

# Small Groups Development



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***Striving together ...  
Saving lives!***



# Forward

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**P**astoring at Maadi Community Church, Cairo, Egypt, was an amazing ride. My wildest dreams of what God would do in and through this ministry were exceeded. We saw thousands of lives impacted for Christ. On the way, my life, my beliefs, and my ideas about what it means “to do church” were reshaped forever.

I have always been committed to the necessity of small groups as a means of creating an environment for spiritual growth. After all, making a biblical, theological, practical and even sociological case for small groups is not much of a stretch. However, for many years of ministry I made the mistake of viewing small group ministry as just one important ministry of many. And because of that mistake, I spent years evaluating the health and dynamics of the church based primarily on weekend attendance.

Five years of ministering alongside Bill Joukhadar at MCC radically changed my view. I came to understand that small group ministry is not just “one of many programs” but is an essential, foundational component of a church’s DNA. I also discovered that observing the health of small groups often offers a more accurate snapshot of the church’s health and vitality.

When we first started working together, Bill asked, “What would you think if people with limited time constraints chose to attend a small group rather than attend the weekend service in which you would be preaching?” I recall that my response was defensive – after all, the real acid test for any church is weekend attendance, right? Wrong!

I have since come to appreciate the exciting dynamic that is created when a church is equally committed to “celebration” (weekend services) and “cell” (small groups). Churches that equally prioritise weekend services and small groups grow – they grow upward, inward, outward and forward.

Bill is a rare find. He is the most deeply committed, hardest working person I have ever had the privilege of serving alongside. He has committed his life to see the Great Commandment and the Great Commission fulfilled. I believe that Bill is one of today’s leading specialists in biblical small group ministry. You will find his teaching anchored in God’s word. The success that God has blessed him with speaks for itself.

I pray that as you read this testimony and begin to implement his Small Groups Church Plan in your church with love, patience and sensitivity, the Lord will give you the privilege of experiencing the ride of your life.



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# Session 1

## Orientation

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### Introduction

Part of every church leader's vision should be to see his/her church grow according to biblical guidelines in the most effective and efficient ways. Positive "growth" measures both quality and quantity. Ephesians 4:16 makes it quite clear that the church the Lord delights to build through His people is one that is characterised by "*health and growth and is full of love*". For this reason, diligent pastors often look for creative ways to bolster the growth of their churches through the collective ministry and missionary efforts of their paid staff and congregational team of volunteer ministers.

In August 2000, at Maadi Community Church (MCC), Cairo, the Lord began to unveil a simple, yet powerful, universal plan for growing evangelical churches. This church growth plan is revolutionary to our present time and centres on the development of small groups.

Small groups complement and complete the weekly large body worship celebration experience. A healthy church can be illustrated by a wholesome cake that is decorated with icing. The cake represents the place where *community* takes place in many small group settings and the icing represents the place where the whole church community gathers together, as one large body congregation, to *celebrate* the goodness of God. Note: It is the cake that supports the icing, and, while the cake can stand alone, the icing cannot. Even though the cake does not need the icing, both are desired since both parts combining together in a complimentary way is better.



When this plan was implemented at MCC, amazing things happened. In just eight years, MCC grew in health, strength and size from 400 to 4,000 members, worshipping and fellowshiping in 413 small groups in the mother church, and five daughter churches that were formed. More noteworthy, 1,600 new believers came to Christ through these groups!

An important part of the church plan was this training program which was established to teach, inspire and equip believers in the work of building the church. A biblical structure was also developed to steer, support and safeguard the work and the workers.



Healthy small groups employ biblical **principles** that perform amazingly well in many denominational settings, many countries, and cultures. These principles have been trialled and proven successful in evangelical churches in a number of countries around the world. Throughout this training experience, you will be encouraged to freely "shop" for these universal and timeless principles.

The small groups approach to building the church is not new ... it's how God grew His church in New Testament times. And I believe it is how He wants to continue to grow His church around the world today.

## Three purposes of small groups

Small groups are made up of the larger body of believers meeting in smaller, intimate-sized groups of 5-12 people. They meet in homes or at other places, outside the church building, for the purpose of understanding and practicing *life*. Their purpose is to deepen community, grow leaders and impact unchurched friends with the love of Christ. Some churches call their groups, *life*-groups and use *life* as an acronym to mean: **Living In Fellowship to Evangelise**, summarising these three equally weighted purposes.

While the traditional Sunday worship service experience can increase the size of a congregation, it cannot take relational intimacy of the members to an adequate depth. This **deepening of our relational intimacy with God and one another (growing in community)** is the first purpose of small groups and will result in maturity, producing ongoing seasons of abundant fruitful growth.

A second purpose of **growing leaders (making ministers)** of the church is vital for the church to function as one body. Following the counsel of Jethro to Moses, and Paul's instructions on building up the Body of Christ, a critical objective of this training is to harness the church's most valuable resource — its specially gifted members — for the work of building community, leadership (discipleship) and the Kingdom of God (Exodus 18:21; Ephesians 4:11-13,16).

History shows the church cannot be built solely upon the efforts of a professional clergy and just 20% of faithful volunteer members. The church's urgent need today is to inspire and empower the remaining 80% of the congregation to engage in active service — in the work of building up the church. Small groups exist for this purpose.

Flowing from these first two purposes is the third: **impacting unchurched friends with the love of Christ (relational evangelism)**. The church today is not performing as well as it can in its mission of sharing the Good News, and time is running out. We need to involve "all" of God's specially gifted people (every believer) in this important work. We must unite together to lead the church through another reformation — not a reformation of theology, but of understanding *how* to best tackle the work of building the church and expanding His Kingdom.

This training will help believers understand and practice the Great Commandment and the Great Commission (Matthew 22:36-40; 28:18-20), so that they may experience the reality of a "Great Church" (Ephesians 4:11-12, 16). Small groups are the best way to deepen community, grow leaders, and impact unchurched friends through the love of Christ.

## Benefits

From the time small groups were adopted by Maadi Community Church in Cairo, members of the church became increasingly inspired, equipped and engaged in church life at deeper levels and as a result reached out to their unchurched friends in practical ways with the love of Christ. Through an expanding network of friendship relationships, the Good News of Jesus Christ travelled freely and widely and resulted in many people coming to Christ. A large number of new believers were incorporated into the life of the church and were helped to grow in their faith and experienced joy and fruitfulness.

As members of the church practised *life* in their small groups, the following encouraging growth signs were evidenced:

- National, racial and cultural barriers diminished (congregation of 50 nationalities!)

- Spiritual gifts were discovered and practised
- Commitment to personal godliness increased
- Members were transformed into servant-hearted ministers
- Purpose, satisfaction and fulfilment was experienced
- Practical needs were met
- Giving of time, talent and treasure to the work of God increased
- Differences of gender, personality, age, culture, experiences and gifts were seen as complementary strengths in the life of their groups and church
- Competition gave way to a spirit of co-operation and collaboration
- Unity resulted and helped to strengthen and safeguard the church from divisive influences and threats
- Christian life became purposeful, exciting, vibrant and fulfilling
- An attitude of duty gave way to an attitude of devotion
- Kingdom expansion was given highest priority in personal and church activities
- Many came to Christ, were incorporated into the church, baptised, discipled and given leadership opportunity
- The church enjoyed growth in health, size and love.

## Getting to know you

---

One of the primary purposes of small groups is the development of our relationship with the Lord and with each other. It is appropriate at this time to engage in an icebreaker activity that will help us to relax and reveal something about ourselves, which in turn will help us to relate to each other. Relaxing, revealing and relating is what needs to take place for relationships to form and grow well.

Every person in this training group has been grouped together into pairs. When you have been informed of the name of your *pair-partner*, you may sit together for the purpose of this exercise. Use the questionnaire on the following page to begin to get to know each other.

### Instructions

During this time, please write down what you learn about your pair-partner ...

- You will be allowed 5 minutes to ask all or any of the questions listed.
- After 10 minutes, we will regroup and you will be allowed 60 seconds to introduce your partner.

Please relax ... this is not a competition 😊

## Getting to know you ...

1. What is your name?	4. What are your hobbies?
2. Where were you born?	5. What is your passion in life?
3. What is your occupation/skill?	
6. Apart from saving you, share one amazing thing the Lord has done in your life.	

## Commitment – *making things happen!*

You are expected to do **your** best in all aspects of this training. This includes embracing the following six commitments:

### 1. Commit to the small groups vision

Establish expanding networks of small groups in the life of the church that will effectively ... *“Equip God’s people to do his work and **build** up the church ... so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love”* (Ephesians 4:12, 16).

Please examine the Small Groups Church Plan that is illustrated in Session 2 (page 17).

Note: This plan is founded upon two great biblical passages of Scripture, the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Read aloud Matthew 22:36-40 and 28:18-20

## Snack Break (15 – 20 minutes)

**Please take every opportunity to serve others before serving yourself.**

## 2. Commit to becoming a servant-leader

**Jesus** says ...

*“Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all. For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give my life as a ransom for many”* (Mark 10:43-45).

**Peter** said ...

*“God has given gifts to each of you from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Manage them well so that God’s generosity can flow through you”* (1 Peter 4:10).

## 3. Commit to cultivating community

Community doesn’t just happen. It is the result of intentional, selfless and sacrificial effort made by every person in the group. With God’s help, do your best to be:

- a. **Real** — share your true feelings
- b. **Inclusive** — accept others
- c. **Supportive** — help others
- d. **Forgiving** — don’t harbour resentment
- e. **Honest** — speak the truth in love
- f. **Humble** — admit your weaknesses and be teachable
- g. **Polite** — respect the differences of others
- h. **Trustworthy** — keep confidence, don’t gossip
- i. **Dependable** — follow through with your commitment to serve
- j. **Punctual** — plan to arrive 5-10 minutes before each session; notify the trainer if you anticipate arriving late or are unable to attend
- k. **Servant-hearted** — be a server, not an observer!

## 4. Commit to pair-partnership (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

For the duration of training you are asked to develop a meaningful friendship with your pair-partner. You can do this by ...

- a. Encouraging each other at training sessions and via email and phone
- b. Praying for each other in and out of group training times
- c. Having coffee together (at least once)
- d. Sharing a meal together (at least once)
- e. Bearing each other’s burdens as you can (Galatians 6:2)

**At all times, do your best to be a genuine friend!**

## 5. Practise an outward focus

Practising an outward focus is showing consideration for our unchurched friends who are spiritually lost. Practising an outward focus is essential to having a balanced walk with the Lord, and for our group to maintain good health and growth.

During training, you will be expected to attempt all four *reaching out in love* exercises and to pray for two unsaved friends whom you will be asked to nominate on the Blessing List.

Note: The Blessing List will be explained more fully in Session 2. In the meantime, start thinking of two unsaved friends who you want to see come to know Jesus and who are in your circle of life.

## 6. Participate in all aspects of training

You will be expected to ...

- a. Pre-read the session material each week
- b. Complete the weekly Session Summary question pages
- c. Serve in one of eight group activities each week
- d. Evaluate one training session
- e. Evaluate the training course

### Commitment questions

- Are you willing to embrace the above commitments?
- Are you willing to do your best to perform them?

If your answer is *yes*, please sign your name below.

**Note: Your signature is simply a validation of the agreement made between you and the Lord. Taking this step permits the Holy Spirit to remind you of the six commitments you have made today.**

*"I understand the above stated commitments and agree to do my best to fulfil them."*

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Final comments

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1. **Course fee:** The fee that is asked of you covers the cost of the material you will receive during training.
2. **Learning:** Primarily, our learning approach will be through simulation. Effective learning is best achieved through “hands on” practice. It is important to acknowledge the role of the Holy Spirit in this learning. 1 John 2:27 says, “*But you have received the Holy Spirit, and he lives within you, so you don’t need anyone to teach you what is true. For the Spirit teaches you everything you need to know, and what he teaches is true — it is not a lie.*” The Holy Spirit will use all members to help us discover and apply God’s truth so that personal transformation and growth of relationships can take place.
3. **Personal information:** Please complete a small personal details form (for use by the members in this training group and church administration purposes).
4. **Serving opportunities:** From the selection of serving opportunity cards placed before you, please choose at least one card from each of Sessions 3 to 7 choices and then record your selection in the relevant session columns of the Serving Opportunity Roster (over page).

Now, place the laminated serving opportunity cards in the envelope given to you, and then hand the envelope to the training facilitator. He/she will use your service cards to compile a master record of the group’s serving opportunities.

