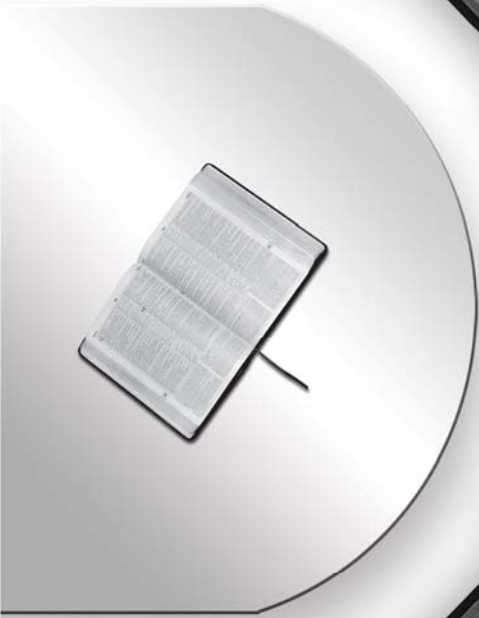




Growthgroups

equipping small group leaders



Executive Summary



Growthgroups
Executive Summary

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Growthgroups

Executive Summary Participant's Workbook And Host/Hostess Guide

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Preface

SMALLER? Yes. Smaller!

Groups serve many purposes. They provide safe places for people to grow spiritually and an avenue through which they can invite others to grow with them.

So many people do life alone, wishing and hoping that some day they will find what, in their hearts, they believe exists this side of Heaven. That is what Growthgroups are about. Don't be fooled, however; this kind of God-honoring fellowship takes time. It is not fast food. But those who take the time to grow in community will not be left empty-handed nor empty-hearted. As a church, we are ordinary people proclaiming an extraordinary message to share with our world. Groups are one of the best places to introduce people to this extraordinary message. Unfortunately, Seventh-day Adventist Congregations are not known for excelling in small groups. In fact, in the latest Natural Church Development survey, Holistic Small Groups was our lowest ranking characteristic. We seem to do well at evangelism but are not as successful connecting people with the church they have just joined.

Because of the need for greater success in establishing and growing small groups, the North American Division Church Resource Center has identified several experienced Adventist small group professionals who are willing to share their expertise to all of the churches in the NAD.

After 20 years of small group experience, Milton Adams has developed a small group model that grows out of who we are as Seventh-day Adventists. This authentically Adventist seminar is designed for those who are not yet in a small group. His simple, straightforward, practical, yet passionate approach can equip people with no prior experience to begin to lead, co-lead, or host a small group.

We've placed some icons in this user's guide to help you identify different parts of the learning environment.



This icon is instructions for the person who is hosting this training seminar.



This icon symbolizes that it is time for a group exercise.



This icon represents a key Bible text.

As you launch your Growthgroups Small Group Leaders Seminar, you can be sure that our prayers go with you as we seek to raise our proficiency in this fundamental quality that every congregation must have.

--Dave Gemmell

Equipping Small Group Leaders Seminar Host/Hostess Instructions



Using the Data DVD

To use the data portion of Growthgroups DVD follow these instructions:

- Place the DVD in a DVD equipped computer.
- Right click on the DVD drive.
- Select 'open' on the pop up menu.
- Choose the pdf document that you would like to open.
- If you have a color printer use the documents that have the word 'color' in them.
- If you have a BW printer use the documents that have the word 'BW' in them.

Building your team

You'll need a leader, a co-leader, and a host to be able to provide the best learning experience for your church. Divide the tasks up between team members according to time and talents. You'll need a techie person, a logistics person and up front host/hostess .

Marketing Growthgroups

Step One: Choosing a date and time

The second step is for your team to choose a time sufficiently in advance in order to get the word out about Growthgroups Small Group Leadership training seminar. Many people have busy schedules so to be fair to them you should probably give them at least eight weeks notice before the event is launched. Try to get 'buy in' from the church by making sure that it is voted by the church board or other responsible committee.

There are four modules in the seminar and each module takes up to 75 minutes. They can either run four weeks in a row at the same time every week, or you can do an intensive weekend with Module One on Friday evening, and Modules Two, Three, and Four on Sabbath afternoon.

Step Two: Getting the word out

Once you have your date selected you can use the following schedule to get the word out:

Eight weeks in advance

- Print out the posters from the data section of the Small Groups DVD, write in the date and time, and hang the posters in high traffic areas.
- Place the following announcement in the bulletin and email newsletter:

"Growthgroups are a process through which people can connect with God and with each other. Growthgroups, Equipping Small Group Leaders Seminar, featuring Small Group coach Milton Adams, is coming to (Name of Church) on (date) at (time). Save the date for this important event."

Seven weeks in advance

- Check to make sure posters are still up
- Place the following announcement in the bulletin and email newsletter:

“Growthgroups offer the warm grace of Jesus Christ within small communities of trusting, caring relationships. Growthgroups, Equipping Small Group Leaders Seminar, featuring Small Group coach Milton Adams, is coming to (Name of Church) on (date) at (time). Reservations are now being accepted. Please contact _____.”

Six weeks in Advance

- Check to make sure posters are still up.
- Use the bulletin insert (print up extra copies for future use).
- Place the following announcement in the bulletin and email newsletter:

“People with the most friends are the least likely to catch colds. And when they do get one, its symptoms and duration are lessened. Growthgroups, Equipping Small Group Leaders Seminar, featuring Small Group coach Milton Adams, is coming to (Name of Church) on (date) at (time). Growthgroups are designed for those interested in learning how to lead, co-lead or host a small group. Your place at this event can be reserved by contacting _____.”

Five weeks in advance

- Check to make sure posters are still up.
- Have your team stand in the lobby giving personal invitations to people and handing them an extra bulletin insert.
- Place the following announcement in the bulletin and email newsletter:

“Growthgroups exist for people who are not already in them. This not only includes people inside the church, but outside of the church, too. Growthgroups, Equipping Small Group Leaders Seminar, featuring Small Group coach Milton Adams, is coming to (Name of Church) on (date) at (time). Growthgroups are designed for those interested in learning how to lead, co-lead or host a small group. No prior experience in small groups is necessary. Contact _____ to make reservations for this life changing experience.

Four weeks in advance

- Check to make sure posters are still up
- Have your team stand in the lobby giving personal invitations to people and handing them an extra bulletin insert.
- Place the following announcement in the bulletin and email newsletter:

“The great theologian Winnie the Pooh says, ‘You can never have too many friends or too much honey.’ Growthgroups, Equipping Small Group Leaders Seminar, featuring Small

Group coach Milton Adams, is coming to (Name of Church) on (date) at (time). Come learn how to lead, co-lead or host a small group. For reservations contact _____."

Three weeks in advance

- Check to make sure posters are still up.
- Have your team stand in the lobby giving personal invitations to people and handing them an extra bulletin insert.
- Play Video Promotional #1 during the worship service.
- Place the following announcement in the bulletin and email newsletter:

"Growthgroups are not a gimmick. And they're not an event. They're a process by which we GO into the world and connect people to their Heavenly Father, and graft them into the Family of God. Growthgroups, Equipping Small Group Leaders Seminar, featuring Small Group coach Milton Adams, is coming to (Name of Church) on (date) at (time). Contact _____ to reserve your place."

Two weeks in advance

- Check to make sure posters are still up.
- Have your team stand in the lobby giving personal invitations to people and handing them an extra bulletin insert.
- Play Video Promotional #2 during the worship service.
- Place the following announcement in the bulletin and email newsletter:

"Your front door can be a gateway to eternal life. God wants your home to be a safe haven where people experience His love, and are transformed by His grace. Growthgroups, Equipping Small Group Leaders Seminar, featuring Small Group coach Milton Adams, is coming to (Name of Church) on (date) at (time). Come learn how to lead, co-lead, or host a small group in this safe, fun, learning environment. Contact _____ to save your place."

One week in advance

- Check to make sure posters are still up.
- Have your team stand in the lobby giving personal invitations to people and handing them an extra bulletin insert.
- Play Video Promotional #3 during the worship service.
- Place the following announcement in the bulletin and email newsletter:

"Don't miss out on Growthgroups, Equipping Small Group Leaders Seminar, featuring Small Group coach Milton Adams. Growthgroups begins this week at (Name of Church) on (date) at (time). There is still room to join. Contact _____ to save your place."

Host's Guidelines

Before the Event: Print out all of the documents needed for the participants. These can be

found in the data section of the Growthgroups DVD. They are italicized below. If you don't have a printer you can order all of the materials from AdventSource.org.

Orientation: Have your team watch the entire seminar yourself so you will know what to expect.

Room Set up:

Standard Equipment Needed

Executive Summary Participant's Guide

TV

DVD player and cables

Remote control

Growthgroups DVD

Pens

Additional tools will be needed for each module

Module 1:

Index cards

Learners Agreement

Module 2:

Several index cards for each person

Values Handout

Sample Group Agreement

Module 3:

Giant Post it notes

Module 4:

Refreshment table with fruit, drinks and or water and cups

Enough Bibles for everyone

During the Event:

Follow Pastor Milton's instructions. The techie person can run the DVD and hit pause when people aren't keeping up. Make sure there is enough house light so participants can see to write in their Executive Summary. The co-host can be ready with the handouts when called for. The host can be the upfront leader.

After the event:

Announce the time of the next presentation

Dismiss with a benediction

Greet everyone personally, thanking them for coming, and seeking a commitment for them to come the next time.

User Support: If you have any technical trouble you may contact Dave Gemmell at dave@vervent.org. If you have questions about Growthgroups you can email Pastor Milton Adams at miltonadams@growthgroups.us.

Growth Group Module One

Host's Notes



Standard room set up

Additional items needed:

Index cards (at least one for each participant)

Learners Agreement printed

(can be found Appendix 'B' in the pdf folder and is labeled "Learner's Agreement.")

Growth Group Exercise: One minute

Go shake as many hands with as many people as you can and welcome them here.



Growth Group Exercise: One minute each

Form into pairs and tell your partner one thing you already know or think you know about Growth Groups, and then share one thing you want answered in today's training. Then switch roles and listen to your partner do the same.



Creating Your Learning Environment

1. Create a _____ learning environment.
2. Create an _____ learning environment.
3. Create a _____ learning environment.

Building Support:
People _____ what they help _____.

4. Enthusiastic pacing—stay on _____.

Circle the ideal time for a growth group:
60 Minutes 120 Minutes 90 Minutes

5. Create a _____ environment.

Definition:

"Growthgroups are small communities of five to twelve people who connect socially and spiritually within an environment of trust and grace"

Question:
Am I _____ here?

