

Servants Ministry
Small Group Leaders Handbook
August 2006



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Preface

It is of utmost importance for you to know that the following handbook is not simply a “how to” manual, nor is it meant for you to rely on man’s wisdom to create a “picture perfect” ministry. We pray that this handbook will first and foremost prompt you to seek the Lord and His will in your life and your fellowship. This is a reference tool to give encouragement as well as insight and to be helpful about the little things so that we can better focus on the bigger, more important vision that God has placed before us.

This handbook is the first of its kind; it only begins to offer experiences from a portion of Servants’ Ministry. We hope it will be an ongoing project with expanding contributions and testimonies of His goodness for years to come. Lastly, we pray that this would point to Him *“who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine, according to His power at work within us.”* (Eph. 3:20).

I. Vision of Servants Ministry

The body of Christ is still here on earth because the Kingdom harvest is still plentiful. Matthew 24:14 tells us that when the gospel is preached to the whole world, then the end will come. Accordingly, Servants Ministry exists

To reach our campus and to touch the world for Jesus Christ.

His great mandate for our life time is to win souls and make them into His disciples. The vision of Servants Ministry is three-fold:

SOUL-WINNING

First, we need to win more souls of this generation and the next one. Any nations and regions that live off only the past revivals become stagnant and decay quickly. We pray that God will use us to see more people become eternal sons and daughters of His.

DISCIPLE-MAKING

Second, we want to see more dedicated disciples of Christ. We hear and see of many crowds of Christians, but how many of them are willing to lay down their life or willing go overseas and into our inner-cities? May God raise more disciple-makers.



CAMPUS REVIVAL

Third, our focus of this Kingdom work involves campus ministry. Students make crucial life decisions during their college years -- major, vocation, life-goals, life-long friendship, etc. We desire to introduce Christ at the core of their life-decision process. Without Jesus, we end up with nothing. With Jesus, we have eternity.

FIVE SIGNS OF REVIVAL

We can discern that God is doing something real and enduring when these fruits are manifested amongst His people:

1. Changed holy life
2. Obedience to the Word
3. Passionate worship to God
4. Joyful & powerful service to God
5. Love for and reaching out to the lost

II. Living Set Apart

It is important to recognize that people, methods, technologies, and organizations themselves do not and cannot really change this world. Only God can bring about His lasting spiritual changes to this world -- and He does so through ordinary people who are willing and available. Campus ministry is a training ground in which to fulfill the call of God as we engage in learning, developing our God-given gifts, and growing through various experiences. Will you say "Yes" to His call this day?

"As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the Lord is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him. For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God? It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect."

II Samuel 22:31-33

What sets us apart from the rest of the world? Lately, many non-believers have been known to do good things by giving away their millions to the poor. Are we falling into the trap of busying our lives with things that appear to be right or good? The passage above tells us that if we will make God our refuge and live in utter dependence on Him rather than upon ourselves, we will be living the perfect way our Father has set before us. Will we actively believe Him and make Him our Rock, so that we can take part in ushering in His Glory?



Table of Contents

1	Introduction	5
1.1	Purpose of Document.....	5
1.2	Target Audience.....	5
2	Me? A Small Group Leader?.....	5
2.1	Requirements? Qualifications?.....	5
2.2	Responsibilities... No! Opportunities as a Leader	6
2.3	My Attitude and Conduct as a Leader.....	6
2.4	Time Management.....	6
3	The Small Group Essentials.....	7
3.1	Purpose	7
3.2	Vision.....	7
3.3	Goals.....	7
4	The Importance of Small Groups.....	8
4.1	A Biblical Model for Small Groups	8
4.2	Bible Study vs. Small Group.....	8
4.3	Foundation within a Fellowship.....	9
5	The Small Group and Prayer	9
5.1	“Drawing Near” Prayer.....	10
5.2	“Application” Prayer	10
5.3	“Personal Needs” Prayer	10
5.4	Opportunistic Prayers.....	10



- 6 The Small Group and Relationships 11**
 - 6.1 Leaders to Leaders..... 11
 - 6.2 Leaders to Members..... 12
 - One-on-One's..... 12
 - Discipleship 12
 - 6.3 Members to Members..... 12

- 7 Four Main Parts in Leading a Small Group 14**
 - 7.1 Leadership Meetings 14
 - First Leadership Meeting! YAY! 14
 - Leadership Meeting – General Agenda 14
 - 7.2 Bible Study Preparation: A Personal and Humble Study..... 14
 - The Key to a Good Bible Study 15
 - Steps to Preparing for the Bible Study 15
 - 7.3 Preparing to Lead the Small Group 18
 - 7.4 Leading the Small Group 21

- 8 The Logistics 22**
 - 8.1 Come and Join the Family! Invitations to the First Meeting 22
 - 8.2 Plan Ahead! 23
 - 8.3 Communication..... 23
 - Logistical Communication..... 23
 - Relational Communication..... 24
 - 8.4 Getting Your Members Involved..... 24
 - 8.5 Where Should We Meet?..... 25
 - 8.6 When Should We Meet and For How Long? 25
 - 8.7 Do Numbers Matter? 25

- 9 Some Do’s and Do Not’s of Leading a Small Group..... 26**

- 10 Things to do when You get Home 26**

- 11 Final Thoughts..... 27**



Appendices

A	Loving Your Small Group	28
B	Discipleship	29
C	Discovery Questions.....	30
D	Evaluate Your Meeting	30
E	Creative Icebreakers	31
F	Crew Ideas	31
G	When You're in Doubt	32
H	Reading Suggestions.....	33
I	Helpful Websites	33



Section

1 Introduction

1.1 *Purpose of Document*

This handbook provides guidance and assistance on leading a small group. It is designed to create a baseline in which leaders may follow to optimize their serving. Following the guidelines is highly recommended. However, your experiences throughout the year of service will be primarily based on your *relationship with the Lord*, and your efforts and personal creativity utilized. The handbook serves to lay down the foundation so that leaders may focus more on the vision and purpose of the small group rather than the logistics of leading.

1.2 *Target Audience*

This handbook is mainly for small group leaders. Others may read it for reference or for an outlook on the responsibilities of a small group leader to aid them on the decision of becoming a leader. Assistant leaders are highly recommended to read the manual.

2 Me?! A Small Group Leader?!

Think about how you came to know Christ, or how you've grown in your faith. You are who you are because someone knew you by name and invested in you personally. Whether it was your parents, friends, or perhaps a pastor or small group leader, more than likely 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. While most churches hold large group worship services, these events aren't designed for personal interaction, and it can be difficult to develop close personal relationships. This is why small groups are so valuable.

2.1 *Requirements? Qualifications?*

These are questions that everyone asks themselves to which everyone gets the same answer for. ☺ Perfection is not a requirement. If it were, none of us could lead a small group. Spiritual maturity is a continual process. The following five Heart attitudes will help keep you in check as a leader.

