

Acknowledgements

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Index

How to use this manual.....	3
① CSC Directional Statements.....	5
② CSC Small Group Philosophy.....	7
③ Biblical Community.....	13
④ The Four Spaces of Community.....	19
⑤ Best Practices.....	25
i. Lead Yourself.....	25
ii. Be Real.....	29
iii. Create Studies That Draw Them In.....	33
iv. Help Your Group Be Conflict Positive.....	36
v. Help Your Group Bond.....	41
vi. Keep the Focus on Jesus.....	48
vii. Grow New Leaders.....	51
viii. Grow Your Group's Outward Look.....	57
ix. Lead Your Group Through Helpful Self Assessments.....	61
⑥ Providing Care.....	71
⑦ Celebrations.....	75
⑧ You and Your Community Leader.....	83
⑨ Mentoring Questions.....	85
Detailed Index.....	91
Resources Consulted.....	95

PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL

This manual is not a comprehensive exploration of small group information. It is a presentation of CSC philosophy and strategy for small groups, as well as a sampling of best practices for small group leaders. It also provides suggested ways for community leaders and small group leaders to conduct celebrations like baptisms, child dedications, and Holy Communion.

Although each ministry of Centre Street Church will nurture biblical community uniquely, small groups from the various core communities of the church should share some common features. For example, a common vocabulary should be in use, our vision for biblical community should be the same, we should all be striving toward a multiplication approach to growing leaders.

The Executive Leadership Team has commissioned the publication of this manual toward this purpose. Our expectation is that pastors, community leaders, small group leaders and potential leaders will find it useful and, together, we will grow in our experience of biblical community.

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

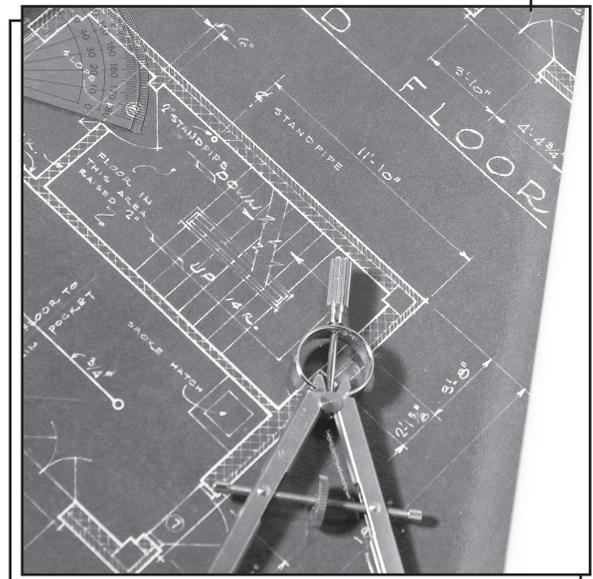
This manual is written as a training tool. It is written in particular to the small group leader with the expectation that the leader and his/her community leader will work through the manual together. It can be read and discussed in bite-sized portions, as appropriate. Sprinkled throughout the manual are discussion questions that are designed to get people talking with each other. When you see  , this is your opportunity to stop and talk about the ideas presented. Suggested answers are listed in the section 'Mentoring Questions' at the back of the manual.

Here are some possible relational connections in which this manual might be used, in addition to community leader and small group leader:

- Pastor to community leader
- Pastor to mentoring huddle
- Community leader to mentoring huddle
- Small group leader to potential leader

As well, a community leader, small group leader or potential leader can read the manual on their own, acquiring information and help as needed.

The section 'Detailed Index' is a handy troubleshooter. Once a problem is identified, the reader may be able to find information in the manual which will help them address the problem.



Centre Street Church Directional Statements

1

OUR PURPOSE

(God's call to the church)

To glorify God through exalting Him, edifying one another and equipping believers for effective ministry and outreach.

CSC VISION

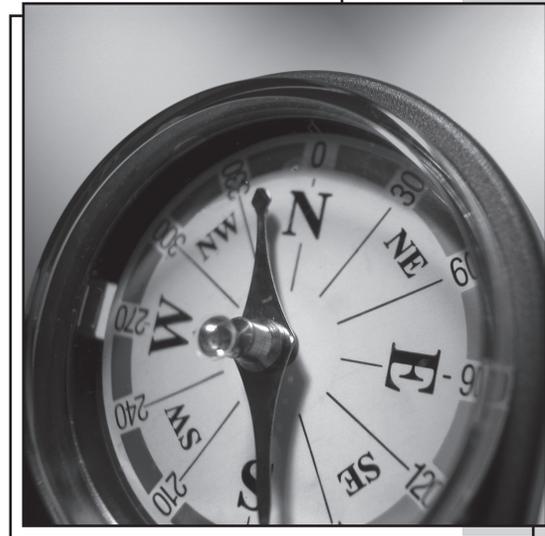
(Our ideal future)

To become a biblically functioning community of devoted followers of Jesus committed to accomplishing God's redemptive purposes in the world.

CSC MISSION STATEMENT

(Why we exist)

To introduce people to Jesus and help them become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.



OUR CORE VALUES

(Why we do what we do)

We value **people** because people matter to God and need to know Him.

We value **corporate worship** as vital to the celebration of God's presence among us.

We value **scriptural preaching and teaching** communicated with grace toward the transformation of lives.

We value **the practice of prayer**.

We value **small groups** as being strategic to the building of a biblically functioning community.

We value the **unity of loving relationships** permeating every aspect of church life.

We value a **discipling process** which moves people to become fully mature followers of Christ.

We value the **empowerment of people** to do the work of ministry with a servant heart according to their giftedness.

We value **servant-leadership** given by Spirit-filled people.

We value **giving our best to God** because this honours God and inspires people.

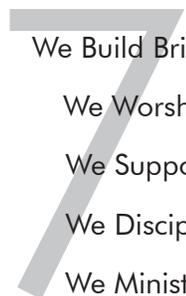
OUR 6 E'S

(Marks of a fully devoted follower)

- 
- Embracing Christian Growth
 - Exalting the Lord
 - Experiencing biblical community
 - Exercising good stewardship
 - Evangelizing the lost
 - Extending the Kingdom

OUR 7-STEP STRATEGY

(How we're fulfilling our mission)

- 
- We Care
 - We Share
 - We Build Bridges
 - We Worship
 - We Support
 - We Disciple
 - We Minister



Why is it important that community leaders, small group leaders and potential leaders have some understanding of CSC directional statements?

What are some ways that the statements above might impact CSC small groups?

Why are small groups important to CSC?

What does the phrase 'biblical community' mean to you?

Core value 8 reads: 'We value the empowerment of people to do the work of ministry with a servant heart according to their giftedness.' How do you see yourself empowered, as a small group leader? What do you sense are Jesus' best hopes for you as a small group leader?

Look again at our 6 E's. In which of the 6 E's have you seen growth in your life? Which areas need the most work?

Centre Street Church

Small Group Philosophy

2

Why?

It's a common question, isn't it? Why. Why is our government democratic? Why are schools and other organizations run by boards? Why do hospitals have so many policy manuals?

There are good answers to all of these questions and those answers become important to us in many ways every day of our lives.

This section answers the question, 'Why does CSC do small groups the way it does?' A number of your pastors and volunteer leaders have prayerfully come to a common understanding of how the Lord would have us lead his people in this place and time. It's important that you, as a small group leader, understand and influence the people you lead, so they are aligned with the direction of the larger church. This section of your handbook addresses this issue.

Small Group Basics

On page 11, you will find the Small Group Basics diagram. This diagram will be referred to at the beginning of each 'best practice'. You and your community leader will use it often. Once you have grasped the ideas laid out in this diagram, you will have a good understanding of our small group philosophy.



Without help from your community leader, try to work through the chart explaining how it flows in a sequence. Hint: Start with the top circle, then move counter clockwise. Use the explanatory notes to help you.

Words We Use

Small Group: Small groups are biblical communities that interact with God, people, and life. A small group has an identified leader and meets to help people find belonging, growing in Christ, and reaching out to others. Small groups gather around various affinities such as geography, gender, a common cause, a common stage of life, or shared activities.

Small Group Leader: A person who is called of God and affirmed by CSC leadership to minister to the spiritual and life needs of a small group of people for a significant period of time. Small group leaders must take the appropriate training and receive the affirmation of the ministry area where they will serve.

Potential Leader (sometimes referred to as an apprentice): A person who has sensed the call of God to lead a small group, is affirmed by the small group, and begins to learn leadership skills under the care of a small group leader.

Community Leader (sometimes referred to as a coach): A person who has experienced life’s challenges and difficulties and has grown strong as a fully devoted follower of Jesus. The Community Leader is committed to love, grow, and lead the small group leader, and serves under the direction of the assigned Community Pastor.

Community Pastor: Community Pastors are chosen for their love for God, experience in small group leadership, and skills in mentoring. The primary charge of the Community Pastor is to love, grow, and lead small group leaders in the geographical region to which they are assigned.

Core Community: A group of people, usually 50 – 200 in number, which is gathered around a common affinity or life season. CSC core communities are intentionally designed to start externally focused small groups.

Regional Centre: Centre Street Church is a multi-site church – one church in many locations. A Regional Centre begins when the senior leadership of the church identifies a number of small groups or home churches that covenant together to establish a regional work in keeping with CSC philosophy and vision. Each Regional Centre is led by a Lead Pastor whose mission is to shepherd the congregation, hold public worship services, and saturate the region with externally focused small groups.

Home Church: A home church sees itself to be “the church” in its community and therefore implements outreach, discipleship, equipping, and multiplying strategies. It is easily intergenerational and multi-ethnic because of its focus and mission to take Jesus to where people live. All members of home churches are encouraged to be active participants, using their God-given gifts for service and mission in the world. Each home church recognizes its connection and cooperation with the larger CSC community, and therefore adheres to the directional statements of the larger church.

CSC Small Group Principles

Below is a list of principles that direct the way the small group ministry of CSC functions.

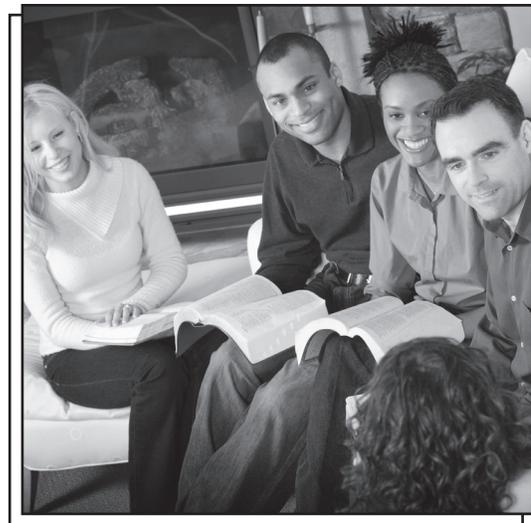
We value small groups as being strategic to the building of a biblically functioning community.

Therefore, we will put an immense amount of time, people power, prayer and physical resources into small groups.



What has been your experience with small groups?

In what ways do you see small groups being strategic to the vision of community in our church?



Community leaders, small group leaders and potential leaders will learn best in an environment where they are mentored by trained, life-giving leaders.

Therefore, we will invest a great deal of our energies into establishing a mentoring process that is both intentional and relational.

- **Relational mentoring:** face-to-face, personal communication.



What are your hopes and expectations out of the mentoring relationship?

What do you hope to achieve by being mentored? How can your community leader help you achieve these goals?

Our small group ministry will grow exponentially under the leadership of equipped and empowered leaders.

Therefore, we will make growing leaders our first priority as a church.



In light of this principle, what do you expect to see our pastoral staff and community leaders do?

Who do you plan to spend time with, equipping and helping them grow?

The Holy Spirit calls and gifts people to lead - the Body affirms both.

Therefore, we will pray that the Lord would send workers into his harvest who will be alert to the activity of God in the lives of people.

- **Harvest:** the word Jesus used to refer to God's Kingdom work (Matthew 9:37-38).



Why do you believe God wants you to be a small group leader?

What affirmations have you experienced?

The more pathways to community, the more people we will be able to draw into the life enriching experience of biblical community.

Therefore, we will honour and validate the formation of different kinds of small groups.



What kind of group do you lead?

What is your vision for your group?

Our Strategy

The 'home grown' leader:

- Small group embraces the vision of birthing a new group
- A person senses the call of God to explore leadership
- Potential leader and small group leader develop a relationship
- Potential leader attends CSC Small Group Leader's Orientation
- Potential leader grows in confidence until he/she is are ready to lead
- A new group is formed – often the potential leader becomes new leader
- New group steps out with the vision of growing even more leaders and groups

- Some small group leaders become community leaders who, in turn, grow other leaders

The 'recognized' leader:

- A person is 'recognized' as a potential leader by a pastor or other leader
- Pastor or leader explores the person's sense of call and gifting with the person
- The potential leader attends CSC Small Group Leader's Orientation
- The potential leader is equipped through the process established by the pastor over the core community of which the new leader is a part
- The new leader is assigned a community leader
- New leader starts a group
- New leader identifies a potential leader and develops him/her as a leader

The Small Group Campaign

- Small Group Pastors' Team plans a church-wide campaign around a compelling question (e.g. "If you had five years to live, how would you live them?")
- Small group curriculum is written and published
- Hosts are identified that will lead a new small group using the curriculum
- The new group identifies a potential leader
- The potential leader is developed by an assigned community leader
- The new leader identifies a potential leader and develops him/her as a leader



What process have you followed (or do you expect to follow) in your journey to become a small group leader?

What has been helpful about that process? What could be improved?

CSC Small Group Basics

Shared Mission

To introduce people to Jesus and help them become fully devoted followers of Christ.

Process

Small Group Process:

- Upward look
- Inward look
- Outward look
- Forward look

Mentoring Process:

- Huddles
- Group visits
- One on one

Outcomes

Community measured by:

- Belonging in Christ
- Growing in Christ
- Reaching out

Personal growth measured by:
The 6 E's

SHARED VISION

Each group has its own personality and sometimes its own unique purpose. However, the shared vision expressed in the CSC Small Groups Basics diagram is the flag that flies over all CSC small groups. Every CSC group needs to talk about its purpose from time to time, asking the question, 'Does our purpose support the shared vision statement held by all CSC small groups?'

PROCESS

Small Group Process...

Small Groups strive to carry out the following four activities in a healthy balance. Other groups may choose to emphasize one or more of the activities, yet looking for ways to carry out all four.

Upward Look: The focus is on the Lord through worship and prayer.

Inward Look: Through application of Scripture, caregiving and the practice of accountability, the focus is on what God can do in us and through us.

Outward Look: We focus on people outside of our group through service and outreach.

Forward Look: The focus is on the future as each group develops a potential leader and plans to send out a new group.

Mentoring Process...

Our goal is to provide a community leader for each small group leader. Each community leader is cared for by a community pastor. As community leaders meet in their huddles (leadership clusters), visit groups, and spend time one on one with leaders, our leaders are cared for and developed.

OUTCOMES

Each group should carry out a group assessment at least twice per year, discussion how well it is doing in these small group characteristics. (see Best practice 9)

- Belonging: The need to feel a part of something greater than yourself.
- Growing in Christ: Being Christ-centered and being a follower of Jesus.
- Reaching out: Having an externally focused ministry.

The **Six E's** are used to examine our own personal growth, as follows:

- Embracing Christian growth
- Exalting the Lord
- Experiencing biblical community
- Exercising good stewardship
- Evangelizing the lost
- Extending the kingdom

Biblical Community

3

In the first section of this manual, we caught the idea that biblical community is highly valued in our church. We need to unpackage that. 'What is community?' is the question that we want to put on the front burner right now. We are going to explore this idea further.

Case Study

Cynthia joined a small group, hoping to meet some new people and to fill a certain emptiness that seemed to be gnawing away inside. Being 'thirty-something' and a bit stuck in the work routine of her life as a nurse, she wanted to connect with a small group of people where she would feel like she was part of a family.

It took a number of weeks for Cynthia to begin to feel comfortable in the group she joined, which was made up of four couples and two other singles. As the weeks turned into months, Cynthia began to notice something. Although the group was very 'safe,' it seemed that everyone was answering the leader's questions with plastic kinds of answers. There was never any debate or conflict in the group. Everyone was, well, just 'nice'.



After four months, Cynthia quit. The week before she quit, she wrote the following words in her prayer journal: "Something's missing in this group."



What do you suppose Cynthia was looking for?

What do you think was missing for Cynthia?

Describe the kind of group that might have helped Cynthia want to stay.

Smart People on Community

The following ideas about community are contributed by Gareth Icenogle:

Community should be understood as the movement between persons to experience 'common' life... Community is about the interpersonal connections between two or more beings. God exists in community. Community implies that persons with differences come together for a common life. God also exists as different persons with a common, intimate and interconnected life. God created human beings to be unique, separate and different, but also to have a common life... God is separate and very different from humanity, but we learn in scripture that God's great creation desire is to be in community with humanity... Community is the reason for creation. Community is the purpose for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, being born, living among us, dying and being raised from the dead... Community is the common life between God and humanity

and small groups are the most visible and frequent form of this community (Gareth Icenogle, Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry, p 10).

Here is an illustration from Julie Gorman about community:

God created and calls us to oneness. When we pursue that, we move from a collection of players to a winning team; from instruments labeled woodwinds, strings, percussion, and brass to an orchestra that produces the sounds of music; from artist, colour, shapes, canvass, paint, and subject to masterpiece. No one would think to claim that the canvass, the instruments, or the positions were the sought-after end. When we are together in community (harmoniously combined in oneness), we reflect our creator... Relating is at the heart of knowing God. Relating is also at the heart of becoming the people of God. Our faith journey is one we make together. Community is the context for our growth, and it is a distinctively Christian concept (Julie A. Gorman, Community That Is Christian, p 24).

