

# South Asian Discipleship Series

## Before You Begin

### ABOUT

This guide is an invitation to know God more deeply and consider how faith in Jesus impacts your unique South Asian cultural experience. This guide is made up of four discipleship cycles. Each “D-Cycle” has three sections: Hear the Word, Respond Actively, and Debrief & Interpret. To grow as disciples of Jesus, we need to live out what we hear God speak and instruct. Our learning is synthesized through reflecting on our learning. We pray that through the power of the Holy Spirit, you would meet God and be transformed as you go through this guide.

### MAKE THE MOST OF THIS GUIDE

- Treat this resource as the leader's guide.
- This guide is best used in 1-1 or 1-2 discipleship meetings with 1 person serving as a leader / facilitator.
- For Small groups: If using this material with a small group (more than 2 ppl, non-Christians present, etc.) we suggest spending extra group time to study the scripture before moving to the response time.
- Planning ahead: For D-Cycles 1, 2, and 4, the Respond Actively section is an **activity** to be done outside of the meeting time. Therefore, the Debrief & Interpret portion will be done after completing the response activity. You can choose to start the next D-Cycle with debriefing the previous one, but keep in mind it will take at least 20 minutes.

### RECOMMENDED SCHEDULE

This guide can be completed in 7 meetings. But if the group needs more time to complete the activities, take as much time as you need. The response activities are essential, so do not move on if the participant has yet to complete it.

#### MEETING 1 | D-Cycle 1: Pursuing Kingdom Dreams (60min)

*Hear the Word & Respond Actively*

#### MEETING 2 | D-Cycle 1 Debrief (30min)

*Debrief & interpret the response activity from last time*

MEETING 3 | **D-Cycle 2: Cultivating Healthy Cross-Gender Relationships (60 min)**

*Hear the Word & Respond Actively*

MEETING 4 | **D-Cycle 2 Debrief (30min)**

*Debrief & interpret the response activity from last time*

MEETING 5 | **D-Cycle 3: Freedom from Shame (75min)**

*Hear the Word / Respond Actively / Debrief & Interpret*

MEETING 6 | **D-Cycle 4: Sharing God's Heart for South Asians (60min)**

*Hear the Word & Respond Actively*

MEETING 7 | **D-Cycle 4 Debrief (30min)**

*Debrief & interpret the response activity from last time*

## GET IN TOUCH

If you have questions about using this guide email [arul.k@intervarsity.org](mailto:arul.k@intervarsity.org).

# D-Cycle 1: Pursuing Kingdom Dreams

## PURPOSE

South Asian American students often wrestle with what it means to pursue the Kingdom of God in light of parental expectations and dreams, which at times can feel at odds. The hope is for students to have a bigger vision for what it means to honor their families *and* courageously follow God.

## KINGDOM VALUE

Lordship of Jesus

## DESIRED IMPACT

Wrestle with how pursuing the Kingdom of heaven is more valuable than any other treasure (including parental expectations) and take risks to live accordingly.

## Hear the Word

### DISCUSS

What is one of the most expensive things you have purchased or received and would say was worth every dollar? Explain why.

### MATTHEW 13:44-46

*Take 3 mins individually to carefully read this passage then discuss the questions below together.*

44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; 46 on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

### DISCUSS

1. What is your understanding of what the "kingdom of heaven" means or represents?
2. Both of these purchases may seem like financial no-brainers: give up something worth less now for something worth far more in the near future. Upon further reflection, what risks might the buyer assume in these parables?
3. What would it look like to value God above everything else, to the point of being willing to give up what currently gives you security?

4. How might that affect your family? What risks or costs would you or your family pay?

### REFLECT

Take a moment of silence to listen to God. Reflect on this parable in light of the goals and desires you have for your own life. Reflect on your relationship with Jesus and if you truly believe that Jesus is more valuable than all you have.

### Respond Actively

*Schedule a time to get together to debrief this activity. Debrief questions can be found below.*

Create 3 columns and list your personal dreams, your parents' expectations/dreams for you, and your impression of God's dreams for you. Reflect on where there are gaps and why.

My Dreams	My Parents' Dreams for Me	God's Dreams for me

This week take an hour to interview your parents in person or on the phone / video chat. If it's helpful, let them know you are doing a homework assignment for a campus group.

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Ask parents about their vocational and life dreams when they were your age. Ask why or how they arrived at these dreams.

2. If parents are religious, ask how their faith informed how they pursued those dreams.
3. Were their dreams different than their parents in any way (e.g. leaving home to immigrate to the US). If so, how did they work through that?
4. Looking back, what would they wish they did differently or knew more about?
5. Ask what counsel and dreams they have for you as you pursue your future.

## GRATITUDE

Express gratitude to your parents. This can be an intimate experience, and it's good to acknowledge your appreciation for their openness.

## Debrief & Interpret

*\*Note: Schedule a time to debrief this experience and continue the conversation.*

## SHARE

- Did you have any "AHA" moments with your parents? What did you learn for the first time? What surprised you?
- What next step of faith is the Holy Spirit inviting you to?

## PRAYER

Pray in pairs to submit your dreams and your parents' expectations to the Lord. Ask God what it means to pursue kingdom dreams through your vocation and in your life. Pray for God to bring peace to any places of tension in your family and for the Holy Spirit to empower you to love and honor your parents. Pray for the courage to take risks and pursue what is more valuable in the long-run, even when there may be short-term costs.

## EXPAND THE INFLUENCE

- Share what you learned with 2 South Asian peers.
- Lead 2 younger South Asian students through the same d-cycle.

# D-Cycle 2: Cultivating Healthy Cross-Gender Relationships

## PURPOSE

Address the unhealthy patterns and cultural narratives around gender dynamics in South Asian communities and move towards healthy cross-gender relationships.

## KINGDOM VALUE

Healthy relationships

## DESIRED IMPACT

To become countercultural like Jesus who doesn't accept broken cultural norms, but shows us a new way forward.

## Hear the Word

### DISCUSS

For male students: How have you seen your South Asian community show respect (or lack thereof) to women (friends, aunties, sisters, cousins, etc.)?

For female students: How have you seen your South Asian community show respect (or lack thereof) to men (friends, uncles, brothers, cousins, etc.)?

*Leader's Note: We hope some of the disparities between men and women in South Asian communities would start to come out and be named here. Let students sit in the tension, and be mindful of comments that seek to invalidate the experience of women. Keep the conversation moving so that deeper conversation can come after reflecting on the passage.*

### JOHN 4:4-30

*Take 5 mins individually to carefully read this passage then discuss the questions below together.*

4 Now he had to go through Samaria. 5 So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. 7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" 8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) 9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can

you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) 10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." 11 "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?" 13 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." 15 The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." 16 He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." 17 "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. 18 The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." 19 "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." 21 "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." 25 The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." 26 Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he." 27 Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?" 28 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 29 "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" 30 They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

## DISCUSS

1. How do you see Jesus respect the Samaritan woman through this passage?
2. What do you learn from the disciples' reaction to this interaction? Why might Jesus' actions be considered counter-cultural?
3. How would an interaction like this be perceived among South Asian cultures?

## REFLECT

Men: Reflect on friendships, family, and ministry relationships with women. How have you ignored, overlooked, or disparaged women? What would you have to change or continue doing to cultivate healthy relationships with women? Pray for Jesus to meet you in repentance and give you discernment if there are ways you need to own or apologize for your actions.

Women: Reflect on friendships, family, and ministry relationships with men. In what situations have you felt ignored, overlooked, or disparaged? Pray for Jesus to pour out healing over those situations and affirmation over your identity. Are there men in your life who have acted counter-culturally in ways that affirmed your voice? Consider sharing feedback on how their actions impacted you in a meaningful way.

*\*Note: Unlike for men, for women there is a cost involved in applying this to their circumstances. As those who have less cultural power, it may be hard to challenge men's behaviors that impact them directly. Men can help by listening well to women's experiences and doing their part to challenge the inappropriate and sexist behaviors of other men.*

## Respond Actively

*Schedule a time to get together to debrief this activity. Debrief questions can be found below.*

This week have a conversation with 2-3 South Asian students from the opposite gender. Explain that you want to get their perspective on gender dynamics in South Asian communities. Your goal is to simply listen and learn from their experience. Be mindful not to refute, debate or minimize the experiences of those you talk to.

## CONVERSATION QUESTIONS

- What was your experience like growing up as a bi-cultural South Asian American person? How did gender impact that?
- What did your parents (or place of worship) teach directly/indirectly about relating to the opposite gender?
- What do you hope that (men / women) would know about what it is like to be a South Asian (woman / man)
- What would healthy gender dynamics look like in the South Asian community? (in families, with family friends, faith communities, etc.)

## Debrief & Interpret

*\*Note: Schedule a time to debrief this experience and continue the conversation.*

## SHARE

- What was that experience like?
- What did you learn that was new to you?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- What next steps can you take to continue growing and engaging in healthy relationships with the opposite gender?

