

SMALL GROUP

LEADERSHIP SUMMIT



JANUARY 18, 2003

ARE YOU SURE?

- you know the amount of time involved in leading a small group?
- you can handle leaders' meetings which will cut out a Friday night every six weeks?
- you have the discipline to do this?
- you have the creativity to lead effectively?
- if you're married, that as a couple you have each other's support in this ministry? Believe me, you'll need it!
- you can enjoy the wide variety of people who will come into your group?
- you have a heart for people and the flexibility to be with them in their times of need?
- you like being held accountable? Because you will be.
- you know what you're getting into?

Of course you aren't sure!
That's why we have this handbook
to give you what you need to be equipped
and feel more confident in this ministry.
So turn the page...

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the world of the MICC Small Group Leader. Perhaps you have a lot of questions and anxieties as you face this challenge and adventure, some of you perhaps for the first time. That's quite natural and normal. Our desire is to see us all move out of the darkness into the light. Leading a group should not be guesswork, so we have assembled this handbook to clear up some cobwebs in your mind, to broaden your vision for the groups, and to provide you with some resources to more effectively reach your objectives.

This handbook and the training and encouragement you will receive should ignite a fire in your heart about the potential and possibilities of spiritually investing your life in others and having an eternal impact on their lives. This is a tremendous opportunity for ministry. Our Small Groups are not just a program to offer, but they are the center of our front line ministry aimed at a greater understanding and deeper commitment to God, to His Word, and to others in the body of Christ. In MICC, we seek to increasingly utilize our small groups as *the focal point* for discipleship, relationships, leadership development, evangelism and spiritual care. We are seeking to grow in our understanding of what it means to be a church *of* small groups rather than a church that *has* small groups.

This handbook contains your mission instructions and a map to navigate your way to safe harbor. To ignore it, or more tempting, to take it lightly, is to risk mediocrity. God forbid that would occur. Enough Christians have already wrecked on the soft rocks of mediocrity! Let's trust God to do something great this year in your group.

This handbook is a compilation from many sources. Some of which are long forgotten and others are listed in the resources section. If you have additional resources which you can share with group leaders, please do bring it to our attention.

If our church is to demonstrate the kind of spiritual life which is displayed on the pages of the New Testament, it will be because men and women like us have committed ourselves to a spiritual zeal in our personal lives and ministry which exalts Jesus Christ and compels other men and women to imitate them as they imitate Christ.

Richard Baxter, a seventeenth century British pastor once wrote, "Men will not cast away their dearest pleasures at the dreary request of a man who does not seem to mean what he says." May God help us all to be people who mean what we say and say it with spiritual power and full conviction.

*Men will not cast away their dearest pleasures
at the dreary request of a man
who does not seem to mean what he says.*

Richard Baxter

THE SMALL GROUP: PREPARING FOR CHANGE

THE INSTITUTIONAL BARRIER

Below is a letter from Martin Van Buren, then Governor of New York, to US President Andrew Jackson. As we read it, it reminds us that the pace of change in our world is exponentially advancing.

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR OF NEW YORK MARTIN VAN BUREN

January 31, 1829

To President Jackson

The canal system of this country is being threatened by a new form of transportation known as "railroads." The federal government must preserve the canals for the following reasons:

One If canal boats are supplanted by railroads, serious unemployment will result. Captains, cooks, drivers, hostlers, repairmen and dock tenders will be left without means of livelihood, not to mention the numerous farmers now employed in growing hay for the horses.

Two Boat builders would suffer and towline, whip and harness makers would be left destitute.

Three Canal boats are absolutely essential to the defense of the United States. In the event of the expected trouble with England, the Erie Canal would be the only means by which we could ever move the supplies so vital to waging modern war.

As you may well know, Mr. President, railroad carriages are pulled at the enormous speed of fifteen miles per hour by engines which, in addition to endangering life and limb of passengers, roar and snort their way through the countryside, setting fire to crops, scaring livestock and frightening women and children. The Almighty surely never intended that people should travel at such breakneck speed.

Yours sincerely,

Martin van Buren

If we are to effectively minister to a rapidly changing world, we need to take those changes into account. In ministry we speak God's timeless and unchanging truth to a changing culture. The ministry approaches of the 1950s or 1980s were designed to meet the specific cultural needs of the neighborhoods and cities of their day.

Now, in our time, we need to adapt our structure and strategy to reach our city. Especially in the unique setting we have—trying to reach the English speaking peoples of Munich—we must depend on God for wisdom and insight to overcome the cultural, geographic and spiritual barriers to the gospel and to building authentic spiritual community.

One of the culturally entrenched forms for ministry is the "cathedral paradigm" which is still the common form today:

People go to a building (cathedral), on a special day of the week (Sunday),
and someone (a priest or pastor)
does something *to* them (teaching, preaching, absolution or healing)
or *for* them (a ritual or entertainment)
for a price (offerings)

William Beckham, *A Second Reformation*, p. 43

Beckham describes the church as designed by God as a bird—born with two wings and born to fly. The two wings are the large group celebration and the small group community. The dominance of the large group celebration (the cathedral paradigm) through the institutional church effectively clipped the other wing! When the church received political sanction and social respectability (4th century, Constantine), and the small group structure diminished, the church was neutralized. It became limited in its real ability to: nurture new members, apply spiritual power, edify the body, train necessary leaders, deliver the gospel to the world, encounter the living Christ and walk in the gifts of the Spirit. The church looked like a bird, sounded like a bird, but with one wing could not do the very thing birds usually do—fly. The one winged church became an earthbound religious institution; it was more aligned with political systems, spiritual power gave way to human ability and effort, godly servant leadership was replaced by (often corrupt) authoritarianism. And church members became—over a stretch of time—consumers and spectators instead of active disciples and worshipers.

CHANGES AS A RESULT OF

THE LOSS OF SMALL GROUP COMMUNITY
THE GROWTH OF THE CATHEDRAL PARADIGM

THE LORD'S SUPPER:

WORSHIP:

WITNESS:

MINISTRY:

LEADERSHIP:

GROWTH:

MISSIONS:

CONFESSION:

DISCIPLESHIP:

FELLOWSHIP:

CHILD CARE:

BIBLE STUDY:

EVANGELISM:

THE SMALL GROUP: PREPARING FOR CHANGE

THE INDIVIDUAL BARRIER

Simply changing the structures of a church organization does not guarantee a change in the organism. You can add small group meetings and still not achieve God's design for New Covenant Community. However, small groups are critical to establishing community as Randy Frazee, author of *The Connecting Church*, concludes: "You can have a small group and not experience community—but you cannot have community apart from a small group experience."

In western cities today, people have increased wealth, mobility, technology, access to information and entertainment, medical care, nutrition and exercise. Yet it is also very easy for people, especially in the anonymity of the expatriate community to live isolated, busy lives, longing for the intimate relationships God designed them for, yet pursuing western values and crowding out the things that could offer lasting satisfaction. This individualistic approach results in isolation, distress, despair and a sense of powerlessness inside.

LET'S BRAINSTORM

What are some of the ways in which our situation in Munich creates individual barriers to community?

Work

Geography

Church

School

Culture

Language

The solution is not to take the small group circle and add it to the competing circles of chaos that are already there. It's going to take some radical restructuring. "God intends our relationship to Christ and his church not to be one more bolt on the wheel of activity in our lives, but the very hub at the center of our lives and community." (*The Connecting Church*, p. 37).

WHAT MATTERS TO US?

THE ABC'S??

BELIEFS

PRACTICES

VIRTUES

THE SMALL GROUP ROLE

Intentionally, each week, choose one of these that you plan to reinforce through teaching, modeling, prayer, discussion. In this way in the small group as well as in the large group on Sundays we share a strategy for transferring and applying what really matters to us and to God, and we may observe real personal and spiritual development in ourselves and others.

COVENANT COMMUNITY OR ASSOCIATION?

COVENANT COMMUNITY

1. UNLIMITED ACCOUNTABILITY:

I am my brother's keeper

2. UNLIMITED AVAILABILITY:

Time commitment is absolute.

3. UNLIMITED ACCESSIBILITY:

Attentiveness to the needs of others is unlimited. Not only does my time belong to my covenant partner, but I belong to my partner also based on the details of the contract.

4. UNLIMITED ASSET COMMITMENT:

All that I have and am belongs to my covenant partners. "What is mine is yours."

5. UNLIMITED ASSUMPTION OF LIABILITIES:

Discovery of a new liability (provides opportunity for the covenant to be deepened).

6. UNLIMITED ACQUISITION OF REPUTATION:

and name of those with whom in covenant.

7. FULL IDENTIFICATION:

with those with whom one shares covenant; if they have good reputation you are bound to that, if they have bad reputation you share that.

8. SHARED FRIENDS :

Those in covenant relationship share a covenant with all who in covenant with your covenant partner.

9. SHARED ADVERSARIES

You share an adversarial relationship with those who are enemies of your covenant partner. This is different from the taking up of an offense for another.

ASSOCIATION

1. LIMITED ACCOUNTABILITY:

Don't stick your nose in my business.

2. LIMITED AVAILABILITY:

You can only have as much of my time as our contract calls for.

3. LIMITED ACCESSIBILITY:

Attentiveness limited-must be attentive to their needs when with them.

4. LIMITED ASSET COMMITMENT:

The only assets at risk are those spelled out in the contract. "What is mine is mine and I intend to keep it."

5. LIMITED ASSUMPTION OF LIABILITIES:

Discovery of a new liability provides possibility of abridging or abrogating the contract.

6. LIMITED ACQUISITION OF REPUTATION :

and name of those with whom in contract.

7. SLIGHT IDENTIFICATION:

with those who work for you and for whom you work.

8. NO SHARED FRIENDS:

No contractual responsibilities for or with others who have a contract with your contractor.

9. NO SHARED ADVERSARIES

No implication for a contract, i.e., if your contractor is being sued by thirteen others, your entering into a contract with him does not mean that you join his lawsuits as a co-defendant.

IMPLICATIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS OF THESE DISTINCTIONS:

1. It is possible to enter into a contract with a covenant partner.
2. It is possible to require at law, i.e., through a lawsuit, that a covenant partner adhere to the details of a contract.
3. It is possible to enter into a contract with one with whom you are not in a covenant relationship.
4. If a transaction is initiated through a covenant relationship, it must be resolved through the provisions of covenant and not contract, i.e., if a covenant brother is the vehicle through which God provides funds to another covenant brother, the one may not charge any interest and may not require repayment at law.
5. The entering into a contract in no way initiates a covenant just as the entering into a covenant in no way necessitates or anticipates the entering into a contract.
6. Contracts are essentially limited in scope and *transactional*; the lives of the contractual parties are not changed. Covenants are essentially unlimited in scope and *transformational*; covenant partners experience lifechange in multiple areas and dimensions in the relationship.

