



BOOK

5

STARTING POINT
FOR SMALL GROUPS

LEADER'S GUIDE

GLC  ESSENTIALS

BOOK 5: STARTING POINT FOR SMALL GROUPS LEADER'S GUIDE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Important Note	page 4
Session 1: BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SMALL GROUP MINISTRY	page 5
Session 2: LIFE-ON-LIFE DISCIPLESHIP Roles of a Dgroup Leader	page 20
Session 3: THE PROCESS OF DISCIPLESHIP . . .	page 29
Session 4: HANDLING ISSUES IN DGROUPS . . .	page 42

IMPORTANT NOTE

This **Leader's Guide** contains teaching explanations inside parentheses that guide and help the discussion leader elaborate on each point in the EXAMINE section of this lesson.

The goal is not to parrot the explanations but to **study, reflect** and **express these directly and clearly** as you lead the discussion in your small group.

You have the option to add related illustrations or statements for further clarification. However, deviating from the outline or adding major points is not encouraged, to ensure transferability of the lesson to your Dgroup members who are expected to teach the same things to their future or current disciples, as well as to limit the time devoted for each lesson.

SESSION 1:

**BIBLICAL
FOUNDATIONS OF
SMALL GROUP
MINISTRY**

EXAMINE

I. Introduction

The foundation of a small group is love and to motivate one another to do good works. Knowing that Jesus is coming back soon should have an impact on our decisions, compulsions and motivations. Making disciples, then, is not possible without contact.

Hebrews 10:24–25

II. Why are Small Groups Important?

It is important for the disciples of Christ to regularly meet together in Dgroups for the following reasons:

A. A Reflection of God's Nature

God, Himself, is a triune community of love with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in eternal fellowship with one another.

“Father, I want these whom You have given Me to be with Me where I am. Then they can see all the glory You gave Me because **You loved Me even before the world began!**”

John 17:24

John 13:1

(Even on the night before He suffered death, Jesus did not call attention to Himself but gave all attention to His disciples, exemplified in washing their feet, including that of Judas who betrayed Him.)

Love
*An unconditional commitment towards imperfect people,
desiring their highest good, which often entails sacrifice.*

B. An Ancient Way to Raise Leaders

In the Old Testament, a wise advice was given by Jethro to Moses to better lead and take care of people.

Exodus 18:19-21

“Let me give you a word of advice, and may God be with you. You should continue to be the people’s representative before God, bringing their disputes to Him. Teach them God’s decrees, and give them His instructions. Show them how to conduct their lives. But select from all the people some capable, honest men who fear God and hate bribes. Appoint them as leaders over **groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten.**”

(This is God’s structure to get more people involved in His kingdom’s work on earth.)

C. The Model of the Master

It was what Jesus did. Although Jesus often spoke in public and was followed by multitudes of people wherever He went, He devoted His time mentoring a small group of disciples.

Mark 3:14

“Jesus chose twelve and called them apostles. He wanted them **to be with Him**, and He wanted to send them out to preach.”

(He wanted to be with them and spent time with them face-to-face in a homogenous group. It's a bonus to share common interests or be in the same life stage in your group, but it is not necessarily a requirement. A small group, unlike a social club, has a common mission of making disciples who will make other disciples.)

D. The Pattern of the Early Church

It was what the first churches did. During the New Testament times, various groups of followers of Christ regularly meet in homes (see Romans 16:5, 1 Corinthians 16:19, Colossians 4:15, Philippians 1–2). It was also the Apostle Paul's strategy to raise leaders in the church.

2 Timothy 2:2 *(For him, discipleship is a group effort not an individual endeavor: learning together, from each other, and with each other.)*

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They **broke bread in their homes and ate together** with glad and sincere hearts.”

Acts 2:42, 46

(Based on the pattern of the early church, in small groups we talk about the Bible, get to know one another and become accountable. We also commemorate the Lord's Supper and spend time praying together.)

E. The Body of Christ in Action

It provides an environment for a close and caring community where people can be honest about their struggles and be accountable for their actions. In small groups, there is space for meaningful relationships to express itself in mutual attention and care where individual gifts are exercised to address the needs of the group. Those who serve as leaders in the group set an example in being willing to share and be vulnerable with the group members.

“[W]e were very gentle with you, **like a mother caring for her little children**. Because we loved you, we were happy to share not only God’s Good News with you, but even our own lives. You had become so dear to us!”

1 Thessalonians 2:7–8

F. A Means to Reach People Where They Are

A Dgroup breaks religious barriers and is less threatening to non-believers. One way to reach people is to bring the church to where they are instead of inviting them to go to a church. God put people within your sphere of influence to impact them with the gospel and your own testimony to eventually lead them to a personal journey with Jesus.

Acts 2:42–47

III. Fourfold Purpose of Small Groups

(To maximize the effectiveness of small group ministry, we need to see the big picture of its fourfold purpose as shown in the example of the early church in the book of Acts.)