Do you have the desire to:

1. Give and receive scriptural correction?
2. Serve rather than be served?
3. Follow spiritual leadership within scriptural guidelines?
4. Initiate reconciliation?
5. Honor your word?

“And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.”

Colossians 1: 28-29



A small group is neither a stand-alone event nor an end in itself. It should be seen, rather, as an activity carefully designed to meet the objectives of the local, national, worldly, and ultimately eternal fellowship. Remember, the goal is NOT to the small group in and of itself, but the ultimate objective is to trust God to change peoples' lives.

2.2 *Responsibilities... No! Opportunities as a Leader*

Being a small group leader entails many responsibilities, ranging from personal, other leaders, members, to fellowship responsibilities. As much as they are responsibilities, they are more so opportunities. As assistant leaders and small group members look up to you for advice and guidance, you have the opportunity to show them God's love and direction. You have the opportunity to make an ETERNAL result in their lives. There is no greater award than to build up His Kingdom!

In short, a small group leader is expected to attend all Sunday services, leadership trainings, large group gatherings and small group meetings. Leaders are also expected to administer the small group meetings, act in accordance with the fellowship's system and direction, and do one-on-one's with the members of his/her small group, as well as with the assistant leaders.

2.3 *My Attitude and Conduct as a Leader*

The most critical element in leading and dealing with your small group members is to truly love them. To love your members is to protect and want the best for them for the glory of His Kingdom. Therefore, live the life of example. Remember your position as the big brother/sister and always look to best serve your members.

Actions speak louder than words. Honesty and sincerity in your words, reflected by your actions, will not only set a model for the members to follow, but also give you credibility as a leader. As the giver should offer respect, the receiver must earn the respect. Be careful with your language, choice of words, and actions. As a leader, it would be best to refrain from all cursing and smoking/drinking. A leader going to parties does not set a good example for the members. No one can tell you how to live your life, but once again, look for the benefit of your members. Compromising in such grey areas can cause members to be hindered—a stumbling block—to their faith. God has offered you opportunity and power to influence people. As a famous uncle once said, "With great power comes great responsibility." ☺

Constantly remind yourself that you are a sinner as much as anyone else. Do not be so quick to assume or correct. Anyone can give the "correct Biblical answer" to situations. Anyone can recite verses and advise them by saying, "Well, the Bible says..." It is of utmost importance to advise according to Scripture. However, before you do that, love them. Once again, loving your members is the key to being a great leader. Express compassion and empathy before you do anything. The member going through hardships may already know for themselves what he/she needs to do. What they really need are your ears and your support through prayer. Have patience and understanding.

2.4 *Time Management*

You are a student, next to being a child of God and a child of your parents ☺. Please be wise about how you spend your time. As much as it is recommended to spend time with your



assistant leaders and members, if you are not doing well academically due to your involvement with your small group, you must adjust your time spent doing ministry. Before committing, fill out a weekly time table to see how you are going to spend your time. The time table will not only help you organize your schedule, but also find a balance between your academics and ministry to optimize both aspects of your life.

Take some time before any planning to make a weekly schedule that includes your personal times with God, family commitments and your academic schedule, friends and hobbies. Spending time with God is of utmost importance. Do not compromise this time. Family commitments come next as you are dedicated to your family. Your academic schedule should come third. Also, write down important dates (exams, papers, birthdays, vacations, etc.) on a calendar. As you plan for ministry, schedule your time accordingly to your weekly schedule. Prioritize your life and work according to what is most important to you.

Remember to add times of rest as well. This may include sleeping/napping, reading a good book, playing video games, watching TV/movie, etc. It is easy for leaders to spend all their time “taking care of business” and not taking care of themselves. It is the easiest way to burn out. As much as work and serving is important, rest is also very important in being a small group leader.

3 The Small Group Essentials

3.1 *Purpose*

To glorify God by uniting Christians through biblical fellowship and outreach, equipping and encouraging them to minister effectively to each other and to non-believers.

3.2 *Vision*

To become spiritually transformed ambassadors for Christ, who are empowered by the Holy Spirit and are living with a passion for God and compassion for EVERYONE around them; believers and unbelievers alike.

This is just a broad vision. You should have your own, personal and individual vision for your group. Remember that there is NO LIMIT to your vision. The greater your vision, the greater your freedom to express and experience God’s power.

3.3 *Goals*

1. Centering upon Scripture
2. Uniting for fellowship
3. Nurturing the members
4. Engaging in prayer
5. Integrating faith in our everyday life as a student, family member, and friend
6. Equipping for ministry



4 The Importance of Small Groups

4.1 *A Biblical Model for Small Groups*

Before looking at the specifics of the small group, a biblical mandate needs to be established and followed. One passage that is particularly helpful in understanding the nature of a small group is Hebrews 10:22-25 (NASB). On the basis of Christ's finished work on our behalf, it says:

"Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more, as you see the day drawing near."

The passage instructs us to:

1. Draw near to God
2. Hold fast on the confession of hope
3. Stimulate one another to love and good deeds

These three exhortations play a vital role in the definition of a small group. If even one of the three teachings is missing, the small group must be adjusted to include all three aspects of the mandate. Please reflect on the exhortations throughout the semester and evaluate your small group based on the mandate.

4.2 *Bible Study vs. Small Group*

It is of absolute importance that this activity to be centered on God's Word (which is one of the core pillars of a Bible study), but the reference of "bible study" as "small group" gives more flexibility to the local fellowship. For example, while a typical weekly small group will incorporate strictly scriptural or contextual (other Christian books and studies) exhortations, there may be times during the year when the activity of the group is centered on only one aspect – prayer, outreach, service or worship.

This reference to small group is not at all an attempt to move away from the study of the Bible. In fact, this emphasis will also help to call the fellowships back to a renewed commitment to study God's Word in a more pure manner, more so than to study it indirectly through Christian books, magazines and videos – which has been a growing trend in recent years. Not that they are bad in itself, but rather than relying heavily on them, we should constantly rely simply on the truth—the Word of God.

It is this breadth of function that underlies the reference from "Bible Studies" to "Small Groups." As mentioned above, the study of and obedience to God's Word must always be central to your assembling together, but there will be times when that obedience will cause us to spend the whole evening, if not an even more extended time, in worship and prayer. At other times, that obedience will yearn to find expression in active ministry (such as community service and outreach ministry), some of which can take place in the very time frame allotted for the small group while at other times it will necessitate different/additional times.



Let's take one more step to further refer to the "small group" as a "family." There are many fellowships that refer to their small groups as either "house groups" or "family groups." The reason behind this is that small groups are more than just sharing, learning and serving parties of people, but more so, it's a family – those united to share the love of Christ. These are the people that you will spend an entire year with. You are the big brother/sister figure and they are your siblings. Simply, LOVE them! This is an absolute. If you are not the greatest teacher or discussion leader, one thing you can do that is above all that is to love them. THAT will leave your members wanting to know more of our Lord. And hopefully, the relationships that you make within the year will not only last through that year, but for the rest of your lives.

