



1. The purpose of Home Groups (Denise Erasmus)

Large-group worship services aren't designed for personal interaction, and it can be difficult to develop close personal relationships if that is your only connection to a Christian community. That's why small groups can be so valuable. God designed people to grow in their faith and follow Him in the context of a community. A small group or Bible study group is a chance to experience that first-hand. Jesus told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing 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 28:18-20, New Living Translation)

The focus of the Great Commission is to make disciples— that is, followers of Jesus. How does one do this? By teaching them to obey everything that He commanded. Small groups are a great way to teach people to obey what Jesus commanded, and lives change when people come together to study God's Word. Relationships are the glue that holds small groups together. Creating an environment where people can deepen their relationship with one another is a big part of leading a healthy small group.

2. Lead a Small Group

Think about how you came to follow Jesus and how you have grown in your faith. You are who you are today because someone knew you by name and invested in you. Whether it was your parents, friends, or perhaps a pastor or small group leader, God has used one or more people to make a tremendous difference in your life.

Leading a small group gives you the opportunity to invest — and perhaps make the same sort of impact — in someone else's life!



3. Who Can Lead a Small Group?

God has an amazing way of using a variety of people to accomplish His goals. We often think it takes a certain type of person to be a great teacher or dynamic leader, but God is more interested in your availability to Him than your natural abilities. As you trust Him to work through you (focusing on His power as opposed to your weaknesses), He will move in your life and the lives of others.

You do not need to be a Bible scholar to lead a small group. “But what if they ask me a question and I don’t know the answer?” When (not if) that happens, simply reply that you don’t know but that you can look it up or ask somebody who does.

Your honesty about the fact that you don’t know everything encourages vulnerability and communicates to others that they don’t have to have all the answers to be obedient to what God’s calling them to do.

4. Characteristics of Small Group Leaders

Spiritual leadership requires different characteristics than leadership in other areas. But perfection is not a requirement. If it were, none of us could lead a small group. Growing into maturity is a continual process.

The following five heart attitudes will help keep you in check as a leader. Spiritual leaders:

- Give and receive scriptural correction (Proverbs 19:20).
- Serve others rather than only being served (Philippians 2:3-11).
- Follow the spiritual leadership of others (Hebrews 13:17).
- Initiate forgiveness and reconciliation with others (Matthew 5:21-26).
- Keep their word (Matthew 5:33-37).

Do you have these characteristics? What areas do you need to grow in? If you aren’t sure, ask a trusted friend who knows you well— and who will be honest and kind with you — where you are in each of these areas.

5. How to lead a Home Group (Jacqui)

A church cell group is a home-based small group that meets together with the goal of growing and splitting into two or more groups; those groups in turn will continue the same goal. A home group must have a leader who is willing to invite people into their home and guide them in Bible studies or group discussions.

Hebrews 10:24–25 is a constant reminder that a group leader is to promote “love and good works” through their group, to meet consistently, and to be an encouragement to one another.

Hebrews 10:24–25

“And let us be concerned about one another in order to promote love and good works, not staying away from our worship meetings, as some habitually do, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

The leader is an important figure in determining the success of the home-based group.

- *Write a purpose statement.*
The purpose statement will give a clear and concise direction to the group; it will inform the members exactly what they will get from being part of the group. All Bible studies and discussion will focus on fulfilling the purpose of the group. If the purpose of the group is to “become more Christ-like,” then the studies you choose for the group will be focused on the character of Jesus and how to apply those characteristics to your life. The purpose statement is the foundation of a home group; write it well and keep it to three sentences or less.
- *Invite people and make them feel important.*
At the beginning stages of a home group it is the leader's responsibility to invite prospective members. Pray about whom you should invite. If you already have a purpose statement, think about people who could benefit from what will be taught. Speak to those people individually about joining the group, or send them invitations through social networking. At each home meeting, greet people as they arrive and thank them for coming as they leave. Use their name each time. In the initial stages of a group, an icebreaker is a good way to let people share experiences from their lives. After the leader has established a small core group of people who regularly attend the meetings, he should instruct members to pray about people they could invite into the home group and eventually invite them.
- *Set guidelines that govern the conduct of the home group members.*
People need to feel safe within the group. Tension in a group discussion is inevitable. Agree to work through any disagreements together. You may have to act as a mediator to make sure all points of view are heard. Sometimes sensitive personal problems or situations may pop up in which a member needs to talk about and seek support from the group. The group members need to commit to confidentiality. There should be no accusing or personal attacking of each other. If a member fails in one of these areas the leader must talk to that person in private and ask them to apologize to the group or leave the group. Nothing will destroy a group faster than someone who constantly attacks others or breaks confidentiality. The leader needs to make certain that members understand what kind of conduct is expected and the consequences that will occur if they do not comply.

