



5

STARTING POINT
FOR SMALL GROUPS

GLC ESSENTIALS

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

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SESSION 1

**BIBLICAL
FOUNDATIONS OF
SMALL GROUP
MINISTRY**

I. Introduction

*(A Christian small group is a regular gathering of a relatively small number of individuals for the purpose of becoming committed followers of Jesus Christ. The goal of a Christian small group is to help every member **believe** in Jesus, **grow** in Christlikeness, be trained to **mentor** others, and take part in **multiplying** small groups (Ecclesiastes 4:1–12, Ephesians 4:1–16, 1 Corinthians 12:12–31, Hebrews 10:24–25).)*

Hebrews 10:24–25

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.

II. Why are Small Groups Important?

It is important for the disciples of Christ to regularly meet together in small groups 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 follow Him 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 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.

“[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

Small group 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

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

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 have none or less and are in need. Involvement in a small group 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

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

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 [I John 1:3].” The outcome of which is that the church grew in number with God adding new believers every day.)

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

(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

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

IV. Functions of a Small Group

The life of the early church shows us the four-fold 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.
- 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)
Get to know each other and minister to one another.
- D. Serve** (Downward Ministry of Good Works)
Get to know each other and minister to one another.



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	Open to both believers and unbelievers	Closed and made up of committed followers
Composition	May be heterogeneous: may be a mixed group of men and women	Must be homogeneous: all men/women for singles groups; same gender accountability for married groups
Numbers of Members	May exceed 12 members	12 committed members or 12 married couples
Degree of Commitment	May be low	Must be high
Objective	For evangelism and spiritual growth	For spiritual maturity, mutual accountability, and multiplication of disciples
Goal	To develop committed followers of Christ	To mentor Dgroup leaders to become multipliers or D12 leaders themselves (ideally up to the 4th generation. See 2 Timothy 2:2)
Focus	Inward in nature and is relationship-oriented	Outward in nature and is service-oriented

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.

Honesty I will be open and honest with my Dgroup leader and fellow members.

Respect I will respect those in my Dgroup by attending meetings regularly and punctually and by honoring the authority of my leader.

Intercession I will pray regularly for my Dgroup leader and fellow members.

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.

*Read about C.T. Studd in Appendix D.



SESSION 2

LIFE CYCLE OF SMALL GROUPS

I. Stages of Small Group Development

Groups change over time. Recognizing the stages of its development will help you and your members to focus on critical action and avoid pitfalls that may otherwise cause the group to break apart.

A. Forming

The members start to learn about each other and the purpose of the group.

B. Storming

As group members continue to invite new members in your group meetings, they inevitably face challenges because of differences in personalities, background, maturity level, expectations, purpose, emotions, etc.

C. Norming

The group begins to adopt certain norms or ways of doing things. The members adjust their mindset and behavior to the mission, vision, core values, and strategy of the church. It is not so much getting along with each other as being aligned to God's purpose for the small group. This is achieved by being as intentional as possible.

D. Performing

The group has now achieved a certain level of maturity and unity that enables them to actively participate in fulfilling the church's mission and vision. One or more of the members are already leading their own groups, and the group is equipped to do certain activities to reach out to those who don't know Jesus (i.e. through Pray Care Share, bridging events like Matthew Party, True Life Retreat, etc.). Also, the leader is now able to delegate more responsibilities to the members, empowering them to serve.

Collectively, the group at this stage:

- Plans and implements programs and activities.
- Distributes tasks according to strength and resources available.
- Follows through, evaluates and assesses performance and behavior of each member.

Members have become interdependent, motivated, and empowered. They have:

- Initiative
- Creativity
- Flexibility
- Openness
- Accountability
- Concern for others
- Confidence
- High morale
- Success

II. How to Start a Small Group

(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, the small group is the 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:

(Think of names, make a list, and start praying for people whom you can share the Gospel and lead to a relationship with Christ.)

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 Real Acts of Kindness (RAKs) 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 (i.e. one-minute testimony).

Action Point:

(Look out for opportunities where you can briefly present the Gospel. Use the gospel booklet “God’s Way to Heaven” together with your “One Minute Witness” testimony to share the gospel to someone.)

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 form your own 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

Action Point:

(List down the names of people you have shared the Gospel to. Schedule an initial follow-up meeting and to begin Book 1: One by One Bible studies. Make sure to meet at a specific place and time. Set your first Book 1: One by One Bible study within 48 hours of the time you shared the gospel with them.)

III. Sustaining Your Small Group

(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:

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

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

⁴Adapted 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)

“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, along with His mandate of making disciples. Identify which stage each member is at the moment and what the next step for them is. Focus on helping them apply God’s truth in areas of character growth, as well as in terms of ministry skills.)*

***THE CCF DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY**



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 delivering your next point or two. This will ensure that people get to process what you are discussing and it also allows a dialogue to take place.)

