

LEADING A SMALL GROUP

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to communicate the elements of an effective discipleship group in order to prepare you to lead one with confidence.

Objectives: This session will help you to:

1. Explain your role as a leader to create a proper environment and provide loving accountability for your discipleship group.
2. Utilize critical elements in leading a discipleship group.
3. Feel more confident in leading your small group effectively.
4. See the vital role of the Discipleship Group in reaching the world for Christ.

Key Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:2

I. Introduction

The motto verse of Campus Crusade for Christ is Matthew 28:18-20. Our target is about 6 billion people! How will we fulfill what Jesus commanded us to do? We've looked at introducing the Four Spiritual Laws, handling responses to the Four Spiritual Laws, closing the Four Spiritual Laws, motivating new believers to come to follow-up, doing follow-up, challenging to a discipleship group - for what? We want discipleship groups, but not as an end in themselves. Instead, they are a tool to help us accomplish the dual focus of the Great Commission: 1) to build spiritual multipliers and 2) to reach a target area/world. Because the discipleship group plays such a vital/key role in obeying Christ's Great Commission, we want to look at how you can have a more effective discipleship group."

Think back over discipleship groups you've led or were a part of. What would you say the role of a discipleship group leader is? Write down your ideas before proceeding on.

II. Roles of the Group Leader

The group leader has two basic roles.

A. Create the right environment for the discipleship group.

1. Spiritual - **God** needs to be the focus of our groups. We seek to study about God and also to know Him personally and trust Him in believing prayer with every area of our lives and ministry.

Ask yourself: ***"What can I do to keep "God" and "walking by faith" at the center of our group?"*** Write down your ideas and thoughts.

2. Social

Have the mindset of Christ (read Philippians 2:1-11). He loved and served others. We do not want to be selfish, only looking to our own interests and needs (Philippians 2:4), but rather to develop an "others-centered" mindset. Many things will cause people to join a group, but only loving, Christ-centered relationships will keep them involved.

Ask yourself: ***"What kind of things can I do to develop loving relationships among my group members?"*** Write it down.

3. Training/Equipping for Ministry

Christ trained others for ministry (Matthew 4:19). Vision building stretches our faith by expanding our anticipation of God's work in our lives and in others around the world. Training gives people the tools necessary to ensure success of the vision.

Ask yourself: ***"What ministry are we going to do together? What am I doing to equip the members of my group for ministry?"*** Write down your ideas.

4. Physical Needs

- a. Meet in an informal, accessible location
- b. Meet at a time when all can attend
- c. Arrange the room so all can easily interact with one another
- d. Meet where you can control distractions
- e. Provide refreshments
- f. Good lighting that creates a warm feeling
- g. Meet in a place where people will be free to interact

- h. Bring extra Bibles.
- B. Provide loving accountability for the members (1 Thessalonians 2:7-14).
 - 1. Get Involved in Day-to-Day Lives of each Member

One benefit of a discipleship group is the growth that results when we hold each other in loving accountability for our relationship with God. Don't just meet once a week but get involved in the day-to-day lives of each member (1 Thessalonians 2:8-9). Spend time with those you're discipling. Call them on the phone and ask, "*How are you doing? How can I pray for you?*"

- 2. Help them Apply God's Word to their Lives

Get them into the Word and the Word into them. Model how to live it (1 Thessalonians 2:10-12). Set specific goals to pray for and work toward. Interest them with good questions.

If you are studying a Bible passage, you could ask questions like these: "*What did you like best about this passage? What do you like least about this passage? What do you not understand about this passage? What do we learn about God from this passage? What do you need to do in light of this passage? What verse or phrase from this passage do you want to take with you?*"

You could also take two pages from the Holy Spirit Booklet per week and do a Bible Study on them.

- 3. Lead and Equip Them in Ministry

Lead them in ministry, helping to develop the necessary skills and to overcome faith barriers that would hold them back (1 Thessalonians 2:13-14).

Communicate support for them as they take "baby steps" in reaching out. Be their coach and their cheerleader.

With these general responsibilities in mind, let's look at how they work in a discipleship group.

