priorities, and being transformed by truth that is "living and active" (Heb. 4:12), not dry text on a printed page. It is our firm conviction that there will be no growth toward Christlikeness apart from regular Bible intake. If we can cultivate a desire to consume the Word of God, our students will mature and become more like Christ.

Some of our more than 100 groups will study books



of the Bible, and others will study a book that is Gospel-centered and applicable to our students. The aim of our student-led small groups on campus is to help students see and savor Christ in His Word, in the context of loving, accountable relationships. When the Scriptures are discussed, mulled over, and used to minister to one another in this context, powerful change happens. Students become different people, changed more into the likeness of Christ.

Our hope is that students would not simply enjoy a small group for a year, but would develop new appetites for God's Word and for making disciples of Christ. And we have seen the results: From Guam to grad school at The Ohio State University, our graduates are putting feet to their learning at Cedarville and making disciples of Christ in the places that God has planted them.

It is our joy to see graduates that are Word-saturated, fruitful members of a local church, living out the Great Commission far beyond their four years at Cedarville for the rest of their lives.

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**Aaron Cook '99** is Director of Discipleship Ministries at Cedarville University.