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

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.)

Small groups ought to be a safe space and an open environment for deeper sharing where sensitive questions and struggles can be discussed freely, prayed for in confidentiality and accountability, as well as be addressed with compassion.

The leader must first demonstrate humble openness and vulnerability by sharing his or her struggles, failures, weaknesses. Allow your small group members to minister to you through prayer and accountability. Your modeling will foster a healthy intimacy in the small 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 modeling a culture of honesty, authenticity, and transparency in the group. Practice what you say and mean 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 small groups grow and multiply while some do not? The real key to sustaining life in a small group 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)*

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

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.)

**“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 leading a small group. Keep the goal in mind—to see your Christ-like members also discipling their own small groups and contributing to the movement of spiritual multiplication generation after generation.)

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

One of the best ways to develop future small group 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].**)*

Action Point:

(Avoid doing ministry alone and on your own. Involve other members of the group to join you. Never be afraid to delegate. Maximize mentoring opportunities and tools such as the EQUIP On-The-Job Training activities embedded in the GLC Essentials Books 1–8 small group workbooks.)

⁹ Op cit. Chan, Edmund p.69

3. Pray for your group members daily.

The integrity of our message to the world is based 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 small group, 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:

(Set a time each week to pray for the members in your Dgroup.)

For additional helpful resource on this topic, turn to Appendix B of the Book 5 workbook.

SESSION 2

ROLES OF A SMALL GROUP LEADER

Being a small group leader is not just leading a weekly meeting of people.

(It is taking on a privilege and responsibility to nurture younger disciples of Christ and lead them towards a deeper commitment to know, love and obey the Lord.)

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, as Jesus did and as we too demonstrate with our lives by God's grace.

This is why it is important that as you try to fulfill such roles, you keep subjecting your personal paradigms and principles of leadership to the model of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures.

(Three of the more important roles you will have to fulfill as a small group leaders are the following: shepherd, servant, and steward.)

I. Cultivating the Heart of a Shepherd

Psalms 78:72

Even with his tremendous authority as King, David was described to “shepherd” his people. He was not perfect, but he served God by shepherding the people God entrusted to him with “integrity of heart” (intention) and “skillful hands” (skill.)

Matthew 9:36–38

While God is described as the good shepherd in Psalm 23, Jesus knew how people can be like sheep that have gone astray and have been so lost in their way.

(That is why He asks that prayers be made so that more and more leaders could rise up, be channels of God’s guidance and direction in life, and shepherd God’s flock.)

In John 10:1-14, Jesus describes how a good shepherd takes care of his sheep.

(Harriet Rubbin once said, “There’s a lot to be said for vision and values, but what about the voice of leadership?” The striking thing about the metaphor of a shepherd as a leader is that it is not so much about having a fantastic vision for the group but about having a voice that people recognize, flock to, and follow. Vision presents possibilities. But it is a leader’s voice that moves people to action. Jesus would often tell His audience, “He who has ears, let him hear.”

Below are just some of the principles in being a shepherd from John 10:1-14 that leaders would find helpful in doing small group ministry.)

A. Make your identity as a leader clear.

(Identity is the first order of leadership in a community. The difference between the shepherd and the thief is love—the good shepherd really loves the sheep).

John 10:1–2

One of the ways to convey your identity, motive and objective clearly is through a discipleship covenant. CCF’s discipleship covenant is summarized using the acronym C.H.R.I.S.T:

C onfidentiality
H onesty
R espect
I ntercession
S piritual Growth
T imothies

B. Nurture close relationships

(As John Maxwell has put it, “People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.”)

A good shepherd knows well the members of the group and, in the same way, makes sure that the group members get to know him or her as well.

John 10:3

C. Provide direction.

Simply put, if nobody is following, you are not leading. As the leader, are you able to model the things you want to see in their lives (i.e. personal transformation, priorities, behavior, mindset, spiritual disciplines, etc.) as they come to know Jesus?

John 10:4-5

D. Seek to bring out the best in each one.

John 10:10

(An overflowing life or abundant life is one that is deeply rooted in Jesus, the Good Shepherd. To bring out the best in each one of our disciples is to make sure that they are intimately connected to Christ for His Spirit will produce what is best in us so that we can in turn, give our best in our relationships and our work.)

E. Be prepared to defend against the Enemy.

Good shepherds are willing to sacrifice for the welfare of their flock. They do not flee in the sight of danger and stand their ground to keep the flock safe.

John 10:11–13

F. Reach out.

Leaders, just like good shepherds, ought to have a broad vision for growth of the flock. They must model spiritual multiplication to their disciples so that together, they can reach out to more “lost sheep” and bring them into God’s fold.