III. Essential Activities in a Small Group

- A. A Time of Sharing:

A time of sharing helps to create a relational environment, while communicating what God is doing in people's lives. It is very encouraging for a growing Christian to hear how God is working in the lives of other growing Christians. Allow regular time for group members to express what God is doing. As you develop a loving atmosphere and set the example by sharing yourself, they will respond more and more.

B. A Time of prayer and praise:

This focuses our attention and dependence upon the Lord. Spend time together praising and talking with God. Make a list and watch for God's answers.

C. A Time in the Word:

It is the Word of God that is sharper than any two edged sword, not our great insights. The Holy Spirit uses it to change lives. We should always teach the truth clearly and draw opinions back to what the Word says. (Colossians 3:16)

D. A Time of Training:

We must carefully equip our disciples to walk consistently with Christ and have a fruitful ministry. There must be vision-building, which stretches our faith by expanding our anticipation of God's work in our lives and in our world.

- Pray together for your target area and other parts of the world.
- Share "war stories" and spiritual needs with them.
- Have regular ministry training times.
- Set ministry goals.
- Demonstrate ministry in your target area.
- Give them the opportunity to do ministry under your eye.
- Allow them to do ministry.

E. One-on-one time to help personalize everything that happens in the group:

Personal relationships help to keep us balanced as whole persons. Do not let your relationship be only 'Spiritual.' Do other things together (sports events, shopping, meals, etc.) to demonstrate Spirit-filled living in all spheres of life.

IV. The First Meeting

Following is an overview of attitudes and activities that should take place before, during and after the first meeting.

Visit every potential group member before the meeting (via visit or phone call.)

Take care of physical arrangements before the meeting.

Provide refreshments.

Be early so you can greet everyone as they arrive.

Be enthusiastic irrespective of who shows.

Plan your time.

Help group members get to know one another. Encourage interaction.

Review your vision for what you hope God will do in the group.

Review how the group will work (time, study and training.)

Use short, easy content.

Don't put people on the spot

Use terminology they are familiar with

Be real
Enjoy yourself!
Visit with everyone after the meeting (person or by phone)

V. Small Group Pitfalls

It is important to know the pitfalls to leading an effective discipleship group.

- A.) Losing sight of your objective: Remember that your objective is to build spiritual multipliers, not just to lead a group.
- B.) Lack of ministry together: You will never have spiritual multiplication unless your group members develop a commitment to a lifestyle of evangelism, follow-up and discipleship.
- C.) Lack of prayer for your people: You must be depending upon the Holy Spirit to work in your life and theirs. Lack of prayer indicates a lack of dependence.
- D.) Poor selection of group members: You cannot afford to have people in your group who are not faithful, available and teachable (**F.A.T.**).
- E.) Little personal involvement with individual members: If you only meet during the group time and an occasional ministry appointment, you will not be able to help them make application in their lifestyle.
- F.) Becoming content-oriented: It is an easy mistake to focus on the materials instead of focusing on the harder task of building into peoples' lives.
- G.) Poor discussion time due to: Poor preparation, Dominating leadership, Ineffective questions or Little-to-no application.
- H.) Getting into a rut, always doing things the same way: Mix things up; add variety and spontaneity.

The three most often neglected are # 1, 2, and 5

VI. Summary

We have looked at how you can have a more effective discipleship group in order to help fulfill the Great Commission. We looked at the leader's roles (creating the right environment and loving accountability), essential activities in the small group, important points for your first group meeting, and pitfalls to watch out for. With this framework in mind look at Appendix A of your notes and take some time now to evaluate your groups. Begin filling this out now and then next week review it with your mentor.

You may be thinking, "how can I remember and do all this?" Well, like the rest of the Christian life, we simply do it in the power of the Holy Spirit and leave the results to God. And like the rest of life, we get better the more we practice it. Enjoy yourself!

Appendix A

Discipleship Group Evaluation

1. What is your vision for the group? How will you explain this to them?
2. What are you doing to set the right environment for your group? What factors are critical for that? What will you do this week to set the right environment?
3. How and when will you incorporate sharing, fellowship, prayer and praise into the group?
4. What will you do this week to spend one-on-one time with each of the members of my group?