A. Purpose # 1:

Foster a Healthy Relationship with God

John 15:5

Ultimately, the goal is Christlikeness—to become more and more like Jesus and do what Jesus has done.

(Jesus Himself said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing [John 15:5].” It should not be a wonder then, at all, why intimacy with God is a regular focus in the life of the early disciples. Training them to be dependent on you doing them disservice; you want them dependent on God. An example is to have them seek Him and study His word on their own.)

It is important for followers of Christ to take whatever steps necessary to ensure a constant and growing relationship with God. It ought to be the number one priority. Otherwise, living for God would be a tiresome work.

(It is only by an overflow of the life, vigor, and power of Christ dwelling within that a truly faithful Christian life could be lived. But this you develop together with other disciples. As in the Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:37–38), love for God is forged by one’s love for his/her neighbor.)

B. Purpose # 2:

Foster Healthy Relationships with Other Believers **Acts 2:46**

Unlike current society's orientation towards a 'DIY' (do-it-yourself) notion of spiritual growth, the early believers nurtured it not on their own individual capacity. Instead, they grew in their faith by spending time together. Acts 2:42-47 tell us that meeting each other for worship, praying with one another, and studying the Scriptures together, even with one's personal problems, are some of the ways in which they deepen their relationship with God.

(When Jesus Christ said that He intends to build a church [see Matt. 16:18], He was making it clear that following Him also means being part of a community of fellow disciples. In Acts 2:46, the original Greek word for 'together' paints a picture not only of being with each other but also of having 'one mind' or being 'unified'. This tells us that being in a community calls not only for 'communion' but also for 'unity' or being in 'solidarity' with one another.)

Discipleship in the context of a community is not just about studying the Bible together in a religious setting every once in a while. It is more of opening up one's life and sharing meals to build relationships that truly care and look out for each other's welfare day in and day out (see also I Peter 4:9).

Acts 2:44 tells us that for the early church, commitment to be part of a community involves the call to share what one has with those who are in need. Involvement in a Dgroup means having genuine relationships with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ whom you can count on when you need it most.

(Such expression of deep love for one another did not end with the church in Jerusalem. It continued among Christians for the next hundreds of years, into the second century, and in various parts of the Roman Empire that the Gospel reached.)¹

C. Purpose #3:

Fulfill God's Mission of Evangelism and Discipleship

Jesus left the apostles not only a mandate (see Matt. 28:19-20) but also a model of nurturing and making disciples. The early church carried both in their lives.

(Acts 2:42–43 tell us that they intentionally centered themselves in regular study of God's Word, in constant fellowship with one another and with God in prayer, and in experiencing the living power of God demonstrated in various miracles of the apostles.)

Jesus said, "People will know that you are My disciples if you love one another" (John 13:35). This marked the community of the small groups that bore witness to Jesus. They are not just a social club enjoying the presence of one another. Instead, they are people living together with a clear mission: that their fellowship would point onlookers to a relationship with Christ.

(The Apostle John put it this way, "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ [1 John 1:3]." The outcome of which is that the church grew in number with God adding new believers every day.)

¹ See Gerhard Lohfink, "The Ancient Church in the Discipleship of Jesus" in *Jesus and Community* (Philadelphia: Fortress Books) pp.149-158.

If all your friends are believers and you have lost connection to the outside world, with whom will you engage? So many people need Jesus and we need to engage them by praying, caring and sharing. Eventually, we build them up as leaders and equip them to multiply.

D. Purpose # 4:

Fulfill God's Call to Service and Ministry

Ephesians 4:11–13 (NIV)

(God's people are to be prepared to do the works of service with the bottom line objective of Christlikeness. Everything else we do is an overflow of the growing character of Jesus in our lives.)

Before He left the earth physically and returned to heaven, Jesus said a prayer for His disciples recorded in John 17:15-19.

(It was clear in Jesus' mind that His followers shall tread the same path that He did and that is to be sent out of their comfort zones and be of service to groups of people hungry for the truth of knowing who God is.)

Servanthood is the core of Jesus' ministry and He did this primarily by stepping out of His heavenly abode and giving Himself to a group of disciples on earth (see Philippians 2:7, Mark 10:45).

Likewise, the early church knew that they were saved to be of service. Acts 2:47 reported that the remarkable way their small pockets of communities live earned the "favor of all the people." The sacrificial love of the early church was not confined within the walls of their community. The records of history will show that for them being a 'neighbor' means being Good Samaritans to everyone

within their reach (see Galatians 6:10 and Hebrews 13:2). In fact, a historical report by the Roman Emperor Julian (AD 361-363) says that he was forced to admit to a fellow pagan that the “Christians feed not only their poor but ours also.” With chagrin, he acknowledged that his fellow pagans did not even help each other: “Those who belong to us look in vain for the help that we should render them.”² This is but a proof that small groups provide remarkable opportunities to be of concrete service to other people.