4.3 *Foundation within a Fellowship*

A great fellowship is not made up of a large membership or fun activities. The union of individual children of God who genuinely wants to dedicate a life in pursuit to love and glorify Him is what makes a great fellowship. Simply increasing membership is easy. All it needs are plan fun activities and have free food. However, to experience and enjoy true fellowship, or koinonia, small groups are absolutely necessary. It is in small groups that people can genuinely grow as a child of God and have genuine fellowship with others.

It is mentioned above that the importance of small groups as an opportunity for building personal relationships. This importance plays a vital role in connecting the members to the bigger fellowship. There are many fellowship members who are reluctant to come out to large group settings because they do not feel wanted or welcomed. They may come to the meeting, but will leave soon after the meeting is over. As people find a sense of belonging in the fellowship, they will begin to involve themselves more into the fellowship and the ministry. And the best way to affirm the members is through small groups, where individuals are recognized and identified. As members are drawn increasingly into the small groups, their involvement with the fellowship will naturally grow as well.

Small groups are the arteries of the body of fellowship. Small groups are needed not only to share about God on a more personal level, but also to be the inner workings of the bigger fellowship. They are the building blocks for the fellowship. If small groups are doing well and God is bringing revivals through out the groups, the fellowship will also experience a revival as well. So do you see the importance of small group leaders yet? 😊

5 The Small Group and Prayer

Prayer is the most important aspect in trusting God with your small group or with any ministry for that matter. It is what connects us to God. It is foolishness to lead a small group apart from divine assistance. God is the One who changes lives; therefore, He must lead in the process. Only God can bring the people to your small group, develop character, and knit hearts together. Prayer is the starting point for such work, for it is God who chisels away and causes us to grow.

Too often, prayer is the last thing to consider when planning and preparing for our small group. It is tacked on as a last minute, all-encompassing prayer asking God to bless human-made plans. Instead, one must declare his/her dependence upon the Most High as the onset and seek His will every step of the way.



The Hebrews passage exhorts us first to "draw near to God." This is an amazing thought – that God desires for us to have a warm, loving relationship with Him, not simply a judicial relationship of being found "not guilty." While the idea of a relationship encompasses more than prayer, it certainly includes prayer, and a prayerful attitude and spirit. There are three types of prayer that are important to a small group.

5.1 *"Drawing Near" Prayer*

The first is the "drawing-near prayer." This can extend over a short period of time, even a few minutes, to a more extended time frame. For a weekly small group, this is the "pause" from the busyness of the day to invite God to meet with you as you look into His Word. It, even briefly, covers those elements which make us teachable – acknowledging God, confessing sin, and laying aside our cares and agendas.

It may include singing and praising. It is relational, rather than the asking and praying for specific personal requests. When a whole evening is given to prayer, this will likely be more extended, and will include, either by song or Scripture, the broader elements of worship. Plan carefully to include the "drawing-near" aspect of the small group during your weekly times of small group.

A receptive heart is necessary if one is to learn and apply the truths of God's Word. Remember, God desires this as much, if not more, for the relationship as for the discipline and knowledge that it brings. He enjoys your company. Do you enjoy His?

5.2 *"Application" Prayer*

The second type of prayer is the "application prayer." This is appropriate as the concluding element of the actual Bible study. Rather than abruptly ending the study and shifting gears to prayer requests, this involves talking with God about what was just learned from His Word and personalizing it into one's individual life. It will also let those in the group know how to continue to pray for others throughout the week in the spiritual dimension of their lives.

5.3 *"Personal Needs" Prayer*

The third type of prayer needs little introduction or explanation. It is the most common type of praying done by people in small groups. It could be called the "personal-needs prayer." Usually, but not necessarily, this involves taking prayer requests for health, friends, activities of the week, and then ACTUALLY praying for them.

Sometimes, for the sake of time efficiency, there is little discussion of the prayer requests – simply a listing of them, followed immediately by a time of prayer. At other times, more discussion (although problem solving should be minimized) is desired. In these cases, some have chosen to serve the refreshments while they share prayer requests, and then wrap up the evening with a short time of prayer. The needs of the members of the group with regard to time commitments will often dictate the format.

5.4 *Opportunistic Prayers*

Be open to occasionally use your small group meeting for an extended session of prayer. Call it whatever you want, but make it catchy. You could call it "a half-night of prayer," a "concert of prayer." If you're really up for it, try an entire day given to prayer. Share prayer requests and



encourage your members to go throughout the day with a list of requests and constantly pray. It can be when they're walking to class, eating, whenever.

Fasting, for those who so desire, can be accomplished in any of the formats. In the longer seasons of prayer, breaks can either be scheduled, or individuals may simply take breaks whenever necessary. Please be careful with fasting. Extended, or any kind of fasting for that matter, must be conducted properly. It serves a great purpose. However, irresponsibility will only harm our bodies and our grades in the process. If you are thinking about going on an extended fast, please consult with Pastor IJ or a small group of leaders for guidance and support. Remember that it is the heart of prayer that is important, not necessarily the act or way of prayer.

Not only should you pray yourself, but you should ask for prayers as well. Contact close friends and family members to ask them for their prayers. You should always think of your small group as a function run on prayers. Therefore, the more people you have lifting your small group up to God, the more blessings you will receive. Do not be shy to ask for prayers. Also, keep your prayer support group up to date on what's going on in your small group. Share with them what you are studying this semester, weekly events, important dates throughout the semester, members list, etc. The more detailed you are, the more specific they will be able to pray for you.

6 The Small Group and Relationships

6.1 *Leaders to Leaders*

First and foremost, there should be a bond of love and trust between the leaders. This is very important! The leaders must be on the same page (common purpose and vision) for the small group to run smoothly. You must respect one another and truly value one another. How do you go about doing that? Simple. Hang out, eat and play! Spend time with one another. Intensive praying and sharing times will come. But before that, truly enjoy one another! Create opportunities and plan activities to get to know each other and encourage one another.

Perhaps this is the starting point of a great year. Once your relationship with the other leaders is grounded in Christ's love, there is nothing to fear. It can be guaranteed that once the leaders become the source of encouragements and support for each other, your members will follow as well. Constantly encourage and affirm one another. Remember that God has selected your partners for a purpose. They will bring you so much joy.

Remember that you are not only leading the members, but the assistant leaders as well. Be an example to the assistant leaders. These are the people who are going to step up and lead in the future. Throughout the year teach them the importance of being a leader and how to effectively lead a small group.

Always put in an effort to know what's going on in their lives. Disciple and mentor them. Yes. Age can be a factor, but you as the leader have the responsibility of raising future leaders.

