

SMALL GROUP LEADER TRAINING



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Section One – Why Small Groups?

Small Groups are the Biblical Model of the New Testament Church!

Acts 5:42

Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 20:20

You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.

Small Groups Enable the Living Out of New Testament Community!

Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Galatians 6:1-2

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

James 5:16

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

Small Groups Are Effective!

- Fellowship/ Friendship/ Community
- Spiritual Growth/ Discipleship
- Evangelism
- Spiritual development and leadership development = Getting people off the bench & into ministry

Ephesians 4:11-15

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

“When you nail people to the Word of God & to each other discipleship happens!” (Rod Dempsey)

Section Two – What Is a Small Group?

G - Guided by a Leader:

Every small group needs a leader. The leader is a capable, qualified New Life member who assumes spiritual responsibility for this small group of people. He/ she/ or they agree to love and invest in these people and strive to lead them to grow closer to God and to one another.

R - Regular meeting times, preferably weekly:

The goal is to meet frequently enough for friendships to form and to be able to recognize when someone is not connected or struggling.

O - Open God's word:

When group meets, time is set aside to explore and discuss God's Word together. The Bible is always the central driving force behind everything we do. However, in a group the emphasis is not on the acquiring of new truth (this is the focus of large group & personal Bible study). Rather, the focus in a small group is to talk about God's Word together in a way that helps us be more obedient so that we will be “doers” of the Word and not “hearers only.” (James 1:22)

U - United in Love:

The goal is to not only grow closer to God but also to each other in order to reach COMMUNITY – authentically being a part of each other's lives – throughout the week and not just during our meetings.

P - Prayer for one another:

Time will always be set aside where we can genuinely share what's going on in our lives and authentically pray for one another.

Types of Small Groups at New Life

- LIFE Groups
- Bible / Study Groups
- Men's Groups
- Women's Groups
- Marriage Enrichment Groups
- Young Married Groups
- Young Adult Groups
- Student Groups (Middle School and High School)
- Freedom and Recovery Groups
- Short-term Groups

Small Group Covenant

Ground Rules For a Healthy Small Group

As a group member, I agree to the following ground rules of small group life:

PRIORITY

Members of this group will make being in relationship a priority – that means not only prioritizing our weekly small group, but making room to be involved with each other in authentic community.

PARTICIPATION

Everyone participates in group discussions, but no one is permitted to dominate. The goal is for ALL of us to use our gifts in ministry and service to each other.

RESPECT

Everyone is given the right to their own opinion; there are no "dumb" questions.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Sensitive matters discussed during the group meeting or with a member of the group won't be repeated outside the group to anyone not in the proper chain of authority.

OPENNESS

The group is always open to new members. The goal is to grow and ultimately multiply into two healthy small groups – so that we are constantly making room for more people to experience New Testament community.

SUPPORT

We're committing to be in each other's lives! This means being in contact with each other between meetings and having the right to call on one another in times of need.

I understand and agree with the purpose and ground rules of this group.

Printed name

Signature

Date

Section Three – What Does a Small Group Leader Do?

Asking All Small Groups To Begin Making Three Shifts:

1. Leaders seeing themselves as primarily SHEHERDS more than teachers and meeting leaders.
 - MULTIPLICATION to keep groups *smaller and manageable* to SHEPHERD!
2. Seeing the meeting as more about the people in the room being the body of Christ to each other rather than the “study.”
 - Meeting in a CIRCLE
 - All utilizing the five W's as the flow of the meeting
 - Back & forth vs. one-way dialogue
 - Praying together (*breaking into two's and three's to pray for each other*) vs. taking prayer requests and leader praying
3. Seeing the most important aspect as what's happening *BETWEEN* meetings *rather than* just the weekly meeting.
 - Work toward developing greater community beyond just the meeting night
 - See more and more groups meeting in rotating HOMES (“house to house”) rather than the building or just one host home
 - Leaders beginning to model wasting time with the people in your group

Setting the P.A.C.E.

The Small Group Leader commits to SET THE P.A.C.E. for his or her group members by:

PRAYING

The proven most effective way you can grow your small group is by daily praying for each of the people in your group.

AVAILABLE

Be available to the members of your group in times of need!