WHY DO WE HAVE SMALL GROUPS?

A BIBLICAL BASIS FOR SMALL GROUPS

The people focused ministries of MICC have a two-fold thrust: evangelism (directed at the lost) and edification (aimed at the believer). This two-fold thrust helps us define our ministry priorities.

MICC is committed to fulfilling the basic Biblically stated priorities of a local church: glorifying our Lord by helping people learn and live the truths of the Word of God, by promoting fellowship among the believers and by focused outreach and influence on those in our world who do not know Christ. One of the primary means to accomplish these priorities is the small group ministry. Small groups are based on the pattern of the early church:

And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42-47

And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ." Acts 5:4

Many of the "one another" passages imply the presence of small groups as well. Specific duties such as "bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2), "speak truth to one another" (Ephesians 4:25), "admonish one another" (Romans 15:14), "confess your sins to one another" (James 4:16) and finally the duty to "encourage one another" (1 Thessalonians 5:11) are best seen in a small group context where people know each other well enough to share intimately as well as hold each other accountable.

In fact, it seems the core structure of the New Testament church was primarily a "house church." Churches in communities met in homes with leaders/elders over them, for example in 1 Corinthians 16:19, "The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house." (Cf. Romans 16:5; Colossians 4:15, Philemon 2).

In the New Testament and throughout church history, the church has both a large group and small group focus. We read, for instance of the early church meeting "every day, in the temple [large group] and from house to house [small group], they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ." Acts 5:42

The modern church, however, often seems to have forgotten the place of the small group in the church structure. Therefore people rarely have the opportunity to work out the life and truth that God has worked within. Instead, passive ritual—observation instead of participation—slowly erases the dynamic and vital spiritual relationships described in the New Testament (1 Peter 1:22-23).

WARNING

this task of group leadership is not recommended
for the faint hearted, self-reliant, or the uncaring.
Ask the Lord for courage, faith to trust Him and a
tender heart for His people before proceeding.

AN EXERCISE

Why do you think that we need small groups today? Perhaps the time for personal reflection below will be of help to you. Consider the issues discussed below and then circle the number which you think best represents the experience of most Christians today.

	Rarely			Sometimes		Usually
Knows other believers in an intimate way	0	1	2	3	4	5
Can let down the spiritual masks	0	1	2	3	4	5
Is actively reading and understanding the Bible on his own	0	1	2	3	4	5
Has friends who encourage and stimulate him to keep growing in the Christian life	0	1	2	3	4	5
Is actively praying for the burdens others have shared with him	0	1	2	3	4	5
Has relationships which regularly inspire him to greater Christian commitment	0	1	2	3	4	5
Has a warm feeling that "I am not alone" in the Christian life. Feels the support of the body of Christ	0	1	2	3	4	5
Has recently shared his burdens and knows that others are praying for him	0	1	2	3	4	5

The experiences listed above were normative for the early church, but regrettably they are often lacking today. In our impersonal world, Christians need a very personal touch and unbelievers can get a taste of the love of Christ through such personal ministry. Small groups are an essential tool to return intimacy, strength and vitality to the church of today.

Our Small Groups can be the instrument God uses to help us be more effective in providing these vital experiences to the people in MICC. Take a moment now to mark where you think our church's experience would rank in the above questions. Reflect on that for a moment, and then in the space below begin to write out some goals for your group for this coming year and some objectives and specific implementation steps to help you reach each of those goals. Take time during the next week or two to complete this exercise.

SOME ESSENTIALS FOR SMALL GROUPS

A number of observations from the book of Acts give us some of the necessary activities and ingredients for small groups.

THE APOSTLES' TEACHING AND FELLOWSHIP

Acts 2:42 might give the best clues as to what is to take place in these groups. A close look at this verse reveals primarily two elements involved. Many scholars agree that “the breaking of bread and to prayer” are descriptive of “fellowship” since in the Greek text there is no “and” (Greek *kai*) between “fellowship” and “to the breaking of bread. . .” A literal rendering of the verse could be seen as follows:

“And they were continually devoting themselves
to the apostles’ teaching, and
to the fellowship
[that is] to the breaking of bread, and
to the prayers.”

So, to reflect this emphasis, the small group should involve two primary thrusts:

1. **The apostles’ teaching.** Time should be devoted in study of the Bible, guided discussion as to its meaning, and most importantly, ways it can be applied to our lives.
2. **The fellowship.** Fellowship is described as “breaking bread” and “prayer.”
Breaking of bread refers to eating meals together (Acts 2:46). However, more than likely it involved more than just a meal. The early church met together for sharing in the Lord’s Supper on a regular basis. This supper included not only a meal, but also a time of remembering the death and return of the Lord through the memorial loaf and (1 Corinthians 11:20-34).
Prayer (literally, “the prayers”) is another crucial element in fellowship. This refers to specific times for members of the body to meet together to pray for specific needs and one another.

MEETING ONE ANOTHER’S NEEDS

The early church “had all things in common, and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need” (Acts 2:44,45). Though this common sharing of property was distinct to the Jerusalem church and soon ended, the principle of meeting each other’s physical needs continued (cf. 2 Corinthians 9:11-13, Ephesians 4:28). Therefore, reaching out to meet each other’s needs for food, clothing, transportation, child care, etc. should characterize the small group.

WORSHIP AND PRAISE

As these believers met together there was “a sense of awe” and “gladness and sincerity of heart” accompanied by “praising God” (Acts 2:46-47). An essential part of any group is unity in the worship and praise of God.

OUTREACH

As a result of all the above elements taking place, they had “favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). As the community was exposed to these believers’ lives, relationships and message, many of them became Christians.

MUTUAL EDIFICATION

The “one anothers” quoted above as well as others emphasize mutual accountability, encouragement and stimulation to spiritual growth (cf. Romans 15:14, 1 Corinthians 12:25, Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16, 1 Peter 4:9,10).

SUMMARY

In summary, based on these passages, the activities and ministries that should be kept in balance in small groups include:

- Regularly meeting together in homes
- Bible study with emphasis on discussion, application and accountability
- Eating together
- Sharing the Lord's Supper
- Praying together and for one another
- Meeting physical and emotional needs
- Praise, worship and singing
- Mutual encouragement and accountability
- Exposing non-believers to the message of the Gospel and to the lives of believers both individually and as a group

It should be understood as well that a Small Group is not just a Bible study or a share group; it is not just a weekly church service or class; rather, it is a family of believers, relating to each other in the Lord with honesty, openness and integrity in every area of their lives.



WHAT IS A SMALL GROUP AND WHAT IS IT SUPPOSED TO DO?

A DEFINITION

A Small Group can be defined as “a small group of believers which meets regularly and is committed to mutual spiritual development and outreach under the pastoral care of a spiritually mature leader.” Breaking down this definition reveals several important components of the Small Group.

A SMALL GROUP OF BELIEVERS

Maintaining a small group is essential for developing “relational Christianity.” In order for true fellowship, accountability and ministry to take place, we need a place where we can be involved in the lives of other Christians beyond a superficial level. Groups need to remain small enough to allow for growing and deepening relationships and ability to get to know one another well.

However, a commitment to keep groups small is not equivalent to having groups become ingrown and stagnant. We expect and desire groups to grow in number as outreach from the group takes place. The group should intentionally prepare itself for growth and healthy cell division. When the group reaches a total number of 14-16 believers committed to the group, it should subdivide with a leader coming from the group to lead the new group.

COMMITTED TO MUTUAL SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

The primary purpose of the group is to have members help each other in their spiritual growth. The primary means to do this would be mutual involvement in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship. As was noted above, this would involve regularly meeting for Bible discussion and application, mutual accountability, worship, singing, praying together and for one another, eating together, sharing the Lord’s Supper, sharing fun times together and with the whole family and meeting each other’s physical needs.

OUTREACH

The group is not only to minister to each other but also to reach out to those outside the group. This could take place in two ways:

1. It is hoped that the groups grow primarily through evangelism. As group members are involved in way-of-life evangelism with neighbors and friends, these people should be incorporated naturally into the Small Group. Groups also should plan periodic special outreaches as a group (e.g. potlucks, fun times, projects, family outings, etc.) where non-Christians can be exposed to members of the group and the Gospel.
2. Group members should be encouraged to invite visitors at the Sunday service to visit their Small Group. As the groups grow, they would, hopefully, divide geographically as much as possible for a greater concentration of outreach to an area.

PASTORAL CARE OF A SPIRITUALLY MATURE LEADER

A key to an effective group is the leader. Groups function best under the direction of a spiritually mature and qualified man who is giving them pastoral care. Because he is so important to the group’s life, the following will discuss biblical and practical aspects of a Small Group leader.

THE PURPOSE OF THE SMALL GROUP

As described above, the Small Groups meet for the purpose of promoting mutual spiritual growth and maturity. This is a broad purpose by design; it aptly describes the overall mission of MICC and the Small Groups have a major role to play in carrying out that mission.

A Small Group is not a Bible study, though Bible study is a part of its meetings.

A Small Group is not a prayer group, though members do regularly pray for one another in and out of the meetings.

A Small Group is not a food club, though eating often occurs as a part of its meetings.

A Small Group is not a small, intimate support group, though members often are close friends and do support each other. Just as the church as a whole is not a Bible class, prayer meeting, fellowship or support group but contains all these elements, so a Small Group involves a variety of the above activities, but it cannot be reduced to only one of them.

SMALL GROUP STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

1. GROUP SIZE

Small Groups should consist of 8 to 14 people. *Those smaller than eight active and committed participants should seek to grow as soon as possible.* In some cases the smaller, struggling Small Group can combine for a while with another group until they reach minimum size. Groups smaller than 8 can tend to become identified as support groups with an inward focus, and they can lack enough resources to reach their objectives. On the other hand, groups approaching 15 in number should consider subdividing into two smaller groups with two leaders.

2. MEANS OF GROWTH

The Small Groups will grow through several methods. One of the best ways is for group members to invite friends or acquaintances. This way people with natural friendships and interests will group together. Groups also will grow as the church grows and newcomers decide to visit.

The mindset of the group should be in some measure to “give itself away.” One of the greatest tensions group members face is that if they form close, supportive relationships and learn to pray openly and honestly with and for each other, they don’t want any newcomers or outsiders to visit and hinder these relationships. *Yet it is precisely through this process that real growth will take place.* It is through dying that we live, through giving that we receive, and if a group is willing to reach out to, pray for, and welcome the newcomer—to “die” to its own comfort and intimacy, it will still retain the intimacy and help the newcomer as well.