Be sensitive to their input, but at the same time be direct. Please have an open mind, but also remember that you are the one to make the final decision on small group matters. You must first plan everything and then ask for suggestions. Additional ideas offered should be taken with humility and willingness to listen. Do not let your pride get in the way of the benefits to the group and to the individual members. Although no one wants a leader who does not know what



he or she is doing, a leader who does not humbly listen, carefully weigh the benefits and adjust accordingly are not much better.

6.2 *Leaders to Members*

Love each of your members individually, not corporately! It cannot be stressed enough. There is no point in small groups if you are not there to express love to one another individualistically. More than the Bible study that you prepare every week, if you are truly able to show Christ's love to your members, you will see dramatic changes in the lives of your members. Refer to Appendix A for practical ways to love your members.

One-on-One's

Obviously small group meetings can serve as your source of bonding for you and your members. However, it is limited by one's level of comfort in a larger setting. Small group meetings are not as effective when it comes to more intimate sharing and personal friendships as one-on-one meetings. Meeting one-on-one or two-on-one is a great opportunity to get to truly know your members. Try to do one-on-ones as often as you can. Of course this becomes difficult as school work and extracurricular involvements intensify. Therefore, manage your time wisely (refer to section Time Management for more information). At the same time, please do not neglect your members. They need you more than you might think. Their lives go much beyond the hour or two that you see them during small group meetings.

Discipleship

Discipleship is different from one-on-one's, but you could think of it as a more intensive one-on-one. It goes beyond your regular friendship to a mentor to disciple level of relationship. With discipleship, you must think of your relationship as a long-term commitment. There is much more involvement with the person than if you were meeting him/her one-on-one. Discipleship is on a very intimate level and much respect needs to be given to the other person. If you have the heart for discipleship and are thinking about mentoring a person, please read Appendix B thoroughly before engaging in discipleship. It is important that you fully prepare yourself before committing to discipleship.

6.3 *Members to Members*

When people walk into a small group setting for the first time, they often ask three questions:

1. Do I like these people?
2. Do these people like me?
3. Do I like what this group is about?

Work hard to ensure that they will have a positive response to at least the last two questions... Since the first one is beyond your control ☺. You are the leader, and hence, the mediator and host/hostess of the group. Allow everyone to feel like they have a place in the small group. Creating a warm and friendly environment will help everyone feel wanted and needed.

The presence of the term and concept of "one another" in the Hebrews passage (Hebrews 10: 22-25) suggests not simply just a "stimulation" of the cognitive side of our being, but the relational aspect of these small groups. Almost everyone who has ever participated in small



groups can bear testimony to a particular small group which was their favorite. Usually, they state that there was a "chemistry" that made that one group special. While that "chemistry" can neither be captured and marketed nor reduced to a formula, it seems likely those groups incorporated many, if not all, of the elements listed above. In addition, there was likely an element of healthy, meaningful relationships.

One of the most significant ways to restore emotional energy is through healthy relationships. Where better to see this happen than in a Christian small group! Many old-time leaders can testify to this truth. On "Bible study night" emotionally weary members often come home from duty with the thought of skipping the study. But on those nights when the members decide to go rather than staying home something interesting usually happens. Even though they add another activity to their day, they end it more refreshed. Healthy, small-group relationships – and small groups designed to foster healthy relationships – restore emotional energy. It is a fact! And many of you can testify to it!

Relationships are important for another reason. Larry Crabb, the Christian author and psychologist, in responding to a question asking what it was that produced change in people's lives, stated:

"Truth presented in the context of relationships changes lives." 1

If one goal of small group Bible study is to change lives by bringing them into conformity with God's Word, then Crabb's comment should be instructive for us.

It says that the simple imparting of knowledge usually doesn't bring about change. However, when the relational element is added – in the form of friendship, caring for one another, accountability, etc. – change is much more likely to occur. This means that the leader of a small group must give attention to relational aspects during the time spent together.

This can be accomplished through "sharing times," and more importantly social times. Sharing time may be facilitated with an activity of five to ten minutes in the study. Occasionally, the entire evening may be set aside for cultivating these relationships. Prayerful, conscious attention to this aspect will produce significant dividends.

This may be harsh, but it is somewhat true. Many people do not remember everything or even most of the things talked about during small group. However, what they do remember are the people that have touched their lives, and the examples that they have lived. As stressed in the beginning of this handbook, if anything, truly love your members.

Therefore as a leader, you must be the bridge between your members until they are comfortable with each other. Especially in the beginning of the year, organize meetings where you and your members can enjoy each other in games or outings. This will allow your members to become comfortable with you and with each other, inside AND outside of small group.

1. Crabb, L., *The Silence of Adam*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan, 1995



7 Four Main Parts in Leading a Small Group

7.1 *Leadership Meetings*

First Leadership Meeting! YAY!

This meeting will be one of the most important, if not the most important, meetings of the year. This is the beginning of an exciting journey! ☺

This meeting should be held no later than a week and a half before school. With getting information from people and making rounds to visit your members, you need as much time you can get before beginning your small group. You need to make cards, goodies bags, most importantly pray, etc. Please let the other leaders know when and where you will be having your first meeting EARLY to allow sufficient time to arrange their schedules.

What should you talk about? Once again, it is imperative that the leaders be on the same page. The leaders of each small group need to work together harmoniously to bring forth the blessings of God. With that said, the most important topic that you should share in the first meeting is the vision that God has put into each others' hearts.

As you pray about your small group, God will speak to you of ways that He wants you to lead His sheep. He is going to put into your heart the desires that He sees fit for your small group. It is your job to pray and to share with one another those visions. As you do so, you will witness an incredible array of visions coming together to form your group.

Leadership Meeting – General Agenda

As mentioned above in the prayer section, start every meeting with prayer. If possible, have a time of praise as well. Let your leadership meeting be a time of worship. The general agenda for leadership meeting will also include sharing times, logistics, and closing prayers. During the sharing times, tell each other how your week was and share praises and prayer requests. Logistics include talking about what the bible study is about for the week to give the assistant leaders a heads-up, talking about who is doing what and when, and sharing any announcements that need to be made to the members.

Some suggestions:

- If possible, have snacks or even lunch/dinner together. This will create a more family-like environment.
- Spend more time praying than discussing logistics. God must reign throughout the whole meeting. Logistics are secondary to people's hearts.
- During sharing times, REALLY listen. If needed, write things down the things that the people are sharing. They need your prayers and you need theirs. As mentioned above, they are your partners. Keep them accountable.

7.2 *Bible Study Preparation: A Personal and Humble Study*

Small groups and Bible study may take place in a variety of settings, from foxholes to comfortable homes. But only one book is essential to the study... Obviously, the Bible. However, as the skills needed to lead a successful study are developed, the use of other references is



recommended. These are nice to have, but should never be considered essential, and that fact must be remembered as you proceed.

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the Word of truth.”

2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB)

Remember, God’s Word is good seed. The leader’s responsibility is to handle the Word of God properly and to help make the study of it a positive experience. It is the Holy Spirit’s responsibility to take that seed, plant it in a person’s mind, and cause it to grow so that it will bear much fruit and bring each individual into conformity with God’s Son, Jesus of Nazareth, with whom He is very pleased.

The Key to a Good Bible Study

“For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.”

Ezra 7:10 (NASB)

There is something *VERY* important when preparing for Bible study. It is your attitude. Remember these words: This preparation time is *NOT* for your members! It is for *YOU*! Many of you may be saying, “Of course the Bible study preparation is for the members! We are making the Bible study for them, not for us.”

Yes. Small group leaders are given a role and responsibility to put the best interest of the small group as the priority. But that does not mean you neglect yourself. You must desire to be well with God before you do anything. Once again, serving does not bring God. God brings God. And it is your job to seek Him.

How can one lead others when he cannot even lead himself? You must be able to lead yourself. But more importantly, you must allow God to lead you *FIRST* before you lead anyone else. Having this attitude of humility helps you to not look at small group as a chore, but an opportunity for *YOU* to grow. It also helps leaders to avoid burning out from serving.

It is a simple perspective change. While you are preparing for Bible study, it is more important for you to seek to *GROW* than to simply make a Bible study. This is the meaning of serving out of an *OUTFLOW*! Let God feed you *FIRST*, before you feed others. Let God lead you *FIRST*, before you lead others. As it mentions in Ezra, you must set your heart to intimately understand God’s words. You must make it your own before you present the material. You must grow in the truth more so than simply talking the truth. This time of preparation must be a personal and humble study.

Steps to Preparing for the Bible Study

As always, start with prayer. Let God tell you what He wants you to share with your group.

Try to select something that has one primary passage and one central teaching. Jumping around to different passages in the Bible can be frustrating and confusing, especially to a new believer. Please be sensitive if they need help finding the specific passage.

Be sensitive to the group’s needs and dynamics. Don’t just pick something that interests you. Think about what will help your group members take the next step towards obedience in Christ. This will require not your own thoughts, but God-given wisdom and discernment.



Focus on meeting the needs of the people! Many small group leaders fail to recognize that the purpose of meeting together is not to simply exchange information! This is not what small group is. The goal is to live the Christian faith, not just talk about the Christian faith. As you get together in your groups, look for things that will alert you to their individual needs, so you will be able to better serve them.

Use the following “Finding the Need” questions to help you determine what you will cover during your small group meetings:

1. What strengths do the members have? Where do they need growth? What do they not understand?
2. What principles, or topics, would benefit them most at this stage in their Christian walk?
3. What are their crucial needs? Do they comprehend the foundations of their faith (e.g. salvation, forgiveness, the Spirit-filled life, and how to study God’s Word)? Are they sharing Christ with others?

Based on these questions, you may get a feel of what is most needed for your group. Once you have an idea of what to study, choose between a topical study and an inductive study for the semester. This will further focus your small group’s studies and give you a general idea of how to approach your small group.

Let’s stop here for a moment and talk about topical studies and inductive studies². Both have their advantages and disadvantages. So let’s compare the two studies:

	Topical Studies	Inductive Studies
Advantages	Can meet the needs of the group how you wish it to be met Discussions and applications may be drawn easier	Straight from the source In general, people want to study the Word You know what you’re going to study next Members may read ahead and study the material on their own
Disadvantage	Have to look for <u>relevant</u> passages	Have to be very careful how you interpret the Word and what you stress The message may not reach out to everyone

These are just some of many. Let God speak to you about how He wants to use you. Either way you choose to approach your small group, just trust in Him and let Him do the work. Once you have decided on the type of study for the semester or year, ask yourself the “Finding the Need” questions again to choose the topic of your weekly studies.

One of the most important steps in preparing to lead a Bible study is simply to read the passage under consideration. Read it over several times, and if you have them available, in different translations. Read the passage as soon as possible after you know what you will be leading for the study. This will both help you to understand the passage and to put it in your mind so that the Holy Spirit can be work with you even when you are not able to study it in the formal sense of the word.

2. Long J., Beyerlein A., *Small Group Leaders’ Handbook*, Downers Grove, Illinois, InterVarsity Press, 1995



Definitely go to it, but do not rush to consult a commentary right away. While the passage most likely means one thing, there are several ways to consider the passage. A commentary will often lead you in one particular direction while the situation in which you find yourself or the group may cause you to approach the passage differently. Allow the Holy Spirit in you to reveal the treasures. Then, look to other sources to see how others have received their treasures.

The next step is to understand the setting in which the passage was written. Usually the passage or the particular book of the Bible will give you some clues. Often you will need to read the chapters before or after the passage under consideration to pick up the setting.

If you have a Study Bible, there may be some short notes preceding the text which will help you with the setting. Who was the author? To whom was the passage directed? Were there certain situations which prompted the writing? If chronology seems important, try to understand where the events of this passage fit in. What was the spiritual climate at the time, for the recipients as well as society at large? Thinking through the setting will help keep you from reading the passage with thoughts and attitudes from the present time which might be inappropriate.

As you proceed with your study, resist the temptation at this point to ask, "What is this saying to me?" There will be adequate time to make application after you first understand the passage.

The remainder of the personal study process can be thought of in terms of three basic questions you will be asking. First, ask yourself, "What does the passage say?" then, "What does it mean?" and finally, "What does it mean to me?" Under each of these question headings, you will likely employ other questions of a similar nature.

In considering what a passage says, you are playing the **role of an observer**. The first thing you might try to observe is the main theme. Seek to find that theme so that you do not get so bogged down in details that you miss it. You might fine tune or modify your perception of the main theme later as you study the passage in more detail, but for starting it is sufficient.

Next, begin noticing the details – repetition of words or phrases, synonyms or word /idea clusters, or unusual words. If the passage suggests action, you might note the verbs; if the passage is descriptive, nouns and adjectives will be worth noting. If the passage seems to be developing a thought, pay special attention to small connecting words such as "and," "but," "because," "therefore," "if...then," "since...therefore," and "so that." Each of these is used for a purpose and will be helpful in your understanding of the passage. You might even find a natural outline of the passage (as it did in Hebrews 10:22-25).

In this observation phase, simply make yourself a note of the things you do not understand and return to find the meaning at the appropriate time. As you practice this discipline, you will find yourself noting more and more details. Some will not prove to be particularly helpful; others will cause a light to go on.

As you move to the next phase – considering what the passage means – you will play the **role of an interpreter**. If there are meanings of words that are unclear, look them up. Perhaps there are even words that you are comfortable using in everyday conversation but would be hard pressed to define. Look these up as well. A good English language dictionary is extremely useful.

For words that seem to have a theological meaning, try to understand them in that context. At this point, it is helpful if you have some Bible reference works available to you. (A



Bible dictionary is a very useful tool. It corresponds to an encyclopedia. It gives more than a definition, usually developing the thought historically or relating it to other doctrines.)

In this interpretive stage, you will also want to play the role of a detective. Ask some questions that look for consistencies or seeming inconsistencies. Here, the entire Bible can serve as a context. If you detect a different thought or perspective, make sure you can reconcile it with other passages that come to mind.

Perhaps you will see an attribute of God that you will want to harmonize with others. It is here that you will want to find shades of meaning that distinguish one word from another. You may not find all the answers in the time you have to prepare. You may find that others in the group will be able to give some insight as a result of previous study they have done. Relax! By agreeing to lead a study, you are not claiming to understand everything. You are growing in maturity as everyone else. You are simply sharing what you have learned from God in hope that your members can also have the desire to seek deeper into the Truth.

As you conclude this phase, ask yourself what you have learned and how you would put it all together. Try to put into your own words what the passage is saying.

Now is the appropriate time to ask the last question, "What does it mean to me?" In this phase, you are playing the **role of a servant** who is trying to please his master through obedience.

You are seeking to be obedient to what you learned. If an application does not jump out at you, try to discover an application through the use of the following questions:

- Is there a sin to avoid?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there an attitude to change?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there an example to follow?
- Is there an attribute of God for praise?

Prayerfully consider these questions in your personal "application praying" time and try to be specific with regard to an application. Using whatever memory device you need to incorporate, stick with this application (and perhaps associate it with the passage being studied) until it is a regular part of your life.

Having studied God's Word and having made application to your own life, you are now almost ready to guide your group in discovering these truths for themselves. There is one more element of preparation needed. You need to formulate discussion questions prior to the meeting. Of course some questions will come up during the meeting, but have some discussion questions ready.

7.3 Preparing to Lead the Small Group

The leader should routinely incorporate into a small group the elements of worship, corporate group prayer, and building relationships. However, the core element of the small group is the study of the Bible. Whether the format includes a recognized teacher, a classic Bible study or a devotional, the desire is for God's Word to be central to the gathering.



As mentioned earlier, the type of small group that is encouraged is one where people approach God's Word, and discover FOR THEMSELVES the truths contained in it. Researchers continually point out that people retain truth and information which they discovered themselves at a much higher rate than if they had simply been told that same truth or information. Therefore, the leader needs to see himself or herself as a facilitator, not as a lecturer (KEY!)

The crucial question the leader needs to consider in the shift from personal study to leading the group is this: "Of the things learned, what should be told to the people and what should they discover for themselves?" As Bible study leader, take the time to formulate questions which result in self discovery. As students mine the gold themselves the truth becomes more priceless to them.

Consider telling the group only those facts which, in your study and with the use of reference books, they could not be expected to uncover simply with their Bibles, such as background information, or a specific meaning you uncovered in a dictionary which you want to use as a springboard for the discussion. It might even include a statement regarding the approach you will be taking, perhaps stating the main point of the passage and the truth you are extracting (if the purpose of the study is to understand the rationale behind the truth).

Your series of group discussion questions should follow the same pattern you used in your personal study: observation; interpretation; application. As you ask the observation questions, direct the people to first give responses right from the text, using the very words of the text.

These questions should be relatively easy to answer and will serve the purpose of getting people to engage in the self discovery process – that is, to talk. When people verbalize their thoughts, it solidifies their ideas and they are better able to retain that information.

Questions/calls for responses in this category might look like this:

1. Who are the people involved in the story?
2. What are the action verbs in verses 4-7?
3. Put the story into your own words.
4. What attributes of God are mentioned here?
5. What is the definition of faith given in verse 1?

After you have had the group discover all the pertinent points, move on to the second set of questions, those designed to understand the meaning of the things observed. Questions you use might sound like this:

- What did Jesus mean when he said, "You must be born again?"
- Why was it significant for the writer to use the word, _____?"
- What is the difference between mercy and grace?
- What is the connection between faith and hope?
- How do you reconcile a God of wrath and a God of love?

See the Appendix C for more discovery questions.

When you ask questions, avoid asking those which can be answered with a "yes" or "no." Those questions usually don't generate discussion. As you logically develop your thought, you might find yourself going back and forth between observation and interpretive questions. That is perfectly acceptable if it fits the progression you desire.



You may also have to field interpretive and application responses and hold them for later if you are not finished with the observation responses. It is not uncommon for people to try to jump ahead of you. When they lead you at just the right pace to affect a good transition, use the response to your benefit. If it is premature, you have the right as the leader to not let them move ahead too fast.

One potential problem of a self-discovery-type Bible study is that people may make wrong statements. As the leader, you might be called to take the position to not only facilitate, but intervene in a gentle way. Situations like this will also require you to lean on your personal study. You may also nicely challenge a wrong response by asking the responder to point out the portion of the text that prompted the response.

You can also ask others to give their understanding of that section. Where there is room for differing thoughts, allow for it; when the response is obviously wrong, you as the leader will need to ensure that the correct response is achieved before moving forward. But you as the leader do not always need to give the correct response.

When the correct response to an obvious observation question is given, you will likely move on. When you are into interpretive questions and responses, don't simply move on when you get the desired response. Allow others to comment. This will usually result in a more complete answer as others join in the satisfaction of discovery and build upon the response.

As mentioned earlier, work your way through the passage alternating between observation and interpretive questions as necessary. You will likely have some of those questions written out ahead of time. This allows you to listen to the responses without worrying about formulating your next question. You should, however, learn to ask additional questions based upon what you hear. These may be questions which simply clarify the response.

At other times you will hear a good thought and want to explore it. As long as this is helpful to understanding the passage, feel free to pursue those areas. If they look like they will distract you from the direction you are leading the group, don't chase those trails of questions. Remember, you are the leader-facilitator and are expected to properly direct the group.

In the interpretive and application portions of the study, be aware of the flow of questions and responses. If a pattern is being established where there is one response to every question and all responses are being directed back to the leader, seek to get out of that pattern. Ask others to respond to a response; ask them whether they agree; ask them to clarify a term or its usage. With just a little bit of practice, this will become easy to do and eventually cause the group to do this naturally.

As you conclude this section, have a summary question ready. It may sound like this:

- What, then, is the main point of this passage?
- Would someone summarize this passage for us?
- Let's take a moment for each of us to formulate a statement of truth derived from our discussions tonight.

The final phase of leading the study is to draw people to a place of application. You can do this by simply asking the basic question, "What are we going to take away from this passage and apply to our lives?" Or, you may want to direct the application in a certain way based upon some of the summary statements that were made.