CONTACTING

Each week, contact three or four group members. This means calling them on the phone, emailing them, sending notes, and planning to get together with them socially between meetings! This is what creates community.

EXAMPLE

Be an example of a growing Christ-follower to the people in your group.

Leading the Meeting

Use the Five W's

WELCOME (15 minutes)

- Food: Keep it simple – Pass a list and share this responsibility
- Icebreaker: Aim to melt anxiety and continue to get to know each other better
- Announcements = Address the main things going on at New life

WORSHIP (10 minutes)

- Sing a song or two using the “No Boundaries” CD or do your own!
- Always have the lyrics & play the music loud (so people are released to worship)
- It doesn't always have to be music = Pray or allow times of silence or share something that focuses everyone on the greatness of God or ???
- Allow times of brief expressions of praise through PRAYER

WIN (15 minutes)

- Focus everyone's thoughts around being a “team” rather than a “club”
- PRAY for your list of people you are asking God to use your small group to help love into greater openness to a relationship with Jesus
- PLAN upcoming social events to be able to use to reach out to the people you are praying for!

WORD (25 minutes)

- Study God's Word together – either using an approved course of Study by your NL Director or utilize the weekly Small Group Discussion Guide.
- Remember that the value of a small group is back and forth discussion rather than one way teaching.
- Focus on discussing personal application of what you are discussing/studying.

WORKS (25 minutes)

- Break down into gender-specific groups of just 2 or 3 in order to genuinely share what is going on in your life.
- Be sure to authentically pray for each other!

SMALL GROUP Discussion Guide

Healing Stream #1

July 5 - 12, 2008



WELCOME:

- **Icebreaker:** When you played hide and go seek as a child – where was a favorite spot you liked to hide?
- **Announcements:**
 - **Church-wide Family Potluck** – This Sun, July 13, 1-5pm @ Gahanna's Friendship Park (sponsored by Children's Ministries)
 - **Church-wide Clippers Game** – Tue, July 22 @ 7pm – tickets are \$5 in the lobby (sponsored by Children's and Student Ministries)
 - **Sonworld Adventure Park VBS** – M-F, July 28 – Aug. 1, 6:30-9pm
 - **Promise Keepers** – Sept 12-13 in Charleston, WV – sign up in lobby for bus/lodging!

WORSHIP:

Use a Small Group P&W CD or DVD to express your praises to God. Songs about our freedom in Christ would be perfect for this week!

WIN (Focusing outward on people we want to see come to Jesus):

Are you sincerely praying for individuals and asking God to use your small group to help these people move into greater openness to a relationship with Jesus? Pray for them right now! Also, do some planning for upcoming events that you can invite them to.

WORD (Discussion Questions related to Sunday's Message):

1. Respond to the statement Pastor Brian used to start his message: "Sometimes I'm not sure this Christianity really is life changing. I was taught that it is. I make statements that would give you the impression that it is. I teach it is. I preach it is. I tell people it is. I counsel people and tell them that a relationship with God is life-changing...BUT THEN I look at those of us who say we are believers and I'm just not sure." **WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS?**
2. Pastor Brian talked about 5 things that cause us to hide – Talk about which of these keeps *you* hiding: Denial, Shame, Judgment, Self-centeredness, or past hurt.
3. Have everyone turn to **Romans 6:18 & 1 Corinthians 15:57**. Looking back on your journey as a follower of Jesus – how have you done at experiencing the promises of these 2 verses? To what extent have you experienced being forgiven *and* free?
4. Have everyone turn to **James 5:16**. The promise of living at this level of community is healing! Where do we rate as a small group at achieving this level of community? What additional steps do we need to take to get to where we want to be?

WORKS (Prayer and Ministry to each other):

Break into groups of just 2 or 3 men or women and RISK being honest about what is going on in your life. Dare to share some of the things you wrote on your moral inventory from Sunday and begin to pray for each other.

Weekly Tip For Small Group Shepherds

Give ‘em Time to Answer!