We encourage the Small Groups to grow to maximum size and multiply. Groups which stay the same size with the same people month after month will find that the intimacy they gain will not make up for the ingrownness they suffer or the ministry opportunities they lose. *We need to balance all aspects of growth: we grow up, grow together, and grow out.*

3. FREQUENCY OF MEETING

We recommend meeting each week. Meeting less often can hinder the group from attaining its goals and ministering effectively. Regular social events (perhaps once per month) should be planned as well to enhance the feelings of belonging and acceptance in the group.

4. PLACE OF MEETING

The individual group will decide how this should be arranged. One couple may choose to be a host for an indefinite period, or the hosting opportunity can be shared by many. Sharing the hospitality is a good way to develop closeness among group members, as we get to see one another in our “natural habitats.” It is a good idea to keep the meeting place the same for one month at a time. Good communication and planning are essential in this area.

5. LENGTH OF MEETING

The groups should usually meet for about two hours. The schedule combines several elements that enable the groups to reach their goals of mutual edification and encouragement toward spiritual maturity. At times you will not want to “quench the Spirit” by abruptly ending the meeting, but it is a good idea to end at the announced time. Otherwise, those who have to leave at a certain time may feel unnecessary tension, and those who stay may feel trapped and frustrated. At times you may want to say, “We need to close this portion of the meeting, but if some of you wish to stay and continue talking, feel free.” As in all things, clear communication among group members will help to avoid difficulties and conflict.

6. FORMAT OF MEETING

The groups should allocate time in a balanced way so that over the course of several meetings all elements of a small group would be properly emphasized. Some guidelines for this allocation of time are: Socializing and snack time—20 minutes, Sharing—20 minutes, Bible lesson and discussion—40 minutes, and Prayer—20 minutes. These guidelines are not rigid and should not be understood as an “order of worship” for each meeting. Be creative and use your resources so that an attractive and effective variety of settings can be established for the meetings.

SOME MARKS OF AN EFFECTIVE SMALL GROUP

THE MEMBERS UNDERSTAND AND AGREE ON THE PURPOSE, EMPHASIS AND FORMAT OF THE GROUP

The task of a good group leader is to communicate regularly to the group in the areas of purpose and emphasis. This can be worked into the discussion or transition periods between study/discussion and prayer times. As we state and restate our reasons for existence, the members of the group will better understand why they are participating and the group will be strengthened. Members who feel that they are on a different wave length or who came with some different expectations will not be needlessly disappointed. If they clearly understand the purpose and emphasis of the group they can either adapt their expectations to contribute and receive from the group, or they can leave with dignity. Leaders should clearly explain the purpose, emphasis and format to new group members as they join the group.

THE MEETINGS ARE MEANINGFUL AND IN TOUCH WITH THE NEEDS OF THE GROUP

In order for this to take place, we must get to know the group members and their needs. A good way to do this is to plan over the course of the group to have members share bits and pieces of their “lifelines” (life stories). This is especially key for starting new groups. This is also a very non threatening way for people to learn to share their lives and needs. If a person learns that the group accepts him as he shares childhood feelings, memories and stories, it is more likely that he will be open to share his present experiences, struggles and emotions.

The meetings should display a good bit of variety and creativity. Stagger the schedule with prayer, sharing, bible study and social emphases. Don't continually have the same format. This helps people come with a sense of anticipation that something different will happen as they come that night.

Be flexible and in touch with the needs of the moment. Remember that our people and their lives are more important than our lesson plans!

Also, avoid lecture sessions. The Bible study should be a discussion format. A true discussion has group members discussing with one another, not merely answering the leader. The leader seeks to draw out group members and involve them with each other in the course of the discussion. You can also delegate the task of leading discussions to a group member you would like to develop into a group leader.

THE MEMBERS LIKE EACH OTHER AND FEEL A SENSE OF COMMITMENT

Sharing a variety of activities together contributes to this feeling of group unity. Potlucks, retreats, dinners, going to movies together, and other social events can build strong bonds of unity. Again, the “lifelines” help here, especially as the leader is freely sharing himself with the group. The leader should model acceptance, encouragement and appreciation for the group members. Another help here is to make sure that your Bible study/discussion times are relationally oriented and not just informational. For example, when studying a narrative passage ask questions like: “Which character in this story do you most identify with and why?” or “How does this passage give you a greater appreciation of your relationship with God?” Such questions draw out personal feelings and responses instead of just facts. This develops stronger relationships, understanding and a sense of connectedness with others in the group.

OBJECTIVES TO AIM FOR IN SMALL GROUPS

The Small Group is a modern day expression of the first century house church. We feel that the pressing demands of our modern world as well as the biblical imperatives of loving, serving and stimulating one another require a small group concept which better facilitates meaningful relationships and emphasizes personal involvement in maturity and ministry. Our objectives are targets to aim for and reach so that we can fulfill our mission in the groups. Without them, we can become aimless and hopeless as we toil just to keep the group together. Some of these objectives are stated and explained below.

TO PROVIDE INTIMATE, VITAL FELLOWSHIP AS WAS COMMON IN THE EARLY CHURCH

“And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. ” Acts 2:44-47

“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.” Romans 12:10

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.” Philippians 2:3-4

How would you imagine this objective being worked out in a practical way in your group? What would you expect intimate, vital fellowship to look like? What are the key elements? List some examples below:

TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT THROUGH PERSONAL STUDY AND DISCUSSION OF THE WORD OF GOD

“How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.” Psalm 1:1-2

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15

“Let the word of Christ dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Colossians 3:16

How would you imagine this objective being worked out in a practical way in your group? What would you expect personal study and group discussion around the word to look like? List some examples:

TO PROVIDE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE THE PRINCIPLES OF SCRIPTURE CAN BE VISIBLY PRACTICED BY THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF THE GROUP

“And why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and acts upon them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation upon the rock; and when a flood rose, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who has heard, and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house upon the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.” Luke 6:46-49

“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.” James 1:22

“For I was very glad when brethren came and bore witness to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.” 3 John 3-4

How would you imagine this objective being worked out in a practical way in your group? What would you expect visible practice of the word to look like? List some examples:

TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEANINGFUL PRAYER

“Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart.”

Luke 18:1

“Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.”

Colossians 4:2

How would you imagine this objective being worked out in a practical way in your group? What would you expect meaningful prayer opportunities to look like? List some examples:

**TO ASSIST INDIVIDUALS IN DISCOVERING
AND UTILIZING THEIR SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

“And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given us, let each exercise them accordingly.” Romans 12:6

“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” 1 Peter 4:10

How would you imagine this objective being worked out in a practical way in your group? What would you expect discovery and utilizing of gifts to look like as it happens? How could you as a leader facilitate this happening? List some examples:

TO ENCOURAGE A LIFESTYLE AIMED SOLELY AT PLEASING GOD

“...so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” Colossians 1:10

“...trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.” Ephesians 5:10

“Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:9

How would you imagine this objective being worked out in a practical way in your group? How do you expect people to learn that the heart and soul of Christianity is being pleasing to God? List some examples:

**TO PROVIDE A MEANS OF REACHING OUT
TO NEW PEOPLE AND BRINGING THEM INTO THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH**

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers.” Hebrews 13:2

“For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax gatherers do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even Gentiles do the same?” Matthew 5:46-47

How would you imagine this final objective being worked out in a practical way in your group? Give some examples of outreach ideas below:

SUMMARY

Small Groups are best described as ministry groups. They exist for ministry! As such, these small groups are designed to enable people to express outwardly the life of God who lives within. In a group setting, people have the opportunity to move beyond passive spectatorship to active participation in the life and ministry of MICC. We can move beyond mere religious observances and lip service to a lifestyle that is both salt and light to a perishing world. With these objectives in mind as our targets, we as leaders can more often and more effectively see the groups fulfill their purpose.

WHAT KIND OF PERSON IS A GROUP LEADER?

INTRODUCTION

The information below was originally written in a church structure in the US where we had *only* elders leading small groups. The element of pastoral care was highly emphasized. In MICC, the small groups are *the* place where spiritual care, evangelism, discipleship and leadership development occur. We believe that the Bible sets forth a social structure in the family and in church in which men have the *primary* responsibility for leading. In the family, in the small group and in the church, women *do* share in the overall dynamics of leadership. Though God has given men and women different but complementary roles, each individual clearly has the same spiritual status (dignity, personhood and value) before the Lord as and each of us has been endowed with spiritual gifts. The individual abilities of each person, male or female, should be fully utilized and recognized within the boundaries of Scripture. In doing this, great flexibility is needed, as well as sensitivity to culture and tradition. While we do have women leading women's groups and women involved in leadership, it is a accepted and simpler grammatical convention to use masculine pronouns to refer to both sexes, as we have below.

HE MUST BE SPIRITUALLY MATURE

There should be evidence of the qualities of a spiritual leader as defined in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 in his life. His most important ministry is to model New Testament Christianity.

HE MUST BE A SERVANT (MARK 10:35-45)

People take time and energy. A leader needs to be available to meet needs and help others in the group. He needs to be hospitable, secure in his relationship to Christ, courageous in dealing with others, patient with their immaturity and problems, and willing to listen.

Biblical leaders influence others primarily by serving them. Involvement with people takes time, effort, emotional energy and a giving attitude. People will learn these qualities and begin to reach out to others in the group as they see the leader demonstrate servanthood (1 Peter 5:2-3).

OTHER QUALITIES

- A. Be able to relate to people
- B. Have the ability to organize and delegate
- C. Have a growing knowledge of Scripture
- D. Have a clear concept of the purpose of a Small Group
- E. Know how to communicate

HE MUST BE ABLE TO LEAD THE GROUP

- A. He should coordinate effective group meetings
 - 1. He should plan and/or delegate issues such as meeting times, places, format, leadership, etc.
 - 2. He should provide a balance and variety in meetings:
 - a) Bible study discussion
 - b) Prayer
 - c) Singing and praise and worship
 - d) Evangelistic strategy, outreach
 - e) Lord's Supper
 - f) Meaningful sharing times
 - g) Meals together
 - h) Fun time and activities
 - 3. Other suggestions
 - a) Provide caring atmosphere
 - b) Focus on sharing personal concerns and needs and not about relatives, friends, etc.
 - c) Be flexible and sensitive to the needs of the group at a particular meeting—e.g. if you have a study planned, but people really are sharing burdens, you might need to use the whole time for sharing and prayer. Structure shouldn't be the determining factor. Look for needs, but beware of doing one thing all the time to the exclusion of others.