- *Be real with your group.*
Laugh, share the things you struggle with as well as your victories and share your life and love for the Lord. Let the people in your group be your friends. You don't have to spill your deepest, darkest secrets, but let them know you're a real person who is in the process of becoming like Christ. Ask for input when discussing various topics: What do you think? Do you agree? Disagree? Does anyone else have any input?
- *Provide snacks or finger foods and tea or coffee.*
Food promotes relationship-building interaction. The members will enjoy talking and getting to know each other during this casual segment of the home group meeting. Once the group is established, members could take turns to provide the eats.
- *Pray for your home group members individually.*
By praying for the members you are showing them that you care and that they are important as individuals. You can pray on your own, or you can call and pray with them one at a time. Possibly, you could meet over lunch and pray at the beginning of the meal or before departing. Always ask the member if there are any specific areas for which prayer is needed.

It is important to keep the home group in people's minds, especially if you don't meet weekly. You could send a message to let a person know that you prayed for her, that you missed her in a meeting she did not attend or that you wish to remind her of the next meeting. Possibly, create a group WhatsApp or Telegram chat, inviting the members to join. Bear in mind that some people feel a little inundated with multitudes of messages being forwarded on these chat platforms. It may be wise to create a separate chat group purely for fun, uplifting or interest items for those people who enjoy receiving and passing on these messages. This would allow those people who prefer not to be included to exclude themselves from the "social" group without missing out on important information being shared on the "important information" group.

- *Group outings will help strengthen the relationships within the group.*
The group could take a trip to hear a speaker who is speaking on a topic that relates to the group's purpose statement. It could also decide to have a walk in a local park, meet up at a café for coffee or milkshake, or visit a museum, mall or flea market. It really depends on the make-up of your particular group when deciding what to do. The point is to just do something together.
- *Evaluate yourself. Is your group growing and learning?*
Do the members feel comfortable enough to be open and honest? Are you doing too much or too little? Take time to evaluate your performance. Try not to base the evaluation as much on how you feel, as on the facts. Leaders who fall into a rut will get burned out and will see the group spiral downward as well. You can evaluate after each meeting. Choose a person or two whom you trust and let them evaluate and discuss with you what they see.
- *Train another leader.*
Pray about selecting a person from the group to train as a leader. You will need a leader on occasions when you need a break or when the group grows to a point that it needs to split. Look for the qualities of a good leader within the home group members. Speak to potential leaders to see if one is interested in leading a home group. Delegate some of your responsibilities to the trainee and let him lead the group on occasion.

6. Small group Evangelism

We want to focus on the deliberate use of small groups for evangelistic purposes.

Jesus convened a small group of followers to send out, to fish for people, to proclaim the good news. Along with twelve recorded male disciples, Luke points out that women were part of small group around Jesus (Luke 8:1-3, 10:38-42).

Small groups for religious purposes remain popular, particularly among people currently involved or seeking a church. Some megachurches recognise the importance of small groups despite worship service seating thousands, they maintain a potent commitment to small groups. We are not a megachurch, but we do recognise the importance of small groups.

Despite the majority of small groups in churches, it is uncommon for them to focus on evangelism....

We are here to advocate for ***our 2022 vision, 'A Great commitment to the great commission'***. Home groups and classes are divided under 4 headings: Education, bible study, therapy & mission groups, only one of many types of small groups focus on evangelism. Other small groups focus on promoting fellowship, bolstering biblical love or nurture spiritual gifts, but there is usually no mention of evangelism.