If the study went well in the interpretive phase(s) and truth was discovered, most of the applications will be proper. The one area you may need to press a little is if the applications are not direct enough. Often, people will state implications instead of applications. Implications will involve statements like "we should..." instead of "I will" If you hear those kinds of responses, press a little deeper to see if the people are willing to make direct, personal application. Be ready to model it yourself.

7.4 *Leading the Small Group*

PRAY before the meeting! The first thing you want to do before you start giving rides and welcoming the members, is to meet with your assistant leaders early to pray. It is going to be God speaking and the Holy Spirit leading the members' hearts. Ask Him to do all the work and you just witness His greatness.

This is going to be the easiest thing I'm going to tell you. It is very simple. Be yourself! It is the simplest lesson, yet a very important aspect of leading. Do not try to be someone that you are not. If you're a passionate person, be a loving leader. If you're an exciting person, be a stimulating leader. If you're a more reserved person, be a humble leader. Express the person that God made you to be and the way that He intended you to be. Do not try to be anything but yourself. Trust me. God is going to put the members in your small group because He see them best fit for your small group. Yes. He has control over that too. ☺ So be yourself and lead with a loving heart.

There is more to leading a successful small group than content alone. Your job as the leader is to cultivate an environment where relationships will grow between you, the group members, and God. Ice breakers will help the group open up and get them in the mood to study the Word. Choose one that will lead you into your discussion in that day's study or one just for fun. Pick one that will help the group to get to know one another. Be creative. Also think of effective ways to transition into your study. Refer to Appendix E for more ice breaker ideas.

Encouragements are crucial! You must constantly affirm your members for their input, feelings, and observations. By doing this, you reinforce the importance of their input. Affirmation does not need to take place during or immediately following the group. It may be a small gesture and can take place some time after the sharing, to express that you have thought about the member's comment. An example of this is a simple phone call, note, e-mail or conversation later in the week with the member to express, "I've been thinking about what you had to say last Thursday. I agree with your thoughts on this and wanted to let you know I appreciated your sharing. I think others from the group could relate with what you said." This shows your attention to the members and invites future sharing.

Do not be so quick to correct your members. Let the other members give their thoughts on the subject before you give your input. When all thoughts seem to have been made, share your thoughts. This gives everybody a chance to participate and it also plays as a building factor for your group discussion.

Remember that when God called you to this ministry, He did not simply tell you to lead, but to be taught as well. Keep in mind that you will probably learn more than the members you are leading. Always have a humble heart when you are preparing for small group.

As the small group meeting comes to a close, have a time of prayer for those who were not able to make it to the meeting. As small as you might think this may be, this is one of the best



ways to express love to your members; to pray for them in their absence. As you finish your meeting with a closing prayer, please remember to lift up those who are present as well as your members outside of the meeting. Your prayers will make a dramatic impact and you will see changes and results.

When the small group meeting is over, take some time to evaluate your meeting with your assistant leaders. This will allow you to critique each meeting and to make appropriate changes to better fit your members' needs. Refer to Appendix D for self-evaluation questions.

8 The Logistics

8.1 *Come and Join the Family! Invitations to the First Meeting*

There are various ways to invite people to your small group. It can be through word of mouth, activity fairs, random encounters, e-mails, etc. Each schools and fellowships will have their own ways on contacting people and gathering members. Take for example, GCF. UVA has an activities fair in the beginning of every semester. GCF takes those opportunities to let the students know about GCF and to get their information. Then each leader takes that information and personally visits or at least calls his/her possible members.

Leaders, it's imperative that each member that is walking into your small group knows who you are. If you are inviting people that you do not personally know, personally visit, or at least call him/her before the first meeting. This is NOT limited to first-year leaders only! They should feel completely welcomed even before they get to the meeting site. The worst thing you want to do is jump into the small group without having anyone know who you are.

When you are visiting people, a friendly smile and greeting make a world of difference. ☺ Introduce yourself and let them know how you got their name and number and that you are excited to have them at your small group. Then get to know them as a person and share about yourself as well. Ask about their spiritual background. When you invite them to your group, get their phone number and their schedule if you can. Tell them you will be calling them back in a couple of days to let them know the specific time for the group. Finally, give them your phone number and name a second time to make sure they have it so that they can reach you if something changes. Please CALL! Don't use emails for the first time. Some people are good at responding and reading emails, but a lot of people are not. I'm sure you guys all have experiences where people just DO NOT respond to your emails. So give them phone calls.

Another great gesture is to make care packages for them while you're making your rounds to visit everyone. Maybe snacks, cookies, encouragement/motivation verses/quotes, just useful things in the beginning of the year. You may also make information cards that you can hand out as well. Include on the information card your information and other useful phone numbers (i.e. Pizza places, office numbers, student health, etc.). Leave an impression on them. Let them know that they are joining a family, not just another group.

If you are inviting first timers or unbelievers, be clear about what you will be discussing. Do not mislead them into thinking that you will simply be hanging out and then, out of the blue, pull out a Bible and say, "Hey let's all look at the Bible...". It probably would not leave the best impression. Although you ARE hanging out and getting to know God and each other better, be



sure to allow the people to make their decision fully knowing that it is God who is the most important topic in our meetings.

After the rounds are made, call them back within 48 hours of your meeting and let them know the details about your first meeting. Ask them if they need reminders as well.

8.2 *Plan Ahead!*

There are two ways to plan ahead your small group. First, invest in a calendar. Write all important dates and events on the calendar. This will allow you to get a better sense of the flow of your semester, and to plan ahead creative opportunities like going to crucial sports games, having outings, celebrating holidays, birthdays, etc. This also allows you to plan when the assistant leaders may prepare Bible studies, and when you may do joint meetings (upperclass-1st year, or brother-sister group). You need to also make sure to attend all fellowship events. Lastly, this will allow you know exactly when you are available for future events and allow you to adjust accordingly. Do this to make your life easier.

The second way is to get a tentative Bible study schedule. Pray for vision and think about a theme for the semester. A great method to allow your members to remember the content of small group is to have a main theme throughout the semester. As you plan for the semester, also think about specific Bible study topics that you can cover within the theme. Sharing the theme allows your members to know what to expect. Although it may seem to be a hassle in the beginning, planning Bible studies ahead will also save you a tremendous amount of time in the future.

8.3 *Communication*

Communication between and within the small group is very important. There are two roles of communication. It dictates whether things get done or not. It also brings about relationships. Let's analyze the two roles.

Logistical Communication

Good communication results in timely and effective results of what was planned. E-mails will be your main source of communication between you, assistant leaders, and the members. Therefore it is important to know the advantages and disadvantages of e-mails.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Fast and easy to use	No expressions
Able to mass contact	Not personable
Able to cover a lot of materials in a short time	Creates urgency and carelessness
	No emotional level
	No guaranteed response



In a college fellowship, E-mails are necessary. However, there is a time to use it and a time to use other means of communication. Now, let's look at the advantages and disadvantages of phone calls.

