

Preparation for Leading a Small Group

Purpose: To set a purpose for a small group, assess needs and write a lesson plan.

Objectives: By the end of this lesson the student will

1. Be able to write out a small group purpose statement
2. Be able to assess real and felt needs of the small group members.
3. Be able to write a lesson plan that keeps with the overall direction of the group.
4. Understand how to choose between different small group materials

Key Verse: 2 Timothy 2:14-17

(This lesson was developed by material in Leading Small Groups, The Ultimate Road Trip (designed by the Campus Ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ). Although it's designed for a college audience, it has helpful principles and information for discipling any target audience.)

I. Introduction

*Note to instructor: Discussion Question #2 (near end of lesson) says, "Write up a lesson plan. Be prepared to discuss it in class and with your mentor. (If you're unsure what the next lesson will be in your small group, write one up for Discovery Group Lesson 1)" Be sure the students know what lesson they are doing **a week before this lesson is taught** so they will have something prepared to bring to class.*

You could begin this lesson in one of two ways:

1. *Tell two personal stories, one of a small group that flopped and one of a small group that succeeded. (Give enough detail for the students to be able to discern the reasons for each.) Then ask the group to talk about what went right in the one group and what went wrong in the other. If you have a board available, write the answers in two columns on the board.*
2. *Have them share stories of small groups that worked and flopped and then have the group discuss why they did so. Your job is to make sure enough detail is presented so they can draw conclusions. If you have a board available, write the answers in two columns on the board.*

Jill's Bomb

When Melinda, Lee Anne and I went to our first small group at Texas A&M, we were pretty excited about the idea of being in a Bible Study together. The leader, Jill, lost ground quickly by announcing, "You probably already know this, but let's go through it anyway." We weren't exactly won over. The "discussion" didn't help either. Jill tried to field test her elementary education skills by asking questions such as, "OK now, what did Jesus do in this verse? He died for our sins. Good. Let's go to the next question." Soon an uneasy silence fell over the room.

As we laughed and talked on the way home, we made a unanimous decision - no one wanted to go where this group was headed. Next Thursday, no one wanted to go but we felt sorry for Jill. We figured someone would show, so we drew straws to see who would make the token appearance. For the next few weeks we followed the same routine, drawing straws to pick the "winner."

Read Jill's bomb and be prepared to discuss why this group failed.

Instructor could say, "Your target audience may not be high school or college, but post-college or adult learners. See Appendix 2 which talks about distinctives of adult learners.

Instructor can have the students get into groups of 3 or 4 to discuss what they wrote down here. After a couple of minutes, ask a couple groups to share what they came up with.

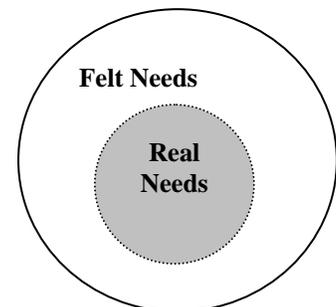
There are three areas of preparing to lead a small group which we will discuss: Audience Analysis, Purpose, and Planning. Leading a small group is like preparing for a journey. To effectively prepare for one you need to answer three questions.

- Who is coming along?
- Where are we going?
- How are we going to get there?

II. Who is coming along?

What do we need to know about the people coming to the group?

- A. There are two types of needs: 1.) First there are **real needs** which are few. They deal with who we are at the core of our being, e.g., security, significance, belonging and love. 2.) Second, there are **felt needs** which are often symptoms or expressions of real needs. Notice the broken line between the real needs and the felt needs showing that the distinction between them is not always clear.



April's Study Break

I led one group for three years, from the basics of the Christian life through a discipleship group. Once my discipleship group fell asleep - all four of them. It was a very busy time in the semester, and I wanted to give them a break so we listened to a talk tape. Bad Idea!

What do you think were the real needs and the felt needs of the women in April's group that week? What would have helped them the most that week? What would have been a more effective way of ministering to them? Write down your ideas.

Note to instructor: Have the students (still in their small groups) discuss what they wrote down. After a couple of minutes, ask for some of them to share what they came up with.