***“The best way to find yourself
is to lose yourself in the service of others.”***
MOHANDAS GANDHI

IV. Functions of a Small Group

The life of the early church shows us the fourfold purpose of a small group and provides us a picture of how it should function today.

(Small groups help facilitate a healthy relationship with God and fellow followers of Christ. It also fulfills God’s mission of evangelism and discipleship as well as ministries of service.)

Small groups serve as a channel in which the grace of God could flow to us, through us, and to others. It follows four ministry directions and corresponds to four basic functions:

A. Worship (Upward Ministry to God)

Example:

“Making a joyful noise unto the Lord” (Psalm 98:4) will cause Him to receive it with gladness. Praising God for who He is and thanking Him for what He has done is also worship.

² A History of Christian Missions by Stephen Neil (New York: Penguin, 1964) p. 37-38.

B. Fellowship (Inward Ministry for God's people)

Example:

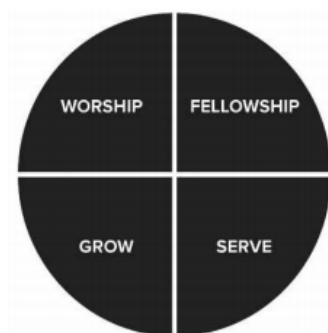
Get to know each other and minister to one another.

C. Grow (Outward Ministry with the Good News)

Organize evangelistic birthday parties for Dgroup members where they can invite un-churched friends and family members.

D. Serve (Downward Ministry of Good Works)

Serve in the different Ministries of CCF (Parking Ministry, Ushering Ministry, NXTGen, etc.,)



Every group has the tendency to gravitate towards one of the four functions – largely due to the leader's inclination. The key is making sure that the small group is functioning well.

It must be noted, however, that over-emphasizing one of the functions to the neglect of the others will have sure and serious dangers. Consider the following:

- A. Worship:** If the group's relationship with God is not properly nurtured...*(it could lead to lack of joy and peace, callousness of the heart, unfaithfulness, and burn-out.)*

-
- B. Fellowship:** If the relationships within the group are not nurtured...*(it could lead to shallow relationships and low accountability, conflicts and division, lack of teamwork and cooperation, and a judgmental spirit.)*

 - C. Grow:** If God's mission of evangelism and discipleship is neglected...*(it could lead to stagnation and lack of growth, self-absorption and exclusivism, and missing out on God's empowerment.)*

 - D. Serve:** If God's mission of service and ministry is neglected...*(it could lead to unutilized spiritual gifts, people's needs not being met, indifference and ingratitude, and a myopic view of the world.)*

(More so, how these functions work together shall also vary according to the type of small group being facilitated. In CCF, there are two types):

Table 1.1: Two Types of Small Groups in CCF

	DGROUP	D12
Membership	Believers and visitors/guests	Believers with some leading their own Dgroups
Composition	Homogeneous by life stage	Homogeneous by life stage
Number	Varies	Varies
Degree of Commitment	Nurturing members to grow and to one day lead	Mentoring members who already are leading and nurturing their members
Objective	Evangelism and spiritual growth	Maturity and multiplication

CCF DISCIPLESHIP COVENANT

Confidentiality	I will not gossip about fellow members, and will ensure that what is shared in the group stays in the group.
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Honesty	I will be open and honest with my Dgroup leader and fellow members.
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Respect	I will respect those in my Dgroup by attending meetings regularly and punctually and by honoring the authority of my leader.
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Intercession	I will pray regularly for my Dgroup leader and fellow members.
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Spiritual Growth	Because I am joining this group to grow spiritually and to help others do the same, I will refrain from conducting business, borrowing money or using this group for purposes other than spiritual growth.
-------------------------	--

Timothies	I will have it as my goal to eventually build my own Dgroup.
------------------	--

Only One Life

by C.T. Studd*

Two little lines I heard one day,
Traveling along life's busy way;
Bringing conviction to my heart,
And from my mind would not depart;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, yes only one,
Soon will its fleeting hours be done;
Then, in 'that day' my Lord to meet,
And stand before His Judgement seat;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Give me Father, a purpose deep,
In joy or sorrow Thy word to keep;
Faithful and true what e'er the strife,
Pleasing Thee in my daily life;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, yes only one,
Now let me say, "Thy will be done";
And when at last I'll hear the call,
I know I'll say "twas worth it all";
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

SESSION 2:

**LIFE-ON-LIFE
DISCIPLESHIP**

**Roles of a
Dgroup Leader**

EXAMINE

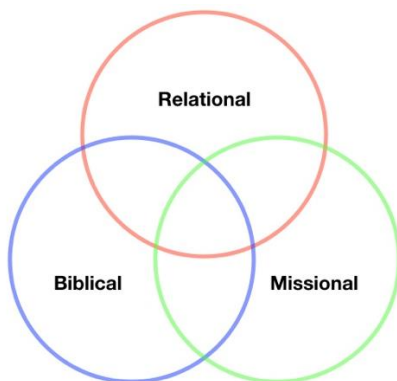
Being a Dgroup leader is not just leading a weekly meeting of people. Drawing from the example of Jesus to his disciples, it is a life-on-life endeavor leading to Christlikeness.