Trust Factor:
Growthgroups are more _____ than _____.

Growthgroups are a _____ not an _____.



Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.

—Psalm 9:10



Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.'

—Luke 9:23

Why Growthgroups?

Compelling People:
Growthgroups aren't _____, they are _____.

1. Growthgroups are our _____.



Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.

—Matthew 28:19

2. Growthgroups are our _____.

3. Growthgroups are our _____.

Growth Groups Exist for those who are not yet in them.

Seven Principles of Growthgroups

1. I am a _____ between the people in my group and Jesus Christ.

2. Everyone can _____ people.

3. I am ministered to as I _____ to others.
4. I am a _____.
5. Birds of a feather flock _____.
6. Growthgroups are strong and healthy when the leader has a ____ - _____.
7. Growthgroups are a _____ for future leaders.

Three Myths about Leading a Small Group

1. I have to _____ it all.
2. I have to have _____ the _____.
3. I have to be _____ before I start a group.

Jesus Is Looking For Two Qualities

1. _____
2. _____

Growth Group Exercise: One minute each
Form into pairs and what has stood out most to you so far in this training. Then let your partner do the same



Growth Group Exercise: One minute each
Share with your partner what your understanding of a Growth Group is? What is its Purpose? Then let your partner do the same.



Host passes out one index card to each participant.



Growth Group Exercise: 30 seconds each
Write on an index card one barrier that you might have about learning how to co-lead or lead a Growth Group. Share that with your partner and then switch.



This Learning Lab is Different

When people interact and apply what they're learning, Learning becomes _____.

Growth Groups are more _____ than _____ taught.

They are a _____ not an _____.

Host passes out Learner's Agreement



Fill Out Learner's Agreement

- Host Announces the time of the next presentation.
- Host dismisses with a benediction.
- Host greets everyone personally, thanking them for coming, and seeking a commitment from them to come the next time.



Growth Group Module Two

Host's Guidelines



Standard room set up

Additional items needed:

Several index cards for each person

"Values Handout" (found in the pdf folder)

"Sample Group Agreement" (found in the pdf folder)

Host's Welcome



- Welcome everyone back
- Welcome new comers
- Read all of the questions in Module One and have the group say the answers out loud so the new people can get caught up.

Building Trust

1. Growthgroups grow at the speed of _____.
2. Trust takes _____.
3. "Don't be _____."
4. _____ downshifts the brain.

The Three Parts of the Brain



Emotions and Learning

1. Physical and emotional discomfort or distress _____ learning.
2. _____ stops learning.
3. When _____ increases, _____ decreases.

A Safe Learning Environment



There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear.

—I John 4:18

1. A safe learning environment is a place where _____ is practiced.
2. Its where people are _____ with each other,
3. Its where people laugh and _____ each other,
4. People are gracious and _____ to each other,
5. People are courteous and _____ of one another.

Growth Group Exercise: One minute each
Pair up and explain how a safe environment affects learning.



“Groups exist for those who are not yet in them.”

The Matthew Party

1. Held on the _____ night at the same time.
2. _____ times per year.
3. Matthew parties keep us _____ focused.

Three Things Jesus Did

1. He _____ people.

Learning without loving relationships is _____.

Serving without spiritual learning can become _____-serving.

2. He _____ and _____.

3. He _____ people.

Matthew parties and Growthgroups are _____ in action.

The Growthgroup Process

We _____ We _____

We _____ We _____

1. Choose a _____ for your Matthew Party.
2. Choose a _____ for your Matthew Party.
3. Schedule _____ Matthew parties on your calendar.

Three Types of Matthew Parties

1. Throw a _____ party.
2. Have a neighborhood _____.
3. Celebrate _____ occasions.

Tips About Food and Drink

1. Provide salad and _____.
2. Ask everyone else to bring a covered dish.
3. _____ each dish with a post-it note.

Reviewing The Purpose and Function of Matthew Parties

1. Use Matthew Parties to _____ your Growthgroup.
2. Break down barriers through _____ and mingling.
3. Throw a Matthew Party each _____.
4. _____ the covered dishes.
5. Send _____.

Who Do We Invite?

1. Invite whomever the _____ impressed you to invite.

"Groups exist for those who are not yet in them."

2. Invite your _____ friends.
3. Invite your _____-Christian friends.

We love, learn, serve and reach out just like Jesus.

How Do We Invite?

1. Pray for a _____ appointment.
2. Listen. Empathize. Encourage. Support. Be a _____.
3. "Would _____ be interested in something like this?"
4. Offer to _____ and go to the group together.
5. Put them at _____.
6. _____ them a couple of days later to see how they're doing.

**"Information is secondary.
Relationships are primary."**

Creating a Safe Learning Environment

1. Provide a clean, _____, and inviting environment that is not too _____ or too _____.
2. Shut off the phone, _____, radio, and answering machine.
3. Keep _____ in a separate room.
4. Provide a light _____.
5. Have soft music playing as people arrive.

The Group Agreement

1. Make a new group agreement _____.
2. The values of the group agreement are _____ by the _____, not the leader.

3. **Group agreements are written with the personal pronoun “ _____” versus “ _____”.**
4. _____ **the group agreement during the year to help members remember their commitment.**
5. **The group agreement clarifies _____ and _____.**

Host distributes several index cards to each person and a values handout.



Growth Group Exercise: Divide up into groups of two or three people. List on your card two or three values you think are most important for your group. Let the values handout guide your thinking. Remain in your groups.



Growthgroup Exercise: On another card list your hopes, dreams and goals for Growthgroup. Remain in your groups.



Growth Group Exercise: Designate a leader for your group. Hand them your values cards. Leader compiles all of the values on a fresh card. Choose two values off the compilation card and write them on a new card. Hand them in to your group leader. Group leader now compiles the two values from the new cards. Remain in your groups.



Host passes out sample Group Agreement.



Review the Group Agreement Process

Week One: Collect the values list, and everyone’s hopes, dreams, and goals for the group.

Week Two: Refine the values list by having everyone choose the top five most important values for the group.

Week Three: Review the Group Agreement and make any necessary changes.

Week Four: Collect contact information for the group directory.

Growth Group Exercise: Take your sample group agreement, add your contact information and pass it to the right.



What We've Learned In Module Two

1. We learned how discomfort and distress stop learning.
2. We've learned that a safe learning environment is tolerant, patient, supportive, and is a place where people enjoy and support one another. It is courteous, gracious, and respectful.
3. We throw Matthew Parties quarterly to: breakdown barriers...socialize... network, to connect, and to populate our Growth Group.
4. We label the dishes with post-it notes.
5. We love. We learn and serve. We reach out.
6. We pray for a Divine appointment.
7. We create an inviting environment where the air is not too hot or cold. We turn off the radio, TV, telephone, and answering machine; and we keep pets in a different room.
8. We discovered how to create a Group Agreement.

Growth Group Exercise: Get with a partner and take a short walk to clear you head. During your walk, take turns debriefing his module. Each of you has five minutes to explain what you've learned. Share your thoughts, questions and your insights. Then encourage each other with a kind word of affirmation. Then return to this room so the host can you give you instructions on when you will be meeting again.



- Host announces the time of the next presentation.
- Host dismisses with a benediction.
- Host greets everyone personally, thanking them for coming, and seeking a commitment for them to come the next time.



Growth Group Module Three

Host's Guidelines



Standard room set up

Additional items needed:

Several giant sticky Post It notes. Write with a felt tip pen on the post it note the following:

- Post it note #1: Room Set up
- Post it note #2: The Pre-meeting
- Post it note #3: The Meeting
- Post it note #4 : The Bonding and Prayer time
- Post it note #5 : The Post Meeting

Host's Welcome



- Welcome everyone back
- Welcome new comers
- Read all of the questions in Module Two and have the group say the answers out loud so the new people can get caught up.

Pop Quiz

Question: Why do Growthgroups exist?

Answer: Growthgroups exist for those who are _____ in them.

Maintaining an Outward Focus

Step One: Have your group spend twenty minutes before your next Matthew Party making a list of the people they will _____.

Step Two: Set up an _____ chair.

Step Three: Pray for a _____ to invite them.

Adopting a Prayer Warrior

1. Talk with the group about adopting a Prayer Warrior.

- 2. Bring a couple of recommendations back to the group.**
- 3. Call the potential Prayer Warrior.**
- 4. Find if they're already part of a small group; if so, move on.**
- 5. If available invite them to be your group's Prayer Warrior.**
- 6. Explain what it means to be a Prayer Warrior.**
- 7. Nurture your Prayer Warrior.**
 - A. Birthday Parties**
 - B. Christmas Dinners**
 - C. Anniversary Cards**
 - D. Sympathy Cards**
 - E. Work Bee (at their house)**
 - F. Weekly Phone Call**
 - G. Transportation Assistance**
 - H. Help with Basic Care**
 - I. Make sure they get the weekly church bulletin.**
 - J. Assist with yard or pet care.**

The Group Agenda

Save this page as a check off list when you do your first meeting

Room Set Up (30 Minutes)

- Co-host arrives
- Check room temperature
- Remove the pets
- Set up chairs (no stools or bean bags)
- Put on some relaxing music
- Set up light refreshments
- Place blessings list on the open chair
- Display Group Agreement (inviting guests to add their name if they wish)

The Pre Meeting (15-20 Minutes)

- Guests begin to arrive
- Give directions to the washroom if needed
- Mix and mingle
- Serve light refreshments with juice or water
- Turn off TV, cell phones, and other distractions
- Transition to Bible study
- Icebreaker (everyone should participate)

The Bible Study Meeting (30-40 Minutes)

- Bible teaching (15-20 minutes)
- Life application (15-20 minutes)

Bonding and Prayer Time (10-20 minutes)

- The blessings list
- The open chair
- Prayer

The Post Meeting

- Doctrinal Bible study if needed
- Mingle
- Disperse

The Purpose of Bible Study

1. _____ is for Growthgroups.

2. _____ is for church.



I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it.

—I Corinthians 3:1-4



We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you will need someone to teach you the elementary truths of god's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still and infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

—Hebrews 5:11-14



Therefore rid yourselves of all malice, and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in our salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

—I Peter 2:1-3

3. Growthgroups are a _____.

What Do You Do When People Ask Doctrinal Questions?

1. _____ them.


2. _____ with them.


3. _____ up with them.


How to Prepare to Teach

1. Read the passage _____ times.

2. Read from _____ translations.
3. Consider the _____ : Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?
4. _____ the passage in your own words.
5. Write down in a _____ the main idea.

 Describe a time in your childhood when someone tattled on you.