Gilbert Bilezikian communicates – in a powerful way – the meaning of community, below:

Each one of us hides an awful secret. Buried deep within every human soul throbs a muted pain that never goes away. It is a lifelong yearning for that one love that will never be found, the languishing in our inner selves for an all-consuming intensity of intimacy that we know will never be fulfilled, a heart-need to surrender all that we are to a bond that will never fail.

The silent churning at the core of our being is the tormenting need to know and to be known, understand and to be understood, to possess and to be possessed, to belong unconditionally and forever without fear of loss, betrayal, or rejection...

Our mourning is for the closeness that was ours by right of creation. Our grief is for the gift lost in the turmoil of rebellion. And now, whenever there is hope, our hope is for paradise regained, for human destiny remade in the redemptive restoration of community, the only certainty of oneness for here and for eternity (Gilbert Bilezikian, Community 101: Reclaiming the Local Church as Community of Oneness, pp 15-16).

The following quote is of particular interest as it is written from a non-religious perspective:

Membership in groups is inevitable and ubiquitous. All day long we interact first in one group and then in another. Our family life, our leisure time, our friendships and careers are filled with groups... We are born into a group called the family and we would not survive the first few years of our lives, the first few weeks, or even the first few minutes without membership in this group... Our personal identity is derived from the way in which we are perceived and treated by other members of our groups. We learn, work, worship, and plan in groups. As humans we have an inherent social nature: Our life is filled with groups from the moment of our birth to the moment of our death (David W. Johnson and Frank P. Johnson, Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills, p 7).

Jesus himself brought to us a teaching that calls for a way of living that is highly relational. The Greatest Commandment, which states that we are to love the Lord our God with our whole self, and the Second Greatest Commandment, which tells us that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, is all about people in community with God and with each other (Matthew 22:37-40).

So, what then is community?

Biblical community happens whenever someone makes the choice to share the life of Jesus with another. This can happen when two people pray together about a need. It happens when someone gives another a cup of cold water in the name of Jesus. It happens when people worship the Lord together. It happens when two or more meet in the name of Jesus to study God's Word together, applying it to their lives. It happens when a nurse whispers a prayer for a suffering patient. It happens when a team of volunteers present a newly built home to a needy family in Central America, in the name of Jesus. Biblical community is happening in thousands of places all over the globe, this very instant.

As you can see, the possibilities for biblical community are endless. The Jesus small group, however, presents unique characteristics and opportunities for biblical community. This idea is explored in the next chapter, *The Four Spaces of Community*. For now, we want to develop the idea that small group biblical community happens when the following three things take place: ***belonging, spiritual growth, and outreach.***



What does the phrase 'biblical community' mean to you?

With your community leader, talk about concepts brought out in the quotes above that catch your attention.

Think of where you would like your group to be one year from now. What do you see?

Belonging

In the Person of God himself there is community in the Father, Son, and Spirit. God never existed alone – and when he created man and woman, he made them for each other and with the intent that the world's first small group would be a man, a woman, and God. Man and woman were created in the image of God and as such, the need to belong is hard wired into every one of us.

The author of this manual and his family had the unique experience of raising an abandoned duckling, many summers ago. Without the protection and food offered by this family, the duckling would surely have died. It is intriguing that the wildlife expert consulted made the statement that the duckling would not survive unless it was touched and made to feel as though it were a part of a 'family.' Even the family dog adopted the duck, mothering it, sharing her food with it and protecting it as if it were her own puppy. It was a bitter-sweet day when the family took the duck to a nearby pond, helping it to re-integrate with its own kind.

Large churches run the risk of promoting a spectator kind of Christianity. We believe that for our church to be an enduring and healthy church, we must 'think small.' The small group in the large church can open the doorway to belonging. The early church of Acts thrived, in part, because of how it loved and brought people into the faith through acceptance and belonging.



Read the Bible passage below, looking for the 'belonging' principle. Make specific observations of how you see this principle illustrated in these scriptures.

Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church – about three thousand in all. They joined with the other believers and devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, sharing in the Lord's Supper and in prayer.

A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous

signs and wonders. And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had. They sold their possessions and shared the proceeds with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity – all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved (Acts 2:41-47, NLT).

Spiritual Growth

The word 'disciple' means – follower. When Jesus called the first disciples he said to them, "follow me." It is not enough to just believe in Jesus. In fact when gospel writers used the word 'believe', they intended a kind of belief that stimulated obedience to Jesus and following him.

The Great Commission (written below) contains the last words of Jesus spoken to his disciples. In these words Jesus tells us what he really wants from us. "Make disciples," was his passionate plea to the small group he left behind. But he did not say these words to individuals. He said it to eleven men, as a group.

Think about this idea. Jesus deeply desires that you find a group of followers of himself – and that you experience life together with that group of people. He intends this to be an adventure for all of us. He wants us to embrace life together and to heal each other through prayer, life-giving words, acts of kindness and the power of belonging. He wants us to help each other grow as we speak truth into one another's lives. He wants us to discern his voice to our lives as we listen to him, together. He wants us to learn from the scriptures together, to help each other believe God's word, understand it and apply it.



From the scriptures below, explore ways that spiritual growth can happen.

Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28: 18-20, NLT).

Then we will no longer be like children, forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has told us something different or because someone has cleverly lied to us and made the lie sound like the truth. Instead we will hold to the truth in love, becoming more and more in every way like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. Under his direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love (Ephesians 4:14-16, NLT).

Outreach

The prophet Isaiah had a heart for God and for people. Through him, God said, "Is this not the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderers with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe him?" (Isaiah 58:6-7a, NIV).

One of our goals as a church is to be an externally focused church. Below are words that describe the externally focused church, as penned by Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson:

Externally focused churches are internally strong, but they are oriented externally. Their external focus is reflected in those things for which they staff and budget. Because they engage their community with the good works and good news of Jesus Christ, their communities are better places in which to live. These churches look for ways to be useful to their communities, to be part of their hopes and dreams. They build bridges to their communities instead of walls around themselves. They don't shout at the dirty stream; they get in the water and begin cleaning it up (Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson, The Externally Focused Church, p 17).

The early church grew because its people loved and served. We believe servants can go anywhere. Service gives us access not only to places of need but also to places of influence.

Increasingly we have found that in areas of ministry we could never have forced our way into, we are now being invited to serve, and that service has become a bridge to salvation. It is "God's kindness" that leads to repentance (Romans 2:4), not the threat of God's judgment. Barriers to the gospel melt away when people are served and blessed. It's been said, "There is only one way to God and that is through Jesus. But there are a thousand ways to Jesus." By creating a thousand entry points into the community, we create a thousand opportunities to show the love and share the good news with the city (Rusaw and Swanson, p 61).



What is an externally focused church?

What would it take for your group to become externally focused?

What effects can you imagine if your group truly became externally focused?

The Four Spaces of Community

4

In the last section, we came to an understanding of the meaning of biblical community. In this section, we are going to build on that concept by looking at four environments in which community is expressed.

As a small group leader, your focus will be to encourage biblical community in your small group. However, community can be experienced in a variety of environments. We want our small group leaders to understand how other CSC ministries work together toward the common goal of leading people into the experience of community in every ministry setting.



Joseph Myers in his book, *The Search to Belong*, explores the idea that people connect with other people in four spaces.² Those spaces are public, social, personal, and intimate. The way that we relate to each other will change depending upon which space we are in at any given time.

Myers emphasizes his belief that community is about belonging. People long to belong. The Christian church, in its mission and its Lord, holds the franchise on belonging. The Roman Emperor Julian would agree with this idea, as expressed in his words below:

Atheism [he is referring to Christianity here] has been specially advanced through the loving service rendered to strangers, and through their care for the burial of the dead. It is a scandal that there is not a single Jew who is a beggar; and that the godless Galileans care not only for their own poor but for ours as well; while those who belong to us look in vain for the help that we should render them (Myers quotes Stephen Neil, p 29).

Public Space

Public space is defined as a distance of twelve feet or more away from oneself. We enter public space when we walk through a mall, attend a sports event or when we attend a large worship service. Cyberspace is public space as well. People who post entries on a bulletin board are sharing public space. According to Myers, technologies like personal digital assistants (PDAs), chat rooms and online games each promote community in themselves.

There are many people who feel that they are part of a community in public space. The key idea here is that community is about *connecting with other people*. A public believer actually *feels as though she belongs*. Others may not accept that person, but the people in their public community do.

In the story of the centurion who came to Jesus asking Jesus to heal his servant, when

² He is resourcing the work of Edward T. Hall who suggests that personality, culture and communication is formed in four distinctly different spaces

Jesus offered to come to the centurion's home, the centurion refused him. The centurion did not feel worthy to have Jesus enter his home. "Just say the word," the centurion declared, "and my servant will be healed." Jesus was astonished by the measure of this man's faith. "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith," he said. (Matthew 8:5-13)

Did Jesus accept this man? Certainly! Just like he accepted the woman at the well, the tax collector in the inner circle and Zacchaeus. In each of these cases, these people wanted to 'belong' to Jesus, even though they did not end up actually leaving their jobs and following him. And, clearly, Jesus accepted them.

The idea here is that each of these people found a certain sense of 'belonging' in public space, even though they did not become intimate with Jesus as did the twelve disciples.

In the contemporary church, community in public space may be the weekend worship service. Here are some unique traits of public space community:

- The only limit to numbers of people is the size of the gathering space
- It provides an easy entry point for inquirers
- If it's a worship event, God's presence can be welcomed powerfully in this kind of setting
- If there is persuasive preaching or teaching, people often make first steps toward God in public space
- It gives an opportunity for people to identify with Christ and his church
- It introduces people to other spaces of community



How has your exposure to public space, in the Body of Christ, enhanced your experience of community?

Social Space

If you are standing four to twelve feet away from someone, you are in their social space – according to this model.

Social belonging is the space where we connect through sharing 'snapshots' of who we are. Such phrases as 'first impressions' and 'best foot forward' refer to this type of spatial belonging (Myers, p 46).

Social space is important for small group leaders to understand for this reason: "...social space provides a safe selection space for us to decide with whom we would like to grow a deeper relationship" (Myers, p 46).

In social settings, people size people up. They ask questions and engage in 'small talk' with the goal of forming impressions of others. It is often in social space that we decide that we like people, or don't like them.

Jesus understood and engaged social space. When he attended the wedding at Cana, he unveiled his first miracle, in social space. When he met Zacchaeus in his home, he joyfully announced (in that social space), "Today salvation has come to this house; because he, too, is a son of Abraham" (Luke 19:9, NASB). When Jesus went to the house of Simon the Pharisee to dine, the setting was likely that of social space. Pharisees were wealthy; their homes often surrounded a spacious courtyard in which large gatherings were hosted. It was in that setting where a sinful woman anointed his feet with precious

perfume, cleansing them with her hair and tears (Luke 6:36). Truly, a community experience!

Our church has a number of core communities. A core community is a group of people who are gathered around a common affinity or life season. Core communities use social space to invite people to get into small groups. Here are some unique traits of social space:

- Size ranges from 35-200 people
- Easy entry point for people who are not connected
- All activities can be planned with a relational feel
- Great place to meet new people, to choose new potential friends and then to get into a small group
- Learning experiences can target a group of people who have the same interest or needs



Talk about one or two ways that your small group uses, or could use, social space to build community.

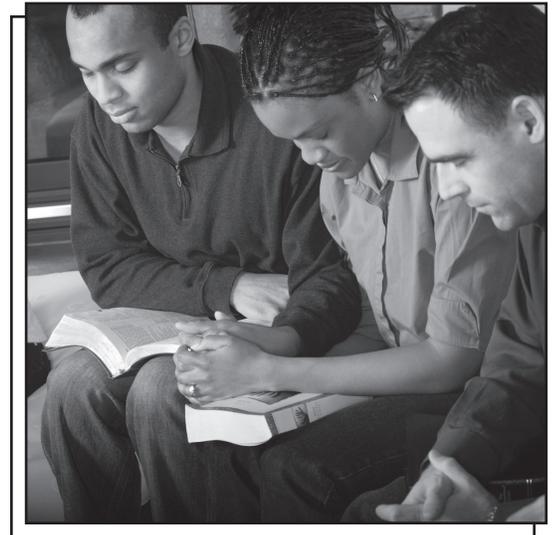
Personal Space

If you are eighteen inches to four feet away from someone, you are in their personal space. We call people we connect with in this space 'close friends.' These people know more about us than someone who's just an acquaintance, yet not so much that we would feel uncomfortable. Most church small groups function in this space.

When Jesus met some of his close friends in the home of Simon the leper, he was meeting people in more personal space (Mark 14:3). When in the home of Lazarus, he was again in personal space. The most obvious use of personal space was his association with the twelve.

Listed below are some qualities of personal space community. These are the very things that God wants your small group to experience!

- Size ranges from three to twelve people
- The potential for full expression of community (as explained in the last section) is great because of the unique dynamics of this size of a group
- Small groups can be highly relational
- The group is small enough to allow people to explore the same learnings and spiritual disciplines together
- The group can practice being the church easily; for example:
 - Everyone can get to know each other as friends
 - There will be a number of spiritual gifts represented in a group this size so the potential for gift discovery and ministry to others is great
 - A small group can exercise healthy 'prayer power'
 - Pre-Christians can be exposed to different 'snapshots' of Jesus because of the variety of personalities in the group



- Significant sharing and accountability can be achieved
- A group this size can care deeply for the needs of people both inside and outside the group
- Moving from 'life is me' to 'life is us' is quite natural in a small group



Read again the bullets above. Share an example or two of how your group is exercising community from the ideas suggested.

Can you think of a new idea you could try to stimulate community in your group?

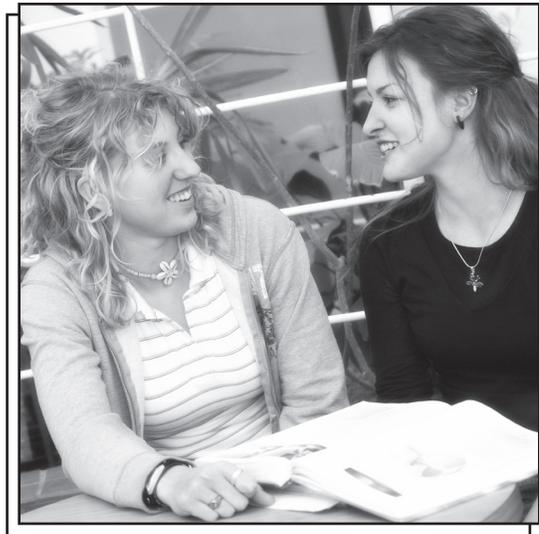
Intimate Space

A friend is one to whom one may pour out all of the contents of one's heart, chaff and grain together, knowing that the gentlest of hands will take and sift it, keep what is worth keeping, and with the breath of kindness, blow the rest away (Ancient Proverb).

In intimate space, we share 'naked' experiences, feelings, and thoughts. Very few relationships are intimate. Intimate relationships are those in which another person knows the 'naked truth' about us and yet the two of us are 'not ashamed' (Myers, p 50).

Of course the kind of nakedness that Myers speaks about here is not physical. It's a kind of connection between two people that is marked by transparent honesty, unconditional acceptance, complete trust and truly knowing another person.

We tend to think of intimacy as the goal for all relationships. This is not realistic. We couldn't possibly be intimate with everyone we know. Imagine the emotional energy and time this would demand!



Sometimes Christians are quick to assume that what they share in their small group qualifies as 'intimate.' It is possible for people to experience intimacy in a small group. But is it the kind of 'intimate' that a healthy married couple enjoys? Is it the kind of 'intimate' that Larry Crabb writes about below?

The idea is this: when two people connect, when their beings intersect as closely as two bodies during intercourse, something is poured out of one and into the other that has the power to heal the soul of its deepest wounds and restore it to health... But it rarely happens (Myers quoting Larry Crabb, p 50).

Generally, a person will not be 'this kind of intimate' with a group of eight to twelve people. Recall the dialogue between Jesus and the woman at the well. The two spoke openly of the fact that she had had multiple husbands. It is not likely that this woman, given her culture and time in history, would have spoken freely about her private life in a mixed group of ten people, as she did with Jesus. What this woman experienced with Jesus, however, did not leave her ashamed or exposed. Jesus handled this fairly intimate conversation with grace and respect, leaving the woman feeling accepted, known, and forgiven. It's not likely that Jesus would have spoken to this woman the way he did in a social or public setting. Clearly, the two were talking about real life issues in intimate space.

The intimate relationship that Jesus had with Peter, James, and John, serves as an example of Jesus' understanding of the power of intimate space. The event of the transfiguration was reserved for only those Jesus entrusted into his intimate space.

Qualities of intimate space community:

- Best size is two to three persons
- A group this small can be leaderless; members need only agree on what they will do - the group leads itself
- Same gender, unless it's a married couple
- Great potential for deep trust and intimate sharing
- High accountability toward very specific growth goals is possible
- Getting into a group can only happen through personal invitation
- Potential for bonding and life change is very high due to the commitment to trust and transparency
- Commitment to personal growth, the practice of spiritual disciplines, evangelism and other goals can happen the easiest in this space because of how small the group is and its safety



How, if at all, has intimate space provided opportunity for growth in your own life?

Now what! What does all this mean for me as a small group leader?

Here is the big idea of all this talk about spaces.

All belonging is significant. Healthy community – the goal humankind has sought since the beginning – is achieved when we hold harmonious connections with all four spaces. Harmony means more public belonging than social. More social than personal. And very few intimate (Myers, p 51).