When I visit groups, the mistake I see made more than any other is rushing through the questions during the large group time. Quite often I've had something I've been ready to share, but haven't been able to do so because before I got to my mouth open, they've moved on to the next question! Remember, the idea is to get the people talking and reflecting on what God's word says, not merely to make it through all the questions. To put it another way, if the people are sharing real stuff and you never get past the first question before your time is up, then you've done a good job. That doesn't mean that it's wrong to get through all the questions – only that discussion, not reaching the end, is the goal!

The biggest problem is our fear of silence, but good discussion requires some moments of silence while people are reflecting on the question or some aspect of what someone else has just shared. In fact, studies show it takes about 15 seconds after a question has been asked for people to hear it and let it sink in enough to be able to respond with an answer. So be sure to give your people adequate time to do so. When you lead the large group time make sure to model the fifteen-second rule. And when someone else is leading the large group time make sure you instruct him or her as well to allow people adequate time to answer. It will increase the depth of your discussions.

Weekly Tip For Small Group Shepherds

After You Say “Amen”

Often the most important stuff happens AFTER you say “Amen”. That's why you need to make sure your group ends in a timely manner. It's also the greatest reason for having food at your meetings. You're NOT “meeting for eating”, but there is some value in having food to facilitate people standing around and talking for a while after the small group meeting is formally over.

So, don't be in a hurry to rush home as soon as the meeting is over. As the leader, make sure it's your routine to be amongst the last to leave. Be sensitive to listen to people and pick up things they say to you that might lead to further sharing. What you or your apprentice hears in the interaction that follows your group meeting just might be the most valuable part of the time you spent together that night.

Between the Meetings

How Do You Pastor People?

1. Earn relational capital by spending time getting to know people at a “heart level”
2. Spend that capital by speaking into their lives
 - Things in their life that’s stalling their spiritual advancement
 - Blind spots
 - Lovingly pushing them toward spiritual steps
 - Confidence & vision

Ezekiel 34:1-6

The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.

Weekly Tip For Small Group Shepherds

Shepherding Your Small Group

Shepherding a small group is far more than leading a meeting! It is taking **spiritual responsibility** over a “flock” of people. That means, as a shepherd, you take the responsibility over onto your shoulders to love and care for these people spiritually. That means you’re going to get to know them. It means you’re going to find out about their spiritual journey – both the things of their past (wounds, struggles, joys, how they came to know Christ as Savior, etc.) and what are the immediate steps they need to take to continue moving forward spiritually! It means sharing your life with them. It means you’re going to seek to influence them – in their relationship with God, in their behavior toward holiness, with their spouse, kids, etc.

The word we translate “pastor” is the same word as shepherd! You pastor people 5 to 15 at a time. Your small group is your flock. We’re depending on you as a shepherd of that flock/ small group to pastor those people. That’s what good shepherds do!

Weekly Tip For Small Group Shepherds

The Value Of Wasting Time Together

The key to a great small group isn't having great meetings on Wednesday night (or whenever it is that you meet.) The real key is that you form small group life relationships! This means getting into one another's lives – or as I've heard someone else more accurately describe it – *“getting into one another's business!”*

This doesn't happen by accident! Rather, it happens as the people in your cell spend time together. Mostly it means forming the level of friendships that cause you to be in and out of each other's homes and out doing things with one another as families. In the midst of this quantity of time will come quality time. It usually happens by accident as you are wasting time together!

I had this reinforced to me recently when we attended the Galveston Homes Tour with two other couples with whom we are forming small group life relationships. We had a lot of fun touring these nice homes on the island. However, the most valuable times were probably the huge amount of time we wasted standing in line together, waiting along with hundreds of other people for our turn to get in. During those “wasted minutes” we engaged in a lot of relationship building discussion – sometimes all six of us together – often just in pairs. There was a lot of joking and laughing, telling stories, and sharing what's really going on in our lives.

There is such a thing as wasting time – but it is never wasted time when it's spent together with people with whom you are in small group life relationships!

Isaiah 40:11

He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

Four Big Hairy Truths About Leading

Big hairy truth #1 = It's about _____, *not* leading a _____

- Don't think in terms of a meeting that takes place for 1 ½ hours once a week
- Think of God using you to impact a small community of people

Matthew 6:31-33

So don't worry about having enough food or drink or clothing. Why be like the pagans who are so deeply concerned about these things? Your heavenly Father already knows all your needs, and he will give you all you need from day to day if you live for him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern.