John 10:14

II. Training the Hands of a Servant

If there is a model of leadership that Jesus clearly modeled during His brief ministry on earth, that would be of “being a servant.”

Mark 10:42–45

A. Caring not controlling

(Over against how the rulers and emperors of His day conducted themselves as “lords” in the lives of the people, Jesus said that in His kingdom, things would be different. Instead of obsession with ‘control’ by use of force, His would be a pre-occupation with caring fueled by love. Avoid an ownership mindset; be reminded of a stewardship mindset.)

- *(He Himself, possesses power that is above all powers in this world. But Philippians 2:6 says, “Though He was God, He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to [NLT].”)* For Jesus, power is not something that needs to be flaunted and kept for Himself.

“Discipleship is not an authority trip.”

Steve Murrell

B. Honor in Humility

(Jesus inverted the world's standard for earning honor. People often work their way up the ladder to get higher positions, even if they will have to step on others.)

Jesus tells His disciples that those who want to go up must come down. To be on top is to be the servant of everyone.

(His was a radical road to earning honor and that is to thread the path of humility (see also Luke 14:7–11). Philippians 2:7 says that, “He gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.”)

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

CS Lewis

C. Service as a Privilege

(It is customary for rulers in high positions to enjoy the perks of power and authority. The same goes for leaders. It is easy to think of certain privileges and rights that you feel entitled to. But Jesus said that He Himself, despite of being the King of the world, expected no special treatment. On the contrary, it is He who gave people the special treatment and even offered his life as a ransom to redeem the world from sin.)

The true privilege of a leader is the privilege to sacrifice one's life for the benefit of others.

Philippians 2:8

(Jesus' life showed that the true privilege of a leader is the privilege to sacrifice one's life for the benefit of others. Philippians 2:8 says, “When He appeared in human form, He humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.”)

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

Plato

III. Developing the Mind of a Steward

(Before Jesus left the earth to return to heaven, He prayed for His disciples and for all the others who will follow Him in the future [see John 17]. The prayer reveals a lot of things with regards to the ministry that He accomplished. One of which is that His disciples were entrusted to Him by His Father (see verse 6). Another is that He kept and developed them with much diligence (verse 8 and 12). And lastly, this is all because the disciples are meant to be sent by Him as the Father has sent Him to the world [verse 18].)

As Jesus strived to be a faithful steward of the people that His Father put under His care, so should leaders today.

(Here are three reminders that will help small group leaders to be good stewards of their members.)

John 17:17–19

A. Make the most of the time you share together

Mark 6:30-32

Jesus spent only three (3) years with His disciples. At many occasions, He would plan to set aside time to be with them, build their faith, and prepare them for the task of making disciples of all nations (see also John 3:22).

Action Point:

Take some time to have private moments with each of your members. Seek to discuss personal concerns and pray about them together.

B. Make the most of people's talents

Ephesians 4:11-12, 16

(God has chosen you to be a leader so that you could help God's people to discover their calling, develop their gifts, and make the Body of Christ stronger and growing.)

Action Point:

Conduct a ‘spiritual gifts’ inventory with your members. Identify their talents and skills and make suggestions on how they can use it to serve God. (Later on, in Book 6: Basic Doctrines, you will be provided with Spiritual Gifts Inventory Test that you can use for your Dgroup members and yourself, to discover your spiritual gifts.)

C. Treasure people for who they are

John 17:22-24

- Never use people for the sake of a program or a ministry goal.

(Programs and ministries are meant to benefit people’s growth. Missing this important truth will make you treat people as if they are but tools to accomplish something. People’s lives are God’s bottom line, not reaching a target or accomplishing a project.) In the end, Jesus expects not to see a ministry report but to meet each and every of His follower and take them to where He is.

Action Point:

Go out of your way to let each of your members know how you appreciate them for their faithfulness, availability and teachability as followers of Jesus entrusted under your spiritual leadership. Be as creative as you can in expressing how you value them as people.

IV. Leadership Roles Checklist¹⁰

- Do people believe that you are willing to sacrifice your own self-interest for the good of the group?
- Do people believe that you value them and truly want to hear their ideas?
- Do people believe that you will understand what is happening in their lives and how it affects them?
- Do people come to you when something traumatic has happened in their lives?
- Do others follow your requests because they want to as opposed to because they have to?
- Do people believe that you are committed to helping them develop and grow?
- Do people feel a strong sense of community under your leadership?

¹⁰ Taken from “Becoming A Servant Leader: Do You Have What It Takes?” by Dr. John E. Barbuto in NebGuide (University of Nebraska, October 2007).



SESSION 2

HANDLING ISSUES IN SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

(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

Authors of “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 remains at a superficial level.

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 (<i>their lives do not glorify Christ, and so they avoid talking about what's really going on</i>).• 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>

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 small group 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 small group 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 small groups 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 small group 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.