<u>Name</u>	<u>Action</u>
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5. How will you individually incorporate regular prayer for each group member?
6. What are you doing to provide loving accountability? What will you do this week?
7. Will training be a part of the group, and, if so, what are you going to do and when will you do it? Could any go witnessing with you (first time just to observe you)?

Appendix B

SHARING QUESTIONS

A very good tool to help build relationships in a Bible study group is to use a sharing question at each group meeting. These are one or two-sentence questions which invite people to tell the group something about themselves. It gives people permission to talk about themselves in a structured context where all share something and all listen to the others. These are not questions which ask for knowledge, information or opinions about issues but *questions which encourage people to talk about themselves - their past experiences, present situations, hopes for the future, joys and sorrows, struggles and successes*. The stress is not on sharing ideas or concepts but on *sharing ourselves*. The sharing question is used to help members to *move beyond chitchat* and shallow conversation to tell something about themselves to help other members of the group get to know them. Usually the question is asked at the beginning of the meeting time and takes between ten and fifteen minutes for all to answer (depending on the size of the group).

Sharing questions can be thought of in terms of five main categories:

- Past
- Present
- Future
- Affirmation
- Accountability

Past tense sharing questions

These questions ask people to share something about their personal history.

- * Where did you live when you were twelve years old, and what is one strong memory you have from that time?
- * Who was the most influential person in your childhood, and why?
- * What was the most memorable holiday/vacation you ever took, and why?
- * When, if ever, did God become more than a word to you, and how did that happen?
- * What is one experience of success that you can remember, and what did it mean to you?
- * What is one quality from your parents that you wanted to keep, and anything you wished you could change?
- * When was the first time you heard about Jesus, and what did you think about him?
- * When did you meet your spouse, and what do you remember from that time?
- * What were the Christmas holidays like for you when you were growing up, and how did you feel about them?
- * What has been your most important spiritual experience?
- * What was your relationship to a church as you grew up, and how did you feel about it?
- * What was the most exciting (challenging, difficult, growth-producing, enjoyable, or terrible) part of your life up to now, and why?

Past tense questions are especially appropriate in the early stages of a new group and when new members join. By inviting people to share their past, we begin to know something about the influences and experiences that have helped to make us who we are.

Present tense sharing questions

These questions invite people to discuss what is happening in their lives at the present time. The very recent past may be a part of these questions, but the focus is on the experiences and feelings that are part of daily life now.

- * What do you do on a typical Saturday? When do you get up, what do you do during the day, and when do you go to bed?
- * What is one part of your life that you enjoy, and one part that is difficult for you?
- * What is your favorite spot in your home or garden, and why?
- * What is a good thing happening in your life right now, and what makes it good?
- * What do you like to do for fun?
- * When you have some free time to yourself, what do you like to do?
- * What is one thing that you worried about or struggled with this past week?
- * What are you looking forward to, and what are you reluctant to face, during the next week?
- * What is one decision facing you that you find difficult, and why?
- * What is a satisfying relationship and/or a frustrating relationship in your life, and what makes it so?
- * When do you struggle with yourself and win, or when do you struggle with yourself and lose? How do you feel about that?
- * What is the most important or most meaningful or most satisfying thing that you do in a week, and why?
- * What is one thing that gave you joy or a sense of accomplishment this week?
- * What is one thing you are proud of about yourself?
- * What is one thing you are good at, and one thing you are bad at?
- * Where are you changing or growing in your life, and what helps and what hinders that process?
- * What spiritual discipline do you find the easiest or the most difficult?
- * What do you like about your job, and is there anything you find boring?

Present tense questions help us to talk about what is going on in our lives right now. Often group members do not know what fellow members do in their daily lives or how they feel about what is happening to them unless such questions are asked.

Future tense sharing questions

These questions focus on what is ahead, usually not in the near future but a little further off. They help people to talk about their desires for change, their hopes and dreams, expectations and possibilities. Questions of this type are usually asked after a group has been together for a while.

- * If you knew you could not fail, and money was no problem, what one thing would you like to do in the next five years?
- * If you could change one thing about yourself or develop one quality that you do not now have, what would it be?
- * What is one relationship you would like to strengthen, and what steps could you take to develop it?
- * What would be the perfect vacation for you? Where would it be, and what would you do?
- * If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be and why?
- * If you could be doing anything you wanted to this time next year, what would it be?