Big hairy truth #2 = Small Groups are the God-designed New Testament approach to confronting “sit and soak” Christianity

Big hairy truth #3 = Your role as a SHEPHERD is to use your _____ to help lead people toward a Kingdom lifestyle (That's disciple-making!)

Galatians 4:19

Oh, my dear children! I feel as if I'm going through labor pains for you again, and they will continue until Christ is fully developed in your lives.

BIG hairy truth #4 = A shepherd WORKS at learning how to lead his or her group in 4 directions:

1. Upward = Discipleship - Closer to God
2. Inward = Authentic Community
3. Outward = Reaching out to the lost people in your sphere of relationships
4. Forward = Seeing people's values change so much that being part of Kingdom agenda takes priority in their lives

Small Group Leader Covenant

I, _____, before my Lord Jesus Christ, declare that I am willing to commit myself to the high standards of Leadership as a Group Leader/Apprentice (circle one) at New Life Church Gahanna.

By God's grace, I commit myself to the best of my ability to:

- ☐ Fulfill the responsibilities of membership at New Life
- ☐ Be an authentic example of a follower of Jesus Christ
- ☐ Continue to make personal spiritual growth a priority
- ☐ Set the P.A.C.E. for those in my group
- ☐ Commit to love and care for the people God brings to my small group – taking spiritual responsibility to help them grow in their relationship to God and each other
- ☐ Limit freedoms as necessary for the sake of ministry
- ☐ Only promote material that is in agreement with New Life's Statement of Faith
- ☐ Be accountable to my Coach
- ☐ Put down murmurings and be a team player
- ☐ Strive to grow and multiply my group

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Section Four – Practical ‘How To’s’ Of Leading:

Four Stages of Healthy Small Groups

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

How to Prepare and Lead a Small Group Discussion

1. Select an approved curriculum:
 - Sermon Series Discussion Guides
 - Any approved small group or Bible Study curriculum available through our bookstore or from a Biblically sound Christian publisher
2. If preparing your own lesson for discussion:
 - Get approval from your director or coach
 - Follow the five W's – inserting your study during the WORD time
 - Prepare several questions to get your people discussing
 - Focus on APPLICATION - “How do we help each other DO this?”
 - Get everyone using their Bible, have them all turn to the passage and have someone read it aloud
3. The goal is cross-way discussion with each other, not one-way lecturing! Pepper the Bible discussion with open-ended questions that encourage participation.
4. Reclaim the discussion when it gets too far off track.

How To Select and Train an Apprentice Leader

1. PRAY that God would RAISE UP and REVEAL an apprentice-leader.
2. Look for someone already in your group.
3. Assign responsibilities to reveal their giftings and faithfulness.
 - Ice Breaker
 - Introduction to the lesson
 - Prayer time
 - Outreach projects

- Leading the discussion
- 4. Look for someone who has F.A.I.T.H.
 - ☐ Faithful
 - ☐ Available to meet with
 - ☐ Integrity/ Character
 - ☐ Teachable
 - ☐ Heart for God
- 5. Make the BIG ASK – *“I’ve been asking God to show me who He might be calling to share some of the leadership load of the group. I’ve noticed the love you have for people. Would you pray about being an apprentice-leader in this group?”*
- 6. Talk and pray with your apprentice between meetings about your observations of what’s happening in the lives of the people in your group.
- 7. Give more and more responsibilities over to your apprentice. Allow them to lead one meeting a month, be absent at times on purpose! Give them more and more responsibility for shepherding aspects beyond the meeting.
- 8. Encourage them to attend small group leader trainings and meetings with you.

Weekly Tip For Small Group Shepherds

Develop, rather than Recruit an Apprentice

One of the most important things you will do as a small group leader is to raise up other leaders. This DOESN'T mean looking around the group to see which spiritually mature person you can persuade to be a leader so you can get this group multiplied when the time comes! Rather, developing leaders is a part of pastoring people. As you've worked hard at assessing where each of your people are, you are seeking to “lovingly push” them to the next place of openness to the Lord.