In doing such kind of discipleship, you will find yourself accomplishing different roles as they look up to you for guidance and direction. As we model Christ-like character and behavior to them, they too will learn what it means to live a life fully surrendered to the will of the Father.

This is why it is important that as you try to fulfill such roles, you must keep subjecting your personal paradigms and principles of leadership to the model of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures. It may sound almost impossible but it is possible with the help of the Holy Spirit.

(Our framework looks like this. There are three intersecting principles, aspects, or facets of life-on-life discipleship. There could be more, but we like to keep things simple.)

Framework of Life-on-Life Discipleship



(All three have to be present. We need at least three hats to wear as a Dgroup leader. Why does it have to be all three?)

It cannot be just one.

- Relational only = country club
- Biblical only = accumulate knowledge, pride
- Missional only = good works but no life change

You also cannot have only two, example:

- Relational and biblical only = happy people who know a lot
- Biblical and missional only = short-lived (will fizzle out) because people will not see love
- Missional and relational only = Where is the truth? What will you pass on?

One is not more important than the other. They all need to be working together.)

(Throughout this session, you will be given Bible-based texts for each principle and role and tips and tools for practical application.)

(Jesus built deep relationships with His disciples. However, we are losing sight of the importance of building deep personal relationships in our Dgroups. We should go back and copy Jesus.)

I. Relational Discipleship – based on Christ’s love

Principle: Jesus taught His disciples to love one another.
John 13:34-35

Jesus said I am giving you a new commandment. Why is it a new commandment? He is raising the standard for them when it comes to relationships. He commands them to love one another just as He loved them.

Characteristics of Christ's love:

Unconditional (Romans 5:6-8)

(Christ died for sinners—the ungodly and unrighteous, not just for the good and righteous ones. His love knows no conditions.)

Selfless (Philippians 2:1-4)

(If we are to be like Christ, we should be humble and look after the interest of others.)

Sacrificial (1 John 3:16)

(Laying down one's life is loving in action or deed.)

Key Roles:

Parent 1 Thessalonians 2:7, 11

Paul describes himself and the other apostles as a mother and a father to the believers. Likewise as a Dgroup leader, you too serve as a spiritual parent to your members.

Shepherd John 10:7-18

We find our greatest example of a good shepherd or Dgroup leader in Jesus Christ. He knows each member of his flock and cares for them.

Tips and Tools:

1. Set expectations.
Orient them of CCF's Discipleship Covenant.
2. Nurture close relationships
 - a. Call or meet them one-on-one.
 - b. Engage in activities together.
 - c. Invite them to your home.
 - d. Consider them as your accountability to God.

***“People don’t care how much you know,
until they know how much you care.”***

JOHN MAXWELL

3. Seek to bring out the best in each one.
4. Provide direction.
5. Be prepared to defend against the Enemy. Pray.
6. Reach out.
7. Invest time.

(Through our relationship with them, we help build a foundation that is based on the Word of God not on anything else. It is the foundation on which they should stand and eventually pass on to the next spiritual generation.)

II. Biblical Discipleship – built upon God’s Word

Principle: Jesus taught his disciples to live in obedience to God’s Word. *Matthew 7:24*

The why and how you are leading a Dgroup must be founded and built on God’s Word. It is not enough just to hear God’s Word but one must also obey it. Obedience to God’s Word distinguishes a wise man from the foolish one.

Key Role:

Builder *1 Corinthians 3:10*

A Dgroup leader should build up his/her members in God’s Word and unto good works.

Tips and Tools:

1. Facilitate learning by encouraging them to undergo GLC Trainings.
2. Help them develop spiritual disciplines.
 - a. Read through the Bible.
(Use a Bible Reading Plan)

-
- b. Memorize Bible verses.
(Use 53-Week Scripture Memory Verse Challenge)
 - c. Be intentional in practicing the spiritual disciplines.
3. Aim for a transformed heart, not just modified behaviors.
- a. Maximize one-on-one times for accountability.
 - b. Check if their theology (what they believe in) matches their practice.
 - c. Monitor progress or steps of obedience in their problem areas.
 - d. Always point them back to God's Word.

(Discipleship is a serious business. It is oriented towards a goal that the Lord Jesus Himself has given us.)

III. Missional Discipleship – borne out of Spiritual empowerment

Principle: Jesus taught his disciples to fulfill the Great Commission. *Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8*

Just before Jesus ascended, his last words to the disciples were that the Holy Spirit will come and empower them to carry out the mission of being a witness and making disciples of all nations.