 1. How is this situation a trap for Jesus? What would the Pharisees accuse Jesus of if he told them to let her go? If he told them to stone her? How does he spring the trap (v. 7)? 2. How would the woman just caught in adultery have felt? What was the significance of Jesus' question in verse 10? 3. How does Jesus' response to the woman exemplify "grace and truth" (1:17)?

 1. How does the way Jesus treated this woman help you face your sins? 2. Jesus accepts you "as is." Does that free you to

⁵³Then each went to his own home.
8 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ²At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

⁹At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the

^{a52} Two early manuscripts *the Prophet*



John 7:53-8:11

For Lite Study

THE WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY

The story of the woman caught in the act of adultery is a good example of an amazing act of acceptance by Jesus. Even though the Pharisees put a lot of pressure on Jesus to go along with the crowd and condemn this woman, he chose to accept her and encourage her to turn her life around.

Optional Ice-Breaker Questions:

- As a child, when were you caught "red-handed" doing something you shouldn't have?
- Who has really been an encouragement to you?

1. Why do you think Jesus bent down and wrote on the ground?
 - to cool off
 - to divert attention from the woman
 - to give himself time to think
 - to force the accusers to think
 - to write something for the accusers to see
 - other: _____

2. What was Jesus saying when he said, "If anyone of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone"?
 - deal with your own sin first
 - you see in others your own sin
 - Your condemnation of this woman is wrong.
 - other: _____

3. What was Jesus' message when he said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin"?
 - acquittal: "The charges have been dropped."
 - warning: "I'll let you off this time, but don't do it again."
 - encouragement: "You're a beautiful person and you don't have to live like you used to."
 - challenge: "The evidence of forgiveness is a changed life."
 - other: _____

4. When have you felt "tried and convicted" by the crowd?

- when I didn't make a team
- when I didn't feel good enough to belong
- when I was turned down for a job or a promotion
- when I stood up for my faith
- other: _____

5. What do you do when you blow it?
 - confess it to God and move on
 - confess it to another person
 - try to make up for it
 - shrug it off
 - other: _____

6. When did you come to realize Jesus values you as a person?
 - when I committed my life to him
 - when I fully understood what he did for me
 - when I felt his healing or forgiveness during a difficult time
 - when I discovered acceptance in a church
 - I'm not sure how to answer that.

7. How can this group pray for you?

Facilitating the Group Study

1. Leader or Co-leader _____ passage from your personal Bible.
2. Ask a _____ question
3. Ask the _____ Questions

Validate and affirm every person and their question.
Our number one goal is relationship building.

Useful Tips for Leading the Bible Study

1. Don't allow the _____ to drive the group.
2. Allow for _____ moments.
3. Always use the _____.
4. Don't feel like you have to _____ all of the questions.
5. Let the _____ lead and guide.

Leading Out in the Bonding and Prayer Time

1. Gather in a circle.
2. Place the open chair in the circle with the blessing list.
3. Hold hands.
4. Leader or co-leader prays.
 - Thanks God for bringing the members to the group.
 - Asks God to be with those who aren't in attendance.
 - Asks God to bless and protect each person through the next week.
 - Prays that God will lead us to people to invite for the open chair.
 - Leads people to read the prayer out loud on the blessing list.

Alternate Endings

1. Invite members to share prayer requests.
2. Have a volunteer prayer for the requests.

- Host attaches giant Post-it notes to the walls.
- Announces the time of the next presentation.
- Dismisses with a benediction.
- Greets everyone personally, thanking them for coming, and seeking a commitment for them to come the next time.



Growth Group Module Four

Host's Guidelines



Standard room set up

Additional items needed:

- Refreshments table with fruit, drinks or water and cups
- Enough Bibles for everyone

Host's Welcome



- Welcome everyone back
- Welcome new comers
- Read all of the questions in Module Three and have the group say the answers out loud so the new people can get caught up.

Growth Group Exercise: 45 seconds

Gather around the refreshments table and discover what is missing.



Growth Group Exercise: 60 Seconds

Grab some refreshments and then sit down in groups of two or three.

Growth Group Exercise: Two Minutes

Let everyone get a chance to answer the icebreaker question "Who has really been an encouragement to you?"

Growth Group Exercise: Two and a half minutes

Read John 7:53-8:11 out loud. Divide it up so everyone gets a chance to read a portion.

Growth Group Exercise: Five Minutes

Discuss the question: "Why do you think Jesus knelt and wrote in the sand?"

Growth Group Exercise: Five Minutes

Discuss the question: "When have you felt 'tried and convicted' by the crowd?"

Growth Group Exercise: Five Minutes

Discuss the question: "When did you come to realize Jesus values you as a person?"

Growth Group Exercise: Five Minutes

- Pray for those who you would have liked to see here at the learning lab
- Thank God for those who are here
- Pray for guidance as you consider becoming a Growth Group leader
- Ask for God to lead you to the people to invite to the group

Action Plan

Step One: _____.

Step Two: Choose a _____-leader.

Step Three: Make a list of people God is prompting you to _____.

Step Four: Invite them personally AND give them an invitation _____.

An Invitation	Directions
Date:	
Time:	
Place:	
General Theme:	
	<i>We look forward to seeing you!</i>

Step Five: Send a reminder post card to arrive _____ before your meeting begins.

Step Six: Plan your first _____ meetings with your co-leader.

See 'Appendix C' for the suggested plan

Step Seven: Have a monthly co-leaders meeting.

See 'Appendix D' for agenda for monthly co-leader's meeting

See 'Appendix E' for the frequently asked questions

Appendix A: Sample Growth Group Agreement

Our Growth Group Agreement

Today's Date ___/___/___

We will meet:	Co-Leader Names	Phone Numbers
Day: Monday	Janice Kobow	_____
Time: Noon - 2:00	_____	_____
Place: Upper Room @ Newport Church		

As I come together to share my life in prayer, study, fellowship, praise, confession, and thankfulness, I commit to the following group values:

Prayer. I will pray with and for my group on a regular basis. I will commit to prayer and Bible study on a daily basis as part of my personal spiritual growth.

Priority. I will give the group meeting priority and if I am unable to attend or am running late, I will call ahead.

Confidentiality. I promise that whatever is shared within the confines of my group will not be repeated elsewhere. Confidentiality promotes trust and openness.

A Safe Place to Grow and Invite Others. I will do my part in providing a safe place for people to grow as I and other group members invite friends. All it takes is for one person to be critical, judgmental, argumentative, condemning, "say-it-like-it-is," or tactless and the atmosphere of a safe place for people to grow is destroyed.

Availability. I desire to help my group as much as is possible. My time and insight, as well as my material resources, are a gift from God for me to use to serve others.

Our Group Directory

Name, Phone Number, Birthday & Email Address

Appendix B: Group Agreement Values Worth Considering

Priority. I will give the group meeting priority and if I am unable to attend or am running late, I will call ahead.

Affirmation. I will help create an atmosphere where my group affirms and encourages one another, building each other up in Christ, and helping each other grow.

Availability. I desire to help my group as much as is possible. My time and insight, as well as my material resources, are a gift from God for me to use to serve others.

Prayer. I will pray with and for my group on a regular basis. I will commit to prayer and Bible study on a daily basis as part of my personal spiritual growth.

Openness. I will choose to be open with my group, realizing that openness promotes honesty and makes it easier for others to also share feelings, struggles, joys, and hurts. Authentic God-honoring relationships begin with my willingness to share of myself.

Honesty. I must speak the truth in love, so that I “will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ” (Eph. 4: 15) . Honesty with each other is critical for authentic relationships to develop and trust to be built within my group.

Confidentiality. I promise that whatever is shared within the confines of my group will not be repeated elsewhere. Confidentiality promotes trust and openness.

Sensitivity. I will be sensitive to the needs, feelings, backgrounds, and current situations of my group and will help build relationships in my group.

Accountability. I will welcome the accountability, support and encouragement my group provides. I will invite my group to lovingly press God’s Word into my life as I continue to grow in my relationship with Jesus.

A Safe Place to Grow and Invite Others. I will do my part in providing a safe place for people to grow as I and other group members invite friends. All it takes is for one person to be critical, judgmental, argumentative, condemning, “say-it-like-it-is,” or tactless and the atmosphere of a safe place for people to grow is destroyed.

Inviting Others. I will look for those people God is placing in my path and extend multiple invitations for them to come with me to my group. Keeping in mind the reason Growthgroups exist – to “go” and make disciples – I look forward to seeing my group start new groups.

Other Values

Appendix C: Leading Your First Eleven Group Meetings

Week 1: Provide a light supper. Choose two or three Ice Breaker questions. Plan for next week's potluck.

Week 2: Have a light supper together, potluck style. Choose a few more Ice Breaker questions. Introduce the Blessing List.

Week 3: Choose a Group Building Activity. Add core member names to the Blessing List. Begin developing your Group Agreement.

Week 4: Ice Breakers. Continue the Group Agreement process. Facilitate a study on Luke 14:15-24 (The Great Banquet), using the Serendipity Bible. Introduce the Open Chair.

Week 5: Ice Breakers. Continue the Group Agreement. Hand out a copy of the Open Chair Worksheet and give people 20 minutes to write down names that God brings to mind.

Week 6: Ice Breakers. Complete your Group Agreement. Facilitate a study on Luke 15:11-32 (The Prodigal Son).

Week 7: Ice Breaker. Facilitate a study on Matthew 28:1-20 (The Great Commission), using the Serendipity Bible. Introduce and plan your first Matthew Party.

Week 8: Ice Breaker. Finalize Matthew Party plans, see Week 10. Hand out Matthew Party Invitation Cards for your core members to give to people as they invite people listed on their Open Chair Worksheet. Give your group three Serendipity Bible study sub themes. Ask your group to choose one, to begin Week 11.

Week 9: Ice Breaker. Hand out Bible study sub theme Invitation Cards, see Week 11. Spend this group time talking about and praying for the people who have and who will be invited to the first Matthew Party. You might want to follow the ACTS prayer outline

Week 10: The Matthew Party. (Same place, time, & day, if possible)

Week 11: Begin the chosen Bible study sub theme. Your group now *invites, invites, and invites* people who came to the Matthew Party, inactive and active church members, or anyone that God prompts them to *invite* to come to a group meeting. Don't forget to adopt a Prayer Warrior. Review the Group Agreement.

Appendix D: Suggested Agenda for Monthly Co-Leaders Meetings

Check In – *These questions are for co-leaders just starting.*

- What is/was your start date?
- Describe your Blessing List.
- Where are you in the Group Agreement process?
- Matthew Party report and next month's plans.
- Who has your group adopted?