(WE would like to focus on small groups and evangelism, taking a well known and well utilized format, the small group, and setting it up for evangelism.

6.1 Biblical foundations of small groups evangelism

Matthew 4:18-22. Jesus convened a small group of followers to send out-to fish for people. He focussed on his group, he taught them, negotiated group dynamics such as who would be the first or last, and who was the greatest or the least and launched them to proclaim the good news, 'The Kingdom of heaven has come near. Women were also part of a small group around Jesus. In the book of Acts and the Letters of the New Testament, we can discern a cluster of small groups. There were house churches in the house of Mary, the house of Priscilla and Aquilla, the house of Philemon and more. Despite appearing to be insular gatherings for believers to be nurtured and discipled, house churches were also evangelistic, serving as the vehicle for Christian ministry in a hostile world.

Priscilla and Aquilla were refugees in Corinth who had been thrown out of Rome because of an imperial persecution of the Jews. Though away from home themselves, they still managed to host Paul for more than a year (Acts 18:1-3). The next time we see Priscilla and Aquila, they have moved to Ephesus, even in this new city, they utilized the small group setting in their home to advance the gospel by evangelising and training Apollos, a Jew and a native of Alexandria. We see their small group evangelism in three verbs in one verse "He (Apollos) began to **speak** boldly in the synagogues, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they **took** him aside and **explained** the Way of God to him more accurately".

First Priscilla and Aquila listened to Apollos as he spoke boldly. At some point they took him aside. There in the warmth and welcome of their home, they taught Apollos more accurately. The small group evangelism is more structured, less spontaneous, more collaborative mode of personal evangelism. What occurred among Priscilla Aquila and Apollos was deeply personal, but there was a community of believers that surrounded them. This is true to the form of the small groups evangelism model. Someone takes the lead, but in the best practice, small groups evangelism will occur in conjunction with a believing community.

6.2 Theological foundations

Small group evangelism captures the aspects of God's nature to be in community, not to exist in community. God created community along with the heavens and the earth and everything in it. So right at the start of scripture, the language of creation is communal.

Home groups are microcosms of God's creation community. Wherever two or more persons come together, they become an actual reflection of the image of God and likeness of God. In this creation text, with man and woman in relationship with each other and with God, we see how the human community exists foundationally as a small group.

6.3 Historical foundations

A system of home groups was established by John Wesley along with his brother Charles. Class members, which is also called home groups helped each other to work out their salvation. Week by week Methodists would speak freely and plainly the true state of their souls. In order to assess the souls' state, Wesley developed three categories of what he called searching questions:

1. Have you carefully abstained from doing sin?
2. Have you zealously maintained good works?
3. Have you constantly attended on all ordinances of God?

So if you look at it, classes or homegroups were the basic building block of the early Methodist movement. Homegroups were places in which the message became flesh. The purpose of these groups was to form members into faithful disciples of Jesus who live as his witnesses in the world. the homegroups became the evangelistic methodology. Today our groups can become a dynamic core of a viral evangelistic strategy aimed at reaching the entire city. John Wesley grasped the genius of the small group and its potential for evangelistic outreach.

6.4 Practical foundations

Small groups evangelism can take place in a variety of ways and contexts.

1. Invite participants

Invite people to a small group. They are among those you know at work place, in your neighbourhood or a favourite coffee shop. They are friends in your WhatsApp and facebook. Be candid in your invitation by asking questions like, "Would you like to take an hour this evening to see what the Bible really says about Jesus? Hospitality begins the moment you explain in full disclosure what the group's focus will be. Transparency extends letting people know in advance how many meetings are on the docket. To invite people to a small group meeting for four weeks for instance. Keep in mind too that it is easier for people to commit to short series.

2. Decide the format

A range of formats suit small groups evangelism. One is an evangelistic bible study. It is important for seekers to read the bible and see for themselves what it says. This study doesn't assume you already believe in Jesus or that you accept the bible as true. Rather it is to help you make up your own mind once you know what the bible really says. The leader's task in this sort of evangelistic small group is to interrogate the good news of the gospel in the discussion. Another option would be to utilize an established small group curriculum which walks seekers through the basics of Christianity.

