

Guide to Starting a Discipled Veteran Ministry

If you are reading this, you must already have some interest in reaching the veterans in your area and I truly thank you. This guide is not meant to be a complete guide of everything you will need to know answering every question you may have but a simple what to be thinking about and steps to take to get started. We are available for and desire that you contact us for any assistance you may need at any stage of your church's ministry.

- 1. Holy Spirit Leading** – We are unapologetic about using every asset in our arsenal to encourage Pastors to reach Veterans in their local area. This is our calling and heart. However, we understand if the Holy Spirit isn't leading a pastor in this area, it isn't the Lord's will, and you shouldn't do it.
- 2. Why should you have a Discipled Veteran Ministry at your church?** – Most importantly because God gave us a directive to give the world the gospel. Specifically, across the board Veterans already have a natural relationship that allows you to leap past introduction and gaining trust before being able to successfully present them with the gospel message. Every Veteran regardless of military experience will tell you the one thing they miss about their military service is the comradery of those they serve with. This is something we search for and rarely find outside the military. Once a Veteran hears the gospel from someone they already trust it makes it easy for them to immediately consider the gospel. Once they consider the gospel from someone they trust and become born again you start to build a unit of born-again Veterans who understand dedication, chain of command, respect their teammates, are mission minded, want to reach others. The focus of Discipled Veteran is NOT to create a subculture in the church but to infiltrate newly saved people into the church.
- 3. The Discipled Veteran Curriculum** – The free studies that you find on our website are nothing more than scripturally sound bible studies that focus on helping veterans deal with common Veteran issues. If you were writing a study for the purpose of having success helping Spanish speaking people grasp a concept of scripture, you would write it in a language they best understand and makes them feel most comfortable. For that reason, these lessons are written using common military acronyms and language to help Veterans understand. For example, when explaining the bible to new Christians it is often difficult and often, they still never get it and if they do often fail to follow it, however, if I tell a newly saved veteran the bible is the SOP (standard operating procedure) for how we are to live our life I need say no more. They know the SOP is a preapproved practice for how to operate anything, it has already been tested by someone they trust, it is always the best practice, and they will follow it.
- 4. Contact Discipled Veteran (How we Help)** - Occasionally a veteran will contact us asking if there is a Discipled Veteran Ministry in an area, allow us to place your church on the Discipled Veteran map on our website so your church can be easily found by Veterans in your area. No one has all the answers, but we know where we had success and difficulty and we can help you. The mission of Discipled Veteran isn't to present you with the ministry and leave you to figure it out. We want to be a tool in your box, helping your church reach veterans in your area.

5. **Find The Leader (What Makes a good DVM Leader)** – The right Discipled Veteran leader may not look like the leader in other church ministries. In church culture we often kill off or discredit those who have the battle scars of life and Satan loves that because we then go into battle lacking the experience of those battle scars. Veterans go to war best following someone who has been in the same battles they are in, found a way to survive, and have the battle scars to prove it. Not someone straight out of boot camp. A saved, man, veteran the pastor trusts should be your major prerequisites.
6. **Decide When You Want to Hold Your Meetings** – Anytime is better than at no time but we have found certain times better than others in that the goal is to infiltrate them into the church body. We recommend during a regular church service, best case during your midweek service or as a Sunday evening connections / life group session. We have found that this gets them coming to church during a regular church service and undoubtedly, they will meet or see someone in the church body that will make them more comfortable coming to regular church services, which is the goal.
7. **Invitation Palm Cards (How to use the cards)** – On our resource page we have provided free for download an example of the invite card we use. It is available for you to add your churches information and have printed. Admittedly, the design may not seem appealing to you, the average church member, or even most graphic designers but they are not the target, and it has been tested and is appealing to our target. We have found these cards are great for leaving in areas where veterans congregate like VA Hospital waiting rooms and secular Veteran organization meeting places. They are also great for passing out at community veteran events such as Veteran Day Parades, or anywhere else Veterans meet. In a one-on-one scenario they are an easy way for any church member to show a veteran they meet that their church cares about veterans by thanking them for their service and giving them an invitation to their churches veteran group.
8. **Meet with and motivate the Veterans you have** – At the first Discipled Veteran meeting to ever take place there were only five Veterans in attendance, and they were already church members. This will more than likely be the case in your church. The goal is to motivate your Veterans to start reaching lost Veterans. At this first meeting explain the ministry, if need be direct them to or utilize our website to help them better understand the mission. Instruct your leader to have a discussion with them about what events or activities the group can be a part of with a focus on interacting with lost Veterans. In most cases you will find that most churched Veterans already interact with many lost Veterans but lack the proper avenue to invite them to the church. Discipled Veteran provides that Veteran attractive avenue. Veterans appreciate accountability. Assign your veterans the task of inviting three Veterans a week to the group with the understanding that each Veteran must report back to the group each week on the three Veterans that they invited during the previous week.

9. Present It to The Church – Getting the church body behind the ministry is a bonus to reaching Veterans in your area. The first Veteran ever saved in the Discipled Veteran ministry was invited by a lady in our church who while visiting her bus route met a man wearing an Army T-shirt. He denied her invitation to come to church but jumped at the opportunity to come to a Veteran meeting at the church. Everyone knows an unchurched Veteran whether it be family, friend, or just acquaintance. On our resources page you will find a referral form that churches will often put in their bulletin and ask their members to fill out and turn it in to the leader. This gives the leader a list, with a connection, that he should immediately start to visit.

10. Prepare a meeting space – If you have the space it is good if you have a meeting space designated as the veteran room so that it can be decorated with military branch seals and the like and be used for your leader to meet with individuals during the week, however, if you don't have the space it is easy to, and many churches do, share with another group and set up and tear down spaces after each meeting. The most important aspect is to set it up as a round table type discussion and not a lecture. Using whatever table configuration, you have set the leader at the end of the table and have a discussion on the scriptural topic of the night.

11. Include the Veteran's family – A Veterans wife deals with things the average wife doesn't deal with because her husband is a veteran. When leaving the military, a Veterans wife also loses that comradery. On occasion a Veterans wife would call and ask us to come to see her husband who may be isolating himself, while asking us not to tell him she called. There have been wives of Veterans saved through the witness of other Veteran wives in the group. Hold Veteran family events like cookouts to give the wives the opportunity to interact.

12. What does a meeting look like? –

1. Get there early and have the coffee ready. Never know when a guy may come early in hopes of discussing something before you start.
2. Open in prayer
3. Discuss any veteran events that are taking place in the area that your group could be a part of to reach other veterans.
4. Discuss any events that your group has planned to attract new veterans and build comradery.
5. Challenge your veterans to invite and report back 3 veterans each week.
6. Teach the lessons stopping often to ask if there are questions or thoughts. Make it a discussion. Don't stand and teach set around a table with them. Make it a discussion. Don't worry about finishing a lesson each week focus on discussion.
7. End in prayer.
8. Stick around after to become friends with new guys.
9. Follow up with new guys within a couple days of them coming.
10. Encourage everyone to get to know each other and become part of one another's life.
11. Build your guys through comradery into a spiritual spec-ops unit for God.

13. Call us with any question you have or help you need.