Ongoing questions:

- What has your group been like over the past month?
- How many new people did you personally invite to group?
- Choose one feeling word to describe how group is going?
- Where do you sense God is leading your group?
- Where do you sense God is leading you?
- How did God work through you this past week?
- How do you feel your devotional time with God is going?
- Turn in Monthly Growth Group Report—See Appendix F

Re-training

These topics have included:

How to Build Your Core
Group Agreement
Open Chair
Blessing List
Co-Leader Responsibilities
Co-Leader Group Agreement
Matthew Parties
Group Agenda 60-90 Minutes
Group Agenda with 10+ People
Amazing Results
Prayer Warrior Adoption
Members Roles
Choosing Bible Study Material
Relational Bible Studies
Leadership Motives
Stages of a Group
Next Growth Group Training
Crisis Work
Reclaiming Inactive Church
Members
Evangelism Preparation

Appendix E: Growthgroup Co-Leader's Report Form

Co-Leader _____ Month _____ Year _____
 I completed this months report

Co-Leader _____ Co-Leaders Group Leader _____
 I completed this months report

Instructions: Co-Leaders, please fill out this form each week. Bring to Co-Leaders Group meeting.

<i>Attendance Record</i>	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	<i>leave blank</i>
Meetings:						Summary
Total Attendance (total # at meeting)						
Number of <i>new</i> people co-leaders invited						
First time guests						
Returning/Other Guest						
Regular attenders present (have signed Group Agreement)						
Regular attenders absent						

Has anyone left your group over the past month? Yes No
 If yes, please provide their name and reason for leaving..

Name	Reason for leaving
_____	_____
_____	_____

How did you intentionally teach your group to reach out beyond themselves this past month? (For example: Matthew Party events, taking time for people to complete the Open Chair Worksheet, etc.)

What has been most rewarding or encouraging part of co-leading your group this past month?

What has been the most frustrating or discouraging part of co-leading your group this past month?

What is the big idea, *the message of hope*, found in the group study that you want people to take with them.

Week 1:	Week 5:
Week 2:	
Week 3:	
Week 4:	

1 Corinthians 3:1-4

Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. *For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?*

Hebrews 5:11-14

We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. *But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.*

1 Peter 2:1-3

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

Doctrinal Questions: What do you do with unique doctrinal questions that come up in group?

1. **Affirm** – That is a good question.
2. **Connect** – I've had similar questions and have found satisfying answers. Let finish our group study and then find a good time to study your questions together.
3. **Follow up** – Provide Bible Studies for those who are interested in specific topics.
4. **Background** – I'll need to first give you some background information. A Bible study series might best lay background. (Remember, we want these questions to come up. They are the result of the Holy Spirit leading people "into all truth" and these questions open the door for one-on-one Bible studies.)

Blessing List: What is a blessing list and how do I use it?

- Start a new Blessing List each year.
- This is a list of people who attend your group.
- *It is not a prayer request list.*
- Many groups write the blessing found in Numbers chapter 6 blessing in the center of the blessing list and say it together as part of the closing prayer.

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.'

Numbers 6:24-26

Poster boards with decorative borders are available. With the Numbers 6 blessing written in the middle, it leaves plenty of room for the names of group attendees to be written. Some have used colorful markers to write names. Place your Blessing List on an empty chair in your group circle at the *beginning* of your group meeting. It serves as a constant visual reminder during group that we exist to invite those who are not yet part of our group. As the co-leader closes the prayer time thank God for bringing each one to group this week. Ask that God will bless and protect each person throughout the coming week. And close your prayer by focusing on the Open Chair that needs to be filled. Ask God to lead and guide each of us as we invite people to come to our group.

Intercessory Prayer: How should I pray for others?⁴

Intercessory prayer can be defined as asking God to act on behalf of someone else. Sometimes we don't know how to pray for our friends and family (or even those who have hurt us), yet we know we should. Paul gave us a pattern of prayer in Colossians 1:9-14 to follow when we pray for others. Read this passage and try using it as a pattern the next time you pray. Watch how God answers.

Pray that:

- They will understand God's will.
- They gain spiritual wisdom.
- They live a life pleasing and honoring to God.
- They do kind things for others.
- They know God better and better.
- They are filled with God's strength.
- They endure in patience.
- They stay full of Christ's joy.
- They always be thankful.
- They recall God's forgiveness of their sins.

Child Care: What should I do if potential members have kids?

One of the most common questions regarding the group meeting is what to do with the children when your group includes small children. Since the group is an extension of the family and represents the family of God, children should not be left out. Members are in the process of becoming an extended family, i.e. the family of God. Youth, who have their own groups, need not attend adult meetings, but the children should be a part of it. Children are too young to participate in such a lengthy meeting where some of the discussions would be unsuitable for them. The children may be taken into

Appendix F: Frequently Asked Questions

Aesthetics: How can I know that the place is comfortable?

- Is it relaxing, inviting, comfortable, warm, appropriate space for people to interact easily?
- Have the distractions such as pets, radios, tv's, children, doorbells, telephones, answering machines been taken care of?
- Have the refreshments such as sliced apples, sliced oranges, crackers, juice or water been provided?
- Is there soft mood music play as people are arriving? Is there a convenient place for people to park their car?

Anger In Groups: How do I deal with anger when it comes up?'

There are two ways of expressing anger in groups. "I" messages are clear and confessional. The person using "I" messages owns their anger, responsibility, or demands without placing blame. "You" messages are most often attacks, criticisms, labels, devaluation of the other person, or ways of fixing blame. When angry, attempt to give clear; simple "I" messages. Here is a comparison:

I am angry. You make me angry.

I feel rejected. You're judging and rejecting me.

I don't like the wall between us. You're building a wall between us.

I don't like blaming or being blamed. You're blaming everything on me.

I want the freedom to say yes or no. You're trying to run my life.

I want a respectful friendship with you again. You've got to respect me or you're not my friend.

Basic Help Principles: How can I really help people?

One of the basic premises in a helping relationship is that people are responsible for their own actions. Some people do not want to walk alongside you; they want you to carry them. Your relationship with them must lead them to independence, not dependence.

People may come to you with what they think is the problem (or what they want you to think is the problem) when there is another, deeper issue. Make sure that you gently probe until you find the full extent of the situation. People come to you assuming that you will keep their problems in confidence. You do not have the prerogative to discuss one person with another unless – perhaps – you need to seek help from someone who is more qualified than you. On the other hand, never swear or promise your own secrecy when someone asks for it before telling you something. You might

need to act on a rare occasion in someone's defense (in the case of suicide and child abuse, for example).

You need to be careful not to get in over your head. You can do a lot as a peer helper, but there are many problems that should be handled by professional counselors. If you feel that you are not equipped to help a person, you should say so and consult your pastor.

It is wise to let men help men and women help women. There is a special kind of intimacy that occurs in many helping relationships, and sexual attraction can easily complicate things. It is very easy to want to "fix" peoples' problems, especially when you see that the "answer" is very simple. But what is obvious to you may not necessarily be apparent to the one being helped. You shouldn't try to rush the process of helping just because you think you know the answers. Your job is to empower people to discover for themselves what their problems are and what they should do in response. Until they reach that point, they are not ready to deal with their problems.

As you become involved in helping relationships, you will find yourself wanting to express your opinions. But sometimes your statements will come as judgments. The best way to show people their weaknesses is to ask the right questions (in a sensitive manner) or restate the problem so that they start listening to what they themselves are saying. For instance, a man might be saying about his wife, "She's a real loser, and I wish that she were dead. Why, she's never even tried to love me. I don't know why I stay with her." In response, you could say, "Don't you think you 're coming down a little hard on her? My goodness, nobody is as bad as you say." But in fact that response would probably cause him to feel stronger about his original statement because you have attacked his original idea. Instead, you should try this response: "It sure sounds like you are mad at your wife. You are saying that she has never really loved you. " This kind of statement allows the speaker to hear what he is saying, so that his next words are directed at his own statements rather than yours. Please, avoid pat answers like "You just need to pray," or "God loves you, and so do I." People need real relationships with caring friends, not pre-programmed brush-off maneuvers. Pray with people. You will find that people discover real peace when you pray with them, and this can serve as a model to help them discover restoration with God.

Bible Study: How do I Prepare For Group Study?²

This Bible study process is for the group leaders to do on their own, as they get ready for their group. It will add depth to your group study time. It is *not* to be used for the group study. Use or customize the Serendipity Bible questions. Most Bible study methods emphasize what the Bible says and what the Bible means. But most of the Bible, read in its context, has obvious principles to apply to life. **Spend most of your time in application.** Limit your study time to a reasonable passage and spend

time meditating and praying about *how* to live the truth. Discuss your thoughts with others who can spur you on to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24-25).

Observations (What does the text say ?)

Translation

Read the entire passage through several times. Try using several different translations (NIV, NASB, NRSV, NKJV, Living Bible, The Message, etc.) for a fresh look at each passage. This will help you identify key words and develop insights into the text.

Context

Answer the following in writing:

- Who is writing/speaking and to whom?
- What is their relationship?
- What is discussed? What is happening?
- Where does the event/communication take place?
- When does this take place relative to other significant events?
- Why does the speaker say what he does? (What problems were the recipients facing?)
- How does this passage fit into the context? (e.g., What comes before and after? How is God using this to speak to me?)

Structure

Examine the structure of the passage and make note of any significant connecting words that help you understand the author's argument (e.g., "therefore," "but," "and," etc.). Try to paraphrase the passage using your own words. Are there any key words that help you understand the author's emphasis?

Word study

List all key words of the passage and use a Bible dictionary, *Vine's Expository Dictionary*, *Richard's Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, or a good study Bible like the *NIV Study Bible* to understand their meaning.

Questions

Write answers to the following as you read the passage:

- What are the commands to obey?
- What are the promises I can trust God to keep?
- What do I learn about God? about Jesus? the Holy Spirit? about my fellow believers?
- Are there any repeated words, ideas, themes?

- Are there any comparisons/contrasts ("flesh" vs. "Spirit" in Rom.8)?
- Are there any lists (like fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5:22-23)?
- Are there any cause/effect relationships (Rom. 10:14-18)?

Interpretation (What message does the text convey?)

Principles

List specific principles that you derive from your observation of the passage. Bombard the passage with questions in relation to the meaning. Proceed verse by verse, recording your understanding as you ask yourself questions like, "What does this mean? Why is it important to understand this? How did this relate to the original audience? What is the opposite of this truth? When should this be applied? How should it be applied in my life?" Look up references to help you interpret the passage. Also, trust the Holy Spirit as your teacher. Pray, asking Him to reveal God's truth to you.

Commentaries

Consult any commentaries you can and write down insights they have that you might have missed. Call wise teachers or leaders in the church to gain their perspective. Ask people in your small group to look at the passage with you.

Theme

Write down in a sentence the main idea or point you think the author is trying to get across. You may want to write down two or three main principles you discovered that develop the theme.

Application (How will I allow Scripture to transform my life?)

Teaching

Ask, "How will this truth change my life, my church, my family, my work?"

Reproof

Ask, "Where do I fall short? Why do I fall short? How can we evaluate ourselves as a group?"

Correction

Ask, "What will I do about it? What will I correct? How will others help me do this?"

Training in righteousness

Ask, "What practices, relationships, and experiences will I pursue so that I might train myself to be like Christ?"

Bible Study Curriculum: How do I chose the right curriculum?³

Curriculum should never "drive" a group.

It is a mistake to forfeit opportunities for extended prayer or service, or to cut short a necessary community-building activity because "we have to get through the curriculum." Remind group leaders that Jesus did not say, "Go therefore into all the world and complete the curriculum." Your goal is ultimately to make disciples – Christ followers – who are obedient to Jesus, yielded to the Spirit, and loving toward others.

Never substitute a curriculum for the Bible.

Curriculum and study guides should be used to enhance the group's purpose and move people into the Scriptures.

Don't feel obligated to finish all the questions.

Competent leaders know what questions to use and how many of them to use: If a curriculum has too many questions, then choose a few good ones. I recommend five to seven questions at most. Many times, two to three good questions followed by the right kind of group process are more than enough. Better to have a great discussion grappling with a few good questions than answering all the questions at a superficial level. The goal is to actively engage people with the truth of God's Word as it relates to their own heart and growth.

Make sure the curriculum is "group friendly."

Many small group studies are designed for understanding the Bible, not building relationships or generating a deep sense of community and caring. Look closely at not only the questions but also the process. Does the curriculum allow for lots of interaction? Does it ask personal disclosure questions that challenge people to open up and share their lives? Or is it filled with content-based "what" questions, often ignoring personal "why" questions.

Look for an application section.

"How would this apply to your life?" is weak. But if the writer asks questions like, "It's clear from this passage we need to share our faith with others. And it is clear that we all know how and that it would please God. But let's talk about why it is so hard for you and me start spiritual conversations with seekers. Are there fears or other barriers you face in communicating the Gospel? How does it feel when you picture yourself talking to a secular person about Christ?" These questions will get at people's mo-

tives, thoughts, feelings, and needs. Only then can we truly encourage and pray for one another.

Never take your Serendipity Bible into group!

The Serendipity Bible is only a resource. Point people to the Bible.

Using Ice Breakers: How can icebreakers help launch the meeting?

Ice Breakers help level the playing field. They are something easy that lets the group get to know each other a little better and also prepares them for the study to follow. Serendipity Ice Breakers are at the beginning of each study. Some times you might want to choose a Group Building Activity. Use Ice-Breakers at Every Meeting!

- A co-leader *always* goes first. You set the standard.
- This is the *only* time you go around the circle as people answer the ice-breaker question.
- Ice-breakers are NOT a game to fill time.
- Icebreakers involve a question/activity that helps people feel at ease.
- They provide a safe way for everyone to participate at the beginning of your meeting.
- Ice-breaker questions transition your group from social time to study time. See the Serendipity Bible's "cup" questions.
- They may require each person to say something on a predetermined topic or for small groups of two or three to accomplish a simple task in a limited time.
- They bring everyone in the group to a common focus.
- They help bind people to people, usually on a superficial level, which is what needs to be achieved to set the stage for more substantial group experience.
- Do not expect too much from ice-breakers; they are important for setting the stage, but are not the substance of group experience.
- They are extremely valuable both for group members that are beginning to know each other or groups that have been together for a long time.

The Serendipity Bible: Where can I get one?

To Order Bibles Call: 1 800 525-9563 These Bibles usually cost \$25 when ordered individually. Quantity orders receive significant discounts. Order online at www.serendipityhouse.com.

Milk or Meat?

Milk is for Growthgroups. Meat is for Church, Sabbath School, and one-on-one Bible studies. Check out the following texts:

another part of the home, a nearby home, or outdoors. Caring for the children should not be thought of as just baby-sitting. The children need to have their own time of relationship building and sharing of needs and problems. Members, including the men, may take turns leading the children. Make sure that you are abiding by your congregations' policies regarding the qualifications of childcare volunteers.

This is not a burden or duty but an opportunity for the bonding of relationships between adult members of the group and the children. You may even consider having children refer to adult members as aunts and uncles. If the homes of your group members are too small to have room for the children, and it's not appropriate for them to meet outside for weather or other reasons, then have the children meet in another nearby home while the adults meet. You may also be forced to open up the church facility for children to meet during the group time, but this should be a last resort. If there is only one home large enough for both adults and children, you may have to meet in that home every week instead of rotating among the homes.

The children's time should begin with several songs for children followed by an opening prayer. Older children may be encouraged to assist the smaller children. Then the children should have an opportunity to share what is happening in their lives, both good and bad. Usually this will provide an opportunity for other children and the adults to bring in wise counsel and instruction from a Christian perspective. Either during or following this time, simple prayers can be offered. A significant portion of the time can be spent in unstructured playing. Arts and crafts may be used, but usually this requires more preparation time than some of the non-artistic adults may be comfortable with. Diversity in activities should be considered as positive, not negative. A Bible or missions story may be read and briefly discussed. A better way to bring in Scripture is through a teachable moment. As situations arise during playing and talking about the interests or problems of the children, appropriate Bible verses may be introduced even if the adult can only paraphrase it.

The focus of the play time should be relational rather than content oriented. These relationships may be between the children and God, the children and the adult, and between the children themselves. Sometime during the meeting, very light refreshments may be provided for the children. As the groups multiply, someone should take the responsibility of planning out a simple curriculum sheet for the children during the adult group meetings. The outline could look like this:

- Opening Prayer
- Ice Breaker
- Songs
- Bible or Mission Story
- Sharing and Prayer
- Playtime or Planned Activity

- Refreshments
- Playtime

It is very important that the children understand the importance of reaching out to new children whose parents are visiting the group. The children should make the visitors the center of attention and make them feel loved and welcome. Children need to be regularly reminded of this. If properly taught, children will recognize this as an important avenue of their service to Christ for the purpose of evangelism to both the new children and their parents. Groups with children should be creative in meeting the children's needs. Some churches allow children to join the adults for the ice breaker and praise time. Some include them during the Word time.

Conflict Management: What should I do when conflict breaks out in the group?⁵

As relationships in groups deepen, conflict is inevitable. A group that experiences no conflict among members is probably either a brand new group or a group that has not pursued authentic relationships. Let's look at some biblical principles for conflict management and then at some effective conflict management strategies for growth group leaders.

Quarreling and Constructive Conflict

The Bible differentiates between quarreling and constructive conflict. Quarreling is negative because it refers to vain arguments or disagreements for the purpose of promoting self-worth or causing division. James 4: 1-3 asks us, "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. This kind of quarreling is not pleasing to God." Paul told Timothy the same thing in 2 Timothy 2:24, which says, "The Lord's servant must not quarrel." However, there is much admonition in Scripture for leaders to use constructive criticism and exhortation in order to bring about spiritual growth. In 2 Timothy 3:16 this is referred to as "rebuking," and in other places as "admonition" or "exhortation."

Quarreling	Constructive Conflict
seeks win/lose	leads to win/win
tends to divide/choose sides	seeks reconciliation/chooses steps
speaks exaggerations from strife	speaks truth in love
is an end in itself	is a means to an end
usually has a hidden agenda	is only about what is in the open
comes from a person pushing	brought about by necessity in community
is a battle	is work
tears down	clears path toward something better
is usually hard	is usually hard

Strategies for Managing Conflict

There are several approaches to conflict management, each having its own benefits. In Growthgroups, however, the strategies of compromise and collaboration are probably the most effective.

Avoidance (*the turtle*)

Avoidance is an effective strategy to use with conflict when

- the issue is trivial
- the situation will take care of itself
- saving face (yours or someone else's) is important
- time is limited

Avoidance is not an effective strategy to use with conflict when

- the problem is important
- the problem will not resolve itself (and may worsen if neglected)
- credibility would be lost by avoidance
- there is a larger, underlying issue that is important to address

Competition (*the shark*)

Competition would be an effective strategy to use when

- a competitive interaction would result in a better solution
- you want one person/position to prevail over another but you cannot declare your sympathies publicly
- the issue outweighs the relationship
- encouraging competition will clarify the issue and expose weak spots

Competition is not an effective strategy to use when

- long-term relationships are important

- conflict is likely to become personal rather than remaining issue-oriented
- it is important to avoid a win-lose situation or public defeat

Accommodation (*the teddy bear*)

Accommodation is an effective strategy to use with conflict when

- the relationship is more important than the task
- the issue is trivial
- small concessions will reap further gains (i.e., choose your battles)

Accommodation is not an effective strategy to use with conflict when

- your actions could be interpreted as being condescending
- its use would set an unwise precedent (e.g., fee bargaining)

Compromise (*the fox*)

Compromise is an effective strategy to use when

- there is no simple solution
- both parties have strong interest in very different facets of the problem
- there is not enough time for a truly collaborative solution
- the situation is not critical and an adequate solution is good enough

Compromise is not an effective strategy to use when

- A dangerous precedent would be set by failure to hold one's ground
- An optimal resolution is possible
- It is important to avoid concessions of any kind

Collaboration (*the owl*)

Collaboration is an effective strategy to use when

- The task and the relationship are both very important
- the time, information, and willingness to collaborate are present
- the outcome is exceedingly important
- sufficient trust exists between the parties

Collaboration is not an effective strategy to use when

- time, trust, and resources are not available
- the issue is not worthy of the investment of time and Energy

Crisis Work, How should I respond to a crisis?⁶

From time to time in a growth group, an emergency or crisis may occur. As a growth group leader, others will look to you in times of crisis.

Handling a Crisis

In cases of impending physical danger, contact the police immediately. Such crises

would include:

- Life-threatening situations
- Severe accidents or emergencies
- An attempted or threatened suicide
- Present threats of violence by a person to him or herself or to others

Though it is very unlikely that you would ever experience any of these in the context of a group meeting (or even with members of your group), please be aware of the possibility and know that you should contact the police immediately.