- d) Variety and surprise keeps a group alive.
- e) Effectively use icebreaker or other related questions to launch sharing times.
- f) Maintain unity and balance by not letting some dominate and others not participate.
- g) Ask people to be faithful in attendance. Nothing kills momentum more than sporadic attendance.
- h) A weekend retreat is a great time for developing relationships and unity.

B. He should provide a model for leading a Bible study emphasizing discussion, application and accountability.

- 1. He must know how to study the Bible. (See Resources, pp. 31-34)
- 2. He must know how to develop a lesson/discussion plan. (See Resources, pp. 27-30,)
- 3. He should assign Bible study discussions to others in the group.
 - a) He should help them prepare if necessary.
 - b) He should give suggestions to them after they lead.

HE MUST BE A CARING SHEPHERD FOR HIS GROUP (PS. 23; 1 PET. 5:1-3)

A. He should pray consistently for members of the group.

- 1. Be alert to what they share during share times.
- 2. Call to follow-up on specific needs.

B. He should exhibit hospitality

- 1. Develop personal relationships by engaging in social activities, meals, outings, etc. with individuals, couples and families.

C. He should call and/or visit in times of crisis or needs

- 1. Sickness
- 2. Absence from church or Small Group meeting
- 3. Family difficulties, etc.
- 4. Drop by informally at times.

D. He should look for special opportunities to shepherd

(These tasks should be done by the leader as he feels that he is personally and spiritually maturing, as they present themselves in the group context, as the leader is aspiring to roles with greater spiritual responsibility. It is because of this shepherding function that we place an emphasis on male leadership of small groups. Men who serve effectively as small group leaders are demonstrating their maturity in ministry leadership and Christian character that is required of an elder. Women may also serve in leadership areas, but in a mixed sex group there should be a pattern of emerging male leadership. If at any point along the way you have difficulty, do not hesitate to contact one of the elders for guidance).

- 1. Be ready and willing to counsel people with special needs.
 - a. Purposes:
 - 1. to help people deal with sins and difficulties
 - 2. to help people realize their position, power and potential in Christ
 - 3. to depend on the Holy Spirit and the Word to change them.
 - b. Procedure
 - 1. Pray and confess your own sins
 - 2. Relax
 - 3. Listen for essence of problem
 - 4. Lay out options/alternatives from the Word.
 - 5. Have them choose which is best-
 - a. The Word has their answer and not you.
 - b. They are responsible for change.
 - 6. Follow up and see how they are doing.
 - 7. Be sure to refer to others when you need help (pastor, professionals).
 - 8. A word of caution: sometimes Small Groups disband because they burn themselves out ministering to one or two needy people in the group. Groups are not designed for group therapy or for becoming “halfway houses” for the emotionally or physically needy, or for resolving all the difficult and complex problems some people have. Pray for and encourage people, but do not allow their agenda and problems to dominate the meetings.
- c. Resources for reading, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, and *Understanding People*, by Larry Crabb.

2. Be ready to confront those in sin. (Matthew 18:15-20)
 - a. Purpose - restoration to holiness
 - b. Procedure (Matthew 18:15-17)
 1. First be sure of your own attitudes and actions. (Gal. 6:1-5, Matt. 7:3-5)
 2. Make sure it is sin he is involved in and not a difference of opinion. Discipline and confrontation is appropriate for direct violations of Scripture, not matters of personal preference.
 3. Reprove him in private (v. 15)
 4. If there is no repentance, take one or two witnesses (v. 16) and confront.
 5. If there is still no repentance, tell it to the church (v. 17). Involve the elders of the situation so it can be done in the public assembly.
 6. Put him out of the fellowship of the church.
 7. Continue to encourage him to repentance (2 Thess. 3:14,15).

HE MUST DISCIPLE MEN IN THE GROUP AND HELP WOMEN DISCIPLE WOMEN.

- A. He should look for faithful, available and teachable men. (2 Timothy 2:2)
- B. He should establish them in the basics of the faith and in their spiritual disciplines. He should insure that they understand the mission and objectives of MICC and the Small Groups.
- C. He should train one or two men (or couples together) to be next group leaders.
 1. Look for men who are respected by other group members.
 2. Look for men who have qualifications for leadership (see above).
 3. Discuss this handbook with them on several occasions. (You might consider meeting as couples.)
 4. Delegate leadership responsibilities to them.
 5. Take them with you and involve them in people's lives as you minister to your group. Let them see you in action.

THE LEADER HAS FOUR BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE TASK OF LEADING:

1. **Facilitate group discussions instead of directing or controlling.** This retains group accountability and security, while frees the leader from being an expert or "guru" for the group. The leader is free to be a group member, yet he is still seen as ultimately responsible for the welfare and success of the group.
2. **Delegate responsibility and encourage individual members to minister to each other.** Delegation not only challenges and utilizes latent individual talent, but it also reveals spiritual gifts and lifts many administrative burdens from the leader, freeing him for involvement in pastoral care.
3. **Organize and provide basic structure to meetings.** The leader may play a small part in the meeting, but he is the one who is responsible to see to it that all bases are covered. He supervises, watches, critiques and seeks to be sensitive to unspoken needs. He should enjoy the ministry! Caution: even though others may share in responsibilities of leading group discussions etc., the leader should not be "invisible" for long. He should be accessible and visibly involved, even if in the background at times.
4. **Self evaluation is the leader's responsibility.** Mistakes made by leaders usually move in one of two directions. The leader will either be overly laid back and just let everything happen as it happens—meetings will be directionless and unplanned. Or they do the opposite—they dominate the meeting and lecture most of the time and do all the work. Meetings should be carefully planned by the leader, but with flexibility, and with the goal of total group participation.

HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS

WAYS TO KEEP IN TOUCH

1. Phone calls and e-mail
 - a. To inform, encourage, thank, to welcome new group members
2. Notes and invitations to
 - a. Socials, dinners, showers, special events.
3. Cards
 - a. Birthday, anniversary, holidays, births, special occasions, hospitalizations, death in the family
4. Prayer requests
 - a. It is helpful to have a system within your own group to handle special and/or emergency prayer needs within your group or from other groups in the church. You might desire to set up a prayer chain specifically for the needs of your group.

WAYS TO EXERCISE HOSPITALITY

1. Meet in group members' homes on a rotating basis (most prefer for an entire month) or in a few selected homes (only if group is too large to fit in some of the members' homes).
2. Schedule refreshments for regular Small Group meetings
 - a. Usually keep it very simple
 - b. Keep costs down
 - c. Something to drink only, or any of the following:
 - 1) Popcorn
 - 2) Sundaes
 - 3) Pies, cakes, cookies
 - 4) Fresh fruit, veggies
 - d. Host home provides - or rotate among others according to group needs and desires.
3. Child care options and ideas
 - a. Parents of children take turns watching them in separate room. Need to have toys, books, crafts available. VCR movies appeal to older children.
 - b. Host family watch children in separate room.
 - c. Babysitters care for children in own home.
 - d. Swap babysitting with another family in Small Group member's area whose group meets on a different night.
 - e. Someone outside of group is hired to come to the hosting home to watch the children. Parents, or perhaps all share the cost.
4. Special attempts made to encourage singles to make our home their home (meals, laundry, visits, etc.).

WAYS TO MINISTER TO THE GROUP

1. Pray for them.
2. Follow up on prayer requests.
3. Help meet physical needs:
 - a. Showers for
 - b. Meals for
 - c. Babysitting for
 - d. Etc.

PRACTICAL MINISTRIES

1. Meals
 - a. To their house (illness, hospitalization, babies, deaths, etc.)
 - b. In your home—have one or more couples/singles at a time for purposes of getting to know them better, encouraging, counseling, etc.
2. Showers or special celebrations (bridal, moving, graduation)

A PERFORMANCE PROFILE FOR THE SMALL GROUP LEADER

1. Each group leader should regularly attend a our leaders' fellowships. These meetings will be part of the equipping and evaluating process by which we can maintain the quality of our groups and insure that we are on course to reach our objectives. Plus, they'll be fun times for us to relax and encourage one another as leaders. Of course, there will be times when it will be impossible for you to attend such a meeting. Our promise to you is to make the meetings very positive and informative so that you will want to attend and benefit from the support and encouragement from the other leaders.
2. Each group leader should spend at least one to two hours in study and preparation before leading the Bible study portion of the group meeting. Once again, we want to stress the importance of variety and creativity in this task.
3. Each leader should monitor group meetings (attendance, format, conflicts, problems) so he can give a report at each leaders fellowship.
4. Each leader should maintain contact with each of those who are absent from the group. When making a follow-up call, be sure to discover the reason for non-attendance (sickness, time conflict or possibly, dissatisfaction with the group) and inform the person of anything they need to know for the next meeting. If assignment sheets were handed out, e-mail or mail copies to all who missed.
5. Each leader is responsible for delegating the responsibilities and tasks in the group to the group. He should be sure that the members understand their responsibilities and have all necessary supplies and information to adequately carry out their task. He should assist whenever necessary without interfering in the learning and maturing process.
6. Each leader should be aware of the spiritual status of each group member. Is each person in a vital relationship with Jesus Christ? Are any members yet unsaved? Have they been through a basic discipleship series like the 2:7 Course? Do they have someone who can come alongside and encourage them in their walk with Christ? Are they actively pursuing their relationship with Christ in a daily spiritual discipline of devotions, Scripture reading and prayer?

HOW TO CONDUCT A SMALL GROUP IN 13 “EASY” STEPS

The group is all assembled, the appointed time has arrived, you can hardly believe it but you are leading the group! As you begin the lesson, you realize that you’ve thought about everything except how to lead the meeting! Since each meeting will require some preparation on your part to make it a success, here are a few helpful reminders.

1. Meet always in an informal atmosphere and be enthusiastic but never phony.
2. Always have your lesson with you and a Bible, but don’t bring a leader’s guide or 6 or 8 commentaries prepared for a 30 minute dissertation. This is a discussion, not a lecture!
3. Experienced leaders often transfer information beforehand from the lesson into specific applications of life. This creates a more informal atmosphere, for you have first personalized the truth before you share it. Truth that walks is truth worth talking about!
4. Keep your Bible open. Extensive use of Scripture is always motivational. If your group members are new Christians or are unfamiliar with the Bible, they will need help in finding Scripture passages. Keep your eyes open as your people use their Bibles!
5. Don’t read or go through your lesson mechanically. Familiarize yourself with the content beforehand so you can cover it in a relaxed and informal manner.
6. Always maintain eye contact with the group members.
7. Always allow enough time for sharing and building rapport at the beginning and end of each meeting.
8. Listen for the group members’ needs and seek to meet them either in the group or later. It’s not wrong to stop in the middle of the bible discussion to pray for a specific need if the situation requires it. Be available and flexible as you teach to meet changing needs as they arise.
9. Use questions to draw out those less inclined to participate. So often, these quiet folks want to share but need your help and encouragement.
10. Be yourself. Nobody expects you to be the super-spiritual one, so don’t even try to be.
11. Never skip application. Allow at least 20% of your time for applying the truths to life situations.
12. Pace yourself. Be aware of the time so that neither the lesson, prayer, informal sharing etc. drags out.
13. Use your own personal illustrations during the study. Put yourself into the study—be transparent and open with your life struggles and joys. This is the greatest thing you can do to build rapport, openness and honesty in your group discussions and sharing.