## LISTENING PRAYER

God can speak to us in many ways: through community, Scripture, images, inklings, and more.

Spend a few moments in quiet, listening for the voice of God. Ask God: How can I emulate the counter-cultural model of Jesus (like in the John 4 passage we read) in my interactions with the opposite gender? Ask for the Holy Spirit to empower you to go and do likewise.

## EXPAND THE INFLUENCE

- What practical ways can you bring this cultural shift to others?
- Who could you convey this value to next?

## D-Cycle 3: Freedom From Shame

### PURPOSE

In the context of honor / shame culture within the South Asian community, students can often feel isolated and bound by shame. Students need to experience healing found in Jesus to move forward in freedom and wholeness. They also need to discern if mental health support is part of that healing journey. Research the campus mental health resources available to students before you meet.

### KINGDOM VALUE

Healing from Shame

### DESIRED IMPACT

Walk in freedom without shame holding us back and invite others to experience healing from shame through the Holy Spirit.

## Hear the Word

### DISCUSS

Take a minute or two to read over and think through the definition of shame: “a feeling of guilt, regret, or sadness that you have because of a past or current situation. Dishonor or disgrace, embarrassment. The feeling of not being enough.”

What resonates with you from this definition? When in your life have you experienced this?

Take a moment to **pray** this prayer: “Jesus, I bring all of myself before you. Open my ears to hear your voice; open my eyes to see you in your word; open my heart and mind to receive and believe your truth. Help me to find my identity in your thoughts about me and not in the image of myself that I or others have created. I pray this in Jesus’ name, Amen.”

## ZECHARIAH 3

*Take 5 mins individually to carefully read this passage then discuss the questions below together.*

1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. 2 The Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?" 3 Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. 4 The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you." 5 Then I said, "Put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the Lord stood by. 6 The angel of the Lord gave this charge to Joshua: 7 "This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'If you will walk in obedience to me and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here. 8 "'Listen, High Priest Joshua, you and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch. 9 See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua! There are seven eyes on that one stone, and I will engrave an inscription on it,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day. 10 "'In that day each of you will invite your neighbor to sit under your vine and fig tree,' declares the Lord Almighty."

## DISCUSS

1. What contrasts do you see between Satan's actions and God's actions towards Joshua? What do you notice about the Lord's personality?
2. Place yourself in Joshua's shoes. What range of emotions would you experience if you were Joshua?
3. How does the Lord respond to Joshua's filthy garments?
4. In verses 9-10, God makes a promise to Joshua that anticipates the coming Messiah. How does Jesus fulfill this promise?

## REFLECT

Take a moment of silence to be present before God. Reflect on what your filthy garments might be. What accusations come up when you think of yourself?

## Respond Actively

Prayerfully engage in this imaginative exercise.

Leader: read the following instructions aloud slowly, pausing between each prompt.

Close your eyes if you are comfortable and imagine yourself in the story of Zechariah 3 in the place of Joshua.

- You are standing before Jesus. Take some deep breaths and embrace being in his presence. Ask Jesus to bring His light to your thoughts and feelings. (pause)
- Jesus looks at you warmly, and tells you to list all the things you are shameful of. (pause)
- Ask Jesus to reveal the lies you have believed about yourself. Name those lies and accusations before him. (pause)
- Hold out your arms before you and clench your hands into fists. As a sign of giving to Jesus the things you're ashamed of and the lies you have believed about yourself, open your hands so your palms are flat. (pause)
- Colossians 1:21-22 reads, "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation." (pause)
- Jesus is still looking at you with eyes of love. He reaches over and wipes your hands clean. (pause)
- Ask Jesus to tell you what He thinks about you. (write them down). Invite Jesus to speak truth and replace the lies you were believing. (pause)
- Thank Jesus for the truth He has brought. (pause)

### WRITE

Write out your experience in a journal or on your phone. Go out and find a stone to keep that can serve to remind you of this interaction with Jesus.

## Debrief & Interpret

*\*Leaders Note: This activity may have brought up past experiences of trauma (sexual, emotional, physical, etc.). We encourage you to share the mental health resources your campus or local area offers with students who may need additional support.*

## SHARE

1. What was your experience like?
2. What lies were you believing about yourself and what truths did Jesus replace them with?
3. What did you learn about God through this experience?
4. Who is one person you can share this experience with?