Key Roles:

Soldier 2 *Timothy 2:3-4*

The Christian life is like a battlefield, so is being a Dgroup leader. You have a mission to fulfill. It is not always easy but remember the one who called and enlisted you will enable you also.

Servant *Mark 10:42-45*

The Dgroup leader's mindset should be to serve and not to be served.

Tips and Tools:

1. Cast vision to them.
 - a. Practice Pray, Care, Share.
 - b. Equip and empower them to disciple others leading to generations of disciples.
2. Identify and help them exercise their spiritual gifts, talents, and skills.
3. Usher them to ministries.
4. Follow through their commitments.
5. Do an extra mile act for them.

***“Humility is not thinking less of yourself,
it’s thinking of yourself less.”***

C. S. LEWIS

6. Walk alongside them in their struggles and difficulties.
7. Celebrate victories.
8. Motivate them to serve.

***“He who is not a good servant
will not be a good leader.”***

PLATO

We’ve seen how the three aspects—relational, biblical, and missional; needed to be present to bring about the desired outcome. **Christ-committed followers.**

SESSION 3:

THE PROCESS OF DISCIPLESHIP

EXAMINE

How to Start a Dgroup

(Once you start doing personal evangelism to many people, the next step is to form your own small group. As more people are brought to you by the Lord to disciple, a Dgroup is an ideal structure for spiritual growth and maturity.)

A. Make Prayer Your Starting Point

Opening a person's heart is always the work of the Spirit as much as salvation is solely the work of God (Acts 16:14). It is very important, then, to seek the Lord's guidance in prayer and His power to be at work.

Action Point:

(Pray to the Lord and list down names of people with whom you can do "Pray-Care-Share," and lead to a relationship with Christ. Use the Pray-Care-Share bookmark.)

B. Make a Difference in People's Lives

Only love can soften the hardest of hearts. In 1 Thessalonians 2:8, Paul wanted to share not only the gospel but their "own lives" as well. Through genuine care and compassion that we share to our neighbors, we also make the love of God felt in very concrete ways. This is a non-verbal way of witnessing to the reality of the love of Christ.

Acts 1:8

Action Point:

(Think of ideas on how to do Acts of Genuine Kindness (AGKs) to the people you are praying for.)

C. Make Sharing the Good News a Lifestyle

Romans 10:14

Always be ready for opportunities where you could briefly present the Gospel.

Action Point:

(Always be ready for opportunities where you could share your salvation testimony and a brief presentation of the Gospel. We recommend the “One Minute Witness” for your testimony and “God’s Way to Heaven” for the Gospel.)

D. Make the Small Group Your Primary Strategy

The passion to share the Gospel to individuals should come with an equal desire to integrate them with the fellowship of God’s people. Once you start doing personal evangelism with several people, the next step is to disciple them in the context of a small group. As more people are brought to you by the Lord to disciple, the small group would be the ideal structure for spiritual growth and maturity.

Hebrews 10:24-25 and Acts 2:46-47

Pastor Edmund Chan of Covenant Evangelical Free Church (CEFC) in Singapore teaches and practices a “no competition” principle when it comes to their church’s small group ministry. This means that there should be no ministry or activity of the church that competes with the small group discipleship ministry. In fact for them, you have to be a part of a small group for you to be considered a member of CEFC.³

³ Chan, Edmund. IDMC 201 Session 2 “Create a Discipleship Environment”; December 11, 2015. Manila, Philippines

Action Point:

(Review the names of those with whom you have had the chance of sharing your testimony and the Gospel. Arrange for a follow-up meeting at a specific place and time.)

Sustaining Your Dgroup

(As with other living organism, small groups need a lot of attention and care. People are not static machines. Over time, relationships either deepen or deteriorate. Small groups, also, would either be fruitful or barren in its purpose of being healthy channels of transformation for its members.)

A. Things to Avoid as a Leader⁴

1. Avoid valuing transfer of information much more than life transformation.

Spiritual maturity is not about how much the members know about God and the Bible. The end-goal should always be Christ-likeness.

(Transformation includes biblical learning, but it does not end with it. The Bible says that “knowledge puffs up.” Spiritual maturity cannot be limited to how much the members know about God and the Bible. Affirm and encourage changes you see in their lives. As a leader, keep these two questions in mind:

⁴ Adapted from Thom Rainer’s “Five Obstacles Facing Small Groups” in http://thomrainer.com/2012/06/19/the_five_obstacles_facing_small_groups/ (Accessed July 10, 2014)

- *How well are my members applying God's truth?*
- *Where is each member in their journey of following Jesus as Lord?)*

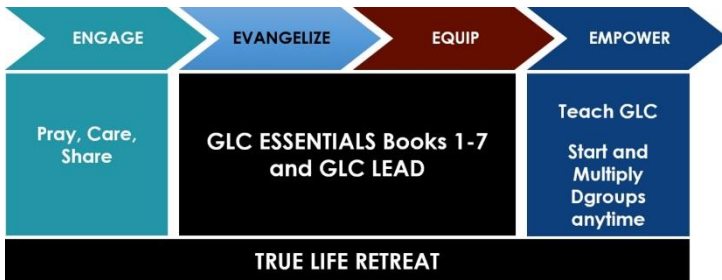
***“Truth doesn’t change lives;
it is truth applied that change lives.”***

EDMUND CHAN⁵

Action Point:

(Encourage each member to step-up in their ‘discipleship journey’ of following Jesus as Lord and His mandate to make disciples. Identify at what stage each member is at the moment and what is the next step for them.)