Growth ALWAYS involves stepping outside of our comfort zones. This will most certainly be the case for your rising apprentice leader as well. **But in order for them to have the “gas” to take such a step will require your ongoing investment in them** – speaking worth into them – *“God really loves you and has plans to use YOU to do something significant for His Kingdom.”* Then they need to have confidence spoken into them – *“I recognize gifts and traits that God sincerely desires to use for His purposes.”* Finally, they need to be given vision – *“The things of God are truly worth selling out ahead of little league, bass boats, and paying the mortgage.”*

Speaking into people doesn't come through your comments to the group on meeting night. It comes from wasting time with people for whom you've taken spiritual responsibility. It comes from genuinely loving them and getting to know what's going on in their lives and then having the gumption to lovingly push them to greater aspects of seeing God work through them to do significant thing for the Kingdom purposes of God.

Growing Your Small Group

1. ENCOURAGE GROUP MEMBERS TO INVITE FRIENDS
 - Have an “empty chair” every week to remind people that there is room for at least one more
 - Use a marker board to list the names of the people you are praying for to invite to church or a social get-together your group is doing. Pray for these people each week during the “WIN” time!
2. “GO FISHING” ON WEEKENDS
 - Use lobby time after weekend Celebrations to invite someone to your group. Use the Small Group Cards at the Connection Center.
3. INVITE THE NEW MEMBERS OF NEW LIFE
 - Introduce yourself to New Members each month and invite them to attend your group

How To Multiply Your Group

1. Develop an apprentice
2. Discuss multiplication strategies with your coach
3. Prepare your group for eventually “birthing” a new daughter group
4. Communicate the value of multiplying your group on a regular basis – “We can reach and care for more people!”
5. Pray in the group meetings for growth and multiplication
6. Use the suggested growth methods
7. Plant the seed in your apprentice’s heart by praying together for group multiplication. Make sure he/she is receiving the necessary training to lead and grow a healthy group
8. Increase shared leadership and grow your group until it has 15 regular members who consider your small group their home.
9. Get together with your coach = Plan a projected “birthday” for the new group and walk through the preparation for birthing with them and your Apprentice.
10. Announce and promote the birthday for a new group.
11. Regularly get together for reunions! Multiplication is not “splitting” but rather extending your family and the Kingdom of God.

Section Five – Small Group Leader Tools

Small Group Lamaze

The day your small group begins meeting it's pregnant! Birthing is not only inevitable, but also desired! That doesn't mean it's something you're looking forward to, but the result of the trauma of "group-birth" makes it all worthwhile!

When the number of adults who consider your small group their home reaches into the "teens", it's time to plan out your birthing strategy. Use this sheet to help make plans.

First, have a meeting with the Small Group Leader, Apprentice, and your Coach. Discuss how you perceive the group separating. Leave your egos out of the picture, but do speculate according to potential apprentices, natural relationship connections, etc. Ultimately, everyone will make their own decision as to how they divide, but often it helps if you can suggest to them the way you think might be most logical. This takes the pressure off of them about hurting someone's feelings. During this time use this sheet to set the dates for the following:

Prenatal – Weeks 1, 2 and 3

1. Look for future apprentices and hosts. The best scenario is to birth the two new groups already with new apprentices in place.
2. **Talk about the upcoming birth and why this is important to do.** Listen to their hesitations, but remind them that Jesus' heart is always to make room for more.
3. The Shepherd and Apprentice need to share parts of leading the meeting. In fact, during these three meetings it is best to allow the Apprentice to do **more** than the Shepherd.
4. Divide the group for Word & Works time. Have the Shepherd and Apprentice go to two different parts of the house. Tell everyone that they are not making a choice of where they are necessarily going after the birth, but hopefully this will eventually happen.
5. That week it is VERY IMPORTANT that the Shepherds and Apprentices each minister (phone calls, social contacts, etc.) with the individuals that were in their part of the group when you divided! This will assure the people that no matter which way they go, they will continue to be cared for.
6. During this time the Coach needs to contact each of the families involved to give them assurance that this will be okay and to find out which of the two future groups they are leaning toward.