Note: Your training facilitators will demonstrate each of the eight activities in Session 2 (from *greeter* to *closing in prayer*), enabling you to “see” what is expected of you in your chosen areas of service in Sessions 3 to 7.

5. **Close with prayer:** Using the following prayer suggestions, sit with your pair-partner and pray for one another before you leave (when you leave, please do so quietly):
  - a. Pray for courage and strength to overcome fears and challenges.
  - b. Ask the Lord to help you to do your best and to be positive and enthusiastic.
  - c. Ask the Lord to prompt you to approach each session with a spirit of expectation.
  - d. Ask the Lord to do all in His will for you through this training experience.

**See you next week! 😊**

4 Ws	Serving Opportunity Roster	Sessions				
		3	4	5	6	7
Welcome (Inward)	<b>A. Greeter</b> Arrive 10 minutes before the session to answer the door and warmly greet everyone. Also greet late-comers.					
	<b>B. Welcome</b> and prayer to commence the session (5 minutes).					
	<b>C. Icebreaker</b> (15 minutes) Prepare a simple <i>icebreaker</i> activity to help everyone <b>Relax</b> and <b>Reveal</b> something personal about themselves which in turn will help members to <b>Relate</b> to each other.					
Worship (Upward)	<b>D. Devotion and prayer</b> (10 minutes) Share from your own spiritual journey something significant you learnt that has changed your life in some way. Pray a short prayer for the group in relation to your sharing. Note: Please don't preach or teach. If you can, don't use any books in your sharing. Let this be a simple, from the heart, sharing time.					
	<b>E. Worship</b> (20 minutes) Using all or any of the following elements: silence, surrender, Scripture, songs, supplication (prayer requests) and service, you are invited to facilitate this time in any way that may help members to draw near to the Lord with an attitude of submission and reverence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be as creative as you can ... use your imagination!</li> <li>• Lead people to worship, don't drive them.</li> <li>• Permit them to choose to sit, stand, sing or remain silent. Worship is an intimate and personal experience.</li> </ul>				L/A	
	<b>F. Snack break</b> (15 minutes) Bring something simple you can afford to make or buy. The host home will supply tea, coffee, water, sugar, milk and cups.					
Word (Forward)	<b>Overview</b> of training session (20 minutes) This will be presented by the training facilitator and apprentice.	Leader/Apprentice				
	<b>G. Discussion</b> of training session (30 minutes) Using the Session Summary page (last page of sessions 2-6 in your training manual) your job is to get everyone in the group to share their responses to the questions. As a guide: you should speak no more than 20% of the time. Note: Do not teach! Make sure the discussion stays on track and keeps within the time allocated.					
Witness (Outward)	<b>H. Blessing List</b> – Praying for unsaved friends (10 minutes) Using the <i>blessing list</i> prayer guide, invite brief feedback from members, then lead the group in praying for the names listed.					
	<b>Reaching out in love</b> (10 minutes) From Session 3-6, members will be expected to practise simple reaching out in love exercises. The training facilitator will explain these exercises to you in more detail each week.	Leader/Apprentice				
	<b>Additional serving opportunities for the duration of this course</b> (white cards):  <input type="checkbox"/> Birthday <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer <input type="checkbox"/> Encourager <input type="checkbox"/> Tidy Up	Leader/Apprentice				

## Small group principles work in Australia (BCC)!

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Small groups are the backbone of any church. Without them ministry cannot expand effectively. Jesus' model of selecting just 12 people to invest 3 years into is a shock to those of us who are hoping for big Sunday attendances. It underscores the fact that big numbers that last in the macro events are attained through excellence in the micro gatherings. Get this method right and both church and Kingdom expansion is inevitable.

If you want numerical growth with integrity you need to sit with Bill Joukhadar of *Cell-church Consultants International*. Bill has the clearest understanding, the most realistic strategy and a solid biblical method to get you there that you can find. He is a theorist, a practitioner and a trainer. His church in Cairo expanded in 8 years from 400 hundred people to over 4,000! He started with a handful of small groups and finished with over 400 groups, lead by people who Bill personally trained. I can't imagine where you would find a more credentialed person than that!

At the beginning of 2009, our church, Beachside Christian Church, had the opportunity to hire Bill Joukhadar as a consultant to our small group ministry. We jumped at the chance because of his outstanding track record. Bill has coached our staff, and now, just six months down the track, the results are beginning to become evident. Our staff is performing efficiently, we have doubled the number of trained small group leaders and by the end of the first year of this transition we will have at least a 30% expansion in our total number of groups operating. These groups minister to around a hundred new people.

I really would encourage you to take the time to hear Bill. He has got something to say that will bless and grow your people in the depth of their relationships with God. This will in turn overflow into effectiveness and success in your community. He is not teaching a new, fast growth fad but a solid, time tested, biblical method that produces fruit that will last.



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# Session 2

## The essentials of a small group



### In this session you will understand:

- The vision
- Historical background supporting small groups
- Building the church: Builders and Foundation
- Growth dimensions
- DNA of healthy small groups
- Small Groups Church Plan.

### The vision

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It is critical to the life, health and success of a small group that every member knows and embraces the vision of his/her group. A biblically based vision is what helps to excite and inspire his/her members to want to engage together in group *life* with one mind, heart and purpose. Our small group's vision is as follows:

Establish expanding networks of small groups in the church that will effectively *“Equip God’s people to do his work, and build up the church ... so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love”* (Ephesians 4:12, 16).

### Historical background supporting small groups

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The practice of believers communing together in small groups is not new in the life of the church. Small groups have been around in one form or another since the first followers of Jesus Christ. The Book of Acts records that, apart from meeting in the Temple courts every day, the first believers also met in homes to break bread and praise God (Acts 2:46, 47).

**For Jesus’ disciples, meeting in small groups was fundamental to church life.**

## Building the church: Builders and Foundation

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### Builders

The Lord is building His church, and He is doing so through His people. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus says ... *“Upon this rock I will build my church”* (speaking to His disciple, Peter).

Scripture teaches that Jesus is the *“chief cornerstone of God’s household”*, that the teaching of the apostles and prophets is the *foundation* (Ephesians 2:19-20), and that the believers are the *“living stones being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood”* (1 Peter 2:5).

We understand that it is from Christ, who is the Head, that the whole body grows and builds itself up in love *“as each part does its own special work”* (Ephesians 4:15-16). And, 1 Corinthians 14 makes it very clear that all believers are expected to use their special gifts to *strengthen, edify and build up* the church.

**The Lord is building His church through His people!**

### Foundation

The Great Commandment and the Great Commission combine to form a perfect foundation for the building of God’s church. While the Great Commandment expresses God’s **eternal** purpose for creating mankind (to love), the Great Commission expresses God’s **temporal** purpose of the church on earth (to make disciples).

## The Great Commandment

### 1. We have been created to love God

Jesus said that the first and greatest commandment is: *“You must Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind”* (Matthew 22:37).

To embrace a life of complete *submission* and *obedience* to God will mean that we love Him with all our hearts, soul and mind. This is the *“bottom line”* commitment of true worship.

In small groups we express our love for God through acts of worship in various ways: confession, surrender, silence, singing, Scripture, supplication (simple prayer requests) and acts of willing service. We spend time in our groups discussing His Word to discover more of who He is and how we can respond in willing obedience to His love. We seek to apply biblical truths in our lives by surrendering to whatever He lays upon our hearts as our spiritual act of worship to Him (Romans 12:1).

**Our attitudes and expressions of worship should underscore the centrality of God in our lives, reflecting our love for Him.**

## **2. We have been created to love each other**

Jesus continued, saying, “A second is equally important: *Love your neighbour as yourself*” (Matthew 22:39).

We are obligated to go beyond just *liking* and *tolerating* others. The Great Commandment obligates us to love our neighbour. Who is our neighbour? The Bible implies that every person we encounter in everyday life is our neighbour, and, we are to love them by the same standard of love the Father shows to us.

To genuinely love our neighbour as ourselves, we cannot allow selfishness to exist in our lives. To succeed in our obligation of “neighbourly love”, we must grow in humility, “*thinking of others as better than ourselves, and we must not look only to our own interests but to the interests of others*” (Philippians 2:3-4).

During our group meetings, we should do our best to create an atmosphere of genuine love and trust. We should accept people as they are, respecting and valuing their opinions. We should build each other up in God’s love. This selfless love towards one another must also be demonstrated outside of regular group meeting times ... it needs to be an “all times” commitment.

**Engaging in *life* must extend beyond the regular meeting times of the group.**

Our love for one another is our witness to the world that we belong to the Lord. Jesus said to His followers, “*Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples*” (John 13:35).

## **The Great Commission**

### **1. We are to reach out to the unchurched**

Jesus’ last words spoken to His followers, as recorded in the last two verses of the Book of Matthew, are:

*“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age”* (Matthew 28:19-20).

This commandment spells out in clear terms the church’s primary purpose on earth ... *make disciples!* To succeed in this command we need to first commit to be willing to “go” wherever the Spirit leads in order that we may connect in meaningful ways with friends and strangers who do not know Jesus.

Note: *Go* means to go, and keep on going. It means we should live constantly on the alert for opportunities to share Christ with those who don’t know Him. Sitting and waiting for those who don’t know Jesus to come to us does not satisfy the “go” principle.

Healthy groups seek to fulfil this principle by proactively looking for ways to reach out to unchurched friends. This happens through patiently building one-on-one friendship relationships with them and, in God’s time, inviting them to appropriate social events sponsored by the group. Reaching out to our unchurched friends happens best through working together as a team. By the way, our *going* is meant to be in partnership with Jesus.

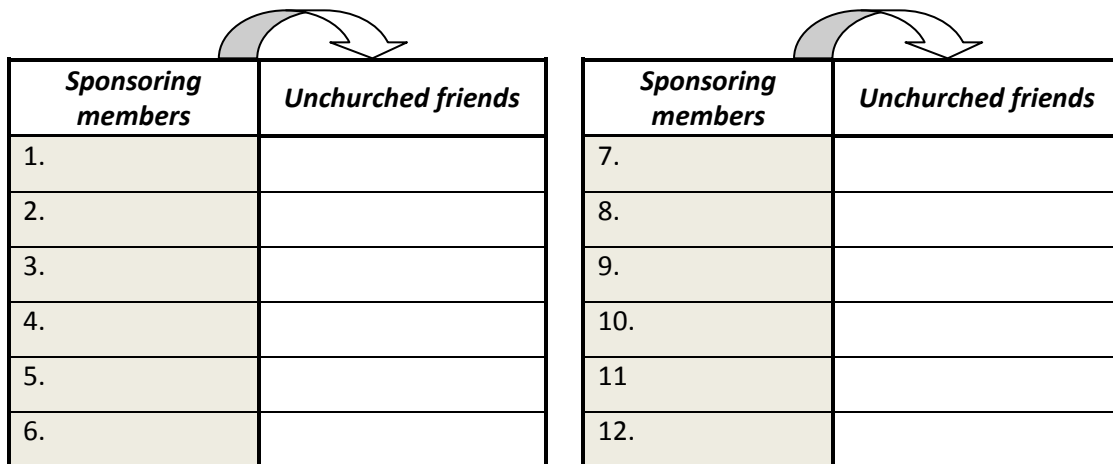
## Blessing List: Praying for unchurched friends

It's important to stress that prayer is where we begin in our commitment to do all we can in our desire to see our unchurched friends come to Christ. Prayer is our chief part; salvation is the Lord's part, preparing their minds and hearts. **He is the Saviour of the world!**

The Blessing List is an excellent tool, useful in reminding group members to pray for their unchurched friends. How does the Blessing List work? Simply, every member decides on one or two unchurched friends they closely associate with and lists their **first** names only for prayer on the illustrated Blessing List guide. Note: Be sure to nominate only those who live or work near you, as your prayers for them may prompt the Lord to connect you socially with them at later times. This is what the members of your group should desire to see happening.

After listing the names of these friends on the Blessing List, you can begin praying for them using the following scripted prayer as an example.

***Lord, we lift up to you our friends who need your saving grace. We lift up ...*** (Now say aloud the name of each unchurched friend listed below)



<b><i>Sponsoring members</i></b>	<b><i>Unchurched friends</i></b>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

<b><i>Sponsoring members</i></b>	<b><i>Unchurched friends</i></b>
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	
12.	

(Continue your prayer with the following)

***Father, we invite you to use our group to save our friends. Develop in us a deep concern for them, and prompt us to pray consistently for their salvation. Please help us to be creative and bold in our outreach efforts, believing in your promise that "The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results." Amen***  
(James 5:16).