Other serious situations: If you have a serious situation that may require further help and guidance to address (e.g., child abuse or neglect, spousal abuse, et cetera), contact your co-leaders group leader immediately for help in discerning the severity of the crisis and for assistance in reporting the incident to the proper authorities (if needed). Remember, in most situations, your first point of contact should be your co-leaders group leader. If your leader is unavailable, contact one of the co-leaders who attend your leaders group. But if there is any threat of violence or danger, call the police immediately.

Supporting versus Counseling

As a growth group leader, you are expected to provide support and encouragement to members of your group. However, you are not trained to be a professional counselor, so you should not assume such a role. Instead, your responsibility is to provide opportunities for your members to receive the appropriate care they require.

Situations that may require professional help:

- Serious marriage problems
- History of past abuse
- Addictions
- Severe personality disorders
- Mental disorders or dysfunctions

If you should encounter anything that resembles the examples above, contact your co-leaders group leader to see what steps should be taken. Together you can determine a plan for encouraging a group member to participate in counseling or another type of help. As you talk with your co-leaders group leaders you could say something like this, "I have a hypothetical situation I would like to talk with you about." This is one way of telling your group leader that this is a *real* situation where you need advice and to maintain confidentiality. Just because you think someone is in need of counseling does not mean they will be willing to participate in counseling. Work with your co-leaders group leader to determine how to approach an individual with the suggestion of counseling or other help.

Group Agreement: How can a group agreement strengthen my group?

All groups operate according to certain values and expectations. Often these go unspoken or unwritten. In order to foster open communication and clarity about the purpose and values of the group, it is important to develop a written group agreement.

- Make a new Group Agreement each year.
- The values around which a group makes a group agreement must be generated by the group, not imposed by the leader.
- Group Agreements should always be in the form of "I" and "you" statements as opposed to "we" statements. Agreements are more personal if "I" is used.
- Group Agreements must be reaffirmed throughout the year so that members remember their commitment.
- Group Agreements clarify logistics and values.

A Process for Making Group Agreements that Create Community

Meeting #1 – Distribute 3 x 5 cards and Group Agreement Values Worth Considering handout (Appendix B). Ask group members to write down on the 3 x 5 card the two or three values they think are most important for this group. Also ask group members to write down their hopes, dreams, and goals for this group.

Meeting #2 – The co-leaders compile a list of values from the last meeting and put them all on a sheet of paper. Give a copy of values to each attendee and ask him/her to choose the top five.

Meeting #3 – The co-leaders prepare a draft Growth Group Agreement and give a copy to each attendee. Read through it as a group, making final changes.

Meeting #4 – The co-leaders hand out copies of the Growth Group Agreement. Ask members to put their name, phone number and birthday on their copy of the agreement and then pass it to their right. As the agreements rotate around, everyone will end up with a group directory listing all names, phone numbers, and birthdays. Leave one copy (the group's copy) of the Group Agreement next to the refreshments after members have signed it. This serves as a visual reminder.

Group Building Activities: What exercises can I do to help enhance my group?

The purpose of these exercises is to build the relationships in your group by encouraging fun, communication, honesty, transparency, authenticity, and shared experiences. As relationships grow, community will be enhanced.

"He is able" celebration

Ask your group members to bring to your next meeting a tangible item that represents how God has proven Himself able in their own lives recently. Ask them to be prepared to explain how God has been able, and how that item represents God's ability to act and bless.

- It should be a physical item that they can hold up and talk about
- They should talk about their own experience (not someone else's)
- You may wish to close this time by all singing the song, "He Is Able."

"God Answers Prayer" celebration

In the Scriptures, we often see God's people recounting the past experiences they have had or remembering God's deeds. This can be done in a variety of ways.

- Remember how you first heard about Christianity
- Give your testimonies
- Remember times when God answered prayer
- Remember when God brought you through a difficult situation
- If your group has been together for a while, remember things you have been through together, and what they meant to you
- Retell the story of first coming to your church and explain what the church has meant to you.

This experience builds a sense of "history" with your group if you've been together for a while. Recounting God's character or your experiences can be a prelude to a time of worship.

Two truths/One lie

Give everyone in the group a sheet of paper and a pen or marker. Have everyone write down two true things about themselves and one lie. These can be in any order. (Have them write big enough so the paper can be shown and seen around the room.) Then have someone read their three items. Everyone must guess which item is a lie. The person then reads each item and explains why it is a truth or a lie. Have everyone take a turn.

Questions in a hat

Before your meeting, fill a hat (or bowl) with opener questions on individual pieces of paper (one question on each piece of paper). Have at least as many questions as there are people in the group. Vary the depth of the questions to be appropriate for your group. Add the following "special" things on separate pieces of paper and put them in the hat:

- "Pass to the Right"

- "Pass to the Left"
- "Boomerang (back to you)"

At the beginning, state that everyone always has the right to "pass" on any question (to put people at ease and not feel put on the spot). Someone (let's say Mary) picks a question out of the hat. Mary can ask anyone in the room (but just one person) to answer that question. She asks John. After John answers the question, he then picks a question and asks anyone in the room except Mary, and so on. If you pulled the "Pass to the right" or "Pass to the left" pieces out of the hat, save them and use them when you are asked a question. If you use a "Pass to the right," then the person on your right must answer the question. If you have the "Boomerang," then the person who asked you the question must answer it. (Of course, anyone can pass if they wish.)

"Who am I?"

During the week before your meeting, collect one unknown fact about everyone in the group. This should be something the group members will not mind being told. The leader types a list of these facts (including one for himself/herself). Enough copies are made so everyone has a list. At the meeting, the lists are handed out. The objective is to find out which fact matches which person. You may approach someone and ask about only two items on the list. (" Are you the one who. .." If not, then " Are you the one who. .."). After two inquiries, you must move on to someone else. After a time limit (or as soon as someone gets them all), the game stops and you read through the list, identifying everyone.

Draw a time line of your life

Give everyone a long sheet of paper and pens or markers. Have each group member draw a time line of his or her life, showing three to five major life events. The number of events can vary, depending upon how much time you have. Then let each explain what he or she drew.

Draw a self-portrait

Give everyone a large sheet of paper and markers or crayons. Have each person draw a self-portrait. Collect all the self-portraits, hold them up one by one, and guess who each represents. When you figure out who it is, have that person tell a little about themselves.

Introductions

When introductions are needed, instead of everyone introducing themselves, let someone else in the group introduce them. If it is a couple's group, have the spouses introduce each other. This can be very affirming.

Videos

Videos can be used for times of worship, praise, or singing. Sing along with the AdventPraise worship DVD (www.adventpraise.com), or use a home video camera to film "A Day in the Life" of a group member.

Sub-grouping

If your group is large enough, break them up into smaller groups, even pairs, for various activities. This is especially useful for times of prayer, sharing on a personal level, allowing relationships to deepen, and dealing with sensitive subjects.

Names of God

Ask, "What attribute of God has been especially meaningful to you lately?" (For example, "I really appreciate God's faithfulness to me because. ..") Have the leader and each person in the group talk about this. *Variation:* Don't talk about it – go right to prayer and pray through it.

Their names in a verse

The leader, ahead of time, picks a topic, and chooses verses on that topic – one verse for each member of the group and for him/herself. During prayer time, have each person read his or her assigned verse with their own name in it and pray through that verse. For example, the topic is "God's love for us." Verses chosen could be Psalms 13:5-6, John 15:9, Romans 5:5, etc. One of the group members, Mary, reads aloud Psalm 13:5-6: "But I, Mary, trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I, Mary, will sing to you Lord, for you have been good to me."

Serve each other

Look for opportunities to serve each other outside of group time. This will really go a long way in developing your relationships with each other. How about

- painting someone's house (inside or out)
- doing a large cleaning project
- bringing meals when help is needed

Serving others together

Look for opportunities to serve as a group, providing help, support, or encouragement to someone else. Here are a things you can do:

- help a needy family or person(s)
- serve at church for a special event (i.e., childcare for Easter service)
- look into an international ministries opportunity

Celebrate

Search for things to celebrate: groups starting, birthing, growing; personal accomplishments; the end of a season of your group; a successful experience. Be creative in the way you celebrate. Enjoy being together!

"It's a wonderful life"

In advance, the leader secretly asks three close friends (may include the spouse) of each group member to write out what the world would be like if that person had never been born. Before reading these aloud, the leader cues up the scene from the classic movie when George Bailey tells the angel it would be better if he had never lived, and the angel Clarence has an idea to show him how the world would have suffered. After viewing the video, read the three letters aloud for each person. Allow time for the group to comment.

Gauges

Each person is given a white sheet of cardboard. These have been prepared in advance with the following categories on the left margin:

- Emotional (Am I in touch with my feelings?)
- Relational (What is the quality of my family relationships and friendships?)
- Physical/Recreational (Am I healthy? Am I having any fun?)
- Ministry Fulfillment (What is my joy level in ministry?)
- Spiritual (How honest and growing is my relationship with God these days?)

Colored pieces of tape or colored markers are then made available. Each person takes time to analyze each dimension of his or her life and put a piece of tape or wide band of color next to each gauge. Colors have the following meanings:

- Green I am flourishing in this area.
- Gray I am doing okay; nothing too great, nothing too bad.
- Yellow I have growing concerns for this area. Caution!
- Red I am in trouble in this area. It requires serious attention and correction.

Then each person holds up their card and explains the gauges.

Hot Seat

The leader calls each group member, one at a time, to sit on a seat in the room, facing everyone. Then the person on the hot seat chooses a question from a pile and answers it. Members of the group pose follow-up questions or discuss the person's responses for the next three to four minutes. Sample questions for the above exercise might include:

What is your favorite book of the Bible and why?

Lately I am becoming more _____
The feeling that best describes where I am at right now is _____
If there was one person in the world that I could spend a day with, that would be _____

Group member appreciation night

Each member of the group has a piece of paper with their name at the top of it. Lines are drawn on the paper to create enough boxes for all of the people in the room. At the top of the sheet is the sentence, "I appreciate this person because he/she. ..." Pass these sheets around the room, asking each member to complete the sentence by filling in one box. After all the sheets have been passed to everyone in the room, return the sheets to their owners. Then have members share what impresses them most about the affirmation they received from others in the group. (This will take approximately 30-45 minutes.)

Life story

Over the period of several weeks, each member of the small group can be assigned to spend fifteen minutes telling his or her life story. Then, fifteen minutes of discussion and interacting can occur. The point of the exercise is to find out exactly where people have come from. Often, it is hard to appreciate people until we understand their past and some of the significant events in their lives.