Birth – Week 4

Meet as separate small groups but in the same house. **Be certain that you've been continually presenting the fact that this would be the first night meeting separately.** As people arrive, fellowship together and then go to the two different parts of the house for your small group. It is important that you both plan to end at the same time so that both groups can fellowship together afterwards.

Postnatal – Week 5, 6 and 7

Groups meet as two separate small groups in the two different locations.

Week 8 - one month after birth

Both small groups meet back together for a reunion! This should not be a meeting but a fellowship time of enjoying one another. It is also important to have any new members of both groups attend so that they can feel a part of this bond as well. They serve as visual evidence of the value of birthing!

Week 9, 10 and 11

Both small groups meet as two separate groups in their two different locations.

Week 12 - two months after birth

Optional: Both small groups meet back together for another reunion. Generally by this time group members enjoy being together but find they have made the transition and their new small group is really where they are connected! Feel free to continue to regularly plan to do things together with both groups in the future.

Additional insights

- Don't expect the members in your small group to WANT to birth. In fact, if they wanted to get away from one another you would have a problem! These people have likely grown to value and love each other. They have longed for community in their lives and now a birth can seem a threat to losing it. BE EMPATHETIC! **However, you have got to know that the greatest threat to community is becoming too large and / or ingrown.**
- It is imperative that the Small Group Leader and Apprentice clearly believe and present that birthing is **the best thing for the group**. If a small group doesn't birth at the appropriate time (around 15 adults) one of two things will happen:
 1. The group will continue to grow and become a medium-sized group rather than a SMALL cell. **Community will be lost** because sharing will become "surfacy" and safe. **THE SMALL GROUP DYNAMIC IS LOST AND COMMUNITY WILL BE LOST ALONG WITH IT!**
 2. The group will stop growing and become ingrown. It will be "us four and no more!" When the focus moves away from the empty chair and evangelism and asking who else God would want to benefit from this group it is the beginning of the end! The group moves from the dynamic of "Christ in the midst" (Matthew 18:20) to navel-gazing. **AGAIN, Community is lost.**
- **The only way to hold onto community is to let it go!** Birthing allows the focus of the group to remain outward while continuing to encounter community within the dynamic of a small group.
- Be patient with your members as you take them through this process. Physical birth is difficult because the baby doesn't want to leave the safe environment of the womb for the unknown risk of the world outside their mother. But life is outside the womb! As you help your members through this traumatic time, you'll experience the life of God at work in and through your small group!

What About Children in a Small Group?

Caring for children is often a concern for small groups. Our children grew up attending small groups their whole life and loved it! Even though our groups tended to have less structured times with the kids, they still developed community with the other children in our small group. Just as we were walking in community type relationships with the adults, our kids experienced much of the same thing as well. We often did things together as a small group that included whole families or went out with other families in our group. I believe there are tremendous benefits in including children in small groups, but there are numerous ways of doing this. Let me highlight some of the main ones:

1. **Meet on Wednesday night and enroll your children in Awana** – This is the plan used by many New Life small groups and it works well if you have children three years and up and can meet near the building. It's a great way to avoid another night out as a family. However, I'd encourage you to consider other options especially during times when Awana is not meeting. (Summer, breaks, etc.)
2. **Hire a sitter to oversee the children** – Often this can be a teenager. It's important to explain expectations to them and make clear any house rules. EVERYONE should help finance this – even those without kids because we are all making this possible through passing a jar each week that is used to pay your sitters a pre-determined amount. If there isn't enough cash coming in then bring it up and challenge the group (not just those with children) to do more. If you have more than enough, just keep the extra in the jar for future weeks.
3. **Ask a responsible older brother or sister from the group** - Everything from option #2 usually applies, though you might pay them less. This can lead to tension if there are problems with their performance but deal with it directly.
4. **Take turns caring for the children** – It is important that this be the agreed responsibility of EVERYONE in the group – not just the women or not just the ones with children. If someone is not especially good with kids be sure to team them up with someone who's experienced, but everyone needs to shoulder the responsibility.
5. **Don't do any childcare** – Some groups don't do childcare because everyone in the group has children that are older or perhaps the group is made up of single adults without children or young married couples with no children yet. But once children are involved it is important that you make a plan that makes it possible for these people to be involved with your small group.
6. **Take an offering** – If just 1 or 2 families in your small group have children you can decide to pass an offering plate each week to help them care for the expense of hiring a sitter at their home. It's unrealistic for most families to absorb the full expense on their own – but in some cases this is a good option as long as you are dealing with just 1 or maybe 2 families.
7. **Include the children** – Some groups I've seen effectively include the children for part of their small group time. If you are following the five “W's”, include the children in the Welcome (letting them answer the icebreaker too) and the Worship (I've often seen children genuinely worshipping in this setting – plus they learn from seeing their parents model authentically singing praises to God). The children will then need a plan for the remainder of the small group meeting, perhaps utilizing one of the other options mentioned, though it is for a shorter time period.
8. **Do a “kid's slot”** – This will look differently depending on the ages of the children in your small group, the variety of ages, and the number of children. Most groups will merely provide