## 2. We are to make disciples

The Great Commission commands us to "make disciples", "baptise them", and "teach them to obey God's Word" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Making disciples involves the work of leading unchurched friends into the knowledge of the Good News of Jesus Christ and then helping those who respond to Him to grow in their faith through following Him with their lives ... reflecting His character and conduct.

As unchurched friends give their lives to Christ, small groups provide ideal environments for them to be accepted *as they are*, loved and nurtured in their faith through Christian fellowship and receive one-on-one discipleship support through other group members.

Small groups also provide safe places for new believers to discover and practise their spiritual gifts. Diligent small group pastors look to draw out the potential of Christ-likeness and leadership in every believer in the group, encouraging their members to grow through simple acts of service in the life of the group and the wider church.

One of the objectives of small groups is to raise up members to lead through voluntary service, hoping that one day they will pastor other groups ... thus contributing to the ongoing work of building and expanding God’s church.

In the small groups context, teaching takes place by the Holy Spirit speaking through each member, through guided Bible-based discussions. Group members should be encouraged to openly express their thoughts, feelings and beliefs without fear of criticism or rejection. Open sharing is vital to the spiritual growth and leadership development of the members. **Don’t muzzle your members from freely expressing themselves.**

At all times, be sure to express a warm and sincere “thank you” to those who exercise leadership in various forms in the life of your group. Your expression of thanks should be extended to them for their willingness to share and serve. Impress upon them that *progress* cannot be achieved without *participation*. **While participation is expected, perfection is not!**

### Growth dimensions

Establishing a small group community upon the foundation of the Great Commandment and Great Commission should result in “balanced” growth in four critical dimensions:

	What?	Why?	How?
<b>Upward</b>	Love God	Great Commandment Matt. 22:36-40	Praise, prayer Obedience to God’s Word
<b>Inward</b>	Love each other		Accept Respect Care
<b>Outward</b>	Love unchurched friends	Great Commission Matt. 28:18-20	Prayer Social events Meet needs Share Gospel
<b>Forward</b>	Make disciples		Equip Release Support

## DNA of healthy small groups

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For small groups to be healthy, loving, and multiplying, the following DNA values need to be prioritised:

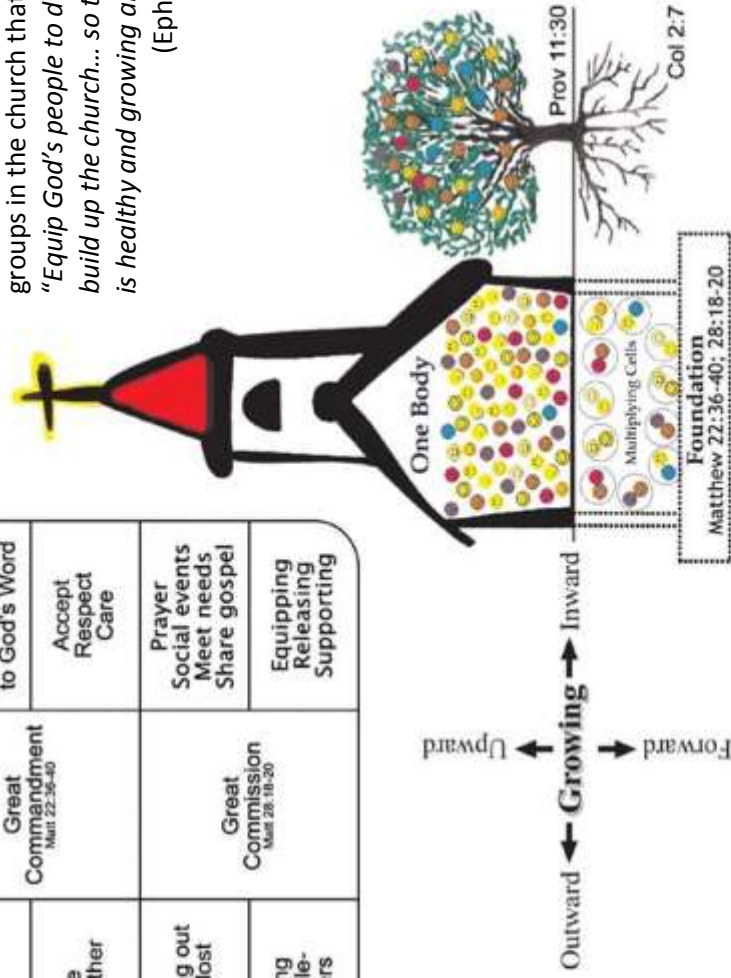
1. **The Holy Spirit is the One who empowers** the life of the group.
2. **Prayer** is our spiritual breath.
3. The **Word of God** is our spiritual bread.
4. **Balanced growth** of upward, inward, outward and forward.
5. The **priesthood of all believers** sees every member as a minister.
6. **Developing servant-hearted leaders** results through discipleship, delegation of authority, and the proper management of spiritual gifts.
7. **Teamwork** says that life, ministry and mission are best accomplished together, not alone.
8. **Multiplication** of servant-leaders, small groups and churches is the goal.
9. **Intimacy:** Smaller is better. Five to twelve people is the ideal group size for intimacy.
10. **Open groups** remain welcoming and inclusive of newcomers.
11. **Discussion** and **application:** Facilitate discussions that motivate *life* application and transformation.
12. **Grace** is the virtue that accepts people as they are.
13. **Church celebration** (worship services): Commitment to engage in, and serve at, worship services is essential for personal and church growth.
14. **Outreaching** unchurched friends is a top priority.

# Small Groups Church Plan

## Vision

Establish expanding networks of small groups in the church that will effectively "Equip God's people to do His work, and build up the church... so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love" (Ephesians 4:12, 16 NLT)

	What	Why	How
Upward	Love God	Great Commandment Matt 22:36-40	Praise Prayer Obedience to God's Word
Inward	Love each other		Accept Respect Care
Outward	Reaching out to the lost	Great Commission Matt 28:18-20	Prayer Social events Meet needs Share gospel
Forward	Making disciple-makers		Equipping Releasing Supporting





## Summary: Session 2

### The essentials of a small group

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Q1: What caught your attention in this week's session that has impacted you?

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Q2: Is there anything you don't understand? If you could ask the author or the Lord about this week's session, what might be your question(s)?

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Q3: What is a personal application for your life (be specific)?

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Record "principles" you discovered in this session that you consider worth applying to your life and leadership.

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## Case Study 2

### Small group principles work in Australia (HBC)!

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Church is not just about the large gathering on Sunday. A brief chat over coffee with a few people does not constitute the community which is described in Acts 2:42-47. The large group setting is limited in providing opportunities for real growth, deep relationships, truly caring for others and reaching out to the lost.

Helensvale Baptist Church on the Gold Coast recognises these limitations to the large group meetings and pursued Cells-church Consultants International's Bill Joukhadar to help us grow. Bill offered the Small Groups Church Plan to help.

Part of this plan consists of a training course called Small Groups Development. It is a course which engages its participants in a small group environment where there are opportunities for real growth, deep relationships, love and support along with an edge of reaching out to those who don't know Jesus yet.

While there is plenty of time to discover the theory of small groups, the strength of this course is its strong and clear emphasis on experiencing "Life". (The acronym "Life" which stands for Living in Fellowship to Evangelise is used to sum up the vision presented in Small Groups Development.)

At Helensvale Baptist Church we have begun the journey of moving towards this vision of "establishing expanding networks of small groups in the church that will effectively ... equip God's people to do His work and build up the church ... so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love" (Ephes. 4:12, 16).

The growth of many individuals in their relationship with the Lord has been wonderful. The Lord is being glorified and our church, as a whole, is experiencing encouraging growth. One member testified about their experience in a group that has embraced this vision with these words,

*"I have been a Christian for a while now, but in many ways I am still just a baby, and in only 2 weeks of Life-group I feel that I have grown immeasurably, and the most exciting part is that I know in my heart that I am going to continue to grow, be inspired, challenged and encouraged with every step I take. The glory of all of this without a doubt goes to God".*

CCIs Small Groups Development course is biblically based, practical and challenging. Its foundation is a heart of love for God and His people (both saved and unsaved) and provides a structural framework to help in being obedient. Of particular note is the encouragement it gives to engage with others through simple "reaching out in love" exercises, and the important emphasis it places on the need to work together in the work of evangelism as like a "team of fishermen".



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# Session 3

## Growing upward and inward



### In this session you will understand:

- How to develop your personal and group's upward life
- How to develop your personal and group's inward life
- The four stages of small group life.

In order for group members to embody the commission of upward and inward growth, small group pastors must first embody the commission themselves!

### Upward growth — Love God (Matthew 22:37, 38)

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Small group pastors must first have a passion for intimacy with God. This passion for God stimulates a deep desire for ministry. Out of this passion flows love for group members. Without it, leaders often feel the need to minister out of performance, guilt or compulsion. When this happens, the group does not function and grow well.

Consider these words spoken by Jesus to His disciples: *“Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing”* (John 15:5).

Remaining in the Lord is the key to fruitful ministry! Attempting to serve the Lord in your own strength, and not in His power, is like switching on a lamp at night that's not plugged in ... it is powerless, and you're left standing in the dark.

So what does it mean to “remain” in Christ? It means to  *dwell, abide, live and stay connected* to Him.

Your remaining in Christ is made possible through:

- a. Fasting
- b. Confession, repentance, surrender and daily refilling of His Spirit
- c. Praise
- d. Prayer
- e. Reading, studying, meditating and memorising His Word
- f. Above all, obedience to everything the Lord reveals to you!

### **How to develop *your* upward life**

1. Meet with God daily. Set aside a realistic amount of time when you're at your best. Prioritise quality time, not quantity.
2. Try to incorporate all the elements of confession, repentance, praise, prayer and Bible study ... varying them as you feel led by the Spirit.
3. If you miss a day or more through personal weakness, ask the Lord for His forgiveness and then re-connect and move forward. Don't condemn yourself.
4. Do your best to obey everything He reveals to you. This is for your benefit.
5. Focus on the Lord before group meetings. Renounce any worry. Adopt a spirit of great expectation. Time with God is more important than program preparation.
6. Consider fasting (according to the ability of your health). It helps to focus your energy on seeking God and His will as you submit your physical desire to Him.

### **How to help your members develop *their* upward lives**

1. Pray for your members in simple, everyday language. If your group has seekers or new believers, discourage the praying of lengthy prayers so that all may understand and be able to participate.
2. Pray with confidence. Remind members that answered prayer is a result of:
  - a. Remaining in Christ (John 15:7)
  - b. Righteousness, through the forgiveness of sins (James 5:16)
  - c. Doing what pleases the Lord by obeying Him (1 John 3:22)
  - d. Believing that what you have asked for will be answered (Mark 11:24)
  - e. Asking with a right motivation in Jesus' name (John 14:14).
3. Occasionally, devote a session to thanksgiving, praise and prayer.
4. Appoint a prayer coordinator to keep a prayer journal for the group.
5. Brief visits to the homes of your members, asking and praying for needs.
6. Encourage members to become regular self-feeders, able to read, understand and apply Scripture in their lives, using good Bible-based study guides.

## Inward growth — loving each other (Matthew 22:39)

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If you lead great meetings where people share deep insights, if you teach the Word revealing truth, if you sacrifice time and energy for the sake of your group, but you don't love them, you've done nothing that is commendable (1 Corinthians 13).

People need to experience authentic love in order to feel valued and safe enough to practise transparent sharing that will result in relational growth. Jesus spent His entire ministry loving the outcasts, those who felt they had no place in society or with God. His love for them changed their lives.

Your small group should be an environment where people feel accepted and loved as they are. Honesty and transparency take place in the safety and security of a loving context. It's up to each of us to help make our group a "love gymnasium".

### How to develop *your* inward life

1. Pray regularly for yourself (be honest and seek humility, wisdom, insight and courage).
2. Read God's Word regularly and expect Him to speak into your mind.
3. Invite the Lord to transform your heart and life — refuse to remain as you are.
4. At all times, be honest about your mistakes. (*"We all make many mistakes"* James 3:2.)
5. Practise selfless and sacrificial leadership ... do your best!

### How to help other members develop *their* inward lives

1. Encourage your members to meet socially outside of group meetings.
2. Encourage them to form same gender accountability relationships. We call this Pair-Partnership (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).
3. Try to involve everyone in all activities of the group.
4. Know the needs of your members, and, together with the Lord, look for ways to meet their needs. **Never attempt to meet the needs of others in your own strength.**
5. Endeavour to model transparency in your life. Share your own limitations, fears, struggles, weaknesses and needs. Don't fake being okay.
6. Ask the Lord to fill you with His grace to affirm and encourage your members, especially those we call "challenging characters" (more about this later).
7. Ask the Lord to fill you with His Spirit that you may be sensitive to hidden needs and fears of group members and to minister accordingly.
8. Create an environment that allows people to fail and learn from their mistakes without condemnation.

9. Watch out for co-dependency. If you find fulfilment from being needed by others, and not from serving God, then your leadership will fail. Likewise, if members are looking to the group to satisfy their personal needs, and not to the Lord, they too will be disappointed. The Lord is the only One who is able to satisfy our needs (Matthew 6:33).
10. Beware of becoming an oversized group. For the sake of intimacy, the group should consist of no more than 12 people. Keep in mind the small groups health principle: **As size increases, intimacy decreases.**

## The four stages of small group life

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### 1. **Forming** — the honeymoon stage

This stage is exciting. People are getting to know each other and are enjoying it. Communication is at a surface level. It will remain at this level until members feel that the group environment is safe and trustworthy enough to go deeper. Don't be satisfied to remain at this level. For maturity and fruitfulness to result, the group must grow deeper.

#### **Leadership initiatives:**

- a. Establish "common good" ground rules.
- b. Ensure that everyone knows and has accepted the group's vision.
- c. Aim for balanced growth.
- d. Delegate leadership roles as soon as possible.

### 2. **Storming** — the conflict stage

In this stage, personality and value differences can create tension. People are getting to know each other better and may struggle in the process. You must remind yourself that this is just a passing phase — **this is to be expected**. Strong and healthy groups learn to patiently and prayerfully work through this phase and still love each other.

Remember: You can avoid hurtful situations generated by gossip by following these biblical principles drawn from Matthew 18:15-17:

- a. If someone has offended you, don't tell everyone! Speak only to that person with the aim of working towards mutual understanding and reconciliation.
- b. If the person refuses to acknowledge they have wronged you, and continues to work against you, bring in a godly witness who can help resolve the crisis and restore peace.
- c. If the person still refuses to listen and their conduct is damaging the life of the group, or the wider church, then take the matter to your coach (more about coaches later).

**Leadership initiatives:**

- a. Help group members to understand that tension is a normal experience in developing genuine relationships.
- b. Do not ignore the storm or try to control it. Pray and deal with it honestly.
- c. If necessary, meet privately with those engaged in the conflict (Matthew 18:15-17).
- d. Help people value and accept their differences of personality, culture, experiences, opinions and beliefs.
- e. Keep the group engaged in reaching “in” and reaching “out” in love activities.

**3. Norming — the community stage**

At this point, members will have worked through their differences and are learning to love and appreciate each other. People are letting down their masks and are becoming more accountable to one another. A sense of united vision moves the group forward.

**Leadership initiatives:**

- a. Reinforce the vision of the group through regular outreach activities.
- b. Encourage members to remain engaged in group and wider church ministry roles.
- c. Enthuse the group about multiplication.

**4. Outpouring — the outreach and multiplication stage**

This happens when a group becomes a team. Members are ministering to one another and to unchurched friends. They are excited about raising-up new leaders and birthing/forming new groups.

For a group to remain intimate and effective you must take steps to multiply the group. If you don't, the group will, more often than not, stagnate and die.

**Leadership initiatives:**

- a. Try to plan social activities that are appealing and satisfying to your unchurched friends.
- b. Continue developing emerging leaders.
- c. Encourage members to step out of their comfort zones, and, by faith, form new groups.

# Reaching out in love: 1



## Meeting someone new

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Jesus says, *“Anyone who is welcoming you is welcoming me, and anyone who welcomes me is welcoming the Father who sent me”* (Matthew 11:40).

1. Arrive at the church 10-15 minutes prior to the commencement of the worship service.
2. Look around for someone who is new to you.
3. Approach that person; warmly greet them and introduce yourself in a friendly manner.
4. If they respond with openness and warmth, make inquiries about them (where they live, family, occupation, how long have they been attending the church, etc?).
5. Thank them for speaking with you and, if newcomers to the church, invite them to call on you if you can help them with any information about the church.
6. Privately thank the Lord for the person you met and complete the personal evaluation below to share the experience next week with others in your training group.

**Personal evaluation** (summarise your experience):

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Growing upward and inward

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Q1: What caught your attention in this week's session that has impacted you?

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Q2: Is there anything you don't understand? If you could ask the author or the Lord about this week's session, what might be your question(s)?

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Q3: What is a personal application for your life (be specific)?

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Record "principles" you discovered in this session that you consider worth applying to your life and leadership.



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### Small group principles work in Egypt!

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As you marvel at all that you read on these pages you're able to fast-forward through the journey we have taken at Maadi Community Church in Cairo, Egypt. We're able to look back too and praise God for fruitfulness beyond our wildest dreams. To God be the glory! We, at our best, are just faithful servants who long to follow the Lord where He would lead us. The last eight years has been an amazing journey. We've made many mistakes along the way but even these have taught us so much.

Through hundreds of groups we've been able to see at first hand the reality of small groups and not just the theory. We have seen both healthy and unhealthy groups and through it all have continually desired to know what makes the difference. Some of the keys we have learnt are based on our individuality as a particular church, in a particular country, but as God began to spread the Small Groups Church Plan to other countries, out of Egypt, we discovered the principles worked everywhere.

It's out of this that our training has flowed. Our training method has been used, adapted and refined at every stage along the way. As you read through the training material so much of it will seem simple and familiar. We so often try to intellectualise and complicate things, instead of actually living out what we are called to do. The greatest growth has come from being faithful – faithful in prayer, faithful in unity of vision and faithful in stepping out.

Ours is a story of ordinary people doing extraordinary things, of a church being mobilised through the congregation. The church pastors have been able to return to equipping the many to be active in the church and the community. It's a simple equation – the more people who are empowered, truly involved, the greater the fruitfulness. We so easily revert back to choosing comfort over growth but small groups have helped us to lift one another up and consciously choose life. We continue to remember that leadership is serving and that as soon as we stop reaching outwards we begin to stagnate and die.

Where our groups are healthy they multiply life, they raise up new leaders, they help all members to discover and develop their gifts, they are a safe place for those that God is drawing to Himself, they are a catalyst to discipleship and the security of accountability.

I'm so grateful to God for being allowed to be a part of the story here in Egypt. I have been spoiled for the ordinary. I pray that our story will encourage you.



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# Session 4

## Growing outward and forward



### In this session you will understand:

- How to develop your personal and group's outward life
- How to develop your personal and group's forward life
- Strategies for forming new groups.

### Outward growth — Reaching out to unchurched friends (Matthew 28:19)

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Reaching out to unchurched friends with the Good News and love of Jesus Christ is the “main event” of healthy small groups. Everyone in the group comes together to form a spiritual net. Seeing people being won to Christ is the fruit of our prayers and striving together. Nothing on earth compares with the joy and delight that comes from seeing this happen. **Note: Success comes from our partnership with the Holy Spirit.**

Small groups become spiritual nets when the members support each other through their various personalities, spiritual gifts, talents and experiences. Thankfully, none of us are good at everything. Some people are good at organising events, others at sharing hospitality, and others at being faithful in prayer, etc. **Everyone can celebrate the *catch* through the group's net effort.**



*Striving together ... Saving lives!*

The *net fishing* approach to evangelism can be a challenge. Reaching out to unchurched friends is not something that comes naturally to everyone. You can expect opposition from satan and apathy, negativity and resistance from some of the members in your group.

To succeed in the Great Commission we must place the needs of others before our own (Philippians 2:4-8).

Some of the members in your group may need a gentle “prod” to help them step past their fears and ignorance, so they may taste the satisfying fruit that comes from this exciting work. Blessings will flow as your group practises simple acts of Christ-like love with unchurched friends. Maintaining an outward focus also lessens the perceived enormity and urgency of personal needs and concerns, allowing members to see their situation from a better perspective. Your group will become strong, united and purposeful.

## How to develop *your* outward life

1. Commit to living with a heart that is filled with love for others (Ephesians 5:2).
2. Ask the Lord to give you a compassionate disposition for the lost.
3. Pray regularly for unchurched friends on your Blessing List.
4. Patiently and prayerfully build a sincere and honest relationship with your Blessing List friends.
5. Be prepared to invest prayer, time, money and effort in your outward initiatives. Allow for mistakes to result from your best efforts. Do your best not to give up on anyone!

## How to help other members develop *their* outward lives

1. Share the vision for reaching unchurched friends from the very beginning of the group's life and regularly remind your members.
2. Challenge them to build relationships with their Blessing List friends.
3. Encourage them to pray persistently for them.
4. Plan regular social activities to which they can invite these friends.
5. Keep your group small enough so that intimacy may be experienced. Some groups reserve an empty chair in their meetings as a reminder that there is room for "one more" person.
6. With loving sensitivity, help resistant team members — don't condemn them. Be patient, leave it to the Lord to change their minds and hearts.
7. Serve unchurched friends through meeting basic needs. Love in action is the power medium the Lord works through to draw people to Himself. **The unchurched will see our actions before they hear our words.**

David Yonggi Cho, the senior pastor of the largest church in the world in Seoul, Korea, encourages cell leaders and members to "find a need and meet it". In 1993 he said, *"We have 50,000 cell groups and each group will love two people to Christ within the next year. They select someone who's not a Christian, whom they can pray for, love and serve. They bring meals, help sweep out the person's store — whatever it takes to show they really care for them. After three or four months of such love, the hardest soul softens up and surrenders to Christ"* (*Home Cell Group Explosion* — Joel Comiskey).

## Forward growth – Making disciples

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The Lord did not command us to make “believers” (spiritual babies). The Great Commission clearly mandates us to make disciples ... maturing followers of Jesus Christ. Helping believers to grow in Christ-like maturity is a life-long process. We need to encourage each other to keep moving forward in our faith journey by growing in our discipleship. Our part in making disciples involves: role modelling, teaching and coaching one another in our spiritual walk. **Discipleship is a personal and small group family matter!**

### How to develop *your* forward life

#### Delegate

It is crucial to involve everyone in the life of your group. Responsibly delegate group tasks to help members discover and practise their spiritual gifts. Involve them in the set up, organisation and operation of the group. They will gain a sense of ownership in the group and will experience joy that comes from serving the group. These tasks can include:

- Offering their homes as venues for the group
- Greeting people at the door
- Leading an icebreaker
- Opening or closing in prayer
- Sharing a personal devotion
- Providing snacks
- Leading worshipful singing
- Facilitating the discussion
- Coordinating prayer
- Organising social/outreach events
- Evaluating the meeting
- Tidying up afterwards
- Following-up absentees through their pair-partnerships
- Serve in other areas of service that will strengthen the life and purpose of the group.

#### Take risks

Delegating is a risky business ... and at times, mistakes will happen. **You need to keep in mind: “We all make many mistakes”** (James 3:2).

Create a safe and friendly environment that allows for people to fail as they attempt new areas of service. The skill for you to learn is helping your members stretch a little further through participating in some area of service while understanding that making mistakes is a normal part of learning and growing. This is what we call “failing forward”.

In Christ, we are not failures. However, as we stretch to grow a little more, there will be, at times, failed outcomes. Failed outcomes provide us with opportunities to learn new things and grow in our discipleship. (Recommended reading: *Failing Forward* – by John C. Maxwell.)

## **How to help other members develop *their* forward lives**

### **Disciple new believers**

Do not assume that all the members in your group know the basics of the Christian faith and are regularly praying and reading God's Word. We can encourage young believers in their walk with Christ through one-on-one discipleship, outside of regular group meeting times.

To help in this, a one-on-one 14 lesson basic level discipleship work book entitled "Growing Up into His Likeness" is recommended. This book is ideal, even if one-on-one coaching support is not available. (For more details, see Additional Resources, page 73.)

### **See everyone as a minister**

It's essential that you believe in the *priesthood of all believers* (Revelation 1:6). To be healthy and growing, your group needs to be made up of ministering members. Therefore, the principle task of a small group leader is to:

*"Equip God's people to do His work and build up the church, the body of Christ, until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we be mature and full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ"* (Ephesians 4:12-13).

Do your best to encourage everyone in your group to use their special gifts and abilities to build up each other and the church.