## PRAYER

Close by **praying** aloud these words of worship from Micah 7:18-20:

*Who is a God like you,  
who pardons sin and forgives the transgression  
of the remnant of his inheritance?  
You do not stay angry forever  
but delight to show mercy.  
You will again have compassion on us;  
you will tread our sins underfoot  
and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.  
You will be faithful to Jacob,  
and show love to Abraham,  
as you pledged on oath to our ancestors  
in days long ago.*

## EXPAND THE INFLUENCE

- Ask God to bring to mind 3-4 people with whom you can share about how God met you through the imaginative prayer exercise. Write their names down, and pray every day this week for them.
- Share your experience with at least one of them, and invite them to go through this discipleship cycle with you.

## D-Cycle 4: Sharing God's Heart for South Asians

### PURPOSE

Not all South Asian students have a vision for reaching their community on campus. Some may have grown up in sub-ethnic specific, Christian contexts, so the idea of reaching other South Asians might feel like an intimidating cross-cultural act. Others may be eager to connect with other South Asian students but need vision for what God might want to do in and through this community.

### KINGDOM VALUE

Compassion for unreached students on campus.

### DESIRED IMPACT

Help students see South Asians on campus through God's eyes. Engage in small steps of risk and displacement to help the students grow in loving mission towards South Asian students who don't follow Jesus.

## Hear the Word

### DISCUSS

What have been your family's experiences with South Asians of other religious, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds? What positive or negative impressions do you think exist between South Asian communities of differing religious or ethnic backgrounds?

### PASSAGE BACKGROUND

This letter from Paul to Timothy, who was supporting the church in Ephesus, was written during the reign of Emperor Nero when Christians were experiencing extreme persecution at the hands of the Romans. Timothy was the leader of the church at Ephesus, which was under the jurisdiction of the Roman Empire.

*"Ephesus was not an easy place to minister for it was a center for the worship of the goddess Artemis. Her devotees had rioted against Paul's preaching while he was there. Thus this church was in the public eye, making it all the more important that it be held to high standards. Moreover, because it was operating in a multi-religious centre, it would be very easy for it to be infiltrated by the beliefs of other religions, resulting in its distinctive beliefs being watered down and its standards of conduct compromised."*

*South Asia Bible Commentary, pg 1682*

## 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-7

*Take 5 mins individually to carefully read this passage then discuss the questions below together.*

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. 7 And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles.

### DISCUSS

1. What are God's desires and Jesus' actions in the text?
2. What significance does that have to how Timothy should live in the midst of rejection and persecution?
3. How might the statement "God wants all people to be saved" (v 4) have been received by Timothy and the church in Ephesus, given the negative associations with being a follower of Jesus?

### REFLECT

Take a moment and think about the South Asian students on your campus. Consider the different student cultural and religious groups (e.g. Indian Student Association, Muslim Student Association, South Asian dance teams, etc...). We might feel like Timothy, who is surrounded by people that God wants to reach but who aren't interested in or have negative perceptions of Jesus.

Imagine Paul's exhortation for this South Asian community on your campus: God wants all South Asians to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth....

### SHARE

1. What do you notice in yourself?
2. What hopes or desires come to mind?
3. What areas of unbelief emerge?
4. What is God's encouragement or invitation to you?

## Respond Actively

Identify a place where South Asian students are gathering this week. Set aside one hour this week to visit this place with a friend. It may be:

- A place where they hangout
- A South Asian studies class
- A South Asian club/org meeting or event (Indian Student Association, Muslim Student Association, Pakistani Student Association, Hindu Student Association)
- A friend's room or apartment

**Before you go** pray and ask God to expand your heart and increase your compassion for his people.

**While you are there**, get to know people! Pray for God's heart and God's eyes as you spend time in that space.

- Here is a simple prayer to pray for the South Asians you see: "Thank you God that you see them and love them. Would you help them to come to know you and experience the good news of Jesus for themselves. Show me how you want to use me to love and reach them."
- Have some conversations, just for the purpose of building friendships.

## Debrief & Interpret

### SHARE

- What was it like to be in this space and interact with these students?
- What did you notice about them, perhaps something you haven't noticed before?
- What did you notice about yourself while you were there?
- What do you sense God saying to you through this experience?

Spend some time praying by name for the students that you met.

### Expand the Influence

Follow-up with someone that you met from your visit this week. Invite them to hangout or grab a meal with them. If you visited a student org meeting, consider how you might serve that group with the resources that you have.

Start a regular prayer meeting in your chapter to pray for South Asian students on campus.