A PERSONAL EVALUATION

From time to time, leaders should use this self rating scale to evaluate your leadership in the Small Group meetings

	YES	NO
1. All the physical arrangements were cared for	☐	☐
2. The meeting was started promptly on time	☐	☐
3. I did all I could to establish a warm and informal atmosphere	☐	☐
4. I allowed everyone the opportunity to speak and participation was widespread.	☐	☐
5. Quieter members were encouraged to speak without being coerced	☐	☐
6. Order and control were maintained throughout	☐	☐
7. I was objective and open minded to ideas	☐	☐
8. I listened well to those who shared ideas	☐	☐
9. I could be heard easily	☐	☐
10. The study could be labeled discussion rather than lecture	☐	☐
11. Visitors were put at ease and made to feel a part of the group and group discussion	☐	☐
12. Summaries were used to clarify the discussion from time to time	☐	☐
13. Time was well distributed among all phases of the evening	☐	☐
14. The meeting did not drag on or end late	☐	☐
15. I did not allow the discussion to go off track	☐	☐
16. I had a creative introduction to the evening	☐	☐
17. I had a specific measurable goal in mind for the meeting	☐	☐
18. I made sure that any new members had lessons sent to them before the group met	☐	☐
19. I followed up on absent group members and sent them any materials and information they missed	☐	☐
20. The discussion led to realistic applications	☐	☐
21. I was well prepared and excited about the discussion for the evening	☐	☐
22. I modeled transparency and openness	☐	☐
23. I helped people to relate to one another	☐	☐

FUN TIME ACTIVITIES FOR THE FAMILY

1. Act out Bible story
2. Afternoon at the lake
3. Avalanche party—items all together for ice cream sundae
4. Birthday party for Jesus
5. Board games night
6. Bowling
7. Christmas caroling
8. Churn ice cream
9. Cook-out
10. Croquet
11. Dads and kids cook breakfast (Saturday or Sunday morning)
12. Family skit or talent night.
13. Go out to dinner
14. Have a Passover meal
15. Hiking or skiing
16. Make pizzas
17. Parties
18. Play “Nerf” softball, football, basketball
19. Picnic
20. Pot luck meals
21. Progressive dinners
22. Project day - paint, build, garden
23. Play games together
24. “Question you’ve always wanted to ask someone” night
25. Rent old movie and watch
26. Show home movies, pictures, slides
27. Swimming party
28. Take a trip together
29. Times just to talk
30. Treasure hunts
31. Visit convalescent/nursing home to sing, greet patients
32. Volleyball
33. Watermelon
34. Water skiing
35. Weekend retreats

KEEP GOING!

ICE BREAKER AND SHARING QUESTIONS

The following ideas are intended to help you break down some of the thin shields most of us have around our lives as we gather for group meetings. This is only a sample list. Challenge yourself to come up with icebreakers and sharing questions that fit just right for the evening's plans and discussion. Try to bridge between your icebreaker and the discussion with a smooth transition. Rightly done, the icebreakers can help people loosen up and can help them feel a sense of warmth and acceptance in the groups that will enable them to share their surface and deeper needs.

- Tell about the most memorable vacation you ever had.
- When did God become more than just a name to you?
- What is the most embarrassing situation you've ever been in?
- What is the first name of your grandmother on your mother's side? What is the greatest memory you have of her?
- What is your favorite verse (book, chapter) of the Bible? Why?
- If you could model your life after any person (other than Christ), who would it be? Why?
- What kinds of things do you like to do on your day off?
- What animal best describes how you've felt this last week?
- When you were twelve years old, who was your hero? Why this person?
- What is an unusual birthday present you have received?
- What is your favorite plant or flower?
- If you could put together any costume for a costume party, what would it be?
- What is your favorite food?
- What nursery rhyme or cartoon character do you identify with?
- What kind of music do you like?
- What is the most frustrating thing in your life right now?
- What are three (one, two) little known facts about you?
- What is your favorite holiday memory?
- What is a holiday tradition in your house?
- What is your favorite season of the year? Why?
- If you were an appliance or tool, what would you choose to be? Why?
- Do you like to read? What is your favorite kind of book?
- What is your favorite sport?
- If you could visit any place in the world, where would it be? Why?
- What color best portrays your personality? Why?
- What song best illustrates your philosophy of life?
- Who do you consider your best friend? Why?
- If you could spend an hour with anyone in the world, who would it be?
- Who is the most interesting person you've ever met? Why?
- What is the earliest memory you have?
- Tell about the most frightened you've ever been.
- (On birthdays or New Years) If God gives you another ten years, what would you like to see happen in those ten years?

MORE ICE BREAKER AND SHARING QUESTIONS

- What is a spiritual goal you have right now?
- What is your favorite place in the house and why?
- When you have a free hour to yourself, what do you like to do?
- When did God become more than just a word to you?
- If you could pick one character in fiction, TV or film to identify with, who would that be and why?
- What is one area where you would like to grow in your Christian faith? What kind of help do you need to do it?
- What is one personal relationship you would like to work on?
- What is one place in your home country you would really like to visit?
- Spot one thing/object in this room and describe a feeling, memory or thought it evokes in you.
- What hobby was most enjoyable in your teens?
- What is one characteristic that your father has that you desire in your life? What is one characteristic of his that you reject?
- What are the two or three most valuable possessions you have? Why are they valuable to you?
- If you had to describe one frustration you have had with this group, what would it be?
- If you went home and found a check written to you for DM 10.000.000 how would you use the money?
- If you could have any message engraved on your tombstone when you die, what would it be?
- What experience today gave you a happy moment? Why?
-
-
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-
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SENTENCE COMPLETION ICEBREAKERS:

- One word that describes my week is:
- I feel like a _____ (select an animal), because:
- Right now I feel:
- I am happy about:
- I am sad about:
- I am thankful that:
- What I want most from life right now is:
- One thing I like about the Christian life is:
- One thing I don't like about the Christian life is:
- Today, what I would like to change about myself is:
- The biggest evidence that Jesus is in me now is:
-
-
-
-

**BE CREATIVE! YOU CAN THINK OF NUMEROUS QUESTIONS
TO GET PEOPLE TO SHARE ABOUT THEMSELVES**

SHARING PROJECTS

These will take much longer than an icebreaker and will work most effectively when the group has established a general feeling of acceptance and love for one another. Try to keep the sharing fast-paced and lively. Don't let one person go on too long—remind the group that many would like to share their project.

1. What has my spiritual life been like? On a sheet of paper, have each member of the Small Group make a graph that represents his or her spiritual experience. Ask each to graph the peaks and valleys as representing the ups and downs of their Christian life. The graphs then should be shared and explained to the group by each member.
2. Four facts/One lie. Each member of the group should complete the following statements truthfully—except for one. Yet each should try to make the lie as believable as possible. Then one person at a time reads his answers and lets the others guess where he is lying.
 - a. My favorite game as a child was:
 - b. My hero at age 12 was:
 - c. My favorite music as a teenager was:
 - d. My favorite pastime right now is:
3. Expectations. Each member of the group should list five expectations they had for their spiritual lives when at the time when they became Christians. Beside each, write briefly how those initial expectations seem now. Have they been fulfilled? Were they realistic? Have they become a source of disappointment? Joy? Has doubt set in? Are those expectations still viable today? After each has filled out his/her list, share them with the group.
4. Strength Bombardment. One person sits in a group in silence while the others think of a particular strength they see in his or her life. Each of the group tells of the strength he has selected and then explains why. For instance one might say, "Jim, I see the quality of compassion in your life because of what you have done for the Williams family in their distress. You have a tremendous capacity for caring."
5. Fruit Inspection. Read Galatians 5:22-23. Study each aspect of the fruit of the Spirit carefully and then jot down the names of the people in your group next to the particular trait in which you feel they are strongest. (See chart below—copy and hand out to group). When everyone is through, one person sits quietly while the others share how they identified him and why. Then he responds to the group's affirmations by sharing two traits: one where he is strong, and one where he is weak. Repeat this process for each person in the group.

LOVE (the giving person, caring, sensitive to others' needs)

JOY (exuberance flowing from deep, inner spiritual reservoirs, sunny and cheerful)

PEACE (quiet, inner serenity—having come to terms with God and with yourself)

PATIENCE (staying power, enduring the most trying situations without getting upset or discouraged)

KINDNESS (warm hearted and gracious, gives you the shirt of his back)

GOODNESS (unimpeachable character with 14 carat integrity and sincerity)

FIDELITY (never forgets a friend or promise, always there when needed, true blue)

GENTLENESS (strength wrapped in understanding and tenderness)

SELF-CONTROL (keeps his cool, is stable and "heat resistant")
6. Lord's Supper. From time to time, take communion together. Perhaps because of the small number in the group, you can use a common loaf and a common cup. Have each member share why he is thankful for the death of Christ as the bread comes to him. Then, as the cup is passed, have each person share what Christ has been recently working into his life. Conclude this time of worship by singing several songs.

BONDING POINTS

In the beginning you'll find that a new Small Group can be a bit stiff. It has not yet had the time necessary to jell together and develop a corporate identity. The atmosphere will be somewhat formal; people will resist opening up and "just being themselves." But be not dismayed. At the start, this feeling of formality is not only normal but also to be expected.

There are some good steps you can take to bring your group together. These are steps which can transform formality into family. Small Groups should ultimately produce people who belong to one another, who care for one another, who can be real and transparent with one another. This progression from a formal atmosphere to a family one is a result of bonding. Bonding is a term that describes those moments which have a special way of pulling your group closer together.

Such moments of togetherness often happen spontaneously and suddenly, though usually after much time has been logged together. In these situations the group finally sees itself as a corporate "we" instead of individual "I's." You as a Small Group leader can stimulate and/or speed up the bonding process by initiating activities which have a way of drawing people into a unit. These activities are potential bonding points. A few examples are listed below.