B. Influences on Learning

What kind of things do people bring into a Bible study? For example: different motivations, histories, learning styles, personalities, etc. How do you find these things out about your group?

First you can **pray** and ask for discernment. You can also **learn** about *cultural trends*, learning styles and personalities. A good way to do this is through **observation**. **Asking questions** is very helpful in learning more about what interests and motivates your group (see Appendix 1 - Small Group Needs Survey). Following are some influences you might look for.

Cultural Trends

- Since 50% are in or from broken homes, you may want to look at "God's Love and Faithfulness," "Forgiveness," or "Marriage."
- If some are skeptical of absolutes, your group may need to learn about the character of God and the authority of His Word.
- Most groups will need to address the issues of sex, sexual immorality, purity and forgiveness.
- Because of possible New Age influences, the group may need to look at the uniqueness of Jesus or the deity of Christ.

1. General Influences

men v. women

youth v. adult (see Appendix 2 - Distinctives About Adult Learners)

stages of growth

Twenties: Great confidence

Thirties: Achievement & Doubt

Forties: Complexity & Urgency

Fifties: Self-acceptance

Sixties: Mentors

2. Cultural Influences

Baby boomer, busters, "x"ers; heritage, socio-economic factors; North, South, East, West

3. Individual Influences

Personality
Home Environment
Social Environment
Life Experiences

4. Learning Styles

The doer: Just let me do it!
The researcher: But, what about . . . ?
The experimenter: Hey, have you considered doing it this way?
The theoretician: Wow, look how this fits with . . . !

What "Influences" do you see in your small groups?

Note to instructor: Have the students discuss this in their small groups for a few minutes.

III. Where are we going?

We need to understand the importance of having a purpose for meeting. A ship, adrift, gets nowhere. You should have a general idea where you are going before you ask people to join with you. People like being involved in things that have clear purpose. The purpose statement should mesh three things together: Christ's goal for us (Maturity), the purpose of building multiplying disciples, and student needs. A discipleship group is not an end in itself but a tool to help us accomplish the Great Commission, which is to "make disciples." This involves building spiritual multipliers (2 Timothy 2:2) through teaching people to observe all that Christ commanded. The discipleship group is one of the best tools for teaching the Word, providing an environment that cultivates application of the Word and the relationships to encourage us to keep walking with Christ.

Why do we need to have a *Purpose Statement* for our groups? It lets people know why they are meeting, it keeps the group moving in the right direction, it gives the means for deciding whether the group is doing what it said it would do.

What should the leader take into consideration when designing a purpose statement?

Where Christ wants us to end up (Mature: Ephesians 4)
What our particular mission is (Fulfill the Great Commission)
Where the group is beginning (their starting point).

Consider the following scenario: A group consists of college sophomores who are at different maturity levels in their Christian lives. Their key interests are the opposite sex, grades and success. Most are from broken homes. They seem to have little knowledge of the Bible and want to have successful careers and relationships more than they want to know and serve God. They are willing to come together as a group and study the Bible. What would you say are their basic spiritual needs? Write down a purpose for this group. How specifically would you pray

for these group members?

Note to instructor: Have the students discuss this in their small groups for about 8 minutes. Then ask some to share their answers with the class.

IV. By Plane, Train, Boat or Foot?

Now let's explore our choice of content. This should be based upon the purpose and needs of the group. Each of the topical options below has a particular audience and purpose in mind. Following are four good questions to answer in determining the content.

1. Have your group members been in a Bible study before? What did they study?
2. What principles, or topics, would benefit them most at this stage in their Christian walk? Their ministry?
3. What are their crucial needs? (As opposed to general wants.)
4. How many weeks should this group meet? Choose a length that complements their level of commitment and your purpose.

Once you've answered these questions, your materials will often be obvious.

Note to instructor: Try to have examples of each of these available for class. To order copies, you can call 800 827-2788 or 800 729-4351.

Feel free to introduce other materials that will help build up believers in their faith and prepare them for ministry.

Life Skills: LifeSkills was created for non-Christians who want to honestly examine life's issues and hear biblical answers. More of a guided discussion than a Bible Study. Pre-evangelistic. University audience.