GLC IN THE CCF DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY



⁵ Chan, Edmund. *A Certain Kind*. p140. Covenant Evangelical Free Church. Singapore. 2013

How do you equip your Dgroup members? Here's a simple yet effective way to do it. Equip them through GLC in your small group.

STEP	WHAT TO DO
1	Register: Go to bit.ly/RegistertoGLCinSmallGroups or visit the GLC booth on Sundays
2	Get materials: GLC workbooks and videos are available at glc.ccf.org.ph or at the GLC booth
3	Monitor members' progress: Ask them to accomplish the GLC Life App Forms once they completed the modules
4	Get Accreditation or join the Graduation: Submit the GLC Life App Forms and GLC in Small Group Accreditation Form to GLC

2. Avoid valuing teaching more than learning.

(Small groups should have members that are joyfully learning, and not only one person who is happily teaching. This can only happen when the atmosphere of the group is more of a dialogue rather than a monologue.)

Keep in mind that at the end of the day, the question will not be how well the leader has delivered a point or two, but how well the members have processed the insights and related it to their lives, and applied their action points.

Action Point:

(Apply the “3 Before Me” Principle. This simply means, in the context of a small group discussion, make it a habit to listen to what three (3) persons have to say before moving to the next point. This will ensure that people get to process what you are discussing and it allows as well for a dialogue to take place.)

3. Avoid lack of or shallow intimacy.

(Know that as much as there are multiple layers of community, there are also various ways of living as a community. There can be interesting conversations transpiring or connections being formed because of common interest, but the experience of community could still be shallow.)

Dgroups ought to be a safe space and an open environment for deeper sharing, where delicate questions and honest struggles in life can be discussed freely and prayed for in confidentiality and accountability, as well as be addressed compassionately.

The leader must first demonstrate humble openness and vulnerability by sharing his or her struggles, failures, weaknesses. Allow your Dgroup members to minister to you through prayer and accountability. Your modeling will foster a healthy intimacy in the group.

Avoid gossiping, or subtly sharing to other people things that were discussed in confidence under the pretense of praying for the person.

(They say that one significant test of the development of close relationships within a group is the amount of time people spend to linger with each other after the 'formal' session has already ended. This means that they value the presence of each other more than the other things that usually pre-occupy and capture people's attention.)

Action Point:

(Start with nurturing a culture of honesty, authenticity, and transparency in a group. Practice saying what you mean and meaning what you say. Openness is one key building-block of a tightly-knit environment.)

B. Things to Focus on as a Leader

Why do some Dgroups grow and multiply while some do not? The real key to sustaining life in a Dgroup lies in keeping the habits of its leader healthy as well. *(These eight (8) habits of a small group leader will result in fruitfulness and multiplication.⁸)*

1. Have a clear vision for multiplication.

(Because small groups are the best context for discipleship, the leader should adhere to a process of intentional spiritual multiplication as laid down in 2 Timothy 2:2.)

⁸ Taken from Dave Earley's "8 Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders" (Touch Outreach Ministries, 2001).

***“A vision comes from God in answer to prayer,
according to the measure of one’s faith.
Thus, the vision grows as the leader grows.”***

EDMUND CHAN⁹

Action Point:

(Start a small group. But begin with a desire to see your members also forming and discipling their own groups and contributing to the movement of spiritual multiplication across generations. Tell them this often!)

2. Mentor potential leaders by modeling and training on-the-go.

One of the best ways to develop future Dgroup leaders is to allow them to get involved in the ministry of multiplying small group as early as possible.

*(CCF believes in “on-the-job” training for leaders. Thus, we intentionally put our disciples in situations where they will experience first-hand what it means to share the gospel to someone, facilitate a small group Bible study, train a disciple how to give a one-minute testimony, etc. We do this after we have modelled to them how to go about the different **aspects involved in the ministry of spiritual multiplication [2 Timothy 2:2].**)*

⁹ Op cit. Chan, Edmund p.69

Action Point:

(Avoid doing things alone and on your own. As much as possible, involve other members of the group to join you. Be always in the look out on how people can be tapped to help out and be equipped to assume responsibility for a task. Never be afraid to delegate.)

3. Pray for your Dgroup members daily.

The integrity of our message to the world depends upon the quality of lives that we live. We need to live consistent lives of integrity and faithfulness. This is impossible to do on our own, thus the need for total dependence on God through prayer.