1. **Weekend Retreat:** Concentrated and uninterrupted time together as a group creates a climate where relationships bloom and flourish. A retreat provides just such an opportunity. Think seriously about how you can provide this kind of experience for your group this year.
2. **Group Projects:** A group evangelistic project, a special service project or even a party can cause a group to close ranks and learn to depend upon and trust one another.
3. **Informal Contacts:** Going to a movie, out to eat, a sporting event? Ask one or more in you group to go along with you. You will be amazed what these informal settings can do. They communicate to group members that you really do care. They will often respond in like manner with other group members. We tend to reap the harvest of caring actions we sow.
4. **Games:** Get your group involved in some form of competition and it will often bond members together. Challenge another Small Group to a volleyball game for instance. Or split your group into teams for volleyball, softball or for bowling (do they do that here??). If you play any sports individually or as a couple, include some other members of your group in the competition. Having a table game night is also a good game activity for the group. Be sure to have enough room and a variety of games for the group.

What are some other bonding points you can think of which would draw your group together? Remember, Romans 12:10 says that we should be "devoted to one another in brotherly love."

BASIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Communication in a group is a complex matter. The complexities rise with the number of persons involved. Communication is both verbal and nonverbal, conveying feelings as well as ideas, hopes and opinions, judgments and anticipations. Good communication depends on the ability to listen and enter into the experiences of others as well as to be able to express your own ideas and feeling so that others can hear and understand them. Skill in communication requires practice. Often old patterns need to be broken so that new patterns of listening and speaking can be tried. Here is a list of some of the basic communication skills with a brief explanation.

ATTENDING: PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY FOCUSING ON A GROUP MEMBER SO AS TO CONVEY CLEARLY YOUR INTENTION TO LISTEN.

In a small group, examine the seating patterns and lines of eyesight to ensure that everyone can see and hear all the members without straining. Are all members of the group physically turned toward the group or do some sit at an angle or behind a barrier? Experiment with changing the arrangement of the group until one seems best for communication.

PARAPHRASING: SAYING BACK TO THE GROUP MEMBER IN YOUR OWN WORDS WHAT YOU THINK HE HAS SAID.

This lets the group member know that you are really attempting to hear and understand what he is saying rather than just preparing your own remarks. It also gives an opportunity to check accuracy in your hearing.

CLARIFICATION: ASKING A QUESTION OF A MEMBER TO CLEAR UP ANY POSSIBLE CONFUSION, UNCERTAINTY OR MISUNDERSTANDING.

For example, "I'm not sure what you meant by _____" "Could you run that by me again?" "Are you saying that _____?" "Do you mean _____ when you say _____?" "I'm a little confused. Is this what you are saying? _____"

Many times in a group things are said which we may grasp generally but not precisely. Or we may not understand at all. Usually we ignore it, guess what was meant, and go on. Clarification slows down the process and asks the question giving the other person a chance to clear up any confusion.

USE "I" MESSAGES INSTEAD OF "YOU" MESSAGES:

When expressing a feeling, uncertainty or opinion, try using "I" as the subject of the sentence instead of "You."

For example, "I feel us drifting from the subject" instead of "Aren't you getting off the subject?" Or, "I personally feel this point needs more scriptural proof" instead of "You have no scriptural proof for that point." Being willing to share what *you* think and feel instead of sending complaining "You" messages can make a difference in the tone of a small group.

FEELING DESCRIPTION: IDENTIFYING AND NAMING ONE'S FEELINGS

For example, "I feel discouraged with our progress in this." Or, "When you do that, I feel very happy." Shared feelings build trust. Concealed feelings can sabotage the group. Naming your feelings and describing them lets others know you.

AFFIRMATION: RESPONDING TO AN IDEA WITH SUPPORT.

Affirming builds confidence and trust and stimulates other members of the group to speak. Below are a few examples.

- I'm glad you brought that out
- You put a lot of thought into that question
- I hadn't thought of that—great insight!
- That's an interesting point
- Excellent answer
- I appreciate you sharing that with us

QUESTIONS: GOOD QUESTIONS CAN HAVE A POWERFUL EFFECT ON A DISCUSSION. THEY CAN FILL THE DEAD SPACES IN THE TIME.

Every group leader should be armed with some simple questions to keep the conversation and sharing active. Below are a few examples.

- What else can you think of in that regard?
- Did anyone else have a different answer or slant on that?
- What did you, Bob, think about that statement?
- Can you think of a good example to clarify your answer?
- Can anyone add to that?

SOME GUIDELINES FOR GOOD DISCUSSIONS

Below are some helpful hints to show you how to keep the discussion moving clearly, not too fast (shallow) or too slow (tedious):

1. Ask the group to read the passage to be discussed, each one taking a verse.
2. Ask one member to summarize the passage in his own words before any questions are asked about it.
3. When going over the study questions ask specific people to answer them. This will keep everyone on his toes. However, care should be given to avoid embarrassing participants. When you ask a question of a group member, be sure he is going to answer it aptly. If he stumbles, help him along and make him think he did answer it, at least in part. Compliment him on his answer. A person should not be allowed to feel that he has failed. This is especially true of new members of your group study.
4. Restate the question in different words, from another point of view.
5. The leader should have several parallel passages worked out for each study passage and for each question. If everybody looks blank at the first question and no one has anything to say, suggest that one of them look up a parallel passage which you give him.
 - a. Have him read the passage.
 - b. Ask: "What similarity do you see between this passage and the one we have been studying?"
 - c. Ask: "What light does this new passage throw upon the original question?"
6. After one person has made a point, ask others if they agree. Have them state their reasons. Often a great deal can be learned by disagreeing over a passage. Bring in other members and get their opinion. At the end of the discussion have someone summarize the points that have been made. It is sometimes best for the leader to do this.
7. Apply the passage personally. "What significance does this have for us today?" "What does this mean to you?" "How does (or will) it affect your life?"
8. There should be some who have been doing extra studying of the lessons. Have them briefly share their results. Be sure to commend them for their effort.
9. Encourage others individually (apart from the group, in private conversation) to work on some of the "further study projects." Offer to help them and look over their work.
10. Ask questions that stimulate discussion:
 - a. What do you think this passage means?
 - b. Can you think of any parallel passages in the Bible with the same idea?
 - c. What can we learn from this passage about God, Christ, ourselves, our responsibility, our relationships to others, etc.
 - d. Has this passage ever meant something special to you? If so, why? (Be sure the statement is correct and in keeping with the passage.)
11. "What don't you understand about this passage?" Be sure that all unusual words are clearly defined. Have a different translation read (This is the responsibility of the leader).
12. Keep the discussion relevant and personal.
13. Keep the discussion non-argumentative.
14. Use brainstorming and buzz groups for variety and stimulation in your discussion group.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD QUESTIONS

1. Questions should be brief and simple. The group members should be able to grasp the meaning quickly.
2. Questions should be clear, with only one possible interpretation as to what is meant. This demands great care in the choice of words and phrasing of sentences.
3. Questions should provoke thought, testing judgment, not merely the memory.
4. Questions should never suggest the answer.
5. Questions should not offer people a choice between two possible answers contained in the question because these questions do not lead people to think, but rather to guess.
6. Questions should not be stated in the words of the text, pamphlet or notes being used. This encourages verbatim memory of content and discourages thoughtful assimilation of ideas.
7. Questions should be adapted to the knowledge and experience of the group members with special attention being given to the quickest and slowest in the group and an opportunity for answering given to each.
8. Questions should prepare the person for further study, starting a train of associated ideas.
9. Questions should be logical and interrelated.
10. Questions should fulfill an essential purpose and not merely be asked for the sake of asking.
11. Questions should be asked in a conversational, spontaneous way, as if personally addressed to each of the group before one is selected to answer.

TECHNIQUES OF QUESTIONING

1. Questions should be asked in an informal way, implying that the group is able to answer.
2. Questions should be distributed so that all have an opportunity to learn as nearly equally as possible. This should not involve a purely mechanical distribution, e.g. alphabetically, seating order, etc.
3. Strike a balance between volunteers and stimulating shy people.
4. A person should be allowed sufficient time to answer. Do not be impatient. A too rapid placing of questions with insufficient time to answer them will distract rather than develop the thinking skill.
5. The answer should not be suggested by word, or hint, or inflection of the voice, or in any other way.
6. The leader should systematize and integrate his questioning process to provide a unity and coherence which will lead the class through the material in an organized way.
7. Usually, neither answers nor questions should be repeated. If the leader is at fault, the question must be repeated. Otherwise people will become inattentive. Sometimes, however, repeating a question is an effective way of jolting people into deeper thought. It enables you to go beyond the "prepared" answers that they have and go for a new and different perspective that should be brought out. For a good example of this, see 1 Kings 19:9-18.
8. When a person says that he is not able to answer a question, the leader should normally assume that this is true. Don't prod.
9. The question should evidence adaptability to the material and to the immediate situation.
10. Care should be taken not to ask too many questions, especially in a deliberate way.
11. Sometimes the leader should not answer or give agreement, but move ahead to clarifying information in the lesson.
12. Use the "pregnant pause." That is, do not be afraid of silence after you ask a question. Eventually someone will answer if you provide the time. Do not feel that you have to fill up the empty space. If you do, you may find yourself chattering most of the evening.

APPROACHES TO BIBLE STUDY

STEP ONE: OBSERVATION

BEGIN BY LEARNING TO SEE! Read and observe repeatedly and carefully. Observation is the act, power, and habit of seeing and noting. It is thorough and careful notice. It means to watch closely; to look intently; to give full attention to what one sees; to be mentally aware of what one sees. It demands concentration.

Overall, learn to see and observe:

1. Important terms—individual key words and how they are used.
2. How things fit—the relationship of words to words, what is emphasized, main thoughts and phrases, dependent thoughts and phrases, etc.
3. Atmosphere—see the sights, feel the feelings, hear the sounds, re-live what is going on. What's the mood?

Specific things to look for:

1. Key words—important or repeated words.
2. Commands and promises and warnings.
3. Reasons and results for doing something.
4. Contrasts—words like “but”, “rather”, “instead”, etc.
5. Comparisons—words like “like”, “as”, “likewise”, “now”, etc.
6. Repetition of words, ideas, statements, questions, etc.
7. Questions.
8. Connecting words—
“but” introduces contrast
“if” introduces conditions
“then” & “so then” introduce conclusions
“for”, “because”, “therefore” introduce reason and result
“in order that” sets forth purpose
9. Verbs—especially their tense (past, present, future).
10. Descriptive words and phrases (adjectives, adverbs, pronouns).
11. Mood—joy, thanksgiving, concern, humility, zeal, anger, caution, etc.
12. Type of writing—teaching, descriptive story, poetry, parable, prophecy.