Possible implications for small group leaders

- Everyone needs to belong, but not everyone is aware of their need. Those who become aware of their need will naturally move into spaces of belonging in which they are comfortable. Rather than struggle with this principle, small group leaders should learn to understand it and work with it.
- Relax! There is no need to try to force your group into intimate space. Generally, people will only be intimate with one or two chosen friends. This is natural and healthy.
- Do encourage people to find someone to share with, intimately. That 'someone' may very well be another person in your group! The small group can be a safe place to discover an intimate friend.
- Realize that your group will not meet everyone's needs. By design, it can't. Recognize that God is at work in each space of belonging. The church is more than the small group. People need to connect with others in all four spaces to be healthy.
- Understand that when people connect intimately outside your group, this will *increase the health of your group!* People who continually try to meet very personal needs through their small group, can actually hold back the group. They may dominate discussion or demand a great deal of time. A small group is not generally designed to meet these kinds of needs, unless it's a Twelve-Step or Recovery group of some kind.

- As a small group leader, if you can help your group plan social events, this will help your group to reach out more effectively. A pre-Christian may not want to come to a Bible study, but they just might come to a barbecue, a skiing outing, or a Christmas party.
- Help your group understand the power of social space. As a small group leader, familiarize yourself with the core communities of CSC (e.g. singles core communities). If your group has affinity with a core community, encourage your group to be a part of the core community. As your group members interact with others in social space, this will strengthen your small group experience.
- Understand that your group has incredible potential to create environments where life-changing community can take place. God has invested in you a sacred trust. You have been given an opportunity to create spaces for community that could forever change the direction of the lives of many!



From this study, what new possibilities do you see for your group? Try to identify specific possibilities.

Best Practices for Small Group Leaders

In this section, we will answer the questions: What are some time-tested, best practices for small group leaders? How can I influence my group to help it achieve a quality of biblical community that is life changing?

In the following pages, you will observe nine best practices. For each, key principles will be outlined and followed by a few choice quotes. This manual is meant to be a primer for leaders and not a comprehensive study book. Take time to work through each of the principles with your community leader, answering the questions and making comments about the ideas as you go.

i. LEAD YOURSELF



Basics Diagram – The First ‘E’ Spiritual Growth

This study emphasizes the need all of us have to take charge of our own spiritual growth. Spiritual disciplines are introduced with an emphasis upon the value of being quiet before the Lord.

Principles to Ponder

You can be a student of your own soul.

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? (Psalm 42:5)

The soul is equipped to monitor the state of the entire person: spirit, mind, body, and relational health. But the soul is educated by the choices that we make, and the responses we take to the impulses of the body. If the soul notices that sweets are pleasurable and give the body a temporary rush, the soul may take a liking to sweets, even though the mind knows that too much sugar is not a good thing. If the soul observes that the body loves comfort, it may become a lazy and slothful thing if the mind tends to approve of hedonism. And so when I walk through a new show home and see all of its tempting comforts, its airy spaces and pleasant presentation of color and light, my soul may cry out inside, “I need this home. I must have this home.” At the moment I hear these obnoxious demands of my soul, I have before me an opportunity to learn something about myself (Lawson Brown, doctoral paper, Fuller Theological Seminary).



In the time you have spent in quiet with God recently, what have you learned about your own soul?

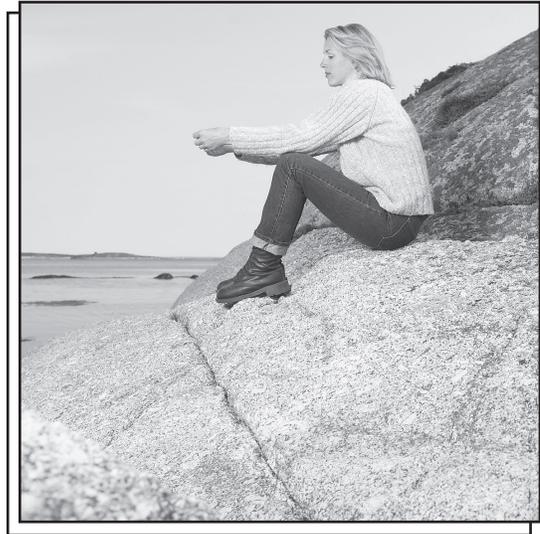
In quiet and solitude we learn about our soul and find connection with God.

In the initial state of creation, man was made fit for the quiet of contemplation, and therefore God placed him in a paradise of delights (Bonaventure, The Soul's Journey Into God, p 62).

Loneliness is inner emptiness. Solitude is inner fulfillment (Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline, p 7).

There is a re-creation room of the soul, and we enter into it when we fast from words and people. Get alone and quiet long enough, and you will begin to sense the whispers of your soul calling to you:

- "Don't move. Stay here, listen. You need this."
- "You don't like your job. You need to understand why."
- "There is a reason why you and your mother always argue."
- "That presentation you made was awesome. Are you willing to recognize that you have a gift in communication?"



If you avoid unnecessary talk and aimless visits, listening to news and gossip, you will find plenty of suitable time to spend in meditation on holy things.... Therefore, whoever is resolved to live an inward and spiritual life must, with Jesus, withdraw from the crowd.... In silence and quietness the devout soul makes progress and learns the hidden mysteries of the scriptures. There she finds floods of tears in which she may nightly wash and be cleansed. For the further she withdraws from all the tumults of the world, the nearer she draws to her Maker. For God with His holy angels will draw near to him who withdraws himself from his friends and acquaintances (Thomas A Kempis, The Imitation of Christ, pp 51-52).



Have you ever tried to 'fast from words and people'? How did it go?

In a world that is so noisy and full of activity, how can we develop a sense of God's presence in our lives?

Many of us know how to talk to God. Fewer know how to listen. Share any practical things you do that help you listen to God.

Effort, joined with faith, releases the grace of God to produce life change.

I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

How were some of the saints so perfect and contemplative? It is because they strove with all their might to mortify in themselves all worldly desires, and could thus cling to God in their inmost heart, and offer themselves freely and wholly to him. But we are held too firmly by our passions, and are too much concerned with the passing affairs of the world. We seldom completely master a single fault, and have little zeal for our daily progress; therefore we

remain spiritually cold or tepid (Thomas A Kempis, The Imitation of Christ, 37-38).

The disciplines are activities of mind and body purposefully undertaken, to bring our personality and total being into effective cooperation with the divine order. They enable us more and more to live in a power that is, strictly speaking, beyond us, deriving from the spiritual realm itself, as we “yield ourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness to God,” as Romans 6:13 puts it (Dallas Willard, The Spirit of the Disciplines, p 68).



Talk about the statement, “effort, joined with faith, releases the grace of God to produce life change”. What does it mean?

In what way do you want to grow right now?

What effort might you give to God, trusting him to help you grow?

Those who practice the presence of Jesus will discover new power and joy in their lives.

I have set the Lord continually before me; Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken (Psalm 16:8).

Think often on God, by day, by night, in your business, and even in your diversions. He is always near you and with you; leave him not alone. You would think it rude to leave a friend alone who came to visit you; why, then, must God be neglected? Do not, then, forget him, but think on him often, adore him continually, live and die with him; this is the glorious employment of a Christian. In a word, this is our profession; if we do not know it, we must learn it (Brother Lawrence, The Practice and Presence of God, pp 52-53).

In those days of learning to lay my heart before God – which is what the prayer of petition enabled me to do – I received more healing and understanding than one could well imagine. The Psalms, with their wonderful promises, provided a bounteous and boundless seedbed of petitions in my early journaling. “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart” (37:4), especially exercised me. Just how does one delight oneself in the Lord, I asked over and over. What were the desires of my heart? I did not know. They were too repressed; I had little hope for them. I searched the scriptures for clues, and those that proclaim God’s presence with us stood out. King David had the answer: “In thy presence is fullness of joy” (Psalm 16:11; Leanne Payne, Listening Prayer, p 76).

For the past few days I have been experimenting in a more complete surrender than ever before. I am taking by deliberate act of will, enough time from each hour to give God much thought.... I am feeling God in each movement, by an act of will – willing that He shall pour through my steps as I walk – willing that He shall direct my words as I speak. I compel my mind to open straight out toward God. I wait and listen with determined sensitiveness (Frank Laubach, Man of Prayer, pp 20, 22).



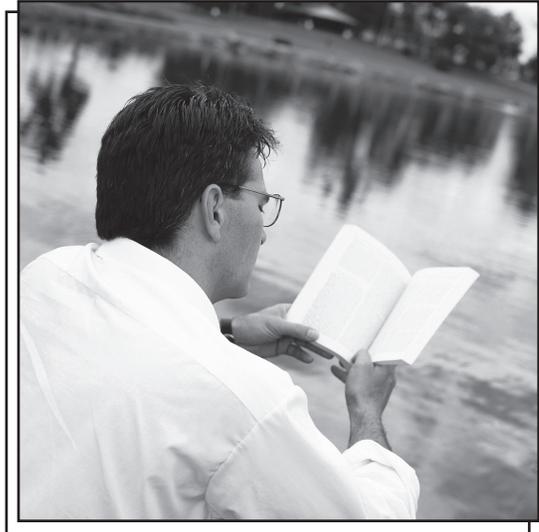
You have read of how Brother Lawrence, Leanne Payne, and Frank Laubach have practiced the presence of God in their lives. What idea do you see here that you would like to try?

Effective spiritual leaders practice spiritual disciplines

From the beginning of time, godly people have practiced spiritual disciplines. The church is hungry and waiting for leaders (like you!) who will lead them into spiritual adventure and growth through the practice of the disciplines. As you learn to walk with God, others will want to walk with you.

There are many more disciplines beyond Bible reading and prayer.

- The discipline of *solitude and silence* stills the soul and helps us to hear God's voice
- The discipline of *fasting* empowers the spirit and trains the body
- The discipline of *frugality* can free us from dependence upon luxury
- The discipline of *sexual fasting* can weaken the power of lust
- The discipline of *secrecy* can help us break free of the need for human approval
- The discipline of *sacrifice* helps us rely less upon ourselves, and more on God
- The discipline of *study of the Word* can totally renovate our world view
- The discipline of *practicing the presence of Jesus* can lead us into deeper intimacy with God
- The discipline of *celebration* can make our lives lighter as we laugh and enjoy others
- The discipline of *service* can hamstring the power of pride in our lives
- The discipline of *fellowship* can help us find balance
- The discipline of *confession* weakens the power of sin in our lives
- The discipline of *submission* helps us lay down our drive for ambition



Share something of your experience of spiritual disciplines. Which have been most helpful in your life? Where do you need to grow in the way of leading yourself? What's the first step you need to take?

ii. BE REAL



Basics Diagram Inward Look / Belonging

This study stresses the idea that openness and vulnerability in a leader can powerfully influence the ability of a group to advance in understanding and growth.

Principles to Ponder

It's natural to *not* be real.

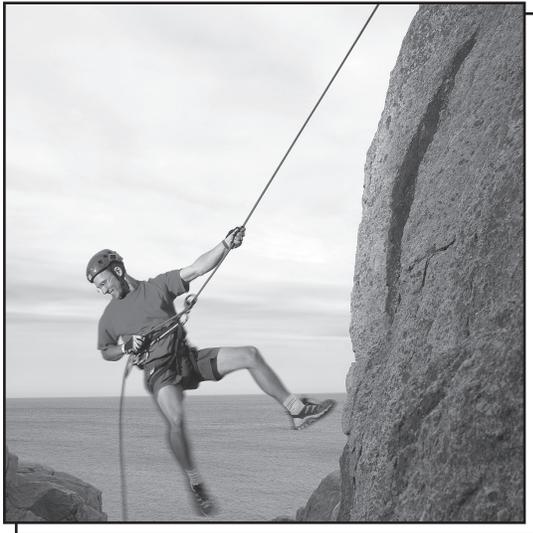
But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" (Genesis 3:9-11).

All of us enter life with a severe handicap: We trust no one, and our deepest inclination is to seize from life what we need while protecting ourselves from its disappointments and threats. That strikes me as a rather substantial handicap if we are designed to be in true community (Crabb, The Safest Place on Earth, p 50).



Have you ever observed in others, shame, denial, hiding, blaming? What are the indicators of these things?

Being real means taking risks.



I am afraid to tell you who I really am, for if I tell you who I really am you may not accept me and this is the only me I have" (Powell, Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?, p 12).

The dilemma we face is not only in what do we share with others about who we are, but also in the fact that we will never know if others will accept us as we are until we attempt to disclose the real us (Gorman quoting Smith & Berg, Community That Is Christian, 132).



What is the relationship between fear and risk? What are the consequences of not risking?

Sincere confession of weakness releases God's power and draws others to us.

Everything in spiritual community is reversed from the world's order. It is our weakness, not our competence, that moves others; our sorrows, not our blessings, that break down the barriers of fear and shame that keep us apart; our admitted failures, not our paraded

successes, that bind us together in hope. A spiritual community... is full of broken people who turn their chairs toward each other because they know they cannot make it alone (Crabb, The Safest Place on Earth, p 32).



What is the world's view of weakness?

My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness (Jesus, to Paul, 2 Corinthians 12:9a).

I discovered an astonishing truth: God is attracted to weakness. He can't resist those who humbly and honestly admit how desperately they need him (Cymbala, Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire, p19).



How does God see weakness?

Group transparency will never happen unless the leader shares some of his or her deep struggles. David Hocking says, "Learn to admit your mistakes in the presence of the group and to apologize sincerely when things go wrong or do not turn out the way you expected... Admitting failure in the midst of success is a key to good leadership. Learn to be open and honest before others. They'll love you for it ,or at least fall over backwards out of shock!" (Comiskey, How To Lead a Great Cell Group Meeting, p 54).

We have found in Cell life that group members will typically be as transparent and open as the leader is willing to be. In other words, group members will seldom "risk" transparency and openness until they have seen someone else take the risk (Comiskey, How To Lead a Great Cell Group Meeting, p 55).



How has transparency created community in your life?

Because we are accepted in Jesus, we can find courage to be real.

Leader or group assurance that I will be accepted is never enough – I can only find such acceptance as I trust the One I have come to know as always trustworthy. Knowing I am embraced by God in Christ frees me to be an 'embracer' in relating to others. Knowing the One who is Truth sets me free to open myself to another and to be open to his longing to be loved as he is (Gorman, Community that is Christian, p 132).



Have you discovered this kind of freedom in Jesus?

Being real means not just sharing weakness.

According to Kouzes and Posner, trust is built when we make ourselves vulnerable to others... letting others know what we stand for, what we value, what we want, what we hope for, what we're willing (and

not willing) to do means disclosing information about ourselves (Kouzes and Posner, The Leadership Challenge).

When you share with your group not just your struggles, but your joys, hopes and successes, as well as your personal boundaries, your group will love you for it. They want to know you!



Can you think of a time when you shared a success or something joyful about yourself with someone? How did it feel?

When a matter is brought into the light, healing begins. When sin is kept in the dark, it is empowered.

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective (James 5:16).

Caution: Not all sin should be confessed in a group. For example, sexual sin where a spouse may be shamed or another person implicated. But every one of us needs at least one 'priest' in our lives, with whom we can share the deepest secrets of our soul.



How does appropriate disclosure tie in with our learnings about 'intimate space,' earlier (see 'the Four Spaces of Community' section).



Case Study One

Ralph shares the same sin with two other men in their small group, almost every week. What's wrong with this picture?

Case Study Two

Compare the following statements made by two different small group leaders:

Leader One: "Pray for me. I'm really struggling. Normally, I spend two hours in daily prayer and Bible reading, but recently I've spent only one hour."

Leader Two: "This has been a miserable week. I didn't reach even one of my goals. I was a slave to my computer, trying to get it to run again."



What can you predict about the impact of each of these people, as leaders?

Scary thought: If the leader always wants to give the best impression, the other small group members will do likewise . . .

Some How-To's on Communication

Below is some interesting research for your consideration (Gorman quoting work done by Pearson in *Gender and Communication*, 1985, p 144).

- Men will disclose more about themselves in a dyad (group of two) than in a group of three or more
- Females tend to share more in a small group than in a dyad
- Both men and women have been found to self-disclose more to women than to men
- The presence of a female has a powerful effect on the social behavior of another; it makes him or her more self-disclosing, more open, and less lonely (Gorman quoting Winstead, *Effects of sex role orientation on behavioral self-disclosure*, 1985, p 144).

Possible implications

- If your group is mixed in gender, having the members respond in pairs to more personal questions may be a help for the men.
- Men may share more about their soul with a woman than another guy! You may want, sometimes, to allow this to happen in a mixed gender group; this will depend, somewhat, on how bonded your group is; the more mature the group is, the easier this might be to do.
- If your group is all women, just let them talk! It may not be necessary for them to break up into two's.
- The best men's group is a group of two or three guys.



Choose one or two of the bullet points below to discuss with your community leader.

- *Style of music you prefer or dislike*
- *Things you feel angry about*
- *What you and your spouse (closest friend) fight about*
- *The nature of your present relationship with God*
- *Weaknesses of yours that disturb you*
- *Features in your looks you would most like to change*
- *What you would most like to cover up if your life were revealed*

iii. CREATE STUDIES THAT DRAW THEM IN



Basics Diagram The Inward Look / Spiritual Growth

This study will give you simple, yet very practical, tools which will help you plan Bible studies that will launch your group into discussions they won't want to end.

Principles to Ponder

It takes quality quiet time to get ready to lead a group meeting (Carl George, *Nine Keys to Effective Small Group Leadership*, p 85).



What do you suppose Carl George means by 'quality quiet time'? Share with your community leader your last experience of 'quality quiet time.'

Your leadership style can powerfully impact the effectiveness of your group's experience.
Inductive or Deductive Approach?

Deductive approach: "I tell. You learn from me."

The leader does the study and research, comes to a set of conclusions, and then passes on those conclusions to the group, largely in a lecture format.



In what settings is the deductive approach useful either in church or society at large?

Inductive approach: "I ask. We discover together."