InterActa: InterActa provides an interactive environment for Christians to explore, grapple with, and learn biblical truths. No particular direction. University audience.

Discovery Group: A six lesson series on the basics of the Christian life for the new Christian or the newly Spirit-filled Christian. Designed to lead to involvement in ministry.

Discipleship Series: An intermediary series for Christians who are growing in their faith and beginning to minister to others.

Action Group: An advanced series of lesson for those leading others in ministry.

Transferable Concepts: 10 short studies on basic Christian truths in regards to Christian living and ministry. Designed to lead to involvement in ministry.

Ten Basic Steps Toward Christian Maturity: A study series that offers a simple way to understand the basics of the Christian faith. The series introduces Jesus Christ and explains how to live the Christian walk.

Five Steps to Christian Growth: This study helps new believers discover what the Bible says about assurance of salvation, understanding God's love and forgiveness, being filled with the Holy Spirit, growing as a believer, and more.

Five Steps to Making Disciples: This tool helps guide new Christians or more mature believers into leadership roles. The five-lesson study gives practical principles for building relationships, implementing regular follow-up and more.

Five Steps to Sharing Your Faith: These practical lessons will help you develop in your disciples a lifestyle of introducing others to Christ.

Practical Christian Living: Developed by the Priority Associates ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ, it has been used primarily with men and women in the business community. Also available from Priority Associates: **"Your Life in Christ"** (for new believers), **"Discovery"** (Bible Study series on establishing and growing in your relationship with Christ), and **"Lifefocus"** (topics that deal with life's issues).

V. How do we get there?

We've set the destination, know who's coming with us, chosen the vehicle, now we need to lay out the course. This is lesson planning. Following is a quick lesson plan format.

to introduce the central truth and goal of the lesson?

to introduce the hook?

to summarize and go on to introduce the book and look?

What will I use to gather their discoveries?

→ chalkboard, white board, overhead, etc.

→ have a guided discussion

What will I say ...

to summarize and lead them into the took section?

to summarize, give assignments and move into prayer?

7. I plan to involve individual students by:

8. Evaluation

Note to instructor: With the remaining class time, have the students discuss what they came up with in the "Discussion Questions" below.

Discussion Questions:

1. Work through the "Purpose Worksheet" (Appendix 3). Be prepared to discuss it in class and with your mentor.
2. Write up a lesson plan. Be prepared to discuss it in class and with your mentor. (If you're unsure what the next lesson will be in your small group, write one up for Discovery Group Lesson 1)
3. Which small group materials will you be using and why?

Appendix 2 - Distinctives about Adult Learners

1. Adults often do not come with a learner's attitude.
2. Adults have definite ideas about things.
3. Adults come with much more experience.
4. Adults expect immediate applicability.
5. Adults involve themselves voluntarily.
6. Adults tend to be apprehensive in learning situations.
7. Adults learn through their own efforts.
8. Adults learn by identification with a group.
9. Adults learn by their association with their teachers - by imitation and modeling.
10. Adults need feedback.
11. Adults come with more pressures and responsibilities.

Adults are:

1. self-directed.
2. growing reservoirs of experience and insight.
3. oriented by changing social roles and corresponding expectations.
4. motivated by practicality and applicability.

Adults learn:

1. in order to cope with change, to succeed
2. when motivated by one of three sources:
 - a. Pleasure/self-esteem.
 - b. searching for answers.
 - c. meeting felt needs.
3. in order to solve problems; therefore, if there is no problem, there is no interest.

What adults want in learning

1. To be involved, not passive
2. Not to be exposed publicly, i.e, they fear exposure of incompetencies (real or imagined)

Appendix 3 - Purpose Worksheet

(Adapted from Purpose and Content Worksheet, URT, p.153)

1. After prayerfully assessing the needs of my group members, I think their basic spiritual needs are:



I think their basic felt needs are:

2. In light of their needs and the overall purpose of our ministry, the purpose of my group will be:

3. This purpose is best accomplished by meeting this many weeks:

4. I will pray God changes the lives of those in my group in these ways: