

New Covenant SMALL GROUP LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Part I – Small Group Philosophy

Biblical Mandates

John 13:15 “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”

1 Peter 2:1-3 “Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.”

Ephesians 5:1-2 “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

John 13:34-35 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Hebrews 5:11-6:3 “We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore, let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so.”

Matthew 28:19-20 “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

1 Chronicles 16:23-29 “Sing to the LORD, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy in his dwelling place. Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength, ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come before him; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.”

When asking the question, “Why do our small groups exist? What’s the purpose of the groups?” we follow these mandates.

Our Mandate – *Christlikeness*

God calls all who believe in Him to become like Him in attitudes and behavior. The church does not exist just to collect the saints together, but to transform them.

Our Strategy – *Small groups*

Small groups provide an environment for the life change Christ intends for every believer. Relationships can best be built in this context. This is where people can best experience a little bit of the love God has for us by experiencing that love from other believers. Also, communities that press toward the same goal together always fair better than individuals who press on alone. Why?

The Example – *Small group leader*

You are the most strategic person in the transformation process of your group. The ultimate goal of a leader is life-change, to help members grow in Christlike character through learning, love one another, and contributing your time and resources. The leader sets the Christlike example, is willing to be vulnerable.

The Goal – *Multiply*

These groups will never be intended to be closed to people not on your member list. Small groups do not exist for themselves. Christlike people do not desire to be unconnected to others closed to outsiders. Small groups must instead have a strategy for growth and reproduction so that each student who comes has an identifiable relational connection. The apprentice program fosters new leaders so that current groups can expand and create new ones.

The Catalyst – *Worship*

Effective ministry takes place in an atmosphere of prayer and celebration. Ministry without Christ is nothing! God’s activity must be noticed, shared, valued, and celebrated. A climate of fun and festivity should permeate group meetings.

Developing Fully Devoted Followers

The ultimate purpose of small groups is to move people toward ***Pursuing God, Pursuing others and Practicing His ways***. In other words, we are creating lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ.

What is a Disciple?

In the simplest form, a disciple is a follower and learner of Jesus Christ. "Living as Christ would if He were in my place." Discipleship implies a life of transformation and continued lifestyle of willing yieldedness to the Holy Spirit.

Okay, this is what a disciple IS, but what does a disciple DO?

A disciple can be described as someone who is maturing in 5 areas:

Saved by grace (*Eph 2:8-9*)

A disciple has received Christ's saving grace. They are not trying to earn salvation by works, but find their security only through Christ's sacrificial death on their behalf. As believers, they have obediently followed Christ's command of baptism.

Spiritual growth (*1 Peter 3:18*)

A disciple gratefully responds to their salvation by pursuing a lifelong process of spiritual growth by seeking to be conformed to Christ's image. Because of this, they nurture their spiritual development through prayer, worship, and Bible study. They regard scripture as the final authority and strive to be obedient to it. They honestly confront personal sin and engage the Holy Spirit in turning from that sin. They also desire to extend the grace they've received to others through the use of their spiritual gifts.

Community participation (*Acts 2:46*)

A disciple honors God's call to participate in community in order to grow in Christlikeness, express and receive love, and carry out the ministry of the church. They also pursue Christ-honoring relationships in all other areas of life, support church leadership, affirm fundamental truths of scripture while refrain from promoting other doctrines in ways that cause dissension.

Uses spiritual gifts (*Rom 12:6-8*)

A disciple recognizes that each member of the body is gifted by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up the body and the ministry of the church. They therefore seek to discover, develop, and use their God-given gifts within the church.

Stewardship (*Phil 4:11-19*)

A disciple knows that they have been bought with the price of Christ's blood and that everything they have belongs to Him. Because of this, they desire to be responsible caretakers of the material resources God has entrusted to them. They participate in the historical standard of tithing as they increasingly submit their resources to the Lord in a spirit of generosity and cheerfulness.

Small Groups in the New Testament ¹

- Jesus and the Twelve
- Paul and his missionary team
- Meetings in homes
- House churches

Characteristics of these Examples

- Leader
- Met in homes
- Purposeful
- Frequent and continual
- Relational
- Unified

The new community formed on the Day of Pentecost and immediately began to function in small groups. These groups wholeheartedly devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles, to fellowship with each other, to take the Lord's Supper, and pray for each other. Everyone used their spiritual gifts to edify each other. They gathered together for fellowship and mutual support so that the church could have an impact on their society. They encouraged each other, cared for each other, and for the world around them.

Key Scriptures

Acts 2:46-47 "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

1 Corinthians 12:7 "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

Hebrews 10:24-25 "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. 25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

¹ Phil Humphries

2 Timothy 2:2 “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. **3** Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”

Small groups exist to teach the truth and develop future leaders who can shepherd others and disciple them in the faith. For this purpose, each leader has an apprentice you will develop toward greater responsibility and leadership.