3. Convene the meeting. Boiled down to its essence, a small group meeting consists of four parts:
 - A welcome (with food and drink)
 - A word about the format of the meeting
 - A brief presentation
 - Interaction

Following the presentation, ease into the discussion with several application questions and encourage substantive interaction with the presentation beyond a simple thumbs-up or thumbs-down:

What in the presentation resonated with you?

What disturbed or frustrated you?

What helped you better understand a particular situation?

Such conversation is lively, it builds relationships. The initial meeting is the most important because it often determines whether someone decides to remain in the group.

4. Plan now for the future

The vision for a small group evangelism consistently looks outward toward sharing the gospel. The home cell groups are living cells and they function much like cells in the human body. In a living organism, cells grow and divide. Where once there was one cell, there became two. Cells are not simply added to the body, they are multiplied by geometric progression. Keeping in mind that the focus of the small groups is evangelism, set up in advance an avenue for moving those who express ongoing interest in Christianity, or those who make a faith commitment, into a Christian community once the initial set of meetings come to an end. An evangelistic small group provides a set strategy for welcoming and evangelizing church visitors.

7. Benefits of small groups

God never intended Christianity to be a “me, God, and my Bible” lifestyle. The Bible teaches us that we also need each other for many reasons.

“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?” (1 Corinthians 12:12-17)

1. People talk more in small groups.

A key benefit of small groups (whether based in a home or a church) is that people are more likely to participate in discussions than in a large class. Since there are fewer people, there is more opportunity to talk and less room to hide.

2. Group members realize that others have similar problems.

People often think there is something uniquely wrong with them. When they hear that others in their small group have similar struggles, they feel relieved and encouraged.

3. People use their gifts and talents to help one another.

God doesn't expect pastors and teachers to do all the ministering. He has given each of us gifts and talents to encourage, teach, and challenge one another. Small groups provide the perfect setting for Christians to help or minister one to another.

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

(Hebrews 10:24)

4. Small group members encourage each other in their faith.

We strengthen each other's faith. In his letter to the Romans, Paul taught us that when we see the faith in another believer, it encourages us in our own faith.

"... that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith." (Romans 1:12)

5. Small group members encourage each other to grow.

Regardless of a group's focus or format, after a while people are likely to share personal insights and testimonies. When people share, other group members see new ways they can draw closer to God and new steps they can take with others.

Changing is hard. There is nothing like a word of encouragement when someone feels hopeless or discouraged. One benefit of small groups is that group members support one another, both during meetings and outside them.

"We can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."

(2 Corinthians 1:4)

6. Group members hold each other accountable.

If someone announces he or she plans to work on making a change, other members of the group may ask how it went the next time they get together. This can be done in a friendly, informal way. Or group members may make a plan to be accountable to each other.

"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." (Proverbs 27:17)

Likewise, when people know they will be meeting with a small group of friends, they are motivated to do their homework and memorize the weekly Bible verse.

7. Members pray for one another.

God honours and answers prayer. When people become connected emotionally, they are more open to praying for one another. Often, group members exchange prayer requests or become prayer partners.

“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”(Matthew 18:20)

8. People are more likely to practice what they learn.

For all the previous reasons, members of a small group are more likely to apply what they learn than those in a large class.

9. Group members can help each other in hard times.

People often feel isolated, alone or abandoned when facing grave health, emotional or financial problems. Small group members can provide a “safety net,” supporting one another in hard times.

10. Friendships start in small groups.

Many people, including Christians, lack close friends. When people get together in a small group, home fellowship group, or cell group, close friendships form and often remain long after the group ends. For many people, this is the greatest benefit of small groups.

11. It promotes the most effective method of Evangelism - RELATIONSHIP EVANGELISM

Acts 20:24 (NCV) “The most important thing is that I complete my MISSION, the work that the Lord Jesus gave me – to tell people the Good New about God’s grace.”



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