### **Mentoring** (same gender)

If you do not mentor future leaders today, it will be impossible to form new groups tomorrow, and you will have to continue doing everything for everyone in the group. This is a recipe for leader fatigue and prevents the Kingdom from growing through your group. Something that is impressive about the Apostle Paul's approach to expanding the Kingdom of God is his emphasis on discipling believers so they in turn will disciple others. This has been termed discipling through *multiplication*. He said:

*"And you should follow my example, just as I follow Christ's"* (1 Corinthians 11:1).

*"Teach these great truths to trustworthy people who are able to pass them on to others"* (2 Timothy 2:2).

See over the page the amazing comparison between growing God's Kingdom through **addition** and **multiplication**, and see how *multiplication* growth more than triples the *addition* growth figures at Year 25.

	<b>Addition</b> ↓	- versus	<b>Multiplication</b> ↓
<b>Year</b>	<b>1,000 led to Christ each day, for one year, but not discipled</b>		<b>Disciple reproducing oneself each year</b>
1	365,000		2
5	1,825,000		32
10	3,650,000		1,024
15	5,475,000		32,768
20	7,300,000		1,048,576
25	9,125,000		33,554,432
30	10,950,000		1,073,741,824
* 33	12,045,000		8,589,934,592

Although the speed of multiplication starts off slowly, in the long term it is clearly seen as the best option for effective and efficient worldwide evangelism.

\* The world's population (7 billion people) would be covered in 33 years when discipling through the multiplication approach.

### **How to equip apprentice-successors (everyone in the group)**

1. Let them share in the facilitation of the meeting.
2. Appreciate their suggestions and allow them freedom to be creative and different.
3. Inspire them to dream big — to go further and reach higher (Ephesians 3:20).
4. Meet regularly to coach and encourage them: Discuss their personal walks with God, group life and leadership development opportunities.
5. Gift them with leadership development books.
6. Believe in them. Be proud of them and publicly affirm them.
7. Support them in their development and be sure to release them at the right time.

### **Release the ministry of the group to those you've equipped**

Your job is to give your ministry away in a responsible and timely manner. At first you'll be doing about 80% of the leadership. At the end you should only be doing about 20%. Practise the small groups command: **Thou shall not do anything you can responsibly delegate to someone else.**

## Launch new groups

Healthy small groups are like biological cells. Organic cells multiply themselves millions of times in the course of a lifetime. Each new group looks identical to the original cell because the DNA-branded nucleus multiplies itself before the cell reproduces.

In the same way, small groups multiply themselves by raising-up new leaders who have caught the vision and who are ready for the challenge of leading new groups.

When groups progress through these steps, birthing becomes a natural result. When leaders are developed and as the Holy Spirit empowers and leads them, they are excited about starting new groups.

At the same time we need to be sensitive to the pain and joy of multiplying:

- a. Be sure to **release the leader when he/she is ready**. You don't need to wait for the group to be a certain size or have been together for a certain length of time. Every group is different. The most important factor is the readiness of the new leader and God's leading.
- b. **Don't birth because your group is too big**. Trying to force multiplication without equipped-and-ready leaders is asking for trouble. Maturity is a critical key to successful multiplication, not size.

## Responding to members who are resistant to multiplication

- a. Lovingly listen to them and empathise with their concerns and fears.
- b. Validate their concerns and help them to consider the joy of birthing a new group. You might like to share with them the following verse:

*"It will be like a woman experiencing the pains of labour. When her child is born, her anguish gives place to joy because she has brought a new person into the world. You have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice and no one can rob you of that joy" (John 16:21-22).*

- c. Help them to practise "dying to themselves", that they may bear much fruit:

*"The truth is, a kernel of wheat must be planted in the soil. Unless it dies it will be alone — a single seed. But its death will produce many new kernels — a plentiful harvest of new lives" (John 12:24).*

## Strategies for forming groups

There are many ways of forming new groups — consider the following options:

### 1. New leader launch

An apprentice from your group takes 2 to 3 group members to form a new daughter group, leaving the original leader to continue as the leader of the mother group.

### 2. New leader plant

An apprentice leader leaves your group to plant a daughter group with new people from outside the mother group.

### 3. Old leader plant

Existing group leader leaves the mother group to start a daughter group with new people. The group's apprentice-successor accepts responsibility for leading the mother group.

### 4. Organic multiplication

Existing leader and apprentice leader each form a new group from the original group.

Note: Whichever option is chosen, the aim is that both mother and daughter groups survive and thrive, so that everyone can rejoice and celebrate the experience.

When referring to multiplication, be careful not to use negative terms, such as: dividing, splitting-up and breaking-up. **Multiplication is about experiencing more of the goodness of God, not less!**



## Telephone encouragement

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*“Let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but **encourage** and warn each other, especially now that the day of His coming back is drawing near”*  
(Hebrews 10:25).

1. Consider two people in your church who know you, who you can contact by telephone to encourage.
2. Telephone them at an appropriate time, and with sensitivity ...
  - Inquire about his/her well being (listen carefully)
  - Express sincere words of appreciation and love
  - Ask if there is anything you can pray for (take the initiative and ask if you can pray “now” on the phone for him/her)
  - Thank them for allowing you to take some of their time.

Caution: Don't trap them on the phone – limit your call to about 5-7 minutes.

3. Privately thank the Lord for those you ministered to and complete the personal evaluation below to share the experience next week with others in your training group.

**Personal evaluation** (summarise your experience):

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Moving outward and forward

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Q1: What caught your attention in this week's session that has impacted you?

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Q2: Is there anything you don't understand? If you could ask the author or the Lord about this week's session, what might be your question(s)?

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Q3: What is a personal application for your life (be specific)?

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Record "principles" you discovered in this session that you consider worth applying to your life and leadership.

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### Small group principles work in Nigeria!

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We praise God for granting us insight into the benefits of MCC's Small Groups Church Plan.

Dominion Impact Church, our apostolic base in Nigeria, has been doing very well since the injection of small group principles, two years ago. The most noticeable of all is our increase in numerical strength in our two church branches in Lagos and Ibadan. This is all due to the intentional evangelistic outreaches carried out by our small groups. Our old method of cold canvas evangelism has been done away with. Small groups are now our major evangelistic approach, and it has proved to be very powerful.

Another area of benefit is the discovery of potential leaders. We testify that it's a lot easier now with the small groups in place to identify our emerging lay-leaders than it was before. With this in place, discipleship is no longer about programs or manuals but of "life" sharing. So, today we don't just have better programs, we have better people!

Delegation of ministry is another plus derived from the small groups approach of building our church. Our members no longer shirk responsibility, both in small groups and in the celebration service. Thanks to their exposure to small group principles they are more committed to Kingdom service than before.

The lives of our group members have also been greatly impacted in the area of self-disclosure. They now know and understand each other better than before. Mask-wearing, pretence and shyness have gone. Intimacy and love is, today, at work in their lives. Our small group members open up more easily to one another, even those with deep hurts or fears.

With all the gains we have enjoyed through our adapting small groups as the building approach of our church we can't praise God enough for all He has done.




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Lagos, Nigeria

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# Session 5

## What happens in a small group meeting



By the end of this session you should understand:

- What a small group meeting should look like
- **WELCOME:** How to start a meeting
- **WORSHIP:** The importance of focusing on Jesus
- **WORD:** How to facilitate Bible-based discussions
- **WITNESS:** Maintaining an outward focus.

### What a small group meeting should look like

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A small group consists of 5 to 12 people gathering together in the home of one of the members or at some other suitable place outside of the church building.

Within a general timeframe of 1½ to 2½ hours, the meeting is normally divided into four essential components based on the foundation of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. These are called the 4 Ws – WELCOME, WORSHIP, WORD and WITNESS.

	<b>COMPONENT</b>	<b>FOCUS</b>	<b>FLOW</b>
<b>Inward</b>	<b>WELCOME</b> (15 min)	Build honest and loving relationships	Us to us
<b>Upward</b>	<b>WORSHIP</b> (20 min)	Re-surrender and recommit to Jesus	Us to God
<b>Forward</b>	<b>WORD</b> (40 min)	Discussion and application (Discipleship)	God to us
<b>Outward</b>	<b>WITNESS</b> (15 min)	Unsaved friends (Our mission)	God through us

The table above shows the 4 Ws working together, guiding a relational flow between God and the members, naturally weaving in the objectives of inward, upward, forward and outward.

## WELCOME — Focusing on each other

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This growth dimension focuses on the work of building honest and loving relationships with those in your group. Success in this endeavour requires us to be intentional and proactive in doing whatever needs to be done on our part to make others in our group feel worthy, accepted, loved and welcome. **This is a self-less work that, at times, demands personal sacrifice.**

Healthy groups are made up of members who adopt and practise a “welcoming presence”.

Saying the words, “You are welcome” doesn’t go far enough in convincing people they are welcome in your group. Having a welcoming presence translates into doing whatever it takes to make people feel glad to be in the group and motivates them to want to share in the life of the group, feeling they belong and want to have ownership.

Commencing group session times with good icebreakers can help the members to focus on each other and engage together as one group for learning and sharing, and deepening of relationships. Note: Be sure to choose simple and safe icebreakers that will engage everyone in the group in an honest, fun and friendly manner.

## WORSHIP — Focusing on Jesus

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Only one element is needed in your group to make it satisfying: the presence of Jesus. This growth dimension helps us to focus on Him and on expressing our heartfelt love for God. There are many ways of doing this. Whatever way is chosen, it must be honest, sincere and personal. Although expressed in the context of a small group, worship is a personal experience, and **every person should be encouraged to express his/her worship to the Lord in his/her way.**

A meaningful time of worship should help members sense the presence and pleasure of the Lord. Consider the following suggestions:

1. Focus your heart and mind on the Lord before the meeting, re-surrender your life to Him and invite Him to fill your life with His Spirit.
2. Listen quietly for the Lord’s voice:
  - He may want to use you in a particular way in the group.
  - He may want to show you how His Spirit is ministering to others in the group.
  - He may want to teach you something new.
3. Don’t let the focus of worship be on songs, group lessons or people’s needs. In our worship, **the focus must be on Jesus.**

## Ways to worship in a small group setting

1. Worship the Lord through honest confessions, prayer, testimonies, worshipful songs, reading and meditating on Scripture, and the rededication of our lives.
2. Practise “waiting on the Lord” in silence. Ask Him, and expect Him, to speak into your mind.

## WORD — Facilitating discussions

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The focus of this growth dimension is on listening to what God has to say, through His inspired Word. Whenever you look into God’s Word, **expect Him to speak to you.**

In small groups, discovering more of God’s truth is best accomplished through the facilitation of Bible-based discussions. The facilitator should not teach, but guide a free and honest discussion among the members concerning the passage of Scripture in question.

The Holy Spirit is our Teacher (1 John 2:27) and can speak through each person in the group, bringing out whatever He wants to say. Many people learn by thinking out loud, so encourage your members to share their thoughts freely by asking open-ended questions. **Inspire as much participation by everyone as possible.**

### Consider the Swedish Bible Study Method

The Swedish Bible Study Method allows God’s Word to speak for itself, is adaptable, reusable, isn’t costly, helps avoid human arguments, and develops in people a means and confidence for self-feeding from God’s Word. This group discussion approach is wonderful because it requires very little preparation and relies on the Holy Spirit to work within your group ... meeting people where they’re at. Here’s how it works:

1. Pray, asking the Lord to guide the discussion that much may be discovered.
2. Read the Bible passage together.
3. Members read the Bible passage alone and answer the following questions.



What caught your attention in this week’s session that has impacted you?



Is there anything you don’t understand? If you could ask the author or the Lord about this week’s session, what might be your question(s)?



What is a personal application for your life (be specific)?

4. Invite each person to share what stands out (3a). Facilitate an open discussion.
5. Invite each person to share his/her questions/thoughts from the passage (3b). Note: Agreed answers must be supported by Scripture. At times, there may not be an immediate answer.
6. Invite each person to share personal applications (3c). Ask them to be as specific as they can.

## **Discussion skills**

### **Prepare**

Read the relevant passage of Scripture beforehand. Pray about the verse/s and ask the Lord for guidance in facilitating the suggested open-ended questions above.

### **Listen**

1. Ask others what they think before you share.
2. Don't plan what you're going to say while others are talking.
3. Express appreciation for every answer given.

### **Show interest with your posture**

1. Affirm people with positive eye contact, nods and smiles.
2. Lean forward. This helps to convey the message that you are listening.
3. Don't cross your arms, or fidget.

### **Be careful not to answer your own questions**

1. Don't be afraid of short periods of silence.
2. Re-phrase the question. The challenge is to get everyone sharing.
3. You should limit your speaking to no more than 20% of the time.