So why Small Groups?²

Howard A. Snyder on small groups says:

“The church today is suffering a fellowship crisis. It is simply not experiencing nor demonstrating that ‘fellowship of the Holy Spirit’ (2 Cor.13:14) that marked the New Testament Church. In a world of big, impersonal institutions, the church often looks like just another big, impersonal institution. One seldom finds within the institutionalized church today that winsome intimacy among people where masks are dropped, honesty prevails and there is that sense of communication and community beyond the human – where there is literally the fellowship of and in the Holy Spirit. Our churches are filled with people who outwardly look contented and at peace but inwardly are crying out for someone to love them...just as they are – confused, frustrated, often frightened, guilty, and often unable to communicate even within their own families. But the other people in the church look so happy and contented that one seldom has the courage to admit his own deep needs before such a self-sufficient group as the average church meeting appears to be.”

“At least 85 percent of the lay people in the typical congregation tend to think primarily in relational, not functional terms.”³

Our student ministry cannot be driven by programs and activities – it has to be driven by intentional and meaningful relationships. Although many people think of programs, activities, and events when they think of church, they really come because of the relationships. The church cannot compete with mainstream culture but the one thing we have to offer that the world does not is the way Jesus pursued people through love and relationship.

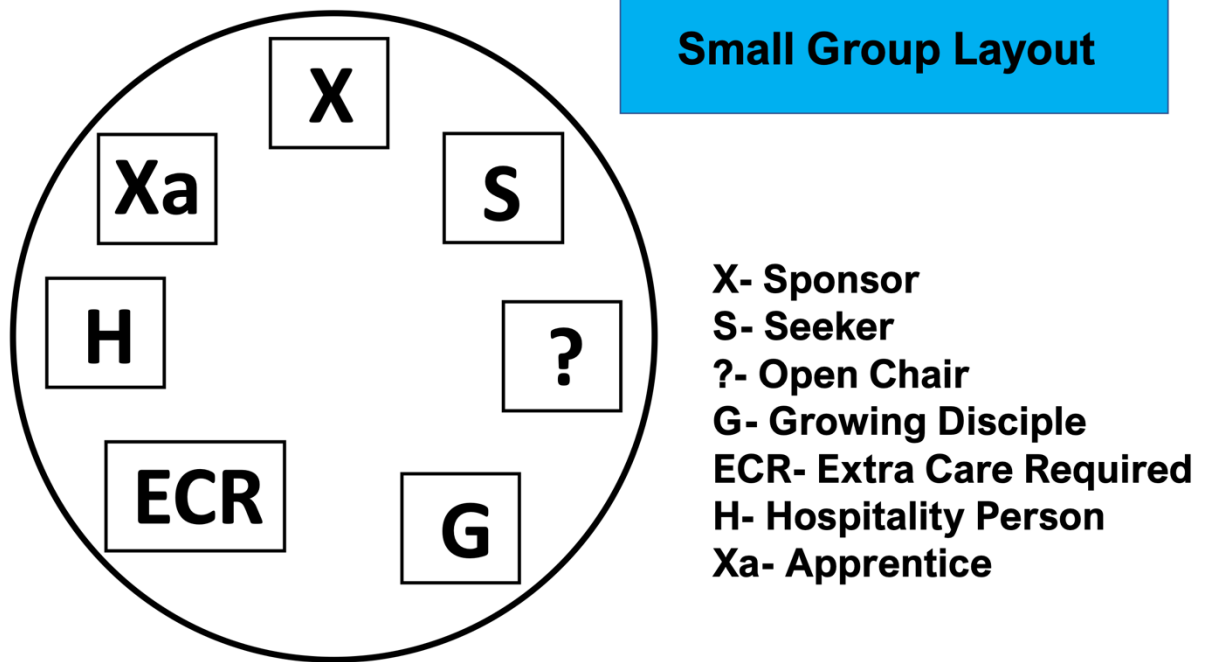
² Phil Humphries

³ Lyle E. Schaller, *Assimilating New Members*

- Fellowship/the people 36%
- Location 24%
- Minister/priest/rabbi 20%
- To worship God 13%
- Peace of mind 13%
- Raised there/habit 10%
- (to learn – 8%; sermon – 7%; music – 5%)⁴

Today the church needs to rediscover what the early church Christians found: that small group meetings are something essential to Christian experience and growth.

Typical Structure of a Small Group⁵



⁴ The Dallas Morning News: Reasons for Attending Church

⁵ Carl George, Prepare Your Church for the Future

Breakdown

- X = Small group leader of up to 9 members
- Xa = Apprentice Leader: Apprentices learn to lead by participating in a group led by the leader. Rising apprentices (RXa) may be also be present in a group.
- H = The role of the hospitality person is to provide a safe and caring environment for the meetings
- ECR = Each of us, at one time or another, becomes a person who requires extra care. Whether because of family background, past history, or present crisis, the ECR person needs a special dose of love and care from God and the group. Most groups have one or two ECR's at any given time.
- G = Growing disciples in a small group. These are Christians who are maturing in their faith.
- Open Chair = This represents the desire to assimilate and include new people into the group structure. From time to time, groups invite and assimilate new members so that those who need and desire discipling and care can be incorporated into group life.
- S = Be prepared to receive seekers. Group leaders and members must be sensitive to the needs and spiritual maturity level of a seeker.