

LifeWay[®]
CHRISTIAN STORES

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OF GOD

8-SESSION
BIBLE STUDY

entrusted
Study of 2 Timothy

How to Lead
A Small Group
WORKBOOK

This workbook belongs to:

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THREE ESSENTIALS OF SMALL GROUPS

The small groups in your church may have a different name. For instance, they may be called:

- Sunday school classes
- Community groups
- Missional communities
- LIFE Groups
- A host of other names

Despite these different names, there are certain attributes of a biblical small group—something that sets these groups apart, even in their variety, from all other kinds of groups.

These distinctives are important for any small group leader to recognize.

THREE ESSENTIALS OF SMALL GROUPS

(CONTINUED)

1. Disciple-Making

Jesus came near and said to them, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” — Matthew 28:18-20, CSB

And let us watch out for one another to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching. — Hebrews 10:24-25, CSB

Disciple-making is the irrefutable responsibility of Jesus’ disciples. As we engage in groups, we encourage each other to grow in knowledge of and obedience to Jesus.

THREE ESSENTIALS OF SMALL GROUPS

(CONTINUED)

2. Community-Building

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.”
— Genesis 1:26, CSB

May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me.
— John 17:21, CSB

Just as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have existed from all eternity in perfect community, God has created us in His image in order to live in biblical community. Our unity displays the oneness of God in the Trinity.

3. Culture-Shaping

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It’s no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.

You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”
— Matthew 5:13-16, CSB

As we grow in our obedience to Jesus through the group environment, every area of our lives is transformed. This individual transformation works itself out in public ways that shape homes, churches, and communities.

Discussion Questions:

1. What name do you use for small groups at your church?
2. Which of the three essentials (disciple-making, community-building, culture-shaping) is their primary focus? How is that displayed?

STARTING A SMALL GROUP

By agreeing to be a small group leader, you have taken on the critical task of shepherding a portion of the congregation. With prayer and proper preparation, your group will be an environment where community and discipleship coexist. Here are a few things you will need to do to help ensure the successful launch of the group.

Choose a location:

This could be a room at the church, someone’s home, a community clubhouse, or anywhere that people can meet for one to three hours each week. Ensure it is centrally located for people in the group, and can comfortably host eight to 16 people. If your group will have families with young children, make sure the facility has enough rooms for adults and kids during the group discussion time.

Choose a day and time:

The day and time will help determine who will be able to attend. If it is on Sunday morning, the group will be limited to current church attenders. If it is held during the day on a weekday, it will be limited to people with flexible work schedules. If it is later in the evening, it may be difficult for young families to attend. Think through who you want to invite to the group, and plan a schedule that fits their needs the best.

STARTING A SMALL GROUP (CONTINUED)

Invite people:

Start with the people who are in your immediate circles—friends, family and co-workers. Make a list and then personally invite each one. Here are 10 questions that a potential group member may ask.

1. How much time is this going to take?
2. What are we going to do with our children during group meetings?
3. Will there be homework? If so, how much?
4. Am I going to have to talk or can I just sit and listen during meetings?
5. Will I have to pray out loud?
6. Who else is going to be in the group?
7. How much do I have to know about the Bible?
8. How many weeks or months is the group going to last?
9. If I don’t like it, can I leave without people being angry with me?
10. What are we going to do during the meetings?

STARTING A SMALL GROUP (CONTINUED)

Launch

Choose a launch date that will allow your group to meet for several weeks before a possible interruption. For instance, May or October may not be good months to start a new group. It's difficult to keep a group consistent through the summer and holidays. Natural launch times would be January/February and August/September. People are back from vacations and holidays and getting back into a weekly schedule. Post-Easter may also a good time to launch a group off of the momentum of Easter.

Discussion Questions:

- 1. What is your biggest fear in starting a small group?
- 2. What type of location would work best for your small group?
- 3. Who will you invite first to your group?
- 4. Which potential questions from invited group members will be the most difficult to answer?

BEFORE THE MEETING

The first thing a group leader needs to do is plan ahead. Even if the Bible study is pre-written, you need to know where the finish line of the discussion should be so the members in the group can get there together. Otherwise, you will get off course.

Know the material so you can always bring the discussion back to God's Word. If you are using a video-enhanced study, watch the video prior to the meeting while looking through the study guide. This will help ensure that the video is working, and give you the opportunity to know how to transition from the video to the discussion.

Choosing the right Bible study for your group is critical. Curriculum by itself will not disciple people, but it does help facilitate the conversation and questions that will eventually lead to discipleship. Here are a couple of tools that may help.

A Balanced Discipleship Plan:

The goal of every group leader is to make mature disciples. To do this, you need a map to determine what your group will study. When you use a map-based strategic discipleship plan, your group will engage with seven categories of study that will ultimately move them toward spiritual maturity. You can find an example of an effective curriculum map at LifeWay.com/BalancedDiscipleship.

BEFORE THE MEETING (CONTINUED)

SmallGroup.com

SmallGroup.com is an online library of more than 3,000 discussion-driven and video-enhanced studies that you can customize for your small group to have a consistent and transformational discipleship experience. You can get a 30-day free preview at **SmallGroup.com**

Discussion Questions:

- 1. Do you believe that curriculum matters? Why or why not?
- 2. What type of Bible study would work best for your small group?

DURING THE MEETING

If you have planned ahead and know where the conversation needs to land, you are ready to lead a formative discussion around the topic. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you do.

Provide food first

People will need time at the beginning of the meeting to start building community. The easiest way to do that is by providing food and drinks. There is something mentally comforting about having a cup in your hand between you and another person.