Emphasize among your Dgroup members the need to live by the power of the Holy Spirit through constant prayer and communion with God.

1 Corinthians 3:5–9

(In the end, remember that as you do the best that you can as a leader, genuine growth flows from the hands of God and happens only through the power of God.)

Action Point:

(Commit to set a time each day to pray for the members in your Dgroup.)

The Three-Thirds Process¹⁰

(This is a framework that you can do in your Dgroup.)

What is the Three-thirds process?

The Three-thirds process is a simple method using the context of a group meeting in order to train new dgroup members who will in turn train additional new dgroup members (of their own).

Why use the Three-thirds process in DGroups?

The Three-thirds process brings the group around a common vision, helps the members grow in their walk with God and in community, and develops the members through training.

When a Dgroup leader is developing their Dgroup members, it is vital that they get equipped as they follow the discipleship process of ENGAGE-EVANGELIZE-EQUIP-EMPOWER. This enables them to be contributing to the growth of the movement. This process will help not only the Dgroup leaders to become spiritual multipliers; but the same Three-thirds Process must be modeled and passed down to each generation in the chain of spiritual multiplication.

The Three-thirds Process is divided into three sections. These sections will help the new Dgroup members look beyond their own lives and initiate a process to invest in other people.

¹⁰ Adapted from: The 3 Thirds Process. <https://catalytic.eeru.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2017/09/Introduction-to-the-Three-Thirds-Process.pdf> . Accessed June 8, 2018 4:36 PM GMT+8

(So how does the Three-thirds process look like?)

I. LOOK BACK

Pastoral Care You make a closer relational connection that helps build community for the group and demonstrate pastoral care to each person.	<i>(Ask questions such as: “How are you doing?” “How can I pray for you?”)</i>
Worship You give thanks and express worship to God.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>(Sing a song)</i>• <i>(Read a psalm [i.e. Psalm 23] for thanksgiving to God)</i>• <i>(Ask questions like: “What are some things you are thankful for?” “What are some things you are learning about God?”)</i>
Accountability You ask appropriate questions to hold them responsible for their actions or decisions.	<i>(Ask to whom they told their story this week and whom they have trained. Offer encouragement along with peer accountability.)</i>
Vision-Casting You cast vision to them of what they can become in Christ and what the Holy Spirit can do through them.	<i>(Give biblical reminders of our Great Commission task.)</i>

II. LOOK UP

Lesson Use a set of short-term reproducible discipleship lessons which would include basic follow up lessons.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>(In the beginning, make use of GLC materials for follow up.)</i>• <i>(Dgroup leaders can also use the 4Ws lessons based on the current Sunday preaching series.)</i>• <i>(Once they finish the short-term lessons, they could begin using the Inductive Bible Study method for their small group study.)</i>
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III. LOOK FORWARD

Train/Practice Think about what the group needs to learn and practice in order to take the next step in multiplying, making sure they are equipped to train others in those skills.	<i>(Follow the design of GLC training and curriculum. Do the EXPERIENCE portion of every session in every module.)</i>
Set Goals and Pray Set goals on how to obey the truths learned in the lesson and to take the next steps in witnessing and training others.	<i>(Each new Dgroup member should set their own goals. Pray together for their goals.)</i>

SESSION 4:

HANDLING ISSUES IN DGROUPS

EXAMINE

(Over time, problems and issues will show up in even the best groups. But if group members are devoted to one another and to their common purpose, they will work through these tensions and come out better and stronger together.)

I. Diagnosis and Solutions to Common Problems

“Careful troubleshooting and honest evaluation set the stage for wise leadership decisions.”

BILL DONAHUE and RUSS ROBINSON
The Seven Deadly Sins of Small Group Ministry

Here is a basic troubleshooting guide to help you diagnose common small group problems and some simple yet practical corresponding solutions.

A. More and more members are coming late.

Root Cause:	It is becoming a group pattern to wait for other members and start late.
Possible Solutions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>(Set definite time and begin promptly.)</i>• <i>(Consult and discuss with the group about the agreed time of the meeting and probe the difficulties encountered by the members coming late.)</i>

B. There are quiet members who don't participate in the discussion.

Root Cause:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Questions asked are either too hard or too easy.• Members are not really prepared for the discussion.• There is lack of trust within the group.
Possible Solutions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>(Allow enough time for people to think.)</i>• <i>(Remind the MORE verbal people to hold back at times to encourage and give the quiet members opportunity to speak up.)</i>• <i>(Encourage the quiet members to have their voices heard by letting them read passages of Scripture aloud.)</i>• <i>(Direct general questions to them.)</i>• <i>(Do a round where each person in the group responds or provides an answer.)</i>• <i>(Affirm every effort to participate in the discussion.)</i>

C. There is an overly talkative member.

Root Cause:	The person is naturally outgoing, does not like silence, and sees things quickly.
Possible Solutions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>(Talk to the person privately, and inform him/her that some people need silence in processing their thoughts.)</i>• <i>(Ask for his/her help in drawing answers from the rest of the group.)</i>• <i>(Restructure seating arrangements by sitting beside the talkative member and not across him/her.)</i>

D. Sharing in the group discussion is superficial.

Root Cause:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The leader is not setting an example of authenticity and openness.• There are integrity problems among the members.• The applications made are not specific enough to elicit concrete responses.
Possible Solutions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>(Be open and specific in your own sharing as a leader of the group (talk about experiences of God's truth and grace in your weaknesses, failures as well as your victories).)</i>• <i>(Meet/talk one-to-one outside the group for sharing and prayer.)</i>

E. The pace of discussion in the group is either too slow or too fast.

Root Cause:	Too much time is spent on some activities of the group meeting.
Possible Solutions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>(Plan specific amounts of time for each activity.)</i>• <i>(Move along with good transitions.)</i>• <i>(Test study questions with a co-leader.)</i>

F. A member monopolizes the group with personal crises.

Root Cause:	There are members with an ongoing and persisting problem.
Possible Solutions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>(Talk individually with the person, suggesting resources for help [e.g. counselling, etc.])</i>• <i>(Help the members of the group understand that in as much as love for each other is a priority among Christians, a small group is not necessarily designed to provide adequate therapy for a specific member.)</i>

G. There is no growth or spiritual multiplication taking place.

Root Cause:	There is unclear vision and lack of passion for reaching out to the lost.
Possible Solutions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>(Reaffirm commitment to making more disciples of Christ, filling the open chairs at your small group, and longing to hear stories of changed lives.)</i>

H. There are conflicts within the group.

Root Cause:	Often caused by misunderstanding and clash of personalities.
Possible Solutions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>(Analyze the members' roles in the group and the social interactions that has been ensuing.)</i>• <i>(Observe the biblical guidelines laid down in Matthew 18:15-17.)</i>• <i>(Seek reconciliation not retribution.)</i>• <i>(Take a positive and prayerful approach.)</i>

1. Addressing Conflicts

“An ounce of prevention
is worth a pound of cure.”
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

(Christians are not immune to conflict. Even the best people in the early church were not able to avoid it [see Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:36-41]. But still, Jesus calls us to be “peacemakers” [Matthew 5:9] and the Bible exhorts us to “make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification [Romans 14:19, NIV].” The challenge for Dgroup leaders is to convert a seemingly negative experience into a positive opportunity for spiritual maturity. Recognize that not all conflicts and disagreements are bad and sinful.)

a. Biblical guidelines on resolving conflicts *Ephesians 4:26–27, 29–32*

- Address conflicts and anger immediately (verse 26).
- Be aware that conflict is a tool that the Enemy can use (verse 27).
- Converse with grace and good will (verse 29).
- Don’t grieve the Holy Spirit by acting in a manner not worthy of His name (verse 30–31).
- Don’t allow your anger to take root in you and lead you to become bitter, mad or even resort to doing evil things (verse 31).
- Always settle to act in love expressed in an attitude of forgiveness (verse 32).

b. A Biblical perspective on conflicts

The Bible tells us that nothing can happen in our lives, whether good or bad, apart from the sovereign hand of God.

(His grace can turn an ugly confrontation into a beautiful situation where mercy and love abounds.)

Romans 8:28

c. Some benefits that can come out of conflict

The challenge for small group leaders is to convert a seemingly negative experience into a positive opportunity for spiritual maturity. Conflicts can be a source of growth for small group members.

(Depending on how it is handled, conflicts can be turned around to benefit the group. Here are some examples:)

- **Opportunity for Clarity** - *(In the midst of conflict, members of a Dgroup often draw closer and solidify the values that they share as a group.)*
- **Opportunity for Unity** - *(As disagreement threatens to become a barrier, the drive for genuine unity in the group increases. Commitment to the group becomes stronger as diversity is affirmed and appreciated.)*
- **Opportunity for Transparency** - *(As the group survives a conflict, members feel comfortable with differences and without fear of relationships being destroyed.)*

“The world sees resolution of conflicts as something that needs to be done to move forward and get on with business. Disciples of Christ, on the other hand, ought to see it as a means of building stronger relationships within God’s kingdom which is ruled by peace and love.”
ANONYMOUS

2. Preventing Conflicts

(Building resilient Dgroups is but a product of keeping it in good working condition. Some of the issues and problems may appear insignificant and easy to ignore at the moment. But know that failure to implement and follow basic troubleshooting procedures and an unwillingness to address what appeared to be minor problems could lead to Dgroup tragedies in the future.)

Always be guided by the Bible’s preventive and pro-active approach to preventing unnecessary conflicts and misunderstanding in God’s family found in Ephesians 4:26-27, 29-32.