childcare or child-oversight (perhaps an occasional video), but for some groups this can be an exciting option. The idea is to include the children in actually doing some of the things that are being done by the adults – only on their age level (this will take some pre-planning but again will be different depending on ages). Using the 5 W's as your pattern, the idea is to actually gather the children in a circle for at least some of the time and do the following:

- Welcome – Do an icebreaker that allows them all to share something.
- Worship – Sing a song or 2 that gets them to express praises to God.
- Win – Have them talk about and pray for their friends who don't know Jesus.
- Word – Discuss with the children a Bible lesson, story, or section of Scripture.
- Works – Share real prayer concerns and let the children pray for each other.

9. **Have childcare in a different home nearby** – This can often be a good option if you can arrange it for children that have trouble leaving their parents alone or if you have a LOT of kids. Give the sitters everyone's cell numbers or the number for the host home and if there's a problem Mom or Dad are just a call away! This can really work well with 2 groups that might share a sitting home.
10. **Rotate men and women meeting on alternate weeks** – This works for groups consisting of lots of families with lots of kids (especially younger ones). Men meet one week while the wives stay home and watch the children. Women meet the next week while the husbands stay home with the kids. It's important you regularly do whole family times (men, women, children) to maintain connection with everyone.

Some helpful tips:

1. Select a willing childcare coordinator. Usually this is a Mom who's really organized! It's not her (or his) job to do all the childcare, just to keep it organized and communicated. **The goal is always for the entire group to be sharing the load of caring well for the children.**
2. Make HOUSE RULES wherever you meet. Talk with the host regularly about this. If you rotate homes then each new home has new house rules. Some people don't want children in the bedrooms, while others don't care. Communicate clearly the expectations to all the children and parents as well as whoever is caring for the kids.
3. **Having children in your small group will bring tension!** That's okay! The goal of a group is not to avoid conflict but to work through conflict! This brings about community!!! So expect problems and expect to work through them. This will bring you closer together as a small group.

Handling Difficult People

1. How to re-direct talkative members:

When one or two group members seem to be monopolizing the discussion, calling for contributions from others often helps: “What do the rest of you think?” or “Jack, what ideas do you have about this?”

In some situations you may have to take control of the discussion more strongly, and you may have to talk privately with the “talker,” explaining the necessity of group participation. You may be able to enlist him to help you draw others in. This will help him become more sensitive to the contributions of other people.

2. How to get back on track:

A verbal recognition of the fact that the discussion has gotten off on a tangent can usually help you get back to more relevant topics. You could say, “This is interesting. However, we’ve left our topic. Perhaps we could discuss this further after the group but for now....” Or you may present a thought-provoking question to draw the discussion back to the initial topic. Having an attitude of acceptance toward the tangent is important. Maintain the respect for each member’s opinions.

3. How to handle “wrong” answers:

If someone says something that you are quite sure is inaccurate or unbiblical, you may want to solicit a view point from someone else: “Okay, what do others think?” or “Does anyone know other Scripture passages that may help us here?” You may want to restate the issue, or ask another question that would help clarify or stimulate further thought. Always try to keep the person from losing “face” or becoming embarrassed if possible.

4. How to handle silence

Don’t be afraid of pauses, or try to fill in silent moments. If you give everyone time to think, they will bring up good points and ask good questions as the discussion progresses. By being patient, you may be surprised with the number of excellent thoughts the group comes up with. These silent times may seem uncomfortable, but don’t be embarrassed or feel as if you must say something.

5. How to handle difficult questions:

Don’t be afraid of saying “I don’t know” when a difficult question is asked. If you don’t know the answer, don’t pretend to. You can always look for the answer later, or ask someone else in the group to research it. There is no merit in being thought of as a supposed “know it all”, only to find out you don’t.

Types Of Problem People

Social Sidney ~ Life of the party, that's Sid. He wants to "lighten up" the sessions and have some fun. Sid views the group as an opportunity to be with people, a context to meet his need for social involvement – even though he may not consciously recognize the fact. Sid merely puts up with the actual group meetings . . . any excuse to be with people he likes and needs.

Academic Ann ~ Ann is an intellectual giant who takes great pleasure in "digging" into Scripture. Her expectations for the small group are not met unless Bible study is the exclusive group activity. Every word in the Biblical passage must be carefully analyzed . . . in the original language. Interpreting the passage is her goal, its application and other members of the group are of little interest.

Listener Larry ~ Not much of a talker, Larry just wants to listen to what the others have to say. Mentally, he is actively involved. And on the rare occasion when he does speak, his comments usually are thoughtful and well-stated. Larry wants other group members to accept his quiet participation and leave him alone. He is always the first to leave at the end of the meeting.

Holy Harry ~ Harry is so heavenly minded his fellow group members question his earthly value. He's quick with spiritual clichés, fast to spout biblical platitudes. Harry has no personal problems or struggles. His holier-than-thou attitude turns off other group members. Harry's desire is for the group to focus on the heavenly and set aside the earthly.

Application Alice ~ "How does that apply to me?" is Alice's constant question. Too much time spent on interpreting and understanding the passage doesn't please her. During Bible studies she wants to quickly "experience the text" and draw out the application. For Alice, however, actually putting the application into practice isn't a big concern.

Philosopher Phil ~ Theology and philosophy are Phil's passions. He wants the group to focus on "heavy" issues. A good group, according to him, is one that revolves around the leader lecturing on the intricacies of the topic or biblical passage. Group discussion is okay – if kept to a minimum – but he prefers debating philosophical issues with the leader.

Counselor Carol ~ Carol sees the group sessions through the eyes of a counselor. She "psychologizes" every topic, every discussion. Group members are treated like clients who are in desperate need of her counsel.

Counselee Clara ~ Clara is Carol's counterpart. She wants the group to serve as a therapy session. She desperately yearns for the group to study biblical passages that may give her a solution to one of her many problems.

Preacher Patrick ~ Every group session is Patrick's pulpit. He eagerly anticipates each meeting. Long hours are spent preparing. While not the official group leader, he dominates the discussion and, in effect, takes over. Patrick is well-meaning, but gets on the other members' nerves. His desire to strongly admonish group members stems from the fact that he was saved out of a tempestuous background, and now he wants to shield his friends from the agony he experienced.

Forced Frank ~ Frank doesn't have any expectations because he doesn't even want to be there. The truth be known, he attends only because he feels forced to – by a demanding spouse, a craving to be accepted, some sort of ulterior motive, or another person or situation. There in body but not in mind or soul, Frank just wants to be left alone.

New Life Small Group Leader Weekly Summary

Shepherd: _____ Apprentice: _____
When SG met = Date: _____ Start time: _____ Finished: _____

1. Who was there?

List Regular **Adult** Attenders who were present:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Adult Guests:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Totals = Adults present: _____ Students: _____ Children: _____ Total Att: _____

2. How'd it go?

List who did what:

Refreshments: _____

Childcare:

Welcome:	_____
Worship:	_____
Win:	_____
Word:	_____

3. Plans for next week –

4. Ministry beyond the meeting:

Who'd you spend time with this past week? (Who, when, what?)

What other ways did you have contact: phone, e-mail, notes, (Who, when, what?)

5. Upcoming Events or other things to report:

6. Is there anything Jay can do to help you?

Turn in through report box in Small Groups Connection area (New Life lobby)
Fax to: 614-475-8899 Att: Mary Ely
e-mail to: mely@enewlife.com