Three key material possessions

Set up the scene as follows: Explain to the group that they have just discovered a major fire in their home. Assuming they have been able to safely get their family out, what three material possessions would they take with them from their burning home? Have members explain why they would take the items they chose. Then generate a discussion to discover the value behind each of these possessions and why we hold certain possessions so dear.

Group photo

The purpose of this exercise is to have each member take a "picture" of the group. In other words, have each person draw or describe what the group looks like using a word-picture. For example, the group could be described as any of - the following:

- A hospital (a place where wounds are healed)
- A gas station (a place to be refueled spiritually)
- A fortress (a safe place where struggles can be shared)
- A battleground (a place where we can work on who we are becoming in Christ)
- A mountaintop (a place to gain perspective and be encouraged)

- A valley (a place of discouragement and trial)
- A carnival (a place for fun, enthusiasm, and excitement)

These are just some examples, but have members either draw or describe the kind of group environment they need or see.

Fill in the Blank

Ask various members of the group the following “fill in the blank” questions:

- Tomorrow, something I will most likely take for granted is...
- Last year at this time I never would have thought God would ...
- The person I am most thankful for this year is ... because...
- One specific attribute of God which I most appreciate is...
- The following people have been especially used by the Lord to enrich my life this past year are ...
- I want to specifically thank the Lord for giving me the gift of ... so I can use it to serve Him and His church.
- Considering the standard of living of most of the world’s population, I am rich because I have these material blessings...
- If I could stand up and shout anything to the rest of the group tonight, I would tell them that ...
- My God is ...

Learning Styles: What are three major learning styles that might be within my group?⁸

Adult educators and trainers often refer to certain “learning styles.” There are three major types of learning styles utilized by members of your group. An effective leader should use a variety of presentation and discussion techniques in order to communicate effectively to each learner.

Visual Learners – the “see-ers”

These people respond well to charts, diagrams, and other visual stimuli. They tend to like handouts and enjoy parables and stories. They are visual thinkers; that is, they respond well to word pictures and to stories that are vivid and descriptive and allow them to “picture” what is happening.

Tips for the leader: Use handouts, newspaper articles, story boards, paper and crayons, and objects to keep the attention of your visual learners.

Auditory Learners – the “hearers”

Auditory learners enjoy learning by hearing. They would rather be in a discussion on an issue than read a book about it. Some of them may be avid readers, but in general, they would rather listen to a story than read one.

Tips for the leader: Use subgroups to allow full participation by all members in discussions. Allow members of your group to respond verbally to questions and decisions. Use background music during prayer times or at the beginning of the meeting.

Kinesthetic Learners – the “doers”

These folks like to touch and feel things. They like to participate in the action. They learn by doing. While a visual learner might be motivated to help the poor by seeing a picture of the poor in an issue of Newsweek, the kinesthetic learner would be motivated by a field trip to the inner city.

Tips for the leader: Utilize objects and experiences for your group. Plan outings and events that allow people to experience truth in action. Allow kinesthetic learners to learn by trial and error, rather than by simply telling them the answer to something.

Levels of Communication: How do we press deeper into group intimacy?⁹

Level 1: Cliché Conversation

Discussing “safe” public information takes place during the first few minutes of a meeting: weather, family, friends, current affairs.

Level 2: Information or Facts

People talk generally about events, ideas, and facts, but not about themselves, their commitments, and their beliefs about Scripture.

Level 3: Ideas and Opinions

This deeper level of communication involves a willingness to talk about personal ideas and opinions. There is involves some risk.

Level 4: Feelings

People are willing to risk telling group members what they *feel*, not just what they *think*. They are less protective and more open.

Level 5: Peak Communication

The deepest level of communication involves openness, transparency, and self-disclosure. It is a risky and rare but powerful level of communication. Think of a close relationship you have; what you most remember is probably peak communication. Leaders must model deeper levels of communication.

1. The group leader must *share personal struggles*, not just the victories
2. The group leader must model good listening skills. *Listen to understand*, not to provide answers.

3. The group leader must *respond positively*, even if someone's answer is wrong. If the leader criticizes a response, others will be more hesitant to share.

Matthew Parties: What is a Matthew party and how does it work?

As far as possible, have your Matthew Parties on the same day, at the same time, and at the same place as your weekly Growth Group. This helps to build bridges, break down barriers, and provides a natural next step for inviting people to your group. If a person is able to come to a birthday party on Tuesday at 6:30 p.m., then there is a good chance that their schedule will be "free" when you invite them to your regular group. Remember that Matthew Parties are not places for "sin to abound." They should be wholesome activities around which to build God honoring friendships and share experiences.

- Quarterly birthday party
- Open house – Every year move your Growth Group to different member's home and have an open house for the neighborhood.
- Special dinner - Valentines, Thanksgiving, Christmas
- Sabbath afternoon potluck/hike
- Community service project

Open Chair: What is an open chair and how does it work?

Growthgroups are never closed! If the co-leaders do not make this part of the group's life, it will *never* happen. You must intentionally teach the fish, the people, how to be fishers of men and women.

Before you begin inviting people

1. Involve everyone in the process. Everyone in your group should be taught how to invite people to the group.
2. Every week remind people they are free to invite their friends and family to the group.
3. Every week pray for the people God wants your members to invite to the group.
4. Prior to each Matthew Party take 20 minutes during group to ask God to bring to your minds the names of people He wants you to invite to the group. When a name comes to mind, write it down. Assume that God is answering your prayer and giving you names of people. Give each person a copy of Open Chair Worksheet for this exercise.

How to invite new members

1. Invite them to a Matthew Party. Introduce them to others at the Matthew Party who attend your group.

2. During the weeks following the Matthew Party, ask God for a Divine appointment where you can learn about a need or problem they are facing in their life.
 - A. Listen to them and empathize with them.
 - B. Ask them, "Do you remember that open house/potluck/birthday party at so-and-so's house? There is small group of people who have continued to meet each week at the same time. Do you remember meeting ____ and ____? They come each week"
 - C. Tell them how your group has provided support, encouragement, and prayer for you as you have faced difficulties in life.
 - D. Ask them, "Would you be interested in something like that?"
 - E. Pick them up and take them with you to group or meet them somewhere so they can follow you to group. Avoid planning to meet them at group. They may get cold feet and not come on their own.

Introducing your friend to the group

1. You be their personal host or hostess.
2. Introduce them to everyone. It is your job to make sure they are comfortable.
3. Call them a couple days later to stay in touch..

Prayer, ½ Night of Group Prayer: How can we have a special time of prayer?

(Use during spring quarter in preparation for church-wide harvest event. Or adapt for a special group prayer focus) Here is An Outline for Prayer – ACTS

Personal Prayer of Adoration and Confession (8:00 pm to 9:30 pm)

A – Adoration (Psalm 100)

Practical Suggestions:

Choose one of God's attributes.

Paraphrase a psalm.

Pray back a psalm.

C -- Confession (1John 1:9)

Practical Suggestions:

Take inventory. Is there anything that displeases the Lord?

Is there anything that needs to be made right?

Group Prayer of Thanksgiving and Supplication (9:30 pm to 12:00 pm)

T -- Thanksgiving (Luke 17:11-19; 1 Thess. 5:16-18)

Practical Suggestions:

List your blessings using the following categories:

Spiritual
Relational
Material

S -- Supplication (Phil. 4:6-7; 1 John 5:14-15)

Practical Suggestions:

Categorize the harvest event under the following headings:

- People receiving advertising
- People who have attended Matthew Parties
- People on group's Blessing List
- My friends, relatives, family
- People I will personally invite (Take 30 minutes for people to make a list.)
- For each person present that God will provide "God opportunities"
to personally invite the people on the lists.
- For the speaker and counselor teams
- Meeting logistics (place, supplies, equipment, etc)
- End with the Lord's Prayer

Prayer: What are some guidelines for conversational prayer?

It takes time for a group to become comfortable with prayer. Give your group the time they need to grow in this area but have a plan in mind so your group does indeed grow into deeper levels of group prayer. As co-leaders you decide when your group is ready to move on to the next level. Once your group is comfortable with these styles of prayer, use different styles each week.

Option 1: Co-leader closes with a prayer of blessing and prays for the people God wants us to invite to this group.

Option 2: Co-leader takes prayer requests and prays for these requests, for God's blessing, and for people to invite.

Option 3: Co-leader takes prayer requests and asks for volunteers to pray for specific requests as they are mentioned. Co-leader closes, asking God to bless the group and prays for the people God wants us to invite to group.

Option 4: Co-leader begins prayer then, while heads are bowed, asks people to share their prayer requests. Before moving onto the next prayer requests, co-leader asks for volunteers who would also pray for this specific request. Co-leader closes, asking God to bless the group and prays for the people God wants us to invite to the group.

Eight Guide Lines for Conversational Prayer:

- Never pray around the circle. People will feel obligated to pray even when they may not be ready.
- Encourage and model how a group can surround a prayer request with many people praying for the specific request before moving on to another prayer request.
- Supporting prayers (“Amen;” “yes, Father;” “please, Father;” Bible promises, songs)
- Favorite songs, Bible promises, and poems add a nice touch.
- Silence is ok
- Sit, kneel, stand, prostrate
- Encourage use of singing, Bible passages, silence, etc.
- Close with the Lord’s Prayer

Once you have experienced conversational prayer in your group, use a variety of prayer styles from week to week.

Prayer Warrior: How can my group adopt a “shut in?”

Train your group to refer to their shut-in as their Prayer Warrior.

As co-leaders:

1. Make a list of prayer warriors you know in the church.
2. Prioritize them according to who most needs help.

As a group:

1. Talk with your group about adopting a prayer warrior.
2. Bring two or three recommendations to the group to choose from.
3. Begin calling. Ask if they have already been adopted by a Growth Group yet. (If they have, congratulate them and move on to the next one.)
4. Explain to them that your group wants them to be part of the group even though they will not be able to attend the weekly group meetings and that the group wants to (*See below forexamples*)
5. Explain to them that their commitment to the group will be to:
 - Pray for the group while they meet each week.
 - Pray for each person in the group every day.
 - Birthday parties
 - Christmas dinners
 - Send group card on anniversary day
 - Send group card on the day they lost their spouse
 - Sunday work-bee each summer
 - Phone calls throughout the week

- Help with transportation to medical appointments
- Basic car care
- Send church calendar/bulletins
- Yard care
- Pet care
- etc.

Praise and Thanksgiving Worship Service:

Suggested Order of Service

- Songs (2 or 3 songs, *ask people to stand*)
- Call to Worship, Ps 8:1 – 9:2
- Prayer (Say the Lord's Prayer together)
- Song (Jesus Loves Me) *Ask people to sit*
- (Children's Story)
- Tithe and Offerings
- Song (Give Thanks)
- Ps 95:1-2 or Ps 100

What are you thankful for?