The group reads a passage and explores it together, looking primarily at what the text says. The leader guides the process largely through the use of good questions. The group comes to conclusions together on what the passage means.



Which approach will build greater ownership in the group? Why?

Explore how the gift of teaching might either help or hinder a small group leader's influence.

What if you are asked a question that you can't answer?

Discuss the following statement with your community leader: "Effective small group leaders do not teach. They facilitate discussion and involvement in their groups."

Small group experts suggest that the leader should speak only 30 per cent of the time. Does this describe the actual practice of your group?

A good question will launch a group into interesting discussion.

Fact: We have on record more than 150 questions asked by Jesus in the gospels.



Why do you suppose Jesus would ask anyone a question?

Example from scripture: After Adam and Eve sinned, God asked four questions: "Where are you?" "Who told you that you were naked?" "Have you eaten from the tree that I have commanded you not to eat from?" "What is this that you have done?"



What effect might these questions have had on Adam and Eve?

Example from scripture: When Jesus encountered the blind man, he asked, "What would you like for me to do for you?"



Isn't it obvious what the man wanted? Why do you suppose Jesus asked him this question?

Open questions work better than closed questions.



Closed question: *there's only one right answer*

Example of a closed question: When Eve offered the forbidden food to her husband, what did he do?



Closed questions have a place, but when the leader constantly asks only closed questions, what will be the effect?

Open question: *may have a number of possible answers; the leader will not know how people might respond to an open question*

Example of an open question: If Jesus asked you, "what do you want me to do for you," how would you respond?

Hot Tip #1!

Here are some good open-ended questions you can use for any Bible study:

- What stands out to you in this passage?
- What seems to be the main idea of this passage?
- Can you illustrate this truth from an experience in your life?
- What is God saying to you through this passage right now?

Hot Tip #2!

There are 3 basic steps to inductive Bible Study:

- Observation: what does it say?
- Interpretation: what does it mean?
- Application: what does it mean for my life?

Note: It's okay to use closed questions for the first two steps. Sadly, most Bible studies stop with interpretation. It's the application step that goes for the heart. These are the questions that lead your group members to be real about their own spiritual journey.

If you have 40 minutes for Bible study:

- Give a brief overview of the passage – explaining a bit about its background
- Ask a few closed type questions to help your group get into observation and interpretation
- Be sure to explore at least one application question
- If your questions are good, three to four questions will take the full 40 minutes

iv. HELP YOUR GROUP BE CONFLICT POSITIVE



Basics Diagram Inward Look / Belonging / Spiritual Growth

This study shows how conflict can work for the benefit or harm of a group. It puts tools in your hands which will help your group work through conflict, skillfully.

Principles to Ponder

Groups tend to settle into patterns of response to conflict.

The Conflict Negative Group: conflicts are suppressed and avoided and, when they occur, are managed in destructive ways

The Conflict Positive Group: conflicts are encouraged and managed constructively toward the growth and health of the group (Johnson and Johnson, p 379).



The Bible does not hide the presence of conflict among God's people.

Read the following Bible passages:

- Acts 6:1-7 "This is *not* fair!"
- Acts 15: 36-41 "He abandoned us – he can't come along!"
- Galatians 2:11-16 "Your behaviour is hypocritical!"

Compare these texts with the following exhortation from Paul: "Live in harmony with each other... Do your part to live in peace with everyone, as much as possible." (Romans 12:16,18).



How can we reconcile what actually happened in the lives of godly Bible characters with Paul's exhortation?

How do you feel about conflict?

How was conflict handled in your home?

- *Did you or others in your family withdraw into silence?*
- *Blow up?*
- *Sit down and talk it out?*
- *What has your experience taught you?*

Conflict has the potential to build or injure a group.

The Chinese character for crisis is the combination of the symbol for danger and the symbol for opportunity. Small group leaders often have the power to help their group move toward opportunity when conflict arises. On the other hand, a conflict handled badly can be dangerous for the group.

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Consider the following 'opportunities' for a group when it faces conflict:

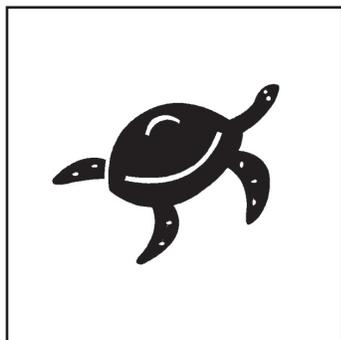
- Can bring to attention hidden values and assumptions that need to be examined
- Can give members confidence that they can express both negative and positive feelings without fear of being rejected
- Can build ownership and interest in the group
- Can reduce boredom
- Can lead the group into agreement which will enable the group by giving it power toward its goals
- Can build community among participants by increasing their liking, respect, and trust for each other
- Can motivate a group to pray in unity together
- Can model for group members positive ways of solving difficulties which can help them in other relationships

Consider the following dangers of not encouraging or of mismanaging conflict:

- Can lead to 'pseudo-community' (everyone pretends that it's a great group while difficulties churn around under the surface)
- Can sap a group of its passion, creative energy and spiritual power
- Can create anger and hostility, leading to resentment and sin
- Can result in pain and sadness
- Can cause people to leave in frustration and disappointment
- Can hamper God's hopes and dreams for your group

There at least five strategies for conflict resolution.

The Turtle (Withdrawing): you withdraw, get silent, pull back, avoid the conflict



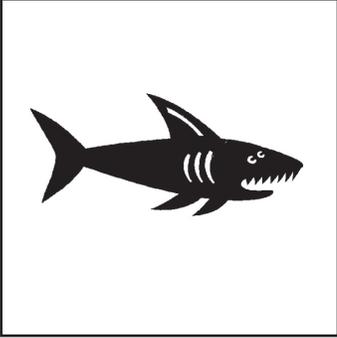
Okay to use this strategy when:

- The situation will take care of itself
- The issue is trivial
- You are helping someone save face
- There's no time

Not okay when:

- It's an important issue that must not be avoided
- Shame may be brought upon the church or the Lord's name if the conflict is ignored
- There is an important underlying issue that needs to be addressed

The Shark (Forcing): you overpower or confront



Okay to use this strategy when:

- The issue is more important than the relationship
- Confrontation will bring to light wrong motives or bring clarity to the issue

Not okay when:

- Relationships are more important than the issue
- Conflict is likely to get personal rather than issue focused
- You want to avoid a win/lose situation

The Teddy Bear (Smoothing): you take the steam out of a situation by using soft words or show special kindness



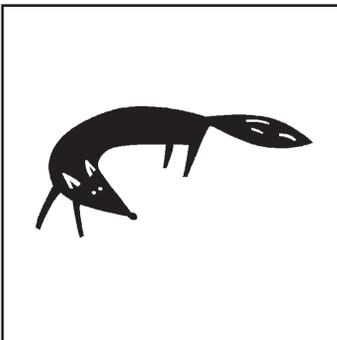
Okay to use this strategy when:

- This is not a hill you need to die on
- The relationship is more important than the issue

Not okay when:

- The issue is crucial and an important principle is at stake
- You're setting yourself up to set an unwise precedent
- You might be perceived to be shallow rather than forthright

The Fox (Compromising): you give ground to gain peace or to find middle ground



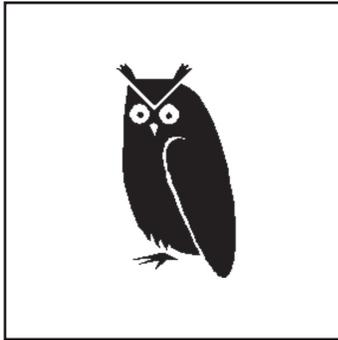
Okay to use this strategy when:

- When both sides cannot get what they want
- The situation is not critical and middle ground is appropriate

Not okay when:

- A better outcome is possible
- It is obvious compromising is wrong

The Owl (Problem Solving)³: you help people reason together, take a firm stand for what is truthful, honor each person in the conflict, encourage the conflict to come out in the open, speak with frankness and honesty, yet not in anger or to provoke



Okay to use this strategy when:

- The issue and the relationship are both important
- There is willingness and trust on both sides
- The outcome is very important

Not okay when:

- There is little time, willingness or trust
- The issue is not worth the effort



Which strategy of handling conflict do you tend to use?

In the New Testament examples mentioned earlier, which strategies of conflict management were used? What were the outcomes?

Have you faced a conflict issue in your group in the past? If so, how did you handle it?

The 'Jesus principle' for conflict resolution

You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:32, NASB).

... if you had a tumor and your doctor, having examined you, had determined that it was malignant, would you want him to ignore telling you the hard truth?... If we want the truth from those who watch over our physical condition, how much more should we want the truth from those who watch over our souls (Bill Donahue quoting Chuck Swindoll, Leading Life Changing Small Groups, p 124).

Leaders with Jesus' heart hold high this principle! It can be applied in many situations of conflict. But people need to be willing to face the truth. If one or more persons do not want to embrace the truth, the possibility of resolving the conflict may be low. In a case like this, you will not be able to use the problem solving style of conflict management. One of the other approaches may have to be employed.



Can you think of a time when the truth helped you in a conflict situation?

You can help your group work through conflict in positive ways.

Suggestions for leading a conflict positive group:

- Listen to the wants of the other person; face the person, stay quiet (until your turn comes); think about what the person is saying; show that you understand
- Be specific about your wants, needs, and goals, giving explanation; in so doing, separate the people from the problem or issue; always value and respect people even if you disagree with their

³ Model taken from Johnson and Johnson, *Joining Together*

idea or behaviour; e.g. "I feel like you do not feel comfortable with the direction of the group right now; I don't think this is good and I think we need to talk about this"

- Be attentive to how anger is expressed by yourself and others; when angry, try to give simple 'I' messages; e.g. "I don't like the wall that I'm sensing in our group right now"; on the other hand, avoid 'you' language; e.g. "you guys are putting up walls in the way you're talking to each other"
- Try to help others come to solutions that bring about a win/win situation; guide your group in exploring options which will benefit everyone
- Remember that conflict can quickly become distorted and much larger than the real issue; it's rare that one party is 100% right and the other 100% wrong; ask the Lord to help you see the kernel of truth (often about yourself) inside the distortion
- Hold up principles and biblical truth when helping your group evaluate ideas; model the reality that God's Word is authoritative for human conduct
- Always speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15, 25)
- Push conflict to its lowest level; require that private disputes be settled privately (Matthew 18:15-17)
- Encourage people to be quick to forgive and to not keep a record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5)
- Ask God to help you discern barriers to communication and triggers of conflict in your group; discerning these things is often your first clue in unraveling a conflict
- Leading a group through conflict often requires courage on the part of the leader; resist the feeling to quit when things get hard; healthy resolution of conflict can help a group bond like nothing else can
- Trust your community leader and share your difficulties with him/her; it's always best to get another perspective
- Know when you're in over your head; your community leader or pastor can help you decide



Given the principles learned above, how would you help your group work through the issues in the following case study?

Case Study:

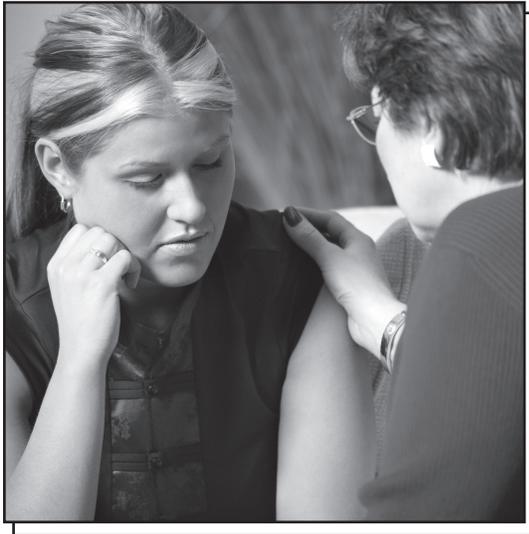
Tom's Life Group is in a bit of a fix. A man and woman have joined the group who are not married, but are living together. They have been attending for six weeks. Some in Tom's group are putting pressure on him, suggesting that he's not leading in a biblical way by allowing the couple to continue. They feel the couple should be encouraged to repent of their sin, or to leave the group. The other side feels that it's more important to be redemptive – to accept the couple, pray for them, and ask God to convict them of their sin. Tom's group has been together a number of years; a deep sense of community has developed. However, this issue has the potential to tear the group apart.

v. HELP YOUR GROUP BOND



Basics Diagram Belonging / Spiritual Growth

This study will give you some good ideas on how to help your group achieve a sense of closeness.



Case Study

Mandy is a broken and bruised person. She had suffered lots of rejection and abuse in her life. In an effort to deaden her pain, she had turned to alcohol. She knew her life was going nowhere, fast. When Mary invited her to her high school all girls Life Group, a glimmer of hope sparked in her heart. But she was also afraid. She wondered if she would truly be accepted.

At some point in the meeting, Mandy was invited to share what she hoped for in her experience of the group. "I'm hoping to find a safe place," she replied. "I've been badly wounded. I need some people who will encourage me."

The girl on her right, who was herself new to the group and not yet a believer, touched her on the arm, saying, "Mandy, this is a safe place."

The leader of this group had accomplished a significant goal for any group. An unbelieving seeker was able to say to a person who needed assurance, "This is a group that is authentic and real, with people you can trust, potential friends who won't do you wrong" (adapted from a story told by Carl George, *Nine Keys to Effective Small Group Leadership*, p 104).



After reading the quote below, talk about the following question: What has to happen for a group to get to this level of safety?

Even task groups like tech teams or service groups won't be effective if they don't have relational time, pulling aside to concentrate on 'heart' issues. Your group's sense of unity and strength will be determined largely by whether or not the people in your group feel loved and accepted. In the words of Carl George, "one of the purposes of leadership in a church is to bring people together to learn to love each other" (George, p 104).

Principles to Ponder

God joins his power to those who agree together

Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them (Matthew 18:19-20).

When your group agrees together in the name of Jesus, powerful things will begin to happen. One of the first things your group needs to agree upon is its purpose. This is an important step in the formation of your group.

All CSC groups meet under one common mission: *To introduce people to Jesus and help them become fully devoted followers of Christ.* Clearly, if a group's purpose is at odds with this vision statement, that group will be out of step with the larger church. It should not seek to identify itself with CSC.

Our common vision, however, allows for many different kinds of small groups. Your group needs to discuss together its purpose for being.

Part of what your group will need to do is to talk about the level of intensity that the group wants to achieve. Intensity varies according to meeting frequency and length, curriculum choice, whether you are a task or a growth group, connections between meetings, and the outcomes you want to see.

After talking with your group about these things, you should be able to express your purpose in a sentence or two. The following are examples of good small group purpose statements:

- Example 1: Our group has purposed to use the sport of volleyball to:
- a. Enjoy one another and encourage health of the whole person
 - b. Explore the experience of biblical community together
 - c. Draw in unbelievers and help them taste biblical community

- Example 2: Our group of four men exists to:
- a. Encourage each other to read large volumes of scripture, apart from the group
 - b. Ask each other accountability questions each week
 - c. Pray for unsaved friends and loved ones

- Example 3: Our Small Group exists for the following reasons:
- a. To explore the Bible together with a focus on life application
 - b. To walk with one another in the journey of life with the commitment of practicing the 'one anothers' of scripture

- Example 4: Our art group has determined the following purpose:
- a. To explore and develop skills in water color art
 - b. To look at the theme of creativity in scripture with a view to celebrating our gift for God's glory
 - c. To develop a sense of community with each other over a six-month period of time



If your group has not yet written down its purpose, when will you introduce this idea to them?

If your group purpose is not yet written, take a few minutes to write out some ideas for your purpose.

You may want to present these to your group when you explore your purpose together.

Involvement produces ownership

When you get everyone in your group involved in the planning process, you harness the above principle. Here are some ideas that will help get you thinking:

- Track out group activities in blocks of time; for example, September till year end, then January till

summer, etc.

- Talk about practical things like where you will meet, the activity being planned, who will lead, etc; provide a hard copy sheet with this information in chart form
- On your info sheet, list everyone's name at the bottom along with contact information
- Explore the giftings and interests of each other; for example, who likes to plan socials and fun events? Who enjoys phoning people or sending out weekly e-mails to pass along information? Who is good at following up new people to the group? If childcare is an issue, is there someone who likes to work with kids? Who has the gift of hospitality? Get everyone involved, if at all possible!
- What about food?
- Other possible areas for people to get involved in: leading discussions, prayer time leaders, maintaining a list of service opportunities in the church or community, organizing a group outreach, becoming a potential leader, writing notes and cards, visiting members who are ill or who have needs, choosing study materials, tracking with the church on feedback and evaluation tools

Johnson and Johnson write: "Leadership is actions performed by many, not a position held by one" (p 198). Explore this idea with your community leader. Begin by expressing the idea using different words.



Have you involved your group in activities like those mentioned above? If not, why not?

Has your group had a planning session yet? If not, when will be your first? (Note: Set aside enough time. Planning may easily take up an entire session or more. The time is well worth it in terms of the bonding potential for your group).

A Group Covenant will help bond a group

Some groups find it helpful to talk about their 'ground rules,' or guidelines. Whether the covenant is written down, or simply a verbal understanding, here are some questions you may want to talk about:

- How long the group will meet
- Attendance expectations
- Accountability
- Is the group open or closed
- Availability outside of meetings
- Preparation/homework outside of meetings
- Prayer format, openness, honesty, confidentiality



Carl George's Three Key Covenants

- Golden rule practice: "I will treat others as I would have them treat me. I will not violate this rule in the way I use information shared in my group."
- Edification goal: "I will restrict my confessions to my own sins and my own areas of needed improvement. I will not talk about the flaws of others."
- Pursuit of truth principle: "I will ask, 'If Jesus were here, what would he do or think about this issue?'"