### **Invite further responses**

1. Try to involve everyone, especially the shy and quiet members.
2. Address a question to a specific person if he/she hasn't contributed in the discussion. Be careful not to pressure or embarrass any person.

### **Guiding the discussion**

1. Be prepared to change or omit questions that don't fit in as the discussion progresses or as time runs short. At all times, be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.
2. Gently bring back those who veer off on a tangent or who argue points of minor importance.

3. Begin and end the discussion on time. Be prepared to close the discussion and summarise so the group can move on.

### **Watch your attitude**

1. Be humble and teachable: Demonstrate that you too are a learner.
2. Be honest if you don't know the answer to a question. See if anyone else in the group can help.

### **Develop good communication skills**

1. Seeing and hearing is more effective than just hearing.
2. Doing is more effective than hearing and seeing.
3. Be imaginative and visual ... have fun!
4. Speak slowly and clearly, and with good volume.
5. Never use religious jargon, especially with the unchurched and new believers.

## **W**ITNESS – Maintaining an outward focus

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This growth dimension focuses on our unsaved friends ... it considers creative ways the Lord can use us to draw them to His saving grace and into the life of our church.

Maintaining an outward focus will be a constant battle as satan will do his best to hinder you and your members in this endeavour. In the regular meeting time of the group, be sure to allow time for:

- Follow-up news of friends on the Blessing List and pray for them.
- Discussion, planning and implementation of social-outreach events aimed at engaging Blessing List friends.

As already mentioned cast the vision for reaching out to unsaved friends from the very beginning of the life of the group and then regularly practise reaching out to them.

## **Additional suggestions**

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### **Seating**

Seating is important at group session times. The most important thing to know about correct seating is that everyone should be able to see each other from a comfortable seating position, without having to lean forward or backward.

A “circle” seating arrangement works best if you have ample seating space. Limit 3-seater sofas to two people, as it helps to improve member comfort and visibility. The person in the middle may feel hemmed-in and may not be able to see some of the members.

Where necessary, move sofas, chairs and cushions into place. (Rearrange seating at the conclusion of each meeting.)

### **Snack time**

A time of refreshment at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of your meeting is an important part of the session. This time serves as an unscripted, informal time for fellowship, shared around simple food where members can engage in conversation. Twenty to thirty minutes is a reasonable amount of time to allow for this activity.



## Small gift

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*“Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24).*

1. Consider an inexpensive, practical gift you can give to someone at the worship service on Sunday (movie ticket/coffee voucher, etc.).
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to prompt your attention to a person at the worship service you plan to attend.
3. Come to church with the gift and be ready for the Holy Spirit to direct your attention to someone to receive your gift.
4. Ask a friend to deliver your gift to the person without revealing your identity. “Giving anonymously ensures that the Lord receives the glory, and you will be blessed by Him.)
5. Personally give thanks to the Lord for giving you the ability to give and for the person who received your gift.
6. Complete the personal evaluation below for sharing with others in next week’s training session.

**Personal evaluation** (summarise your experience):

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## What happens in a small group meeting?

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Q1: What caught your attention in this week's session that has impacted you?

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Q2: Is there anything you don't understand? If you could ask the author or the Lord about this week's session, what might be your question(s)?

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Q3: What is a personal application for your life (be specific)?

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Record "principles" you discovered in this session that you consider worth applying to your life and leadership.



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### Small group principles work in Finland!

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The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is a long established traditional ministry-based church organisation with ministry activities dominated by the clergy. Small groups at the congregation of St Marc in Helsinki are relatively new. They are a powerful and exciting testimony of laymen on fire for Christ and committed to take the Great Commission seriously.

The vision for a small groups based church started to move ahead in early 2005 through the blessings of our former Head of Congregation. The minister of our congregation had been waiting for the Holy Spirit to move at the grass-roots level of the church. At an early stage of implementation he named the small groups in our church “mobile spiritual field clinics”.

Maadi Community Church in Cairo, Egypt, was used by God to help us see the ultimate model to inspire the small group work in Helsinki. MCCs small group pastors training manual and associated training resources were translated from English into Swedish.

This exciting work of God has already started to spread to other Swedish speaking congregations in the Helsinki area, with priests from a number of churches showing keen interest in the adoption of small groups in their churches.

In 2006, a Christian summer camp, with participants from all over Finland, enabled the Cairo small groups model to be further known and applied nationwide. The following feedback has been received from people who have experienced small group pastors training:

- Open, informal and encouraging atmosphere
- People friendly
- Jesus focused
- Prayer and fellowship
- Good suggestions for evangelising
- Opportunity to share experiences and testimony
- Supporting one another against spiritual warfare
- Ideal fellowship context for men and women with differing thoughts.

Small groups are alive and well at Helsinki. They serve the will of God and rely completely upon His power.



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# Session 6

## Leader qualities and skills



By the end of this session you should understand:

- Anyone can share in leading a small group
- Jesus' view on leadership
- Key qualities of a leader

### Anyone can share in leading a small group

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Research into the most successful small groups-based churches in the world discovered that there is no connection between the area of a small group leader's spiritual giftedness and their success in small group growth and multiplication (*Home Cell Group Explosion*, Joel Comiskey).

Comiskey's research revealed that any layperson can successfully lead a small group and showed that the following factors have little to do with effectiveness as a leader:

- Area of giftedness
- Personality type
- Gender
- Age
- Marital status
- Occupation

His research showed that who you are as a leader matters more than what you can do.

### Biblical view on leadership

Jesus says about leadership:

*"Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your **servant**, and whoever wants to be first must be the **slave of all**. For even I the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give my life as a ransom for many"* (Mark 10:43-45).

Paul underscored the Lord's view on leadership with these words:

*"Your **attitude** should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness" (Philippians 2:5-7 NRSV).*

Small group leadership is about being a humble servant, not an authoritative head.

If true leadership is about service, then every member of a small group can share in the leadership of their group. **Small group members should see themselves as developing leaders.**

### **Key qualities of a leader** (evidenced and growing, but not perfect)

1. A genuine heart for God and people (Matthew 22:37-39; 1 Corinthians 13:1-7)
2. Humility (Philippians 2:5-7)
3. A commitment to serve the Lord and group members sacrificially (Luke 9:23)
4. A firm trust in the authority of the Word of God (John 8:31)
5. Empowered by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8)
6. Prayerful (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18)
7. Has a life that reflects the "Fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23)
8. Has a positive attitude and is totally dependent on God for wisdom and strength (Philippians 4:13)
9. Pursues holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7)
10. Regularly encourages his/her members (Hebrews 10:25)
11. Disciplined and diligent to do what is necessary to foster growth (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)
12. Has a heart for witnessing (Matthew 28:18-20)
13. Is **FAST** enough:

**F**aithful (Luke 16:10)

**A**vailable (2 Timothy 4:2)

**S**ervant-hearted (Mark 10:42-45)

**T**eachable (Proverbs 9:8-10)

14. Although **weak**, is **willing** to say "yes" to the Lord (2 Corinthians 12:9)

**Weakness** is not a disqualification from godly service:

Paul said, *"If I must boast, I would rather boast about the things that show how weak I am"* (2 Corinthians 11:30); and

Jesus said, *"My power works best in your weakness"* (2 Corinthians 12:9a).

**Willingness** is mandatory for godly service:

Isaiah said, *"Then I heard the Lord asking, 'Whom should I send as a messenger to my people? Who will go for us?' And I said, Lord, I'll go! Send me"* (Isaiah 6:8).

## Character of a leader

Character is the most important quality of servant-leaders. 1 Timothy 3:1-7 lists qualities of a pastor. Notice that of the fifteen qualities listed, only one deals with something he/she does: being able to teach. All the other attributes deal with the pastor's character. Thus, a leader's character is more important than his/her skill. **God is more concerned about who we are than what we do.**

Why do some Christian leaders fail in their ministry? Sadly, they lack boundaries for appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. We'll consider just three character areas:

### Sexual purity

Some leaders fail in the area of sexual purity, not because of ignorance of what the Bible teaches, but because of failure to place adequate boundaries in their lives to safeguard them from sin. Consider the following guidelines for safe-guarding sexual purity:

- a. Never visit alone the home of someone of the opposite sex when they are alone.
- b. Maintain complete purity in all counselling (check your thoughts).
- c. Guard carefully the nature of books, music, TV programs, internet sites, etc., that influence your life.
- d. Innuendos, crude sexual humour and vulgar jokes are unacceptable for a leader. Paul told Timothy to *"set an example for believers in speech"* (1 Timothy 4:12).

### Financial integrity

The way we handle money indicates how disciplined we are in general. Consider these guidelines for financial integrity:

- a. Pay your bills on or before time.
- b. Where possible, stay out of debt.
- c. Practise tithing and sacrificial giving. God says, *"It is more blessed to give than to receive"* (Acts 20:35).

### Spiritual integrity

Spiritual integrity means we are careful to live as imitators of Christ, not impersonators. We should do our best to practise God-given principles for daily living and encourage others in their walk. This means we should be devoted to prayer, God's Word, consistent in living out our faith, loving and forgiving others to the best of our ability, in His strength.

Furthermore, it means we are honest with ourselves in our areas of weakness and where we need improvement (we can call these "God at work" areas in our lives). Our lives must be consistent with the calling we have received. Transparent living is essential and powerful in leadership. We can lead only up to where we "are" in our walk with the Lord. We must always be honest and upfront before the Lord and others about our mistakes. **We must be real.**

## Attitude

The *attitude* of a leader is always more important than his/her *aptitude*. Attitude is a choice! The attitude we have is the attitude we have chosen.

### The wrong attitude

Some people fail to become better leaders because of a wrong attitude. They fall into one of two broad categories – overconfidence or lacking confidence:

- **Overconfidence:** Produces pride, a sense of superiority and arrogance. This may cause a person to act hastily, come on too strong and head off in wrong directions.
- **Lacking confidence:** Produces negative responses, fear, doubt, confusion, disbelief and lack of leadership (intimidated by fear of failing and falling short of expectations).

### The right attitude

The well-balanced leader seeks to develop a good self-image as Christ's minister, depending solely on the quiet confidence and assurance that comes from trusting in the Lord and following His ways (Proverbs 3:5-6).

When considered from a human perspective, a sense of weakness and inadequacy should come over everyone when they consider the list of leader qualities that have been mentioned. Thankfully, the Lord does not expect us to lead in our own strength. Paul declared:

*"It is not that we think we can do anything of lasting value by ourselves. Our only power and success come from God"* (2 Corinthians 3:5).

So, what is God looking for in a leader?

*"The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him"* (2 Chronicles 16:9).

Listen, the Lord is not scanning the horizon for seminary students or those who see themselves as "lone ranger" spiritual giants. He delights to call those who are weak, those who are sincerely loyal to Him, those who are willing to be used by Him. **The Lord is the "ability" of our avail-ability. Our part is to "avail" ourselves to Him. Are you willing?**

## Everyone has potential, so what's your excuse?

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Sure, there are lots of reasons why God shouldn't choose you for leadership, but if you are deeply committed to Him, if you are willing to trust Him, He will use you in spite of who you are, what's in your past, how you feel and what you think about yourself.

Scan your eyes down the list of biblical characters on the following page the Lord used in amazing ways. They too had their share of excuses as to why the Lord should not have chosen them for leadership:

- Noah got drunk
- Abraham was too old
- Jacob was a liar
- Moses was slow of speech and tongue
- Gideon and Thomas both doubted God
- Samson was a womaniser
- Naomi was a widow
- David was too small for King Saul's armour
- David had an affair
- Saul, David and Moses were murderers
- Elijah and Jeremiah became depressed and suicidal
- Hosea's wife was a prostitute
- Amos' only training was in the school of fig-tree pruning
- Jonah ran from God
- Peter denied knowing Jesus three times
- Martha was a worrier
- Lazarus was dead
- Paul persecuted the church.

**Think about it:** The Lord knows what He's doing. He has chosen to work through human agents like you and me. He never makes mistakes, and, you're always in good company. The question that must be answered: **Will you allow the Lord to work through you?**

**Suggestion:** If you are struggling with your self-image or have any doubts as to who you are in Christ, then look carefully at the extra reading section in this session.

## Skills for leading

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### Maintaining a right direction

You can maintain a right direction by helping to keep the focus of the group on Christ. Throughout the life of your group, satan will tempt the members to relax and just hang-out. Groups that fall into this trap slowly lose meaning and purpose, and eventually stagnate and drift apart.