Song (Give Me The Bible)
Ps 119:105

Choose of your favorite Bible verses and share it with us.

Song (What a Friend We Have in Jesus)
Phil 4:4-7 or Ps 95:6

What prayer requests you would like to bring before God?

If you have an unspoken prayer request, raise your hand.

Silent Prayer (5 minutes)

Pray for the requests you have heard mentioned

Pray for your own silent prayer requests

Song (Nearer Still Nearer)

Song (Day By Day and with Each Passing Moment)

How has God been working in your life this past week?

Song (Doxology)

Acts 2:42

We will continue our worship service next door as we fellowship and eat together. We are dismissed.

Roles: What are some of the roles that group members play into?¹⁰

Often members take on certain roles (sometimes consciously and sometimes without really knowing they are doing it). People will take on different roles at different stages of your group. Below are some supportive and destructive group roles you might want to be aware of.

Supportive roles

1. **Information seeker** – asks other members to tell more of their story.
2. **Opinion seeker** – takes an active interest in what others in the group think
3. **Initiator** – offers new ideas, new ways of doing things. Often sets the pace in a discussion.
4. **Elaborator** – adds more than just the facts in a story. Adds “color” to the discussion.
5. **Tension Reliever** – often uses gentle humor to relieve tense situations. Uses “identification” to keep the tense person from feeling alone: “I understand. I feel that way many times myself.”
6. **Reviewer** – tends to provide summary statements and clarity statements.
7. **Consensus seeker** – looks to see what the group is thinking and whether or not there is agreement on issues or decisions.
8. **Encourager** – finds ways to build up others in the group.
9. **Standard Bearer** – holds forth the values of the group and defends them.

Destructive roles

1. **Aggressor** – insults and criticizes others. May show strong jealousy.
2. **Rabbit Chaser** – consistently focuses on stories or issues irrelevant to the topic at hand.
3. **Recognition Seeker** – tends to focus primarily on his or her own achievements or successes.
4. **Dominator** – monopolizes group interaction. Tries to control discussions.
5. **Special Interest Pleader** – tends to focus on personal pet peeve regardless of the topic or direction of discussion.
6. **Negativist** – might be a perfectionist who is never satisfied with anything. Quick to point out the “down side” of any issue or topic.
7. **Quibbler** – focuses on details. Often loses the forest for the sake of the trees.
8. **Practical Joker** – rather than using humor positively, tends to distract people with jokes and comments. This is often a defense mechanism, and is used whenever a discussion gets too personal.

Your job as a leader is not to “peg” each person in order to figure out what their role is. Roles may change from time to time. You simply need to be aware that these kinds of roles exist in a group. Listen to each person with a sensitive spirit and heart. Ask probing questions that help get behind each role. If you have problems working with any one particular type of person in your group, consult your co-leaders group leader for ways to solve the problem and deal with the relationship.

Troubleshooting Tips: What are some things we can do to fix common problems?¹¹

Creating safe places where life change can be maximized is not easy. Sometimes it's reassuring to know that all Growthgroups undergo some type of relational difficulty. If group members expect to grow, people will have to be vulnerable. Anyone who has ever led or been a part of a nurturing growth group will tell you that where people are emotionally transparent, problems will come to the surface. When they do, it's the leader's job to help steer the group in the right direction.

Two principles guide a leader's attempts at successful troubleshooting. First, any solution must promote the health and wholeness of the individual. Second, any resolution must also promote the health and wholeness of the total group. The following troubleshooting tips were garnered in part from discussions with leaders. They should go a long way in helping your group deal with problem situations with grace and insight. Remember no technique is 100 percent successful in solving the crisis your group may encounter, but with prayerful attention, sensitivity, and caring interaction using one or more of these tips, your group has a good chance of not only making it through your particular barrier, but realizing true community and maturity on the other side of it.

Issue #1 – The Overly Talkative Member

If not moderated properly, what often begins as a trickle of friendly patter can turn into a virtual flood of words. The Talker is rarely shy, and usually very uncomfortable with long periods of silence. Typically, what's behind this need to fill in the pauses is the fear of intimacy or personal disclosure. The Talker is very quick to move on an item and can very easily unsettle a group's pacing if there is not some type of sensitive intervention. Here are some tools that you may find helpful.

Establish Ground Rules for Your Group. Set the rule that no one can speak a second time unless everyone who wants to talk has had a chance to speak. Often in the case of a Talker who is married, the spouse is silent or appears introverted. Use the situation to your advantage. Each person may speak a second time only after their spouse has been given an opportunity. You would be amazed at the positive response from over-run mates.

Make (or reiterate) the rule that no one can overrun someone else while they are

speaking (translation: “NO INTERRUPTING!”).

Go systematically around the group, allowing each person a chance to talk. Remember at the onset to be sensitive with members who are either unaccustomed to or feel uncomfortable with speaking in a group setting.

Assure the talkative member privately that you value his or her sharing but that you wish to hear other people's comments as well. In front of the group, state that you would like to hear more about the person's items of interest after the meeting.

Agree at the beginning of the meeting to save some issues for the end, after everything else has been discussed (this only works after you have seen the Talker verbally camp on certain subjects repeatedly).

Here's a creative solution: throw a football or some other object around the room. Only the person with the object in his or her hand has the right to talk in the group. During the discussion, simply interject and sensitively direct a question to another person.

Meet individually. Spend some one-on-one time with the Talker. Attempt to ascertain the driving issues that are making it necessary for the person to dominate the meeting.

Firmly and sensitively confront the person in private. Begin with the positive contributions the person has made in the group and the need for others to be given the opportunity to make a similar impact. Use the confrontation time as an important affirmation moment as well.

Ask for the Talker's help in drawing others out. Suggest he or she end his or her comments with a question like, “So what do the rest of you think?”

Issue #2 – The Answer Person

For too many years within the Christian community, spiritual fruitfulness has been wrongly determined on the basis of how much you know. This measure stands in sharp contrast to the biblical notion that “fruit” for the believer is defined by what you do and by who you are. Because of this misinterpretation of Jesus' teaching, knowledge has preceded action on the list of preeminent Christ-like virtues. It is not hard to see, then, why many sincere group members see nothing wrong with throwing around easy answers, simply quoting a Bible verse, or becoming wrapped up in some minute theological trivia having nothing to do with the group discussion. These group members are often argumentative and have very little tolerance for outside interpretation of feelings or biblical passages. They often will go to great lengths to make sure their opinions are heard and validated. Answer people all too quickly dismantle safe places. Other members should not have to experience the pain of non-attention, judgment, or an argumentative spirit. Here are some helpful ways to provide what the Answer person needs and keep the group process on track.

Take action during the meeting

- Backtrack to the original idea, question, or thought shared.
- Refocus on the passage or material being used and collect more information from everyone; then summarize.
- Lovingly redirect the discussion to the other group members: “What do the rest of you think of this passage?” or “How do the rest of you feel?”
- Affirm what is right about the “always right” person's answers, but look for other points of view.
- Be a model of true empathy yourself so the Answer person can see a better way to help others.
- Remind the group of the importance of silence.
- Avoid arguing about who is right or wrong.
- Before the meeting, share how “pat” answers or oversimplified responses make others feel. Ask the group to monitor themselves. Do not feel afraid to call members on this after you have set the ground rules.
- Direct the group to prayer.

Speak to the Answer person

- If it's a continuing problem, talk with the person outside the group. Describe to them what their sharing in this manner does to the group. Tell the truth in love.
- Affirm the person for what they do know, but also let them know how their knowledge may not be what is needed or appropriate.
- Let the person know they need to let the communication of others stand on its own without judgment or immediate correction.
- Ask the insensitive member to share more feelings rather than thoughts (“I think ...”).
- Ask the Answer person to help summarize or rephrase points of the discussion.
- Attempt to find out from the person privately what drives him or her to always appear “in the know.”

Issue #3 – The Member with an Agenda

All of us struggle from time to time with the issue of wanting to maintain inordinate control over aspects of our lives. Groups can become the arena where our sinful power struggles play out. Some individuals will be especially prone to repeatedly trying to prove themselves and will try to redirect some facet of group life their way for no apparent reason other than their own preferences. A person presenting this problem leaves telltale language clues. Look for phrases such as “yes, but” or “Well, I think.” Often this person is critical of the group process, even with items considered

tabled by the group. Here are some hints to aid you in dealing with this individual.

Reaffirm group covenants while you're all together

- Reaffirm, recast, reestablish, challenge, redefine – use whatever word you want, but remind everyone of the agreed upon guidelines for group involvement.
- Discuss these standards with everyone in the group to affirm the purpose and values of the gathering.

Speak to the person with the agenda

- Confront the person privately and attempt to discern the underlying problem.
- Suggest that the person work with the other members to find a proactive solution that solves the problem yet doesn't violate the boundary established by the group.

Issue #4-Superficial Discussions

Beginning relationships often have a period where facts are shared more easily than feelings. Not much is bartered in terms of emotional risk and therefore not much is gained at this stage. Early on, this surface-level communication is normal and shouldn't be cause for alarm. Often though, a group struggles to break through the strong ice of superficiality and go deeper, even after many meetings. This hesitation can be the result of a leader's direction, or because someone else is impeding progress in group members' bonding. Whatever is keeping the group in a "functionally frozen" mode, you can easily prepare yourself to handle this problem. Surface communication can also be a sign that you are attempting to go too deep too fast. Mentally take a step back and ascertain whether this is so. If you sense you have gone too quickly, admit your error and be willing to proceed at a more realistic pace. By humbling yourself in this way, you model vulnerability rather than harming the relational chemistry of those gathered. Your openness actually works to center the focus and unite the participants for future growth together.

Improve your questions. By far, the number one way to open up a group is to lead by example. "Speed of the leader, speed of the team," could easily have been first postulated in a growth group.

Usual rule of thumb is to speak as deeply and openly as you would like the others to share.

- Have specific applications and questions. Don't be afraid to challenge the group.
- Ask "feeling" questions rather than just "opinion" or "fact" questions.
- Where appropriate, be more directive. Sometimes ask closed-ended questions that will elicit specific answers rather than open-ended questions.
- Restate and rephrase the question. Often silence means group members are simply unsure of what was asked of them. (Silence may also indicate they're thinking, not that
- they're reluctant.)

Create a safer climate

During initial minutes of the meeting, remind members of confidentiality guidelines. If your group is too large, break into smaller sub-groups. Contact the group members outside of the meeting to see if anything could have made the questions easier to answer.