Silence is your friend

A good leader should only be talking around 30 percent of the time. Remember that you have read the questions ahead of time. It will take everyone else a few moments to process the material before they are ready to answer. A few icebreaker-type questions at beginning of the discussion will help people feel more comfortable.

DURING THE MEETING (CONTINUED)

Focus is key

A few rabbit trails are OK, but you want to keep steering the conversation back toward the finish line. If it's obvious that someone is not entering the conversation, try drawing them in by directly asking their thoughts on a question. However, never force someone to talk if they are not ready.

It's OK not to know

You always want to land on the truth of God's Word, so it's OK to say, "I don't know the answer to that question, but I will ask someone and report back next week." Groupthink can lead to bad theology.

DURING THE MEETING (CONTINUED)

Leave time for prayer

It's easy to spend too much time on the discussion segment and not have room for prayer. Focus the prayer time first on what God has shown you through the study. Ask God to help the group members live out the principles He has shown in them in the Scriptures. Then, take a few minutes to lift to God individual needs of the group. Be creative for how you handle requests. Don't call on someone to pray unless you have asked their permission beforehand.

End on time

People have busy lives. Keep to the time you have agreed to, but allow people to hang out longer if they want. Some of the best conversations will take place outside of the official group discussion time.

Discussion Questions:

- 1. Do you agree with the leader only talking 30 percent of the time? Why or why not?
- 2. How would you handle a discussion that is headed in the wrong direction?
- 3. What are some creative ways to facilitate the prayer time?

THREE D’S TO WATCH OUT FOR

1. The Dominator

Your group may have at least one member who has a tendency to dominate the conversation. They have probably been a Christian for awhile, and it’s difficult for them to let others express their thoughts first. Here are a few things you can try with a dominator.

- Sit next to him or her during the discussion time. There is something about that close proximity to the facilitator that can help quiet a dominator.
- Don’t make eye contact with the person first when you ask a question to the group.
- Intentionally ask another group member a question directly before offering it to the group.
- Meet with him or her after the group time to ask for his help in giving less-seasoned Christians in the group the opportunity to express their thoughts first.

THREE D’S TO WATCH OUT FOR

(CONTINUED)

2. The Dodger

Opposite of the dominator, the dodger is the person in the group who never enters into the conversation. They never make eye contact and seem disengaged with group life. Here are a few things you can do to engage the dodgers in your group.

- Don’t force someone to talk in the group before they are ready to. Some people just need time to feel comfortable with the group before they can open up.
- Give everyone in the group the opportunity to share their story in five minutes or less. Just make sure to give them at least a week’s notice before it’s their turn to share.
- Ask for her opinion on a question that is not too intrusive or difficult. Icebreaker questions like, “What superhero did you want to be growing up?” are ideal for getting everyone into the conversation and comfortable using their voices.
- Arrange for coffee or a chat outside of the group time. A lot of people are more comfortable opening up one-on-one rather than in a large group.

THREE D'S TO WATCH OUT FOR (CONTINUED)

3. The Debater

You will occasionally hit topics in your group that will be controversial to some. In fact, if you are committed to studying the whole Bible, that will definitely be the case. When that happens, you may have people in your group who want to debate either side of the issue. Some debate is healthy, but you want to make sure that at the end of the night, God’s truth is what is agreed upon. Here are a few things you can do to help that happen:

- Know what God is telling us in the passage of Scripture being discussed. This will involve preparation.
- Study the passage in context with the group. This will shed more light on the issue than just a few verses.
- Refer to a study Bible like the *CSB Study Bible*. Study Bibles can help explain difficult passages.
- Never be afraid to end a debate with, “Let me check with a pastor this week and report back to the group on this question.” It’s OK to not know the answer in the moment.

Discussion Questions:

1. Which of the three D’s (the Dominator, the Dodger, the Debater) would be the most difficult for you?
2. What are some other ways to involve a Dodger into the life of the group?
3. How would you handle a controversial topic during the group discussion? Do you agree that it’s OK to leave a topic unsettled?

AFTER THE MEETING

Most life-change opportunities will occur outside of the normal meeting times, so it’s important for the group to stay connected throughout the week. Here are a few tools that can help keep the group on the same page.

Email prayer lists

Prayer list emails will help keep needs in front of group members during the week. Also, plan on following up on requests during the group prayer time. A good leader is a praying leader. Spend time each week praying for each group member.

Private Facebook pages

Facebook is great for keeping the conversation going between meetings. You can also plan social events and missional opportunities. Facebook Live can be utilized for live discussions or training in between meetings.

Group texting apps

Apps like GroupMe are helpful for sending immediate needs and last-minute meeting changes to everyone. Just be careful to not overuse this tool. Your group members will tire easily of over-texting and will begin opting out.

[illegible]

With a few tools and the Holy Spirit's guidance, you are ready for a life-changing small group experience!

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some other ways to stay connected as a group outside of weekly meetings?
2. What are your next steps for starting a small group?

NOTES

This image shows a full page of blank handwriting practice paper. It features 20 evenly spaced horizontal grey lines across the entire page, providing a guide for letter height and placement. The background is white, and there are no margins or additional markings.

NOTES

A Special Thank You to Chris Surratt & LifeWay Groups Ministry

Chris Surratt is a ministry consultant and coach with more than 23 years of experience serving the local church. Chris served on the Executive Teams at Cross Point Church in Nashville, Tenn., and Seacoast Church in Charleston, S.C., prior to becoming the Discipleship and Small Groups Specialist for LifeWay Christian Resources. He is the author of *Small Groups for the Rest of Us: How to Design Your Small Groups System to Reach the Fringes*.



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