Whether written or just a verbal understanding, what is your group's covenant? Is there anything that needs to be made more clear?

When people share their story, others are drawn to them

Each of us has a story. My story is a record of the things that have influenced me to be the person that I am, including the home I grew up in, important friends, life shaping events, my spiritual journey, etc. When people share their story, others are drawn to them and will grow in their understanding and appreciation of them.

Some groups make it a practice to allow every person an opportunity to share their story, and then to pray for the one sharing.



How might this experience be planned for your group?

When we help people feel safe, a group grows closer

Some mixed gender groups divide men and women for the purpose of more personal sharing and prayer. This is a practical idea from the point of view of saving time, if nothing else. If your group divides into small groups for prayer, more people can contribute.

In an earlier section of this manual, we learned about the four spaces of community. Recall how some people will not find it easy to share intimately, unless they are in a group of two or three.



If yours is a mixed group, what steps have you taken to help the genders have a safe and meaningful experience?

Food and fun draw people together

Lots of groups start out with fun icebreaker activities and then end around food. Bill Donahue has created a great list of 'group openers and share questions' in his book, *Leading Life Changing Small Groups* (skills section). Bill advises that the leader needs to be creative and discerning in the use of icebreaker activities. If your group has already bonded and is quite familiar, you may use more serious opener questions. Here is a sampling of questions from Donahue:

- What is your favorite movie and why?
- Who is the number one advisor in your life and why?
- People might be surprised to find out that I _____.
- What is the most daring thing you've ever done? What made it so daring?
- My favorite way to waste time is _____.
- You have one minute to speak to the entire nation on national television. What one or two key things would you like to tell them?

- What were the circumstances surrounding your first kiss?
- What's the biggest lie you ever told?
- What is your biggest fear about death?
- What day of your life would you most like to relive? Why?
- My number two career choice would be _____.
- Next year looks better to me because _____.
- I am most like my dad in that I _____.
- What was one of the worst things your brother or sister did to you as a child?
- An emotion I often feel, but don't often express is _____.



What is it about your personality that will naturally help your group have fun?

Leaders who navigate their groups through potential tight spots build trust

Below are some tight spots small group leaders face from time to time, as well as possible solutions:

Someone in the group consistently demonstrates disruptive behaviour:

- Resist the urge to label people; love the person but address the negative behaviours
- If someone is off topic, thank them for their contribution and ask if the topic could be taken up one-on-one, after the meeting
- Sometimes you may have to call a person 'offside,' given the covenant agreements your group has made; this is a responsibility a group needs to own together
- Lead your group in a discussion around group courtesies (see Carl George's Three Covenants, above); it's always best when the group itself corrects bad behaviour
- Speak privately to the person about their behaviour; watch your tone and offer helpful feedback; better to ask a question than to come across as condescending; e.g. "Danny I've noticed that you are quite eager to talk in group. I like that, but there have been times when I felt a little frustrated because there's only so much time and others have little opportunity to contribute. Can you help me understand?"
- Be clear in what you want; "Hmmm. I think I understand you a little better, Danny. However, for the good of the group, would you be willing to wait for at least three people to respond to a question before you share?"
- If the problem persists, you may have to eventually ask the person to not return to group; this should be a last step and only taken after other attempts at remedy have failed, and after you have spoken to your community leader; it would be best if your community leader was present should such a conversation even be needed

Someone in the group is quiet and won't share:

- When you ask a question, request that those who have already spoken refrain so that those who have not yet spoken, can share
- Always show courtesy and respect to every person who shares, no matter how inaccurate or inappropriate their contribution may be

- If your group is perceived to be unsafe in any way, the resulting quietness is likely due to fear
- Don't put the quiet person on the hot seat, or cause them to feel centered out

Someone is controlling and over-bearing and tries to take over:

- Be direct, yet gentle; interrupt when necessary; e.g. "Now, John, I'm going to have to call you 'offside' right now. You've interrupted Mary in the middle of a sentence. Mary, please continue."
- Don't allow the person to run the direction of the group
- Speak privately with the person, giving clear feedback on what you have observed

Someone is presenting incorrect doctrine or questionable doctrine:

- You need the group to help you; ask them for their perspective on an issue being discussed
- Give your perspective, using scripture
- Affirm the fact that the Bible is God's Word and the final standard for our beliefs and conduct
- Be careful not to be the 'doctrine cop'. Small group should be a place where it's okay for people to sound off once in a while about their views; it becomes a concern when blatant error is being given air time or when someone continues to ride the same 'hobbyhorse' bringing unbalance to the group
- Remember that you don't have to defend God; he's big enough to care for himself; adults are generally quite discerning; challenge your group to search the Scriptures and to not accept a matter unless there is good foundation in the Word



Share with your community leader any recent tight spot your group may have faced. How did you handle it?

Trust is built through discerning leadership

- Listen to your instincts; if something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't
- Stick with the facts; if a false idea is being put forward, confront it with truth
- Someone who intends to mislead may speak words that sound right, but their body language will not lie; lack of eye contact, speaking that seems to be overly rehearsed or controlled, avoidance and closed body language can directly contradict words being said
- Speaking the truth is easier than lying; if something doesn't seem to fit or make sense, be wary
- Ask yourself, "What's to be gained here? Who has the most to lose by having the truth come out?"
- Open, free-flowing communication given with lots of eye contact and open gestures is believable; calculated answers and guarded communication can be suspect; indirect messages and avoidance of discussion may send the message that someone is trying to deceive
- Truthful discussion is honest and it invites further scrutiny; someone who wants to deceive will not be comfortable having his story checked out
- Someone who is credible has been so in the past; consider past experiences with sources as well as reputation
- Don't back off of the hard questions; ask it; check out a story to the best of your ability



Is there a situation for which you need discernment, right now? Discuss this with your community leader.



More great ideas that will help your group to bond

- Be a person of prayer; whenever someone shares a life need, offer to pray on the spot, provided you're not in a setting that might embarrass the person
- Keep a prayer list; pray for your group between meetings; ask God to release his resources into difficult situations under your care
- Practice 'on the spot' prayer in your group; when someone shares a difficult need, ask the person if the group can pray right now; you honor Christ and model the principle of focusing on Jesus whenever you stop and pray together
- When someone confides in you a life need, ask the Lord to give you scripture which will address the need; you may want to write the scripture on a card in your own hand, and then give it to the person; agree with the person to pray the truth of the scripture into their life need
- Be resourceful; search the web and Bible bookstores for good resources which might help people in need
- Be an encourager and be a praise giver; look for people doing something right and then celebrate their goodness
- If someone is in the hospital – go! Take Jesus with you and perhaps a group member; Encourage your group members to visit the person as well
- When visiting in hospital, keep visits brief; prepare a scripture to read ahead of time; ask a few questions and be a good listener; ask about how to pray, then – pray!
- Pay attention to milestones in the lives of people; birthdays, anniversaries of death or other losses
- Learn the names of children; help your group to see its ministry to whole families
- To put it all in a nutshell – just do life with your group; remember our first core value: 'we value people because people matter to God and need to know him'



Take time to pray with your community leader.

vi. KEEP THE FOCUS ON JESUS



Basics Diagram Spiritual Growth

This 'best practice' will help your group practice the presence of Jesus as a group. When this is done, interesting results will follow!

Because God is a person he is capable of having relationships. He is not an inanimate object, a force, a principle, or an impersonal dynamic. God is a person enjoying and pursuing relationships. He has awareness of himself and can communicate. The entire account of Scripture is a record of his commitment to developing relationships with others (Gorman, Community That is Christian, p 24).

A survey of salvation history reveals the struggle of God and humanity to be in intimate relationship with one another. This is a warfare for human persons who can be redeemed only as God intercedes in human relationships and activity. God beckons us into the presence of divine and human persons and relationships (Icenogle, Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry, p 20).

One of the most encouraging truths we have as small group leaders is that we do not expect, or even want, that we should do it alone.

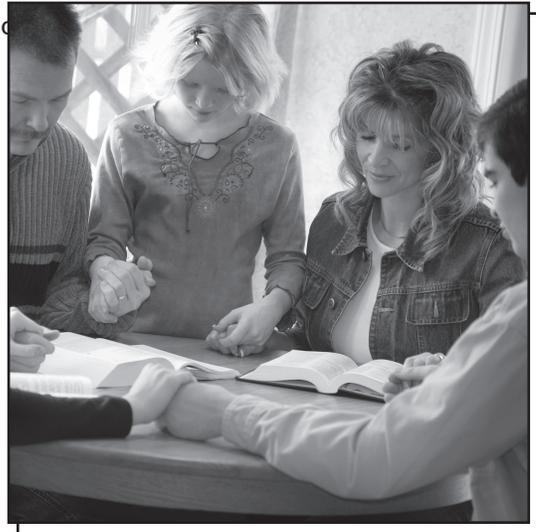
Did you know that your pastors regard you as a pastor? You may not be paid as a pastor, and no one may call you 'pastor,' but in the biblical sense, you are a pastor. A pastor is someone who commits to caring for the spiritual needs of a particular group of people for a significant period of time. That's you! And we know you cannot do this alone. Think of this. *Jesus, the Chief Shepherd and Head of the church, the King of the universe, wants to partner with you and help you shepherd your group.*

Knowing all this, who would ever think of showing up at small group without taking Jesus along! Unfortunately, small group leaders sometimes take this truth for granted. They just expect that Jesus will tag along and help them when they get into trouble.

Jesus does not want to tag along. He wants to be invited. He wants to be released to speak to hurting hearts, uncover sin in hearts, heal hurting bodies and repair damaged souls. He wants to help you address those tough questions, help the unruly and rude grow, attract unbelievers to his great heart and into your group. He wants to laugh with you and walk with each person in your group. He wants to be front and centre of your group. He wants you to talk to him and invite him into your challenges.

The following is a list of ways that you can model for your group the presence of Jesus:

- Start the meeting with a brief time of worship and prayer; consciously invite Jesus to be present in your meeting



- When you're stumped about a question or it seems that the group has come to a difficult spot, stop and ask God for help
- Make prayer a key group activity; even sports and outdoor kinds of groups can take time to talk to God
- When someone has shared something painful, consider stopping right there to pray for the person; some people are not embarrassed to have others gather around them, place a hand on them, and pray
- Ask the Lord to reveal to your group, his dreams, hope and purpose for your group; give him time to answer; watch for the little ways in which the Lord makes his heart known to your group
- Jesus will often express his heart for a group by speaking through the passions of members in a group; for example, if four out of ten in your group have a heart for inner city ministry, what do you suppose the Lord might be saying to your group?



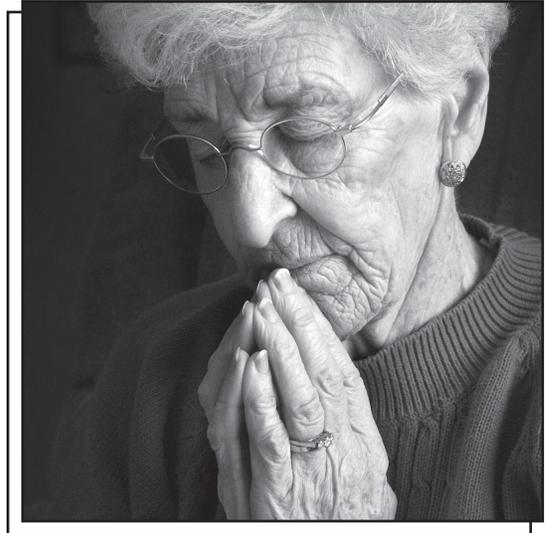
How do you help your group catch a sense of the presence of Jesus?

Practice the presence of Jesus through group prayer

One of our core values as a church is prayer. Here are some ideas for prayer which may help you experience the presence of Jesus more powerfully in your group:

- Choose a passage of scripture and pray it back to God, as a group
- As a variation of the suggestion above, each person can read a phrase or sentence of scripture, then expand on the idea using their own words
- Pray conversationally; one person can begin the prayer with just a sentence, then someone else develops the idea further in a sentence; the next person may choose to change the direction of the prayer completely
- Have someone prepare a particular theme for prayer for a given meeting; for example, prayer for a people group or country; the person can come with information about the prayer concern so that the group can pray with greater knowledge and awareness
- During CSC Weeks of Prayer, set aside a longer period of time for prayer; use the materials prepared by CSC prayer leaders to guide your group
- Do a special study series on the power of prayer; then pray!
- Use the Lord's Prayer as a template for prayer; pray the prayer one line at a time, stopping to expand on the outline given in the Lord's prayer
- Instead of members sharing needs and then having others pray for them, have each person simply pray what's on their heart; others will pray along with the person speaking
- Ask members to come with prayer requests written out on cards; put the cards in a bowl and pass it around; members will pray for the cards they draw
- In keeping with your study theme, write down one or two verses from your text on cards; hand them out at the end of study time and ask that people pray the passage back to God over the next week
- This one takes a bit of courage and faith: randomly divide your group into pairs; ask that people not share prayer needs, but that they simply pray what's in their heart to pray for the person they are with; re-group and share the experience - you may be surprised!
- Pray through the church bulletin

- Take a page from the telephone directory and begin to pray for names; ask the Lord to help you know how to pray
- Walk through your neighborhood in pairs, praying as you go; you can do this silently as you walk, or in quiet conversation with the Lord; pay attention to the ideas that come to mind
- Have your group keep a prayer journal; write out prayer requests, making them a special focus; concentrate on only a few requests at a time; as answers come, record them in your journal
- Make praying for the lost a constant theme; be bold in praying for unsaved loved ones and friends; focus on their life needs; remember that God has been known to perform miracles in the lives of the unsaved, many times; any idea why?
- When praying for loved ones, choose a scripture on their behalf; pray the scripture back to God, placing the name of your loved one into the scripture



Talk about ways to help your group increase its awareness of the presence of Jesus.

vii. GROW NEW LEADERS



Basics Diagram Forward Look

This study declares that you can influence another person to catch the vision of being a leader. It will give you ideas on how to find potential leaders – and then begin to help them grow.

The Vision

Imagine thousands in our city, nation, and all over the world, walking together in the strength and joy of Jesus. Imagine people in two's, five's and groups of ten, praying together, confessing their sins to each other, sharing their hopes and dreams, caring for each others' children, sharing meals together, reaching out to the poor, comforting the grieving, visiting the sick, serving the needs of each other, together. This is our vision of biblical community. Can you see it? Has your group begun to taste the joys of biblical community?

But how can these things happen and the church *not* grow? It can't. The expression of genuine biblical community *will* cause the church to grow.

And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had. They sold their possessions and shared the proceeds with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity – all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved (Acts 2:44-47).

Isn't it exciting to be a playmaker in all of this? You are, you know. This vision for community cannot happen without you. In fact, there are three key dynamics that need to work together for this vision to happen.

The Vision in Micro Form



We believe that Christ's vision for us, as a church, is clearly expressed in the quote following:

The church of the future looks like a place where we worship God in large groups, we nurture each other and do our service in small groups, and where those who give spiritual oversight are placing their highest leadership priority on forming leaders and giving them permission to minister (Carl George, Nine Keys to Effective Small Group Leadership, p 132).

We are passionate about these ideas. In light of that, a high priority for us is *growing new leaders*. Your partnership in this is absolutely necessary. If potential leaders are not called out, nurtured, empowered, and released to start new groups, the vision will fail.



Discuss 'the vision in micro form,' above, with your community leader. Explore how growth results when the three elements on the left side of the equation are present.

Principles to Ponder

Everyone needs a community leader

Case Study 1

"Why don't people open up in my group?" lamented Jeremy to his community leader.

"Any ideas on what's wrong?" responded his community leader, Travis.

"I dunno. I prepare good studies – sometimes I study for three hours for one lesson."

"Lesson?" responded Travis. "Sounds a bit like school. Tell me what happens on a typical night."

"Well, it starts off okay. People talk to each other and seem happy enough to be there. And afterward during snack time, everyone talks, but something's not working during the study time. I usually start by giving them an overview of the Bible text we're studying. I hand out sheets that break down the text for them. I've found this cool website that gives you prepared outlines. It comes complete with insights from the best commentators. People seem to appreciate this, but – something's missing."

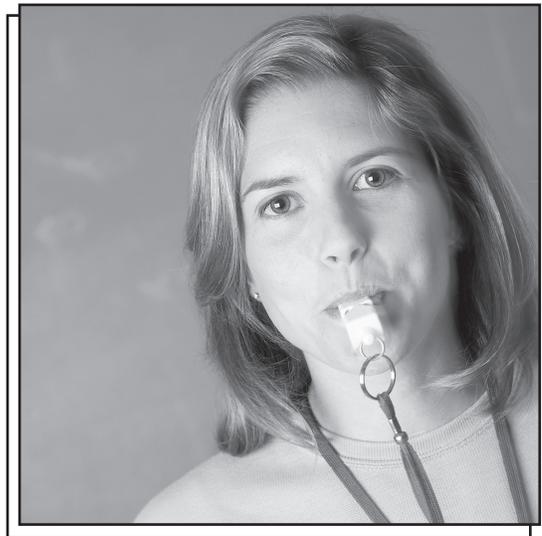
"Well, let's see," mused Travis. "How do you see people connecting with the studies?"

"What do you mean?"

"How are they taking the truths of God's Word and applying it to their lives?"

"Hmmm. I don't know. How are these supposed to do that?" replied Jeremy.

"That's where you come in, Jeremy. You need to think of open-ended questions that will draw them into your text. A question that will force them to make the teaching personal."



Jeremy looked perplexed. Travis, reading his confusion, continued.

“Let’s say you’re studying the story of Jesus and the rich young ruler. And at some point in the meeting, you pop the question: ‘What does money mean to you?’ How do you think people would respond?”

Jeremy paused, then replied, “I’m not sure…”

“Exactly!” his mentored reacted with delight. “That’s precisely what makes it a good question! You don’t know how people will respond. That kind of question gets people to personalize what’s going on in what they’re reading. That kind of question draws them in.”



What relationship is being illustrated in this case study?

Why is this relationship important for the vision of community described earlier?

Finding a potential leader or co-leader may be less difficult than you think

Case Study 2

Mary leads a group for college-aged women. Recently, she has been praying about finding someone to assist her as a leader from within the group. After prayer, it seemed that her heart was drawn to Cynthia. She wondered if it was the Lord prompting her. She decided to test herself. She invited Cynthia to join her for ice cream. Let’s listen in on their conversation.

“You know,” remarked Mary, “there is something I wanted to ask you about.”

“So – let’s hear it,” replied Cynthia.

“I was wondering if you would like to help me with our Small Group.”

“Uh oh. What do you mean? You’re going to Hawaii or something?”

“Not exactly,” Mary responded, laughing. “I’ve been asking God to give me a helper. You know, someone who could begin to do some of the things I’m doing. Not take over the group necessarily. But we’ve been experiencing some pretty cool stuff happening in our group. I just feel that the Lord doesn’t want us to keep this to ourselves. Do you ever think about that?”

“Now wait a minute,” Cynthia reacted. “I don’t think I’m leadership material here. If you want me to pass out the bagels and cheese, that’s one thing. But be a leader? Are you kidding me?”

“I don’t think I’m asking you to be a leader, not just yet, Cynthia. But have you ever wanted to do more for God? Have you ever felt that kind of stirring inside?”

Cynthia’s expression changed. “Well now that’s a different question. Funny you should ask. About a month ago, while the pastor was preaching, I felt something like that. And it’s been growing. But I haven’t known quite what to do about it.”

Mary took another spoonful of ice cream and smiled, mischievously.

“What!” retorted Cynthia. “I suppose you think you’ve heard God tell you I’m supposed to be this potential leader person you’ve been talking about at group. That’s it, isn’t it – you rat!”

Mary smiled, again. "Will you pray about it? Will you just pray about it? I'm not asking you to sign any kind of contract or anything like that. Will you just pray about it?"

"Mary Wilson – you're meddling," Cynthia came back, this time, smiling too.



Why is Mary Wilson praying about an potential leader?

How does the potential leader fit into the vision described above?

How can your community leader help you find an potential leader?

Visionary groups pray and plan to send out new leaders

Case Study 3

Clinton leads an awesome Life Group. But he's been noticing a change. The group has gotten to 19 in number, but the group rarely has more than ten or twelve in attendance. He's been discussing this situation with his community leader. Tim, his community leader, has suggested that his group may actually be too large. Since people generally don't open up in a larger group, it may be possible that interest in the group is declining. Through this insight, Clinton has decided to put the idea of starting another group to his group.

"Clinton, are you suggesting that our group split!" Karen gasped.

"Not split," Clinton responded, feeling a bit of panic rise up inside. "Remember, guys, how our group talked about mission some months ago? I remember how some of you expressed your desire to see more and more people experiencing the kind of community we've had."

"I don't get it," Ralph said. "Our pastors constantly encourage us to get into community. Grace and I have been waiting for months to get into a group like this. Most of them are closed. We finally found one that's open and we're just getting to know you guys and here we're talking about changing that. Why does leadership push us to get into community, and then tell us to break it up?"

Clinton was beginning to sweat. "Guys, the fact that our group is open has made it possible for Ralph and Grace to begin to experience community. If we didn't have a vision for that, they wouldn't have gotten that chance."

Larry, an older man in the group, entered the conversation. "Maybe we should make this a prayer focus, guys. We've kind of hit a wall here. Clinton has led us in the past, when we come to a problem like this, to just stop and pray. I think we should pray." There were lots of nods. And so, the group prayed. Then, there was quiet.

Karen broke the silence. "I'm wondering – if we could continue as we are, but when we have a night where there's too many for the family room – that some could go with Tammy, our potential leader, into the dining room. I'm not saying that the people that go with Tammy start another group. But I, too, am bothered that not everyone is here. I'm wondering if we should make it known to the others that when we have, say, twelve or more present on any given night, that we simply divide ourselves into two groups, and just go from there."



What thoughts and feelings were stirred in you as you read the third case study?

Why is it hard for groups to talk about starting new groups?

What other alternatives could you suggest to Clinton to help his group be more visionary?

Spot a potential leader:

- **F** – Faithful (fruit of the Spirit in their character)
- **A** – Available (has demonstrated commitment to the group)
- **S** – Servant heart (loves people and serves the needs of others)
- **S** – Skills (demonstrates some leadership ability)
- **T** – Teachable (responds to correction and instruction)



More ideas!

- Meet with them between meetings, going over the material in this handbook
- Ask them to open a meeting with greeting and prayer and possibly worship time or ice breaker activity
- Ask them to share their testimony in a meeting
- Ask them to lead the prayer time
- Ask them to lead a study
- Ask them to facilitate a planning time
- Ask them to assist you with care to group members, to call absentees or to call members between meetings for encouragement and prayer
- Ask for their help in contacting prospective new members
- Ask them to lead a meeting in your absence
- Bring them along to meetings with your community leader

As your potential leader grows in his/her skill and comfort level, a new group can be birthed. Your relationship with your potential leader need not be cut off; your potential leader should attend huddles with you and your community leader right away

Grow a Potential Leader

- 1** Continually bring before your group the vision spoken of at the beginning of this best practice; help your group to see the value of shared leadership
 - create a participatory leadership environment (see p 47 on 'planning together')
 - encourage and celebrate risk taking
 - if everyone is participating in your group already, it won't feel as threatening for someone to try apprenticing
- 2** pray, with your group, that the Lord would call an potential leader
- 3** observe who is rising to the surface as a potential leader
- 4** approach that person (or persons)
 - present the challenge
 - give them time; be prepared for a 'no' or hesitancy
- 5** begin to grow your potential leader

Ideas on how to grow your potential leader

The following are some ideas to help you grow your potential leader; talk about these ideas with your community leader:

- The most powerful method of teaching, known to humankind, is modeling:
 - I do, you watch, we talk
 - I do, you help, we talk
 - You do, I help, we talk
 - You do, I watch, we talk
- Pray that God will call those he wants to be leaders; ask him to put new leaders on your heart



“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matthew 9:37-38)

viii. GROW YOUR GROUP'S OUTWARD LOOK



Basics Diagram Outward Look

This 'best practice' will help you and your group explore sincerely the Great Commission given to us by Jesus.

Case Study

Ruth has been introducing the idea of 'the outward look' to her small group lately. In a recent meeting with her community leader, she confessed that she had mixed feelings about the process. The people in her group seemed to like the idea of reaching out through serving, but whenever it came down to planning an actual event, there seemed to be resistance. Let's listen in:

"I really like the idea of prayer walking in our neighborhood," said Joseph. "I think we way underestimate the power of prayer for the lost."

"I agree with you," said Lily. "But lately I've been sensing that there needs to be a practical expression flowing out of our prayers as a Life Group. Like what about going through the neighborhood, knocking on doors and giving out cookies and treats?"

"That's a neat idea, Lily!" piped in Samantha. "And then we could collect prayer requests from people. You know, just let them know the church is there for them. I heard the pastor talking about adopting entire city blocks for prayer and acts of kindness. You know, blocks around the church. Why couldn't our Life Group do that?"

"I dunno, you guys," offered Ralph. "Come Friday night, I'm bushed. Some nights Francis has to practically push me out the door to go to Life Group. Don't get me wrong, once I'm here, I love it. It's just getting psyched up for it."

Roberta jumped in. "I probably side with Ralph a bit on this one. I think we should all be having an impact in the neighborhoods in which we live. I've just come to enjoy the wonderful experience of community we've all had together. I've never experienced anything like this before. If we start doing all this outreach stuff, will it dilute what we've worked so hard to accomplish?"

"But guys. Taking Jesus to our city is a part of community," Ruth interjected. "Should we be holding this in to ourselves. Remember how we said that we would continually ask ourselves the question, as a group – 'what would Jesus do?' I'd like to put that question to us as we close our meeting this evening. I don't think we're ready to decide anything right now. But I'd like for us to make this a prayer focus for a while, as a group. Can we?"

The room became quiet. Heads nodded. The group entered into a time of prayer.





What are the challenges of building deep, trusting relationships and still reach out beyond the group?
How can working together in acts of service build deeper community in your group?
How could you lead your group in a discussion like Ruth did?

Principles to Ponder

Every group struggles with the challenge of finding the balance between caring for people and carrying out task

One thing is clear: groups cannot afford to focus on one end or the other. Look at how Jesus met the impact challenge in his group. "He appointed twelve – designating them apostles – that they might be with him [a focus on people] and that he might send them out to preach . . . [the call to a task]" (Mark 3:14; Donahue and Robinson, Walking the Small Group Tightrope, p117).

NOTE: In the quote above, the authors use the word 'task' speaking of activities that a group does to reach out (this is 'the outward look'). In the discussion following, the word 'task' will be used this way.

It's easy to see the task as something that distracts from the pursuit of biblical community. Actually, the task can very much be a part of community. Collecting bottles together for a missions fundraiser can be a great way to bring people together. As for the disciples, the tensions of getting work done together can uncover flaws, cause people to appreciate each other better, press people together to pray. Life seems to find lots of ways to provide teachable moments for people who work together.

Some groups, by definition, are task groups. Worship teams, choir, usher teams, communion teams, custodial and maintenance teams, even inner city mission teams will find that task easily nudges out time for each other, prayer and sharing. For Community Small groups, on the other hand, the relational side tends to push out the task part of community.



If you are a part of a task group, consider the following possibilities:

- Do the task first, but then spend time sharing together and praying for each other
- Meet once a month apart from the task; focus on relationships (e.g. a monthly meal together)
- Take your task group on short retreats or occasional overnights
- Find ways to connect with members of the group, informally, between task events
- Look for ways to affirm and encourage each other while you're at the task; (e.g. "Jeremy, I saw you comfort that lady who just lost her husband. Did you see how her eyes lit up when you spoke to her? Way to go, Jeremy!")
- Instead of engaging in small talk while at task, take opportunity to make every interaction count; (e.g. "Mary, just wanted you to know I've been praying about the need you shared last week. Any update on your situation?")
- Plan ahead a bit; celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, group milestones, etc.

Russ Robinson, tells the following story of how his growth group grew even more through task:

A few years ago, I was in a couples' group that included a woman irrepressibly possessed of a mercy gift. You probably know someone like this. Every time they come to a meeting, they tell you another story of someone they have found to help.

As we approached Christmas, this woman described to us a ministry that provides gifts to orphaned children, and we stumbled onto an idea. What if she could make the connections necessary for our group to touch the lives of a couple of these kids?

Within weeks, we were all gathered in our basement surrounded by what seemed like a mountain of gifts, wrapping paper, and ribbons.

As we listened to stories of the two boys who would receive our presents, our hearts began to melt. And soon our hearts were melded together, by finding how our little community could touch others through our service.

Our group was never the same again. We learned that by moving from the community end of the continuum toward the task end, we ended up enriching our experience of community all over again (Donahue and Robinson, Walking the Small Group Tightrope, pp 122-123).



Discuss the following statement of Jesus and how it relates to this discussion: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

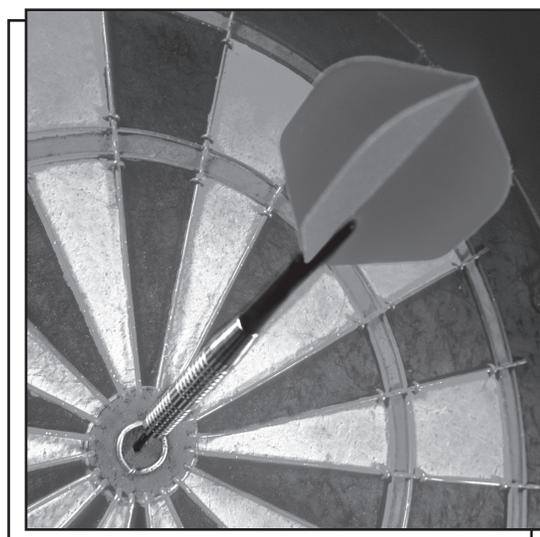
If you lead a Community Small Group (or other kind of growth group), what has your group done to practice 'the outward look'?

If you are leading a task group, what has your group done to grow relationships within the group?

The first step to progress is establishing a goal

Help your group establish a goal. Then help your group take one step at a time toward its goal.

Serve well. It's not acceptable to do a poor job at a task in the name of fellowship. There's no place for saying, "It is more important to pray and study; the task will get done when we have time." Excellent service performed with an open heart makes a difference. People's needs must be met, and that won't happen by simply limiting our group efforts to studying and praying together. And meeting people's needs will enhance to form growing, authentic relationships.



There are plenty of serving opportunities in every church. Each opportunity can help community groups serve or help task teams find ways to connect people and build them up. If you tend to focus on people and relationships, remember that serving together will stretch your group

spiritually and relationally. Focusing on a goal the group can accomplish together will build even deeper community (Donahue and Robinson, p 133).

Imagine the feeling of leading your group toward a purpose far greater than itself! Facing the obstacles, finding solutions, sharing the load as a team, and putting out, flat out after the task. And then, when all the dust has settled, seeing the looks of satisfaction – hearing the stories of God’s life igniting here and there – knowing the smile of his approval – for you, and your group. Imagine...



Do you have a dream for your group? What is it?

Some groups talk about, pray about, and plan ways to reach at least one person for Jesus, per year. What would it take to help your group own this goal?

If you don’t have a goal, discuss with your community leader possible ways of introducing this discussion to your group.

ix. LEAD YOUR GROUP THROUGH HELPFUL ASSESSMENTS



Basics Diagram The 3 Markers of Biblical Community / The 6 E's

This 'best practice' will help you lead your group members through an individual assessment done by exploring the six E's. It will also help your group with a group assessment, done by focusing on the three markers of community.

Your Annual Physical

Many people hold to the practice of taking an annual physical examination. They do so whether or not they are feeling well. It's a good practice. Many times, a life has been saved because someone took the time to take their routine, annual physical.

Small group leaders often feel as though they know what is happening in their groups but even in the most intimate groups there are still things that are not addressed until they become issues. You can be proactive with your group and deal with underlying concerns before they become issues.

Very seldom are the results of an assessment negative or destructive. The experience of our community pastors demonstrates that most feedback is extremely positive. Assessments can be viewed as an opportunity to celebrate the good things a group has become, to build on that, and of course, to address growth areas.



How to use this assessment

1. Review small group basics (pages 11-12)
 - Your group purpose statement should easily connect with the shared vision of the church
 - Shared process outlines the 4 Looks – your group covenant or agreement should address each
 - Shared outcomes are what we expect our group to become; this is what the group assessment measures in terms of belonging, growing in Christ, and reaching out
2. Share the small groups basics diagram with your group, explaining it as you go.
3. Hand out photocopies of the group assessment to each member of your group (as published below)
4. Explain that there are 30 questions that are to be answered by placing an "X" on the scale. Be sure that they understand that "1" is a low score and that "5" is high.
5. Ask them to complete the assessment in 5 minutes. Prompt them to quickly read the questions and to give their first response to each question. You can take more time if needed but stress that it is best to record their first impressions.
6. Collect the completed assessments.
7. Hand out the finished assessments randomly, ensuring that no one has their own.

8. Read through the questions one at a time getting each member of the group to quickly give their numerical score. Record the values on your master without commenting on the results. Your group will settle into a routine – this need not take much time.
9. When the tallying is complete, ask them:
 - “What strengths did you hear about our group?” Here you want to affirm the group for what it has accomplished and where the strengths of the group lie.
 - “What growth areas do you see?” Here you want to gather comments that lead back to the small group basics. For example if your group does not have a clear purpose you may find that the belonging scores were lower.
10. Finally, lead a discussion around the following question:
 - “Where should we go from here?” This is where the group addresses what needs to happen to improve or seek a different direction. It may be a time when the group decides whether change is acceptable at this time as well.

Our community pastors encourage that you do this assessment twice yearly. The fall and new year might be the best times to do this. You will want to keep the information you gather so that you can see if the group has moved in the direction they intended.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

For each bullet below, place an "X" on the number that best describes your group right now.

- People in our group talk about ways they are growing in their faith.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- We help each other through stressful events.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- Our group is growing in its understanding of scripture.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- We help each other respond in obedience to the truth taught in the Bible.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- Our group has the wonderful sense that Jesus is right with us, as a group.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- We value the Bible as the absolute authority for spirituality and conduct.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- We take lots of time to pray for each other, loved ones, our community and the world.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- We are willing and able to receive disciple making training to disciple new believers in our group.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- Most members of our group are in an accountability relationship with someone in their life.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- We take turns leading studies.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

BELONGING

- Leadership is shared in this group – everyone does something to contribute to the strength of the group (eg. Planning events, phoning, emailing, visiting).

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- Our group is not closed – we are always inviting new people.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- We have talked about and have agreed upon guidelines that direct the way we conduct ourselves as a group.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- We plan together, make decisions together, and follow through on our decisions as a group.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- We are honest and open with each other – yet maintain courtesy and respect for one another.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- We do not avoid conflict – we handle conflict in positive ways.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- There is a sense that the needs and health of the group come before personal agendas.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- Some of us get together in settings outside of our meetings.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- People are not afraid to step out and try new things.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- We do work bees, garage sales, etc, together.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

REACHING OUT

- We have adopted a missionary – we pray for them and communicate with them.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- Someone has found the Lord through the influence (even if in part) our group in the last year.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- We share about our neighborhood and the needs both secular and spiritual that we see there.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- Each of us has a "most wanted list" (list of people we are praying for daily to come to the Lord).

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- We support area outreach events by volunteering and inviting others to join us.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- We are considering and praying about a group MTO trip.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- Our group is open to anyone who wants to grow and learn about Jesus and we are willing to disciple new believers.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- We have completed or have planned externally focused projects for our group this year.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- We know what an externally focused group is.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

- Members of our group volunteer in the community.

Yikes! We're supposed to do that!	Lots of room to grow	We're just coasting	We're good at this	Write us up in the who's who of small groups!
1	2	3	4	5

SELF ASSESSMENT

This section is a tool designed to help your small group members evaluate their journey as individual followers of Jesus. You may want to take time with your group once a year to complete this form, and then to discuss the outcomes. Statements are organized under the 6 E's.

For each bullet below, place an "X" near the statement on the line that best describes your life experience right now.



Embracing Christian Growth

- *The Bible is alive to me – I read it often – God speaks to me regularly through his Word*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *My life is a constant conversation with God – I look forward to extended times of prayer with the Lord*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *I have discovered the power of silence – I am learning to hear his still small voice to my life*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *I feel like my walk with God is alive, growing, and feeding me almost every day*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *I have the inner confidence that the Father loves me – he is my friend – he is pursuing me and wants to know me*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

Exalting the Lord

- *I love to worship the Lord with other believers*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *People who know me would say that I am a person who often expresses gratitude and praise to God*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *I love to listen to praise music and to sing along in my heart*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *People say that I'm an exceptional singer (just kidding :o)*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *My focus is much more on the Lord than it is on the dark side or my problems*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *I try to practice the awareness that my entire life is an act of worship to the Lord*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

Experiencing Biblical Community

- *I meet with a small group of Christians regularly*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *I pray with other believers regularly*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *There is at least one person in my life with whom I share the private spaces of my heart*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *I am a part of a small group that practices openness, engages conflict in a healthy way, struggles honestly with the truths of God's word, allows me to fail and to explore my giftedness*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *Others would say about me that my life is rich in relationships*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

Exercising Good Stewardship

- *I live with the settled persuasion that all that I am and all that I have belongs to God (my life, possessions, relationships, health, time)*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *Others would say about me that I volunteer in service to the Lord and others significantly*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *I have a good sense of what my passion and giftings are and I am content in the way these things are being expressed*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *I give to the work of the Lord, regularly, in a planned way, generously, cheerfully*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *I sense the smile of God's approval in the way that I use my time, talents, and material resources*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

Evangelizing the Lost

- *I have a positive relationship with a good number of unbelieving people*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *These people would say that they know I'm a Christian*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *These people would probably say that I represent my faith in a positive way*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *I pray for lost friends and loved ones by name regularly*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *In the last six months, I have invited someone to some kind of Christian event, at least once*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

Extending the Kingdom

- *I contribute to some kind of mission regularly*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *I pray for a kingdom ministry other than my local church regularly*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *I have made some kind of trip for the sole purpose of extending the kingdom in the past ten years*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *I would be able to explain to a visiting friend what our church does to touch the lives of others, outside our own 'in house' ministries*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

- *I hold in my heart a special interest or affection for some kingdom venture, other than my own church*

I'm on life support	Lots of room to grow	I'm just coasting	I'm feeling strong	It's awesome right now!
1	2	3	4	5

Providing Care

6

The Centre Street Care Giving Model

As mentioned in the philosophy section of this manual, biblical community happens most naturally when it functions under the leadership of trained and empowered volunteers. Throughout the scriptures there are many exhortations to disciple, encourage and minister to one another.

As potential leaders, small group leaders, community leaders and pastors, we are called to nurture, feed and care for those entrusted to our leadership. Most of the care needed in the church happens in small groups.

This, in fact, is the biblical model. Remember Moses and his marathon pastoral care ministry? He was essentially giving pastoral care to several hundred thousand people. Of course this is impossible. And so God sent his father-in-law Jethro to help him reorganize his life. It would be more accurate to say that Jethro actually saved his life! The entire Hebrew nation was divided into small groups of ten, with one-to-one care structures over the leaders. Only the most difficult cases were brought before Moses.



CSC has provided for a similar care structure. Each potential leader is advised and cared for by a small group leader. Each small group leader is advised and cared for by a community leader. Community leaders receive care from Pastors.

Three levels of ministry

To help you understand how you are both empowered and protected by our care structure, we are providing the following guidelines that we ask you to follow:

Ministry Level One

Most care happens at this level. These are issues related to discipleship, encouragement, and growth in spiritual disciplines. At this level you are encouraging and challenging people to life changes that reflect their growth and maturity in Christ.

Below are examples of Level One kinds of caregiving:

- Person facing a crisis like surgery who needs prayer and assurance
- Someone has experienced the death of a loved one
- Someone has questions about the Bible, suffering, life issues, etc
- A person is struggling with authority
- Encouragement to pursue faithfulness in a marriage

- Exhortation around social courtesies
- Lifestyle, attitudes, or behaviours which contradict Christian testimony

Ministry Level Two

In general, this is a situation where the person has *already received some care from the group or yourself, but your efforts bring about little or no result*. There are also some potentially serious behaviours that you should be alert to. These situations should definitely be discussed with your community leader who may in turn consult his/her supervising pastor. (Note that you should not use names, except with permission, when speaking about a sensitive matter with your community leader or pastor). Here are some examples of Level Two care situations:

- Person withdraws and becomes non-communicative; this could be an indication of trauma, major depression, etc.; your role is crucial in that you could be the bridge of support to direct the person to where they can get help
- Self-inflicted pain such as cutting; this person definitely needs professional intervention
- Grief that seems to be over extended; the grief disrupts the person's ability to cope with life
- Disruptive behaviour in the group which does not lessen after intervention from yourself or the group
- Inability to accept responsibility and consequences for personal choices that hinders a person's relationship with the Lord and others
- Lifestyle, attitudes, or behaviours which do not honor the Lord, and which do not correct after intervention from yourself or the group



Ministry Level Three

These are serious care situations that require you to contact your community leader, who in turn is required to consult with his/her supervising pastor. Again, you should not use names except with permission. Examples:

- Potential divorce cases
- Any abuse situation, sexual, physical, etc.; note that there are ethical and legal implications that come to bear on situations like this
- Disclosure of suicide plans or attempts at suicide; police can intervene if a person is suicidal
- Funerals and weddings

Consulting Up

A strong CSC principle to follow is that when in doubt about a situation, speak with your community leader or supervising pastor. The collective wisdom of the group is almost always better than an individual's perspective.

When you sense it's time to consult, always protect the confidentiality of the person(s) involved or *have their permission to discuss their situation with your community leader or supervising Pastor*. You should not discuss a sensitive issue with someone unless that person is in a position of designated authority to speak into the situation.

Never agree to keep something confidential if:

- There is a question of safety
- It hinders your ability to lead
- The information could put you in a compromising situation
- You might be put in a place of violating the law or the scriptures

Anyone providing Pastoral Care at Level Two or higher must keep some written record of the meeting times and content of the meetings.

CSC Pastoral Care

Our Pastoral Care division is led by trained professionals who minister from a biblical perspective to those who are in crisis or are facing unresolved issues and life challenges. Through intentional professional assessment and intervention, people are guided towards wellness and spiritual health. It must be understood that CSC Pastoral Care is not a counseling centre. Where appropriate, Pastoral Care will assist people either directly or will refer them to suitable outside resources that deal specifically with the needs and concerns presented. Included in our resource list are medical services, educational resources, professional counselors, mental health professionals, shelters, anger management programs and the like.

Red Light on Your Dashboard

The following are some indicators that will help you to know when to consult and/or refer to Pastoral Care:

- You are feeling more and more 'pulled in' to a difficult situation
- You know you're in over your head
- Someone seems to have 'attached' to you, demanding more and more of your time and energy
- Someone comes back week after week with the same problem
- You sense someone is denying the real issues or refuses to take personal responsibility
- You feel guilty or you feel manipulated
- You feel unsafe physically, emotionally, sexually
- Someone is threatening to harm themselves or others
- There is suggestion or evidence of child abuse (by law, cases of abuse must be reported to the authorities; you must speak to your community leader or pastor when you have information of this sort)
- You feel like it's your duty to solve a difficult problem
- Someone in your group is asking for help with a difficult marital problem

The discussion above may leave you feeling a bit unsure about leading! Remember that most leaders will never have to face serious concerns like this. But if it should happen, know that you are not alone, and that there is a caregiving structure in place to help you.



Discuss with your community leader any questions you may have in relation to the information presented in this section of the manual.

Celebrations



Meaningful Celebrations

In the Christian church, celebration of Holy Communion, weddings, baptisms, reception into membership, baby dedications and funerals have been held up as important events and milestones in the life of a believer. It is appropriate that these events are celebrated in the context of community.

At Centre Street Church, community leaders and small group leaders are empowered to conduct baptisms and baby dedications, as well as to serve Holy Communion. This section has been set aside to help you know what to do when someone in your group requests that you give leadership for one of these celebrations.

Note that for dedications and baptisms, it is important for the people making the request to complete and return the requisite forms. These forms are available at the Information Centre. This needs to be the first step in the process that will eventually take the person to the moment of dedication or baptism.

The forms are important as they start a process that makes sure that proper questions have been asked, facilities have been booked, certificates printed, records kept, etc. You must not engage in either of these celebrations without first making sure that the person(s) has/have initiated the paper process. Note that completed forms will come back to you to help you as you interview the persons involved.

Typically, community leaders do baptisms and dedications. However, your community leader and the party receiving the celebration, may want for you to be a part of the event. For this reason, sample celebrations are described in this manual for your reference.

Baby Dedications

The meaning of dedication

Baby dedication is an occasion when believing parents (or a believing parent) bring their child to God in the presence of their faith community to declare their intention to raise their child in such a way that the child is encouraged to embrace Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord. Parents are promising, in the presence of witnesses, that they will model what it means to be fully devoted followers of Jesus. By their example, instruction in the Christian life and through patient nurturing, it is their desire to see their children personalize their faith and to follow Jesus. (Deuteronomy 6:5-7)



Helpful tips

- Be sure the parent(s) has/have filled out the appropriate forms and handed them in to Faith@Home Ministries.
- Meet with the parents/parent
- Explain the meaning of the celebration (above); talk about its meaning; give parents/parent an opportunity to express their intention and desire
- Talk about what will happen when the child is dedicated; be creative; explore ideas like special music, a poem read by a loved one, a godly grandparent offering words of advice and encouragement, a spontaneous time at the end for family and friends to share a scripture passage, a word of encouragement, a prayer, etc
- Double check with the family as to location and time of the dedication

Suggested Outline for Dedication

Welcome and personal remarks

Invocation: In the name of God: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Address to family and community gathered

We rejoice today with these parents because this little child has come into their hearts and home. There is no gift more precious, more laden with blessing, more enriching to the home and family life than the coming of a little child. However, with this great experience there comes also great responsibility to the parents, for into their care is entrusted an immortal soul whose destiny is greatly affected by the character and influence of the home.

The scriptures have much to say about children and the responsibility of parenthood. Moses urged parents to lay up in their own hearts the words of counsel and advice that they might teach them to their children. Deuteronomy 6:5-7 states : ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Hannah looked to the house of the Lord for instruction

and help in bringing up her child Samuel. Mary and Joseph took the infant Jesus to the Temple and there presented him. Timothy's mother and grandmother were zealous from his childhood to teach him the Word of God. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these." The scriptures bear witness of the fact that of old, godly parents dedicated their children to the Lord and his service. Hannah brought her child Samuel and dedicated him to God and to the service of his house.

We also read from Luke, the following: "When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord" (Luke 2:22). We are confident, therefore, of divine approval today as this child is brought to this community of faith to be dedicated to God and his service.

Scripture

"People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them" (Mark 10:13-16).

Address to the Parents

At this time, I would like to ask _____ to bring their child _____ to join me at the front. (Ask the couple and any witnesses accompanying them to face you. If you desire to create a more personal atmosphere and if there is a small group present, you may want to invite family and friends to the side and behind the couple.)

You are presenting this child for dedication to God. In so doing you acknowledge this child to be a gift from God for whose nurture and welfare you are responsible. It is proper that you declare your purpose to lead him/her in the way of Jesus Christ by answering the following questions before those gathered here.

Will you give an example of a Christian life and instruct and guide this child in Christian living? If so, answer: "We (I) will, by the help of God."

Will you seek to lead him/her to a personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, to nurture him/her in the Christian life and endeavor to bring him/her into the membership and the fellowship of the church? If so, answer: "We will, by the help of God."

Will you do these things helping him/her to confirm by his/her own free will and actions the dedication we make today? If so, answer: "We will, by the help of God."

Commitment of the Community

There is an old saying that goes like this: 'It takes a village to raise a child.' There is truth in that statement. Mom and Dad _____, you are not alone in the task of raising this child. We have a living object lesson of that fact, in that your family, friends, and some of your faith community are gathered with you here today. The next question is addressed to those who are with you today.

Do you as a community of family and friends in the Christian faith, accept the responsibility of assisting

these parents in the fulfillment of these dedication vows? If so, answer: "We will, by the help of God".

As you dedicate your child to the Lord today, we trust that, as parents, you will also dedicate yourselves anew to God, seeking to live exemplary lives before your family and with this faith community gathered here today. Having heard these vows and sacred promises, we do joyfully commend this child to the divine care and protection of God.

Dedication

(If the child is cooperative, you may want to take the child into your arms, place your hand on its head, and say the following words):

As a leader in the church of the Lord Jesus, who laid his hand upon the heads of little children in blessing, I dedicate you, (say the full name of the child), to God and his church, in the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(Pray a prayer for the child and its family, using your own words)

Optional

You may want to invite gathered friends to share words of encouragement, scripture, etc. at this time.

Benediction

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be the glory in the church and Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Ephesians 3:20,21).

Presentation of Certificate and resources

Through the paper process that the parents have engaged, the church will prepare a certificate and resource materials to be presented to the parents. This is the time to present the certificate and materials, to extend personal remarks to the parents and family, and to enjoy the moment.

Baptisms

Paper Process

The person being baptized must first complete the appropriate forms, which are available at the Information Centre. Also, as in the case of baby dedications, baptisms are usually done by community leaders and pastors. However, your community leader, and the person being baptized, may request your participation. The suggested form, following, will be a help to you.

The meaning of baptism

A classic definition of baptism goes as follows: 'baptism is an outward sign of an inward work of grace.' Through the sacrament of baptism, the believer states publicly that he/she has now decided to follow Jesus. Baptism is a testimony that God has done a work in the life of the one being baptized. It is an act of obedience to Jesus and identification with him and the community of Christian faith.



Helpful tips:

- Be sure that forms have been processed.
- If you are asked by CSC to meet with the person being baptized, you will receive a copy of the baptism application and an interview guide sheet to help you interview the person prior to their baptism.
- Be sure all details are cared for: space and time is booked with the church; result of your interview has been recorded on the interview sheet (including date, time and location of baptism and who is doing the baptizing) and returned to the Life Transformation area.
- Talk about the elements that the person would like to have included in their baptism; scripture, words of encouragement from friends, worship time, music, etc.

Suggested Outline for Baptism

Welcome and personal remarks

This is a good place to offer personal comments or greetings.

Address to the person and community gathered

Baptism is the biblical way for people to identify themselves as Christians. It is an outward sign of a work of grace done in the heart of the one receiving it. Jesus instructed that his church should administer baptism to his followers. Throughout the New Testament, people who believed in Jesus committed themselves to following him by being baptized.

Baptism is a symbol of our personal identification with Jesus in His death and resurrection. The Apostle Paul teaches in the book of Romans that when I am baptized I am saying that Jesus died on the cross for my sins. He died in my place to offer me a chance to live a new life.

Going under the water is a symbol of death – it says that I’m putting the sinful part of me on the cross where Jesus died - that Jesus was raised from the dead and gives me life. He has defeated death, and it no longer has the final word.

Rising up out of the water is a symbol of new life – it says that Jesus has given me spiritual life now, and is a reminder that when He comes back I will be raised from the dead and live with Him forever.

Scripture

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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” (Matthew 28:18-20).

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life (Romans 6:1-4).

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call!” (Acts 2:38-39).

Testimony

(Whether by video or live, the candidate now has opportunity to share the story of how they came to faith in Jesus. This is a powerful time in the baptism celebration.)

In preparation for baptism, _____ has studied what the Bible says about it and has now expressed his/her readiness to identify with Jesus in this way. She/he is going to share now a bit of his/her own story of how God has been at work in his/her life.

Words to the person being baptized

We rejoice with you that, having considered the significance of Christian baptism, you are now taking this significant step in your spiritual journey.

_____, do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and your personal Saviour and Lord, and do you now dedicate your life to following him?

Baptism

_____ in obedience to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of blessing

(Using your own words, pray a prayer of blessing for the person baptized.)

Benediction

Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Ephesians 3:20,21).

Afterwards

Encourage the person being baptized to celebrate with others after the baptism in a way that would be appropriate for their friends and family, such as a time of refreshments where people have a chance to meet one another and where the person being baptized can thank each person for coming.

The Celebration of Holy Communion

The church celebrates Holy Communion, or Eucharist, to remember the suffering and death of Jesus, and to give thanks. It is also a time for us to examine our own hearts, to make fresh confession, and to receive God's power and grace into our lives.

You are free to include a variety of scripture passages or particular Bible narratives which will help you create a focus for those receiving communion. Sample passages are listed below.



Suggested Outline

To introduce this celebration, you might read the following text:

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the Kingdom of God."

After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes."

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:14-20).

You may want to read the following scripture in preparation for a time of **personal reflection and repentance**:

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2).

Before you administer the bread, the following passage can be read:

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:23-24).

Before you share the fruit of the vine, the following passage can be read:

In the same way, after supper he took the cup saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:25-26).

You will want to lead your group in a time of **thanksgiving and prayer**, in response to the observation of this celebration.

YOU AND YOUR COMMUNITY LEADER



Basics Diagram The Mentoring Process

What is a community leader?

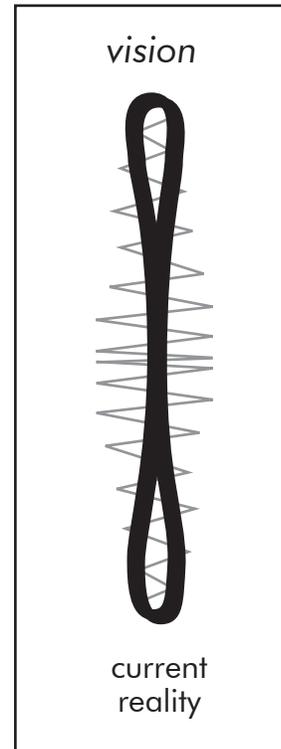
Your community leader is our gift to you! Your community leader has been commissioned to come alongside you, to walk with you through the challenges of leadership, and to pray with you. The primary purpose of your community leader is to help you succeed as a leader. Sometimes your community pastor will fill the role of community leader

We have defined mentoring as follows: Mentoring is a God-centered relationship which stimulates vision and moves people forward.

Vision is about seeing. We want you to have a vision for your group. A clear picture of what God wants your group to be. Identifying vision isn't always easy. But even harder than catching the vision is taking your group from where it is now (**your current reality**), to where God wants it to be (**vision**). The simple sketch to the right illustrates this principle.

Current Reality

Think of the line between current reality and vision as being an elastic band. The further that the two are apart, the greater the tension in the band. Leadership is about living with the tension between current reality (**the way things are**) and vision (**the way they ought to be**). The easy way to lessen the tension is to lower your vision. This, of course, is not desirable. It is the job of your community leader to help you figure out a step-by-step strategy which will help you move your current reality in the direction of God's vision for your group. This is usually the better way to lessen the tension between the two.⁴



Think about the following statement: "Mentoring is more about asking thought provoking questions than it is 'telling'." Do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer.

The Leader Development Structure

Community leaders engage in three main activities with their leaders:

Huddles

- Crucial piece of the mentoring process, yet most difficult to implement

⁴ Concept taken from Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*.

- Every 6-10 weeks; community leader meets with his/her assigned small group leaders
- Small group leaders learn from each other
- Case studies are reviewed for the purpose of troubleshooting and learning from successes of others
- Sharing, caregiving, prayer
- Community leaders lead and model at huddles

One-to-one

- Purpose is to develop the leader and to care for him/her
- Meet at church, restaurants, over coffee, through phone calls and emails
- A relationship is established over time
- Community leader and leader agree on expectations and goals at outset; need to be highly specific and practical; accountability needs to be structured into the one-to-one dynamic
- The relationship is what is most important; content communicated is important but secondary
- Community leader models vulnerability, openness, honesty; shares his/her personal journey openly with the leader

Group visits

- Community leader watches the leader in action in order to help him/her improve
- Should happen once every 6-9 months
- Community leader visits groups during ministry times, during fellowship events, or regular meetings (once or twice per year)
- **L** = Leader (how are they doing?)
- **E** = Environment (is it conducive to the group process?)
- **A** = Potential leader (is he/she involved?)
- **D** = Dynamic of communication (is communication healthy?)
- After group visits, community leader and leader huddle and debrief, setting new goals



Consider again the definition of mentoring: Mentoring is a God-centered relationship that stimulates vision and moves people forward. Talk about the two-fold responsibility of the community leader – vision casting and growth expressed in this statement. How have these things played out in your relationship?

Is there room for improvement? If so, talk about that openly.

What expectations do the two of you have in your minds for your relationship? Talk about it and write it down.

In light of the 'Biblical Community' section of this manual, what do you think is God's vision for your group?

What is your current reality?

Begin to talk about possible steps that will help your group move closer to the vision. Share with your community leader what help you need from him/her to lead your group.

MENTORING QUESTIONS

This section suggests answers to questions  interspersed throughout this manual. Note that the questions that ask for the reader's opinion will not be listed below.

1 CSC DIRECTIONAL STATEMENTS

Why is it important that community leaders, small group leaders, and potential leaders have some understanding of CSC directional statements?

- We all need to move in the same direction for the small groups ministry to succeed
- Small group leaders will be asked lots of questions about CSC by their group members; it's important that small group leaders understand the vision and direction of the church

What are some ways that the statements above might impact CSC small groups?

- The goal is biblical community; our understanding of what biblical community is should form the basis for your group vision
- If a group functions in step with the 10 core values of the church, many pitfalls and roadblocks will be avoided
- Our mission statement is extremely significant; if groups passionately pursue this mission, we will see people come to Christ and grow through our small groups
- (many other possible answers)

Why are small groups important to CSC?

- They are our primary vehicle which will take our people to an experience of biblical community

Core value 8 reads: 'We value the empowerment of people to do the work of ministry with a servant heart according to their giftedness.' How do you see yourself empowered, as a small group leader? What do you sense are Jesus' best hopes for you as a small group leader?

- Small group leaders are celebrated as highly significant leaders in the life of CSC
- Small group leaders are supported by pastors and community leaders, the general budget of the church, the Board of Governors, etc.

2 CSC SMALL GROUP PHILOSOPHY

If this were truly a CSC principle, what would you expect to see our pastoral staff and community leaders do'?

- Spending quality time with leaders, training, encouraging, and growing them.

What is your vision for your group?

- The small group leader's vision needs to be quite clear; if it isn't, time needs to be taken to help the leader become clear

What process have you followed (or do you expect to follow) in your journey to becoming a small group leader?

- There is a global process for all CSC small group leaders; there is also a process followed by each pastor for his/her core community; the small group leader needs to follow through on both

3 BIBLICAL COMMUNITY

What do you suppose Cynthia was looking for?

- Perhaps a sense of belonging; genuine connection between people

What do you think it was that was missing for Cynthia?

- The group seems to lack a sense of being real; they seem to be 'playing church'

Describe the kind of group that might have helped Cynthia want to stay.

- A group where there is both honesty and love; a group that is 'nice' but not real is shallow

4 THE FOUR SPACES OF COMMUNITY

All questions in this section are 'opinion' type questions.

5 THE NINE BEST PRACTICES

ONE – LEAD YOURSELF

In a world that is so noisy and full of activity, how can we develop a sense of God's presence in our lives?

- Fasting from words and people

Talk about the statement, 'effort, joined with faith, releases the grace of God to produce life change.' What does it mean?

- God responds when he sees effort and faith in us; the effort may simply be, taking a half hour to be alone and quiet; when we do things like this, God will honor our faith by reaching out to us in some way

TWO – BE REAL

Have you ever observed in others, shame, denial, hiding, blaming? What are the indicators of these things?

- Someone who does not take ownership for their own actions
- In some cases, the person who seems to be angry a lot
- Sometimes, the person who is not open, overly secretive

What is the relationship between fear and risk? What are the consequences of not risking?

- When a difficult action is needed, almost all people experience fear; the person who feels fear, yet steps out to do the right thing, is courageous; risk requires courage to act

- Not risking can result in missed opportunities – stopping short the release of God’s power and grace – growth; the possibilities are many

What is the world’s view of weakness?

- The world often sees weakness as something shameful – something to be mocked

How does God see weakness?

- Human weakness is ‘normal’ to God; all human beings have sinned and are weak in one way or another; God does not focus on weakness; he looks for faith in us – longing to inject his power into the place of our weakness

How does appropriate disclosure tie in with our learnings about ‘intimate space’ earlier (see pages 26-27).

- Each of us needs a confidante or ‘priest’ with whom we can share the intimate things of our soul; this is best done one on one, or in a same gender group of two to three people

The two case studies:

- Leader one is probably not being real; even if this is a genuine struggle, it is not that believable and should only be shared with the Lord
- Leader two seems to be more in touch with real life; his/her problem is one most people can relate to
- The impact of leader one might be that people will not confide or not be open with this leader; people will feel more comfortable with leader two because he is perceived to be more real

THREE – CREATE STUDIES THAT DRAW THEM IN

What do you suppose Carl George means by ‘quality quiet time?’ Share with your community leader your last experience of ‘quality quiet time.’

- Solitude – fasting from words and people

In what settings is the deductive approach useful either in church or society at large?

- Settings where rote learning is desirable; e.g. mathematics
- Most preaching is deductive in nature

Which approach will build greater ownership in the group? Why?

- Usually the inductive approach; it requires that people expend energy into the learning process, personally

Explore how the gift of teaching might either help or hinder a small group leader’s influence.

- Teachers organize and communicate information and concepts well; but some teachers rely mostly upon the deductive or ‘telling’ mode; this will not work well in groups where discovery and interpersonal action is valued

What if you are asked a question that you can’t answer?

- Say something like: ‘You know what, I don’t know the answer to that question. Does anyone here know the answer? I will find an answer to your question and get back to you on that.’ Then be sure that you follow through.

Why do you suppose Jesus would ask anyone a question?

- No one can inform God about anything; but Jesus always required personal accountability and honesty
- He knew that if the person expended energy personally into a question, the individual would understand themselves better

Closed questions have a place, but when the leader constantly asks only closed questions, what will be the effect?

- It begins to feel like grade school; people shut down

FOUR - HELP YOUR GROUP BE CONFLICT POSITIVE

How can we reconcile what actually happened in the lives of godly Bible characters with Paul's exhortation?

- The principle to seek is unity; but unity is not the same as uniformity; sometimes there are issues of chemistry, the passion of individuals, timing, etc., that cause well-meaning, godly people to soundly disagree about things
- Conflict, if handled properly, can lead people into greater understanding and community

In the New Testament examples mentioned earlier, what strategies of conflict management were used? What were the outcomes?

- Acts 6: 'problem solving'; the leaders prayed and consulted together, came to a solution, announced it to the people who then received the decision with gladness
- Acts 15: likely a combination of 'forcing' and 'problem solving'; clearly, both men spoke their minds and took a stand on an issue that was of supreme importance to each of them
- Galatians 2: 'forcing'; Paul called the situation as he saw it

Given the principles learned above, how would you help your group work through the issues in the following case study?

- At some point, it would be best that a frank, yet loving discussion take place with this couple; this should be done in private, involving people who have the best relational ties with the couple; in all of this, truth and grace need to work together to help the couple grow

FIVE - HELP YOUR GROUP BOND

What has to happen for a group to get to this level of safety?

- Members of the group have to listen to each other, attentively and respectfully; they need to accept one another, keep confidences, and practice the 'one anothers' of scripture

Johnson and Johnson write: 'Leadership is actions performed by many, not a position held by one' (p198). Explore this idea with your community leader. Begin by expressing the idea using different words.

- If the leader does everything, ownership lags; when everyone participates, ownership grows

SIX - KEEP THE FOCUS ON JESUS

All are 'opinion type' questions.

SEVEN - GROW NEW LEADERS

Discuss 'the vision in micro form', above, with your community leader. Explore how growth results when the three elements on the left side of the equation are present.

- It could be argued that if even one of the 3 elements on the left side of the equation is absent, reproduction will not happen

What relationship is being illustrated in this case study?

- The community leader and the small group leader

Why is this relationship important for the vision of community described earlier?

- When people interact, there are lots of challenges; no one is a perfect leader; God has designed us to need each other; when a small group leader tracks only with their group, there is the tendency to stray from the vision for community described in this manual; a good community leader will keep this vision before the leader, continually

Why is Mary Wilson praying about a potential leader?

- She understands her calling to grow new leaders; she understands the power of one-to-one discipling; she understands the potential of this ministry model to reproduce new leaders by multiplication

How does the potential leader fit into the vision described above?

- New groups have the very best chance to succeed when they are started by a trained potential leader; new groups means more groups which means greater influence for Christ in a community

How can your community leader help you find a potential leader?

- By discussing the FASST model for finding new leaders; by visiting group meetings and observing who might make a good potential leader

Why is it hard for groups to talk about starting new groups?

- It can feel like betrayal; the group has worked hard to establish community and now it feels like that is being broken up

What other alternatives could you suggest to Clinton to help his group be more visionary?

- When the group sends out a new group, the two groups could get together once a quarter, planning a 'social space' kind of event

EIGHT - GROW YOUR GROUP'S OUTWARD LOOK

What are the challenges of building deep, trusting relationships and still reach out beyond the group?

- Actually doing it; it takes effort, agreement, and planning time to make these events happen

How can working together in acts of service build deeper community in your group?

- Groups are bonded when they face a challenge together and overcome obstacles
- Activities like this sometimes involve some risk, which pushes the group to pray more and trust God more; God loves this!

How could you lead your group in a discussion like Ruth did?

- Don't force the discussion; and don't give up if the first discussion goes bad
- Lead your group to pray about God's hopes for the group in this regard
- In Bible studies, apply the evangelism/outreach theme to the life of your group

Discuss the following statement of Jesus and how it relates to this discussion: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

- Giving requires a measure of faith and sometimes a bit of risk; God loves to release his grace when he sees these things

Some groups talk about, pray about, and plan ways to reach at least one person for Jesus, per year. What would it take to help your group own this goal?

- The leader needs to introduce the idea and invite discussion
- The leader needs to feel the need of this for his/her group

If you don't have a goal, discuss with your community leader possible ways of introducing this discussion to your group.

- At least once a year, a group should do self assessment and make plans; this is a good time to focus on this theme
- The group can ask God to help them know how to reach out, through prayer

NINE – LEAD YOUR GROUP THROUGH HELPFUL ASSESSMENTS

These questions have no 'right' answers. Help your group to work through them, carefully.

8 YOU AND YOUR COMMUNITY LEADER

Think about the following statement: 'Mentoring is more about asking thought-provoking questions than it is telling.' Do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer.

- In the best practice, 'Create studies that draw them in,' we learned that the inductive approach is good for small group settings because it pulls people into the learning process; the same applies to the mentoring relationship; 'telling' is a one-way communication; a good question invites dialogue and discovery by the small group leader.

Detailed Index

Baby dedications (suggested outline for).....	76
Balance between community and task in a group	58
Baptism (suggested outline for)	79
Be real best practice.....	29
Biblical community is defined and explained.....	15f
Bibliography (for this manual).....	94
Carl George’s Three Covenants.....	43
Celebrations (Baptism, Child Dedications, Holy Communion).....	75
Closed questions (value of).....	34
Community defined	15
Community leader (is defined)	08
Community leader (importance of having one).....	52f
Community leader (you and your).....	83f
Communion (suggested outline for)	82
Core Values (of CSC)	05
Conflict in the small group	36
Conflict (examples in the Bible)	36
Conflict (opportunities that grow out of).....	37
Conflict (dangers)	37
Confronting a group member.....	45
Controlling and overbearing (someone is).....	46
Core community is defined.....	08
Covenant and the small group	43
Create studies that draw them in best practice	33
Current reality (and vision)	83
Deductive studies	33
Directional statements (for CSC)	05f
Discernment in the leader.....	46
Doctrinal arguments	46
Disruptive behaviour in group.....	45
Evangelism (and your group).....	57
FASST.....	55
Four spaces of community	19f
Fox (compromising style of conflict management)	38
Gender communication information	32

Goal setting (and outreach as a group).....	59
Great Commission (and your group).....	57f
Group assessment questions	61f
Group visits (by community leader)	83
Grow new leaders best practice	51
Grow your group’s outward look best practice	57f
Help your group be conflict positive best practice.....	39f
Help your group bond best practice	41f
Huddles (with community leader)	83f
Inductive studies	33
Inductive Bible study (the 3 steps)	35
Intimate space discussed	22
Involvement produces ownership principle.....	42
Jesus principle for conflict resolution	39
Keep the focus on Jesus best practice	48
Lead your group through helpful assessments best practice	61
Lead yourself best practice.....	25
Leader (marks of – FASST)	55
Mentoring defined	83
Mentoring questions (suggested answers/this manual)	85f
Mission statement (of CSC).....	05
New leader (sending one out).....	54
One-to-one (community leader and small group leader).....	84
Open questions (value of)	34
Owl (problem solving style of conflict management)	39
Pastoral Care (at CSC)	73
Personal space discussed.....	21
Potential leader is defined	07
Potential leader (finding one)	55
Potential leader growing (5 stages of).....	55
Practicing the presence of Jesus (as an individual).....	27
Practicing the presence of Jesus (as a group)	48
Providing care (as a small group leader)	71f
Prayer (and practicing the presence of Jesus as a group).....	51
Prayer (ways your group can pray)	49
Public space discussed	19
Purpose (statement of CSC)	05
Questions (the place of) and the small group leader	34

Quiet and won't share (someone is).....	45
Red light on your dashboard (knowing when to refer)	75
Referring (knowing when to)	72f
Resources consulted (this manual).....	94
Risk taking.....	29
Self assessment questions.....	67
Seven step strategy (of CSC)	06
Shark (forcing style of conflict management).....	38
Sin brought into the light	31
Six E's	06, 12, 61f
Small Group Basics chart	11
Small group is defined	07
Small group Leader is defined	07
Small group principles for CSC are explained.....	08f
Social space discussed	20
Solitude.....	26
Spaces of community	19
Spiritual disciplines and the small group leader	25f
Strategy for new group starting is explained	09
Task group (specific suggestions for growing community)	58
Three levels of ministry (used to assess caregiving).....	71
Teddy Bear (smoothing style of conflict management).....	38
Turtle (withdrawing style of conflict management)	37
Vision and direction of CSC explained	05f
Vision in micro form for group reproduction.....	51
Weakness and God's power.....	29

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