Pray for the ability to see all that is there!

STEP TWO: INTERPRETATION

SEEK TO FIND MEANINGS! This step is called interpretation. To interpret means to explain or tell the meaning of something. Your aim should be to determine what the author meant by what he wrote. You should put yourself in his place. Recapture his thoughts, attitudes, emotions. Recreate his experiences, his historical situation and his specific circumstances.

One key to interpretation is **CONTEXT**. That is, “What does this word mean in this verse? What does this verse mean in this paragraph? What does this paragraph mean in this book? What does this book mean in the New Testament or Old Testament?”

The bridge between observation and interpretation is asking questions.

Kinds of questions to ask:

1. Meaning—What is the meaning of this word, phrase, or statement?
2. Significance—What is the significance of the word, statement, connective word, command, etc.?
3. Implication—What is implied by the use of this word, statement, command, etc.?
4. Relationship—What is the relationship of this word to the other word; verses to verses; paragraphs to paragraphs, etc.?
5. Progression—Is there an idea built upon another idea? Does it move to a climax?
6. Literal or figurative—Is this term or statement to be considered literally or figuratively.

Steps in answering questions: This is the process of interpretation:

1. Pray and meditate—think prayerfully about some of the insights you have discovered. Ask God to help you understand.
2. Discern—Some questions are better than others. Don't ask questions that overlap or are irrelevant or that can be answered with “yes” or “no”.

3. Define—Use a dictionary to define words. Remember, “What did the author mean when he used this word?”
4. Compare—Compare your translation with two or three others.
5. Investigate—Compare Scripture with Scripture. Let the Bible interpret itself. Use marginal references and a concordance to find how the author uses this word or phrase elsewhere.
6. Consult—Look at a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia to find out the historical, geographical and cultural background.
7. Wrestle—In light of your observations and your conclusions to the above six steps, and in light of the context, think, meditate, evaluate, reflect and draw conclusions.
8. Summarize—Write down your answer(s) to the question(s). “Therefore, the author is saying. . .”

STEP THREE: APPLICATION

Seek to relate the Bible to your life. This is called application. This step permits the Word of God to speak in a personal way to your heart. This is the ultimate purpose of all Bible study.

There are three steps in the application process.

1. Evaluate to see the relation of the passage to present day living. To help evaluate, answer the following questions:
 - a. What was the purpose of the author?
 - b. For whom was this passage written?
 - c. What are the “local” truths, that is, truths that are applicable to a specific period in history.
 - d. What are the “general” truths, that is, truths which can be applied in any age? Try to come up with one or two overall principles. How do these truths relate to the whole message of the Bible?
2. Apply the general truths and principles to your life. Answer these questions:
 - a. What am I to believe? (About Christ, God, the Holy Spirit, me, grace, sin, etc.)?
 - b. What am I to do?
 - 1) Are there actions I’m doing that I should stop?
 - 2) Are there actions I’m not doing that I should start?
 - 3) Are there destructive attitudes or emotions I need to forsake?
 - 4) Are there positive attitudes I need to adopt?
 - 5) How will I do the above?
 - c. Are there any sins I need to confess and forsake against God or my fellow man?
 - d. What do I need to do about relationships (be specific)?
 - 1) To God
 - 2) To my family
 - 3) To my co-workers
 - 4) To my brothers or sisters in Christ
 - 5) To my community
 - 6) To non-Christians
 - 7) To the world
 - e. What is the good news for me in this passage?
3. Actualize and apply the insights you have gained in your study by putting them into practice.
 - a. Meditate and ask God what specifically He wants you to do.
 - b. Take concrete steps to do what He wants.
 - 1) State one or two things you are specifically going
 - 2) When are you going to do it?
 - 3) Where are you going to do it?
 - 4) How are you going to do it?
 - c. Make yourself accountable to someone else.
 - 1) Tell them what you are going to do.
 - 2) Have them make you accountable by checking on how you are doing.
 - d. Trust God to enable you to obey through the power of the Holy Spirit.

HELPS IN MOVING TO THE APPLICATION OF BIBLICAL TRUTH

A SAMPLE STRUCTURE FOR APPLICATION

You could hand out forms like this to the group members to facilitate their work in making specific, realistic and practical applications from the passage or topic being studied in the group that evening.

In light of

I ought to

I will carry this out this next week by

SOME VERBS TO HELP GUIDE YOU INTO MORE SPECIFIC ACTION AND APPLICATION

Use this list when you are trying to lead the group into specific applications from the passage. Some are related to the content, some to attitudes and others to action. Be sure that your applications are relevant to the whole person (body, soul and spirit—mind, emotions, will).

Accept	Experiment	Respond
Admit	Find	Sacrifice
Analyze	Follow	Save
Ask	Give	Schedule
Ask myself	Go	Select
Avoid	Guard	Send
Be sensitive	Help	Share
Be willing	Invite	Show
Build	Isolate	Sing
Buy	Keep	Spend time
Choose	List	Stay away
Claim	Listen	Stop
Collect	Look for	Study
Commit	Look up	Substitute
Compliment	Love	Take
Comply	Meet with	Talk with
Confess	Memorize	Teach
Control	Organize	Telephone
Count	Plan out	Thank
Create	Praise	Think about
Decide	Pray about	Value
Develop	Pray to	Visit
Direct	Pray with	Wait
Discourse	Prefer	Wake up
Do	Pursue	Walk
Eliminate	Read	Watch
Encourage	Realize	Witness
Enjoy	Record	Work on
Evaluate	Rejoice	Write down
Exemplify	Repair	Write to

VERBS USEFUL IN STATING LESSON OBJECTIVES

State each objective in terms of: "By the end of this session each participant should be able to . . ."

Knowledge	Insight	Attitude	Skill/Action
List	Differentiate	Determine to	Interpret
State	Discriminate	Develop	Apply
Enumerate	Compare	Have confidence	Internalize
Recite	Contrast	Appreciate	Produce
Recall	Classify	Be convinced of	Use
Write	Select	Be sensitive to	Practice
Identify	Choose	Commit to	Study
Memorize	Separate	Be enthusiastic about	Solve
Know	Evaluate	Desire to	Experience
Trace	Examine	Sympathize with	Explain
Delineate	Comprehend	View	Communicate
Become aware of	Reflect on	Plan	Assist in
Become familiar with	Think through	Feel satisfied with	Pray about
Discover	Discern		Understand
Consider			
Appraise			
Gain perspective			
Explore			
Investigate			
Know why			
Explain			
Clarify			
Sort			

MOST EFFECTIVE METHODS TO REACH OBJECTIVES

Knowledge	Insight	Attitude	Skill
Reading	Problem solving	Role-reversal	Demonstration
Lecture	discussion	playing	Role playing
A/V aids	Case study	Permissive discussion	Practice
Field trip	Investigation		Feedback time
Exhibits	Writing	Counseling	Drill
Question/answer	Group analysis	Field trips	Observation
Recitation	Visit to special	Interview	Practice teach
Research project	place	Experiments	
Demonstrations			

FAMILY INFORMATION

Use this sheet (pick up copies at workshop) to record significant data on members of your small group. You can use this information to help you be more effective as a nurturing and caring shepherd of your group.

NAME: _____

SPOUSE'S NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PLZ/ORT _____

TELEPHONE: _____ E-MAIL _____

MOBILE _____ HIS WORK: _____ HER WORK: _____

ANNIVERSARY: _____ HIS BIRTHDAY: _____ HER BIRTHDAY: _____

MARITAL STATUS: _____

LIST THE NAMES, AGES, AND BIRTHDAYS OF CHILDREN:

NAME	AGE	BIRTHDAY
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT EACH GROUP MEMBER

1. What do I feel are their most pressing physical needs?
2. What do I feel are their most pressing spiritual needs?
3. What am I doing to help meet those needs?
4. What do I feel is this person's function in the body of Christ?
5. How am I helping this person to develop into their place of service?
6. What factors are keeping this person from realizing their full potential in God?
7. In what areas of ministry are they presently involved?
8. Do they attend the group on a regular basis?

THE NEED FOR PASTORS

WITHOUT TRUE SHEPHERDS

1. Sheep are scattered
Zech. 13:7; Ezek. 34:5-6
2. Sheep wander
Ezek. 34:6
3. Sheep are lacking
Jer. 23:4
4. Sheep are devoured
Ezek. 34:5
5. Sheep are weak
Matt. 9:36
6. Sheep have want
Psalm 23:1
7. Sheep are diseased
Ezek. 34:4
8. Sheep are broken
Ezek. 34:4
9. Sheep are lost
Ezek. 34:4
10. Sheep are prey for enemy
Ezek. 34:8
11. Sheep are fearful
Jer. 23:4; Psalm 23:4
12. Sheep are despondent
Jer. 23:3
13. Sheep are destroyed
John 10:10
14. Sheep are divided
Acts 20:30
15. Sheep are robbed
John 10:1-2

WITH TRUE SHEPHERDS

1. Sheep receive provision
Psalm 23:1-2
2. Sheep receive direction
Num. 27:15-17; Psalm 80:1
3. Sheep are fruitful
Jer. 23:3
4. Sheep are kept
Jer. 31:10
5. Sheep are strengthened
Ezek. 34:4,16
6. Sheep are fed
Jer. 23:4; I Pet. 5:2
7. Sheep receive healing
Ezek. 34:4,16
8. Sheep receive binding up
Ezek. 34:4,16
9. Sheep are found
Ezek. 34:15; Jn. 10:16
10. Sheep are safe
Ezek. 34:25
11. Sheep receive rest
Psalm 23:2; Ezek. 34:15
12. Sheep are comforted
Psalm 23:4
13. Sheep are restored
Psalm 23:3
14. Sheep are visited
Jer. 23:2
15. Sheep receive increase
Jer. 23:3

THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE IN LOCAL CHURCHES

Jon Zens

1. If a man is lost in Adam we must in love exhort him to faith in Christ and repentance towards God.
2. If a person is a brother/sister in Christ we must love them as Christ loved us (constantly, sacrificially, unconditionally) (John 13:34, 1 John 3:16).
3. In general, Christians are to build up one another as functioning priests in a local church (1 Thess. 1:1, 5:11, 14). Edification is realized through mutual support, encouragement, admonition, and has as its goal our conformity to the image of Christ (Rom. 15:14; Heb. 3:13; 10:24-25; 1 Pet. 4:10; Rom. 8:29).
4. In general, brothers and sisters are to fervently love one another, with a love that covers a multitude of sins, with a love that is quick to forgive, forbear, and that is always kind and longsuffering (1 Pet. 1:22; 3:8; 4:8; Eph. 4:32; Col 3:13).
5. In all these duties, our words play a prominent role. Our mouths are to be used to build up, not to tear down (Col. 3:8,16; Eph. 4:29, 31, 5:4; 1 Pet. 4:11; James 3:10). We must consciously make edification the goal of our speech, and avoid speaking evil of others, when we have not gone to the brother with our reservations. Love “thinks no evil” (1 Cor. 13:5).
6. In general, we are to strive in our actions and words for things that make for peace (Rom. 12:18). We must pursue peace and make peace in our relationships with men. Being a “peacemaker” means that we will (1) follow Biblical principles to resolve sinful conflicts and problems; and (2) order our lives with a view toward effecting and promoting harmony (Matt. 5:9; Heb. 12:14).
7. If a brother in Christ has something against you, you are to go to him and be reconciled (Matt. 5:23-24).
8. If we have something against another brother, we are to go to him and be reconciled (Matt. 18:15).
9. If a strong brother partakes of something you abstain from, you are not to judge him (Rom. 14:3).
10. If a weak brother abstains from something you enjoy, you are not to despise him (Rom. 14:3).
11. In all things, weak and strong brethren are to seek one another’s welfare by pursuing peace and edification (Rom. 14:19). Paul did not tell the vegetable-eater to start eating meat; nor did he tell the meat-eater to stop eating meat (Rom. 14:2-3). Rather, Paul exhorts them both to have a Christ-honoring attitude of respect toward one another (Rom. 15:1-3, 7).
12. If a saint falls into sin, we are to care for him by confronting the problem with a view toward his restoration (Gal. 6:1-2; Matt. 18:15-16).
13. If a saint who has fallen into sin repents, we are to forgive and receive him (Matt. 18:21-22; Luke 17:3-4; 2 Cor. 2:6-8).
14. If a professing brother has fallen into sin, has been lovingly confronted (Matt. 18:15-16), and refuses to repent, the church must put him out of the assembly (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:2, 7). Even this purging out of leaven is done in hopes of the ultimate restoration of the offender.
15. If we know (or believe) that a brother has something against us, or if we know we have something against a brother, or if we know (or believe) a brother is in some sin, or if we—for any reason—feel alienated from a brother, and we do not go to that brother for healing, we sin against Christ and our brother. The N.T. stresses the bond of fellowship among brethren. If we believe that this bond is broken, we are obliged to go to others and heal the breach. This does not mean that we must all agree on everything. But it does mean that we cannot harbor bad thoughts about others.
16. If a brother is walking disorderly (“out of ranks”), the brethren are to withdraw from him in order that he might be ashamed (2 Thess. 3:6, 14). In such cases, the person is to be admonished as a brother, not treated as an enemy (2 Thess. 3:15). The goal here is for the brother to be brought back into step with apostolic teachings (2 Thess. 3:6, 10, 14).

These propositions by no means exhaust the demands of love in Christian relationships. But I do believe that they isolate our basic duties to one another. I am convinced that these duties are scarcely practiced as they should be in our churches, and insufficiently reflected upon in our Christian experience. It is hard to go to another saint and deal with a problem. But love cares and love disciplines. We are in fact unloving if we skirt these duties in the name of “peace.”

Brothers and sisters, after you have read over and meditated on these propositions, I trust that the Spirit will move you to take action regarding the general and specific duties given in the N.T. If we hear, but do not practice, we deceive ourselves (James 1:22). If we hear and do these things, we will be happy and blessed (John 13:17; 15:11). “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

LEADERS' RESOURCES

Below we have provided for you various sources for ideas and direction for small group ministry. Most of the books are still available and in print, and most of them can be borrowed from Steve Henderson or from others. (Please return so others can use them too!) When possible, ISBN data is provided so that you may more easily order one for yourself with a book service such as Amazon.de (Euro prices are approximate where given). This is by no means an exhaustive list. If you have something that is helpful, please pass it on!

BOOKS

Life in His Body, by David Finnell. (Touch Publications, Houston, Texas, 1995. ISBN 1-880828-87-1). This is a practical guide to developing small groups that reproduce in healthy fashion through cell division. Primary focus is on developing a cell church and the ministry structures that help to shepherd people in that setting. Good suggestions on charting a course for people focused outreach and bringing outsiders into the group. Finnell is director of the International Network of Church Planters and has developed these strategies on the field in Singapore. AN EXCELLENT RESOURCE. Available from Amazon.de in one to two weeks for 12.00.

How to Have Great Small Group Meetings, by Neal F. McBride. (Navpress, 1997. ISBN 1-57683-021-7). A helpful volume with practical ideas for starting and maintaining the groups. Good balance between planning and sensitivity to the Spirit.

LifeChange Series. These Bible study materials from Navpress (www.navpress.com) are available at low cost (\$6.00 USD) and for most, if not all the books of the Bible. They stress personal discovery of God's word through inductive study questions, application of scripture, provide help through brief historical sketches, word origins and definitions, and offer help to the leader by a leader's guide and some additional group projects.

Getting Together: A Guide for Good Groups by Em Griffin (InterVarsity Press, 1982. ISBN 0-87784-390-2). Classic book on some of the issues of small group development, leadership and growth. More academic in its orientation, it is nonetheless practical AND it has great cartoons! May be out of print.

Where Do We Go From Here? by Ralph Neighbour (Touch Publications, Houston, Texas 1990). This is the most comprehensive study of cell church development I have come across. Lots of charts and statistics can distract if you let it, but it offers a clear picture of the failure of the program based church to effectively reach and build up people in Christ. New edition appeared in 2000 and is available from Amazon.de for 18.00.

Growth Groups, by Michael T. Dibbert and Frank B. Wichern. (Zondervan, 1985. ISBN 0-310-23121-3. Out of print, but I have three copies). A good overview of basis, philosophy and organization of groups, with suggestions for dealing with hindrances to growth in the groups.

Building a Church of Small Groups, by Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson. (Zondervan, 2001. ISBN 0-310-24035-2). Particularly helpful for those who are in a position of oversight and development of new groups, this book develops the importance of small groups to experiencing real community and relationships in the local church. Helpful material on selecting, training and supporting leaders.

The Seven Deadly Sins of Small Group Ministry, by Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson. (Zondervan, 2002. ISBN 0-310-24706-3). This follow up book to the above is valuable for the ministry leader or small group leader who is interested in maintaining spiritual vitality in the groups. It identifies and diagnoses seven common ailments to individual groups and/or overall group development and prescribes strategies and tools to use to strengthen the group so it can be fruitful.

The Second Reformation, by William A. Beckham. A positive and strong call to the church to rethink the forms of ministry and adapt to be able to meet the challenges of ministry in the modern era. Shows how small groups and cells can be used to catalyze a church's ministry of personal spiritual development and evangelism. Available from Amazon.de for 15.75.

Connecting, by Larry Crabb. (Word, 1997. ISBN 0-8499-1413-2). A wonderful book that calls the church to connect with members in such a way that the love and grace of God are powerfully released as people grow in their spiritual health. Note: this will only work when church leaders (pastors, elders, group leaders) take the New Testament seriously about our role as lovers of God and shepherds of men. Available from Amazon.de for 24.00. For more helpful development of this theme, see also Crabb's *The Safest Place on Earth*.

The Safest Place on Earth, by Larry Crabb. (Word, 1999. ISBN 0-8499-1456-6). A companion to *Connecting* in many ways, as it shows how authentic people in connected relationships can make the church the place of beauty, safety and growth to fruitfulness and joy that God designed it to be. Available from Amazon.de for 24.29.

The Connecting Church: Beyond Small Groups to Authentic Community, by Randy Frazee. (Zondervan, 2001. ISBN 0-310-23308-9). Frazee, pastor of Pantego Bible Church in Texas (where Tom Bulick, our retreat speaker at Mittersill 2002 also serves), has approached the problem of individualism and isolation in our culture head on and restructured the ministries to intentionally focus on those core beliefs, practices and virtues to produce fully developed disciples. Available in 1-2 weeks from Amazon.de for 21.00. You can get more information on this ministry at www.pantego.org.

MAGAZINES

Discipleship Journal. Bimonthly magazine published by the Navigators. Helpful bible study material and leaders' helps in each issue focused on small groups and personal discipleship. The complete *Discipleship Journal* library (all issues from January, 1981 through May, 1999) is available on a single CD-ROM for \$99 and is integrated with Logos Library System™ and includes other Bible reference tools. Individual back issues can be viewed and some articles downloaded at www.discipleshipjournal.com.

Cell Church Journal. Published by Touch Ministries in Houston, Texas, this is a quarterly publication designed to assist groups and churches in their growth. Back issues can be viewed and downloaded from www.touchusa.org.

WEBLINKS

Here's some help in successfully navigating the information sea on the internet related to small groups. There are so many links and sites, you'll find some to be helpful and full of information and overflowing with links to other sites. If you find something that is particularly useful, please pass it on to other leaders!

- www.discipleshipjournal.com a subset of the Navigators/Navpress website. Good information.
- www.touchusa.org the homepage of Touch Ministries, developed by Ralph Neighbour. Focused on cell-churches and their development. Links to other sites and information very helpful. US phone for contact is 001-800-735-5865.
- www.smallgroups.com just like you'd expect—information on small group ministries. Lots of good newsletter archives and an abundance of helpful resources with everything about small groups and more useful stuff for cell leaders.
- www.bild.org the website for BILD International--Biblical Institute for Leadership Development. They are developing excellent materials for use in small groups and in training elders in local churches around the world.
- www.learncorp.com publishers of the materials produced by BILD, including The First Principles series, used in our small groups in MICC last fall (*Becoming a Disciple*). To order these materials for your group, visit this site or call 001.515.292.6810 (Iowa, US; -7 hours from Munich)
- www.cellchurch.co.uk dedicated to the Cell Church movement in the United Kingdom.
- www.cellgroup.com lots of resources and ministry for youth cells. Includes materials for youth led cells.
- www.ccn.org.hk Shepherd Community's (Hong Kong) web site (Pastor Ben Wong) This church has a huge network of cell churches and is very missions minded. Seen by many as innovative and groundbreaking.
- www.cell-church.org this is one of the most valuable sites on the web for those who want to stay in touch with the cell movement. You can join a cell based e-mail mailing list and discuss various topics with other pastors, leaders and members of cell churches, read online articles etc.
- www.crosssearch.com/Church_and_Denominational_Resources/Cell_Churches Gospel Communication's list of cell churches and ministries. Some are not found elsewhere.

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SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES AT 4:00 PM

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(IN THE FREIE EVANGELISCHE GEMEINDE)

U 3 / U 6 AT GOETHE PLATZ