Be careful that the group does not veer off track, and urge your members to move past their fears and to stay out of comfort zones so that they may experience new challenges that will draw them closer in their walk with the Lord. You may need to approach members carefully who try to compromise and block what God wants to do in and through the life of your group.

**Remember:** It is through patient and persistent prayer that God changes hearts and attitudes.

## Maintaining the right pace

Every member in your group is uniquely different. They differ in gender, personality, giftedness, commitment, passion, Bible knowledge and understanding, experience, maturity, etc.

**Be a wise leader:** Don't expect that everyone will be able to move forward (learn, serve and grow) at the time and pace. Helping to keep the right pace will enable everyone to stay together as they tackle the many challenges in the life of the group. This is what pulling together and growing together is about.

When Jacob met his brother Esau en route back to his homeland, this is what he said to Esau's suggestion of leading Jacob and his family, servants, and livestock ...

*"You can see, my lord that some of the children are very young, and the flocks and herds have their young, too. If they are driven too hard they may die. So go ahead of us. **We will follow at our own pace**" (Genesis 33:13, 14).*

Maintaining a right pace requires the faster members to slow down a little in consideration of those in the group who are slower. It also allows adequate time for the main parts of the meeting. Be sensitive and flexible to the needs of everyone in your group.

Meetings should start and finish at the agreed times. This will permit people to depart on time without embarrassment, ensuring that members will not use late finishing as an excuse for not attending.

## Facing challenges (dealing with interesting characters)

As one of the leaders in your group, your concern is to see your members mature in ministry and love (Philippians 2:1-8). The success or failure of your group will depend upon how you respond to people who tend to disturb the harmony of the group. Such people need sensitive and loving care as you restrain their enthusiasm or patiently redirect their thinking (Colossians 3:16).

1 Thessalonians 5:14 says, *"Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone".*

When forming a new group, the Lord should be called upon to hand pick the "interesting characters" for the group. It is important to understand that the characters He chooses will be for the purpose of receiving and giving ministry from each person in the group. **Ministry is intended to travel in both directions.**

1 Samuel 22:2 says this about the interesting characters that were chosen by God to be on David's team: *"All those who were in **distress** or in **debt** or **discontented** gathered around him, and he became their leader".*

Consider the following list of "interesting characters" the Lord may choose to be in your group:

- The dominant character
- The side tracker
- The one who never speaks

- The one who says too much
- The one who always seems to offer the wrong answer
- The one who is over-apologetic
- The one who displays a fault-finding spirit
- The one who is oversensitive to minor correction
- The fearful
- The prideful
- The intellectual
- The negative type
- The one who arrives late
- The one who leaves late
- The attention seeker
- The loner
- The mumblor
- The lazy-bones.

Relax. It's unlikely the Lord will choose all the above interesting characters for your group 😊

## Extra reading

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### **How is your self-image?**

The way we think about ourselves (our self-image) has a big influence on the way we relate to others. If we feel good about ourselves our relationship with others is usually good. But, if we feel bad about ourselves we often react negatively towards others.

Our self-image is built up, among other things, by our looks, personality, attitudes, abilities and perception of what others think of us.

Our self-image is developed as the awareness of our own identity begins in early childhood, and, is the result of accepting the values other people place on our appearance, abilities, performance and the environment in which this takes place.

A negative self-image is produced in a child who is criticised, put down in front of others, made to feel unwanted or a nuisance, or who feels insecure in the family. Lack of discipline, indulgence in place of love and broken homes are major contributors.

Once a negative image is firmly implanted, life's experiences tend to be viewed from a negative standpoint. People tend to compensate for their feelings of lack of self-worth in ways that make small group facilitation challenging, such as:

- a. Being quiet and unwilling to contribute to the discussion
- b. Being apologetic about everything they say or do
- c. Being over-sensitive to minor criticism
- d. Displaying a fault-finding spirit
- e. Being moody
- f. Having a "better than others" attitude
- g. Being apprehensive about change
- h. Attention-seeking.

In most cases a poor self-image can be repaired with loving tender care and much affirmation, but remember that a lifetime of negative thinking takes prayer, patience, perseverance, hard work, and time to be changed.

The foundation of a healthy self-image is the acceptance of the truth that we are wonderfully made by God in His likeness (Genesis 1:27).

### **Doubts about who you are?**

The following biblical statements leave no doubt as to who we are and our "net" worth to God:

- *I am the salt of the earth* (Matthew 5:13)
- *I am the light of the world* (Matthew 5:14)
- *I am a child of God and a part of His family* (John 1:12, Romans 8:16)
- *I am Christ's friend* (John 15:15)
- *I am a joint-heir with Christ sharing His inheritance with Him* (Romans 8:17)
- *I am a temple of God — His Spirit dwells in me* (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19)
- *I am a new creation/new person* (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- *I am a saint* (Ephesians 1:1, 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2)
- *I am God's workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus, so that I can do the things He planned for me long ago* (Ephesians 2:10)
- *I am a citizen of heaven, and seated there now* (Philippians 3:20, Ephesians 2:6)
- *I am chosen of God, holy and dearly loved* (Colossians 3:12)
- *I am one of God's living stones being built up as a spiritual house* (1 Peter 2:5)
- *I am part of a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession to proclaim His goodness* (1 Peter 2:9-10)
- *I am born of God, and the evil one (satan) cannot touch me* (1 John 5:18).



## Share the Good News

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*“For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16).*

1. Carefully read several times the Gospel tract “Steps to Peace with God”, or an equivalent.
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to prompt your mind with a close friend you know, or suspect, is not a Christian and who may be open to hearing/reading the Good News about Jesus.
3. When this happens, make an appointment to meet with your friend for 30-60 minutes at a place that is free of distractions. (Rely on the Holy Spirit for His perfect timing.)
4. Explain that because you care for them, there is some important news you would like to share with him/her. At this point you need to decide to either take them through the “Steps to Peace with God” tract or present them with the tract, asking them to read through it as soon as possible when they are not distracted. Assure them you will not bother them any further about this and you would be happy to answer any questions they would like to ask you.

Caution: Don’t jeopardise your friendship by pressuring them in any way.

5. Complete the following personal evaluation for sharing with others in your group next week.

**Personal evaluation** (summarise your experience):

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Leader qualities and skills

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Q1: What caught your attention in this week's session that has impacted you?

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Q2: Is there anything you don't understand? If you could ask the author or the Lord about this week's session, what might be your question(s)?

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Q3: What is a personal application for your life (be specific)?

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Record "principles" you discovered in this session that you consider worth applying to your life and leadership.

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### Small group principles work in Romania!

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Before we joined MCC in 2001 our vision was to serve the Lord in Romania. At that time we didn't know how to do that. We were warmly welcomed by the church leadership and members at MCC in a loving way. This motivated us to return to the church not only because we had found "real" fellowship but because we wanted to discover the reason behind their warmth. The answer, we discovered, was simple; MCC modelled the early church, as mentioned in Acts 2:46. The members of MCC worshipped together as one body at weekly celebration services and met in smaller sized small groups in homes during the week.

We quickly signed up for small groups training to learn the principles that under-girded that ministry. We expected training to be sophisticated and complex, but the principles we discovered were so simple and clear. We became deeply involved in the small groups ministry and subsequently were brought onto the executive leadership team. The five years we spent at MCC was a valuable preparation time for us.

In 2006 we began our ministry in Romania. We found the churches in Romania suffering from traditional dry worship, lacking focus in deep fellowship and without practical discipleship. Believers in these churches told us that they felt that they were just names in the churches' register. We saw the churches in Romania facing real danger of stagnating and losing their members. Churches were sinking slowly.

We've had the opportunity to share the small groups vision with many pastors and church leaders. They responded very positively and expressed interest in applying the Small Groups Church Plan. We've helped to establish a network of small groups in two churches and have seen amazing results. The most common testimony we have heard is that "small groups are fulfilling what the church once lacked". Believers are also saying that small groups are caring for them and they are experiencing deeper fellowship and motivation to apply God's truth in practical ways. They also expressed excitement about working as a team, not as individuals, to evangelise their community through simple acts of love.

We experienced amazing success at MCC through small groups, and now in churches in Romania. Small groups can work exceptionally well in any culture and country to build-up believers, the church, and expand the Kingdom of God. Building up the church through small groups follows the biblical model.



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# Session 7

## Forming a new group



By the end of this session you should understand:

- Preparations needed to form a new group
- Importance of setting goals
- Importance of accountability, evaluation and structure.

### Preparation needed to form a new group

Preparation for forming a new group should not be a rushed affair. Prayer is the place to begin if good health, maturity and fruitfulness are desired for the group. Careful consideration of the following will help to ensure a strong and confident start in this new venture.

**Leadership Team:** A leadership team, comprising of the pastor of the group, apprentice, coach, small groups director and the Holy Spirit, all working in collaboration with one another, should be established before the group is formally recognised by your church.

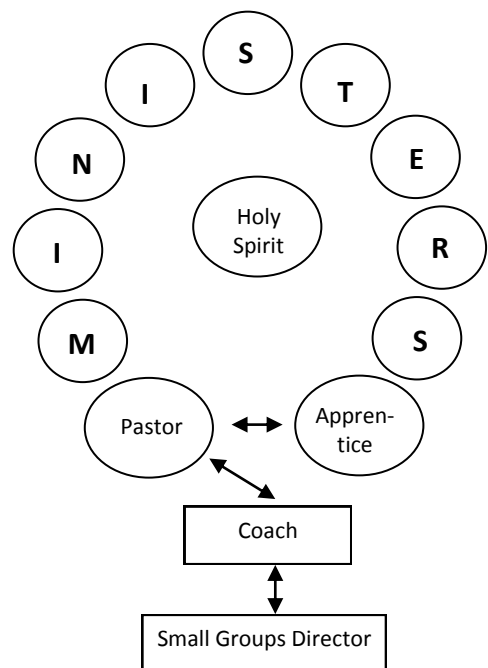
**Coach:** Your coach is like a good parent. Having successfully led and multiplied small groups, he/she will be a source of wisdom and encouragement to you throughout the life of the group.

Your coach will meet regularly with you, supporting you in your leadership development and helping you to keep your group on track.

**Apprentice:** You should see the apprentice as your successor, a close friend in whom you can trust to support you in this new venture. Ideally, this person should be available to meet with you each week to discuss, pray and tackle the challenges of your group. This time should be seen as an investment, not an expense.

**Members:** You need to decide as to which particular group of people to which God is leading you to minister (women, men, young adults, mixed married, etc).

### Small Group Structure



Each small group pastor and apprentice should prayerfully consider whom to personally invite to join their group. Avoid the temptation to quickly fill up your group with random invitations.

Experience shows that people with similar backgrounds and interests form the most effective small groups. More often than not, members discover that their circles of unchurched friends overlap (e.g. squash, tennis, fishing, dancing). As a result, outreach happens naturally as these friends experience a saturation of God's love through constant prayer and loving contacts.

Having decided on the particular group of people, you should share the small groups vision with them in an honest, clear and enthusiastic manner. Help them to understand that the purpose of your group is: **Living In Fellowship to Evangelise** (*life*).

Producing an attractive invitation, containing essential details, is helpful in stirring interest and attracting members. Placing a written invitation in their hands that has been well thought out will help persuade them to say "yes" to coming to your group. Be excited and expectant about what the Lord will do in and through those in your group. **Enthusiasm is infectious.**

**Venue:** Carefully decide on a suitable venue as it sets the tone for what happens. Meeting in private homes helps members to relax, refresh and build relationships.

Attention to detail will help your members feel more confident. The pastor of the group should ensure that the venue is properly set up for the meeting and everything necessary is in place. The venue should, where possible:

- a. Be clean and tidy.
- b. Have good lighting.
- c. Be warm in winter and cool in summer.
- d. Have chairs that can be easily moved into a circle. Create an intimate atmosphere by keeping the circle no wider than 3 meters in diameter; and permit members to sit on the floor or rest on cushions if preferred.
- e. Have food and drink already set out for the snack break.

Note: Avoid noisy households or other venues where distractions are allowed to interfere with the meeting.

**Ground rules:** When the group meets for the first time, it's important to establish ground rules that will govern and safeguard the life of the group ...

- a. Ask people to be honest with each other. There can be no deep relationship without honest sharing. Some people may feel threatened by too much disclosure and it may take quite some time before they can be confident enough to disclose deep feelings. Create a safe and secure environment for transparent and confidential sharing.
- b. Request that there be no negative criticism of people inside and outside of the group. The group must never be allowed to degenerate into a gossip club. Things shared in confidence must not go outside the group.
- c. Consider adopting the following suggested covenant statements. They can serve

you well and safeguard your group by spelling out in clear terms “what is” and “what is not” acceptable in the life of your group. Stress that a “where possible” clause is applicable to each statement ...