- * If you could accomplish one positive change for good in your church, what would it be? How might you go about it?
- * If you went home and found a check written to you for one million dollars, how would you spend it?
- * What would you like to have said about you at your funeral?
- * How do you want your children to remember you, and what are you doing to ensure those memories?
- * What is one change you would like to make in your life in the next two years, and why?
- * What is one dream or hope you have for the future?
- * What is one anxiety you have about the future, and how do you deal with it?

Affirmation questions

These are questions that invite group members to say positive things about each other. Often we form friendships that are meaningful to us, but we seldom say out loud to the other people just what they mean to us and why we value them. During the last meetings of a group, affirmation becomes particularly appropriate.

- * What is one quality that you value or admire in one or more members of this group?
- * If you could give a special gift to each member of the group, what would it be and why?
- * What spiritual gifts do you see present in one or more members of this group? How are those gifts being used in a helpful way?
- * What has been meaningful to you in this group?
- * How has this group been important or helpful to you?
- * What do you value especially about this group?
- * If you were called on to give a speech describing the good qualities of the members of this group, what would you say?

While group members are often reticent to say positive things about each other, it is a quality that can often be seen in the life of Jesus and the apostles. They could see the qualities in people and affirm those, thus helping people to recognize and value what God was doing within and through them. This type of affirmation can be very important in expressing feelings and in building a sense of belonging and being cared for.

Accountability questions

These questions are asked when group members promise to work actively at living out the implications of their Christian faith. Such questions should only be asked when people have chosen to make themselves accountable to fellow group members.

- * What do you believe God wants you to do this week, and when and how do you intend to do it?
- * What changes do you believe you should make in your habits or actions this week? How will you tackle these?
- * What Christian action will you attempt this week, and what help will you need to accomplish it?
- * What spiritual disciplines are you going to follow this week, and why?
- * How did you get on with your commitment from last week?
- * What success and what failure have you experienced this week in your attempt to follow Christ?

- * What relationship should you work on this week, and how will you do it?
- * How will you practice thankfulness to God this week?
- * How is the Spirit prompting you as a result of our Bible study? What will you do about it, and when?
- * How will you share the good news of the gospel this week, and with whom?
- * What prayer discipline do you intend to observe this week?
- * What is one responsibility that you have to fulfill this week, and how do you feel about it?

Guidelines for using sharing questions

- * Ask the question and call on someone to answer who will be comfortable with the question. If you can be brief, answer the question yourself first as an example for the others. If the first one or two sharing talk for too long, suggest that the others answer the question more briefly so that everyone will have a chance to share.
- * Allow people to pass if they cannot or do not want to answer the question. After all have shared, however, go back to any who passed and ask if they would like to share now. Many times they will, and to ignore them will leave them feeling left out. Never force people to share. Do not embarrass or manipulate people. While encouraging everyone to participate, allow them to re-shape the question if it makes them feel more comfortable. Move quickly on to the next person or the next activity.
- * Go around in a circle to answer the question, taking only a few moments for each one to share. Do not ask questions of the speaker or it will not be possible for everyone to get an opportunity to talk. The purpose is to help us know each other better, not to explore in depth the particular topic or experience.
- * Match the threat level or intensity level of the question to the willingness and experience of the group members. Start with relatively safe questions that anyone can answer without much thought or difficulty. As the group continues, risk asking slightly more threatening questions which call for more self-disclosure and more thoughtful reflection.
- * Ask open-ended questions that cannot be answered “yes” or “no” and which every member of the group can answer. Do not ask, for example, “When and how did you become a Christian?” if not everyone has had that experience or uses that kind of language. Do not ask, “Where did you go to college and what was your field of study?” if anyone in the group did not go to college. Be sensitive to the backgrounds of the group members, and do not ask questions that only a few can answer.

Discussion Questions:

1. How will you in your role as a leader create a proper environment and provide loving accountability for your discipleship group? (Section II)
2. How will you utilize the critical elements in leading a discipleship group? (Section III)
3. How has this talk helped you feel more confident in leading your small group effectively?
4. What is the vital role of the Discipleship Group in reaching the world for Christ?