- Attend the group as regularly as you can
- Show up on time
- Participate in group discussions
- Be as “real” as you can
- Be as honest as you can
- Be patient and accepting of one another
- Be forgiving
- The hosting of the group in different homes
- Share and lead in the various parts of the life of the group
- Reach out to unchurched friends with God’s love
- The group’s eventual multiplication
- Etc.

At this time, delegate as many group tasks as possible. Warmly invite, but don’t force anyone to do anything. Some people are slow to start. Rely on the Lord to motivate people into action.

**Commencement date:** Decide on the time and day of the week for regular meetings and when to commence the group. Meeting weekly is better than every two weeks, or monthly. This strengthens member attendance and builds consistent momentum in the life of the group.

## Setting goals

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Healthy groups are “goal-oriented” groups. The goal is net-work evangelism that results in multiplication. Goals challenge our present best, stretching us a little more to make us a lot better. Even from the very beginning, pray with your coach and apprentice for a tentative date to multiply the group. Ask the Lord to prepare those in your group for this outcome. The Lord is about growing His church through multiplication.

As your group progresses, you may find that you will need to move the multiplication date forward or backward, depending on how the Holy Spirit is leading.

The purpose of setting goals is simply to help motivate your group to be constantly stretching in the four growth dimensions. Setting goals also helps to evaluate the progress your group is making.

Everyone in the group should take part in setting the goals for the group. Then, with sensitivity, constantly remind group members of the goals.

**Remember: Whenever we give our best, the Lord will give the increase.**

## Accountability, evaluation and structure

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### Accountability

Unleashing the potential in any church requires responsible delegation. But to be responsible, delegation requires accountability. Everyone is accountable to someone. Scripture says ...

*“Yes, each of us will have to give a personal account to God” (Romans 14:12).*

*“Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they know they are accountable to God ...” (Hebrews 13:17).*

We can help to address this important responsibility by ensuring that small group pastors are accountable to coaches to whom they report at least once a month.

Likewise, the coach is accountable to the small groups director, who is accountable to senior leaders of the church. This accountability measure ensures that:

- a. All groups are progressing on track with the church’s vision and purpose
- b. Balanced growth is being evidenced: upward, inward, outward and forward
- c. The needs of the members are being addressed
- d. High standards of care, instruction and leadership are maintained
- e. New believers are being disciplined and given leadership opportunity.

Small group pastors are required to prepare and submit a Progress Chart to their coach each month (refer to Appendix 1).

Through the information provided on this form, the pastor, apprentice and coach can easily track member attendance, member service involvement, outreach initiatives and results, and the group’s readiness for multiplication.

Each month, coaches are responsible for reporting attendance figures and the state of health of the groups under their care to the small groups director, thus making it possible for the leadership of the wider church to keep in view an accurate “big picture” of all God is doing within the life of the church. Wise decisions can be made when the real state of things are known.

### Health Check

The Health Check report is useful in helping pastors evaluate their spiritual health, and the health of their groups. At the start of the life of the group, pastors should complete this report, and continue this practice every month until the health check indicators shows they are in a state of good health. Thereafter, health checks should be conducted every three months. This report is to be viewed by their coach (refer to Appendix 2).

## Evaluation

Every member of a small group is invited to share in the responsibility of assessing the health of their group. They should be asked to complete a simple evaluation report (refer to Appendix 3). This form can serve as an objective health indicator, assisting the pastor of the group to have answers to the following questions:

- Are the needs of the members being met?
- Are members enjoying life within the group?
- Are members transforming into the likeness of Christ?
- Do members understand that the vision of the group is to reach out to unchurched friends?
- Is the group *open* to welcoming unchurched friends?
- Are there any shortcomings in the leadership, methods and content of the group's life?
- Can the life of the group be improved and strengthened in any particular way?

**Health checks and personal evaluations are valuable and vital to the life and success of your group. Don't be threatened by them. If you use them well, they will serve you well.**

Feedback obtained from these initiatives can guide the senior pastor and small groups pastors in your church to make necessary adjustments and corrections in leadership where needed, ensuring at all times the church's community of small groups are positioned well for growth in love, maturity and fruitfulness.

## Structure

Appropriate structure is necessary for growth and development. You may encounter some resistance from your members concerning this in the operation of your group.

Fear of containment, conformity and control may be legitimate concerns behind any resistance to "fall into line" with leadership in the management and development of small groups. Such resistance should be approached with sensitivity, loving care and prayer.

Help those who resist understand that structure is as crucial to the life of small groups, and the church, as carefully laid railway lines are to the safe and efficient movement of locomotives and carriages.

Network Update is a form that aids small group coaches in support of the growth and expansion of their groups (Refer to Appendix 4).

**It's important we don't get "hung up" on structure. Structure is there to support and safeguard us as we endeavour to stay "on track" in our spiritual journey.**



## Forming a new group

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Q1: What caught your attention in this week's session that has impacted you?

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Q2: Is there anything you don't understand? If you could ask the author or the Lord about this week's session, what might be your question(s)?

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Q3: What is a personal application for your life (be specific)?

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Record "principles" you discovered in this session that you consider worth applying to your life and leadership.



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## Progress Chart



Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_ Month: \_\_\_\_\_

Apprentice: \_\_\_\_\_ Coach: \_\_\_\_\_

Multiplication date: \_\_\_\_\_

Months result	
Attendance	_____ %
Servants	_____ %
Leaders emerging	— Y/N
Reaching out	— Yes/No

### Reaching “in”

Pair partner	Name	Ministry role within group	Date of meeting				
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
<b>Total weekly attendance</b>							
Attendance Code: ✓ = present   a = absent (informed)   ✕ = absent (not informed)							

### Reaching “out”

Summary of initiatives actioned/proposed

### Contact information of new members

Details	New member 1	New member 2	New member 3
Surname			
First name			
Work or home no.			
Mobile No.			
Address			
Birthday (D/M/Y)			
Email			

## Health Check

Please ✓ your assessment in Yes/No column	Y	N	Please ✓ your assessment in Yes/No column	Y	N
<b>1. Vision</b> Our vision is to <i>“equip God’s people to do His work, and build up the church ... so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love”</i> (Eph 4:12, 16). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do the members know, and are they committed to the vision of the group?</li> </ul>			<b>6. Raising-up new leaders</b> Healthy groups are “leader breeder” groups. The Lord has gifted every believer with some leadership ability. Every member has a vital part to play in the life of their group. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you invite your members to share in the leadership of the group?</li> </ul>		
<b>2. Multiplying</b> The goal of our group is to multiply through effective life-style evangelism. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has your group agreed to the goal of multiplication?</li> <li>• Does the group regularly practise “outward” focussed activities?</li> <li>• Are leaders being made ready for multiplication?</li> <li>• Has your group prayerfully decided on a date to multiply?</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you purposeful in grooming apprentice leaders — in preparation for when your group will multiply?</li> <li>• Do your members know their spiritual gifts?</li> <li>• Are they practising their gifts?</li> <li>• Are you helping them to develop their gifts?</li> <li>• Are you engaged in active delegation?</li> </ul>		
<b>3. Time alone with God</b> Your “time alone” with the Lord is of critical importance to your life, and the life of your group. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you spending regular time with the Lord through prayer and His word?</li> <li>• Is your relationship with the Lord growing?</li> <li>• Do you lead with a spirit of expectation that the Lord desires to do great things in and through your group?</li> <li>• Are you leading in your strength and not in the strength of the Spirit?</li> <li>• Are you exercising your faith?</li> </ul>			<b>7. Member satisfaction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you know the needs of the members in your group?</li> <li>• Are their needs being met?</li> <li>• Are members regular in attendance?</li> <li>• Do they value and enjoy their time together?</li> <li>• Are the members in pair-partnerships?</li> <li>• Is there transparency and accountability in the life of the group?</li> <li>• Does your group have a group covenant?</li> <li>• Do you evaluate the life of your group?</li> </ul>		
<b>4. Prayer</b> Successful group leaders are prayer models. They discipline themselves to pray daily for their members, and they encourage them to pray for each other. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you and your members praying for each other?</li> </ul>			<b>8. Group meetings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do meetings foster intimacy and honest sharing?</li> <li>• Do the sessions start and finish on time?</li> <li>• Is there a freedom for everyone to share — safeguarded from criticism and rejection?</li> </ul>		
<b>5. New members</b> Every member is responsible for inviting new members to the group. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you regularly encourage your members to invite new people?</li> <li>• Does your group pray for unchurched friends, using a Blessing List?</li> <li>• Do you plan regular fun-n-friendly social activities to attract newcomers?</li> </ul>			<b>9. Coach support</b> It’s of critical importance that you feel supported by your coach. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does your coach regularly meet with you?</li> <li>• Do you have a good working relationship with your coach?</li> <li>• Do you provide your coach with a monthly Progress Chart?</li> </ul>		
<b>Group pastor’s name:</b>			<b>Date:</b>		

## Evaluation

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Your honest evaluation of this session will help us know the health and progress of our group, high-lighting strengths and suggesting growth areas.

		Yes	No
1.	Did the meeting start and finish on time?		
2.	Was the general atmosphere friendly, informal and inviting?		
3.	Did everyone have equal opportunity to participate?		
4.	Was reasonable order and control maintained?		
5.	Did you feel valued and affirmed by the group?		
6.	Do you do "fun things" in the group?		
7.	Do you enjoy your involvement in the group?		
8.	Is there enough variety in the group time?		
9.	Do you know your group's vision and strategy?		
10.	Are you pleased with the overall leadership of the pastor?		

11. What was the "high" point/s of today's session?

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12. What was the "low" point/s of today's session?

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13. If you could improve just one thing in the group, what would it be?

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Thank you for your honest comments.



### Network Update

Zone:
Month:
Coach:

Assistant Coaches			Day	No.	Small group pastors			Day	No.	Small group pastors			Day	No.	Small group pastors			Day	No.	
1					1a					1b					1c					
2					2a					2b					2c					
3					3a					3b					3c					
Total:					Total:						Total:						Total:			

Overall results							
Church groups				Outreach groups			
	Groups	Members	New believers		Groups	Members	New believers
<b>A</b> Adult group				<b>OA</b> Adult group			
<b>Y</b> Youth group				<b>OY</b> Youth group			
<b>C</b> Childrens group				<b>OC</b> Childrens group			
<b>Total</b>				<b>Total</b>			

Please indicate in the top section, in the side margin, under group numbers 1, 2, 3 (before the name of the pastor and apprentice) the type of each group that is listed by showing letters "A" for adult, "Y" for youth, or "C" for children.

New believers	Followed-up by
Please show additional names on back	

*Striving together ... Saving lives!*

## Prayer of spiritual empowerment

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*When I think of the wisdom and scope of God's plan, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from His glorious, unlimited resources He will give you mighty inner strength through His Holy Spirit. And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts as you trust in Him.*

*May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvellous love. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, how deep, His love really is.*

*May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it. Then you will be filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God.*

*Now glory be to God! By His mighty power at work within us, He is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope. May He be given glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever through endless ages. Amen.*

(Ephesians 3:14-21)

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## Additional resources by Bill Joukhadar

### Growing Up into His Likeness

Believers are to be like the Lord in character and conduct. Whilst it takes but one moment to be born into the Christian faith, it takes the rest of our lives on earth to grow-up into the likeness of our Lord and Saviour (discipleship). *Growing Up into His Likeness* is for every believer who is serious about growing in his/her faith.



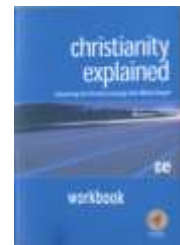
Cost: \$A12 (plus postage)

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## by Michael Bennett

### Christianity Explained – workbook

This workbook is an ideal, practical tool for sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with an unchurched friend in a simple, clear and unrushed manner ... helping the hearer to make an intelligent decision concerning Christ. This workbook is designed to be used in conjunction with the main textbook “Christianity Explained”.



Cost: \$A6 (plus postage)

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## by Joel Comiskey

- **Home Cell Group Explosion ...**  
*How your small group can grow and multiply*
- **The Relational Disciple ...**  
*How God uses community to shape followers of Jesus*
- **The Spirit-filled Small Group ...**  
*Leading your group to experience the spiritual gifts*
- **Discover ...**  
*Use your gifts and help others find theirs*
- **Coach ...**  
*Empower others to effectively lead a small group*



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