Advantages	Disadvantages
If contacted, guaranteed response Quick and easy Personable More emotional level More expressions through tone of voice	May not be able to contact right away No guaranteed response if receiver does not pick up

Be wise about what method of communication you use for different aspects of small group leading. E-mails are very effective for announcements and mass invitations, but not necessarily for personal conversations and requests. Phone calls are opposite of e-mails. To best serve your assistant leaders and members, utilize the form of communication that best fits the need.

Relational Communication

Communication is one of the key elements of relationships. Generally speaking, good communication means good relationships, bad communication means bad relationships, and without communication, there is no relationship. As relationships begin and solidify, you must be sensitive about how you use your language and tone. Ensure your members freedom of expression, but at the same time, encourage edifying and constructive communication within your small group.

8.4 *Getting Your Members Involved*

Allowing your members to contribute to the small group defines their acceptance and belonging to the group. Assigning members to certain responsibilities also in an indirect an makes them come out to small groups. ☺ They can be involved through things from sharing during Bible study, cooking/dish-washing before and after small group, thinking and planning activities, praying and passage reading for the Bible study, to even leading praise time. There are numerous ways that they can be involved.

A practical way to get them involved is to think about ways in which the members can help out the leaders. The more help you can get, the better. ☺ Make them into possible responsibilities and collect volunteers to build up the crew. Some involvements suggestions that your members may take charge of are listed in Appendix F.

Another way for them to be get involved is through ministry teams in the fellowship. Please encourage your members to join ministry teams. This will not only allow them to do God's work and to grow as a Christian, but also feel a sense of belonging in the fellowship, not only just the small group.



8.5 *Where Should We Meet?*

Ask yourself this important question: Do I want this small group to meet on my turf or their turf? Many often want others to come to them, adapt to their likes and dislikes. Consider the impact you would make if you held your group meeting in a non-Christian's room. How would things differ if you always met on an unbeliever's turf? Interesting thought, eh?

Ask yourself and compare the pros and cons of various meeting places. Of course, on your home court, you feel comfortable. You are in control of your surroundings. But unlike basketball, away games are not necessarily a bad thing. Although there may be some cons, having "away games" is not such a bad thing. It may allow the members to feel more comfortable, it may be closer to where they live, or it may be a bigger area for small group. Even small matters, such as the location of the bible study, will affect the dynamics of the meetings. Some things to consider when deciding on a location are rides, travel time, availability, and comfort.

8.6 *When Should We Meet and For How Long?*

Scheduling meeting times can be somewhat difficult. It may not match everyone's needs. Just use your best judgment on when to schedule your meetings to best fit your and your members' needs.

In general, aim to meet for at least an hour, but for no more than two. Honor your time commitments about when you will end. Students have other things to do, and you should avoid (at all costs) becoming the Energizer bunny group – it goes "on-and-on-and-on". ☺ After such bible study, they will not have any energy to do anything else. So much for a battery recharge! The purpose of the small group is for the members to feel spiritually pumped up, not drained.

8.7 *Do Numbers Matter?*

In a society driven by results and fame, our "success" is based on our services based upon how many people show up to our small groups on a regular basis. Let's clarify this misconception.

Sometimes we make the mistake of simply wanting our small group to grow because larger numbers seem better. But a group can grow and still never see a single person come to Christ. Refer back to the purpose, vision and goal of small group. Does it mention anything about a quota?

Here are three important characteristics of a small group regarding numbers:

1. Everyone is able to participate
2. Teaching is usually done through a dialogue, meaning a conversation (give and take)
3. People listen and help each other

To be quite frank, when a group involves ten or more students, it becomes very difficult to manage effectively. To a certain degree, the bigger it is, the less effective it's going to be and the smaller the group is, the more intimate it's going to be. But of course by no means should you stop inviting people just because you have ten or more people in your group. The more people you can bring the Christ, the better it is. But for the purpose of a "SMALL" group, where conversations and personal contributions are crucial (we will talk about this later), it will be difficult to manage a large crowd. The more people you have, the less each person is going to be able to contribute to the gathering.



9 Some Do's and Do Not's of Leading a Small Group

- LOVE!!! BE FRIENDLY!!!
- Do not be led by fear or anxiety in doing something new. Be creative and try new things.
- Have an open mind. Things will change all the time. People will speak up. Things won't go perfectly the way you planned it. You must learn to trust God at all times and adapt according to where He leads you.
- Learn the art of delegation, not only to the assistant leaders, but to the members as well. Do not try to take on all the small group responsibilities yourself.
- This is a BIG NO-NO! DO NOT "wing" your small group meetings. Leaders who do not plan give themselves more stress and hinder the group's growth. A leader may stimulate a great discussion, but he or she needs a deliberate plan to discuss and apply Biblical content. Take time to plan. The result will be a more focused small group, and students moving toward maturity in Christ.
- Plan ahead when your assistant leaders will practice leading small group meetings. A suggested time is near the end of the first semester. Therefore, during the second semester, you and your assistant leaders may rotate leading the meetings. This will unload a lot of work for you 😊
- Let your assistant leaders know when they will be leading well ahead of time so they may have enough time for preparation and also for you to check over their Bible study. It is important that you do this as the leader. Be precise with your feedback.
- Snacks are always good. Really good! But of course, it has to taste good in order for it to be good... 😊
- Make the small group your own. Creativity is key in making your small group unique and exciting.
- Look beyond your comfort zones, especially race. The ultimate goal is to expand God's kingdom, not segregate it in anyway. Reach out to non-Asians!
- Do NOT put your thoughts or your actions before Christ. Let HIM lead You, not the other way around. Always consult and confirm with Him first before you do anything.

10 Things to do when you get Home

- Pray! Sincerely and genuinely spend quality time with the Lord. I suggest going on a personal prayer journey for a day and spend that day to re-find Him and re-find yourself in Him through reflectance on Bible passages and kneeling before Him. Seek Him more and more. The book of Nehemiah is a GREAT choice to start off your year as a leader!
- Make a weekly schedule
- Schedule your semester (Refer to the "Plan Ahead" section)



- Contact leaders
 - (1) Let them know when the first leaders meeting is
 - (2) Ask them to pray and think about their visions for the small group
 - (3) Ask them what they want to eat during the meeting ☺
- Pray and think about your vision for your own small group
- Plan the first leaders meeting
- Plan the first small group meeting

11 Final Thoughts

Remember that this ministry is not yours. It is His and His only. As a small group leader, commit yourself to become a modern-day Ezra. Set your heart to hear His voice through prayer and your personal Scripture studies and obediently apply its teachings to your life. Then, with skill, humility, and compassion, you will naturally lead others to biblical truths.

Be careful not to fall into the trap of thinking that you are doing fine because you are serving. If you think that serving brings God, you are mistaken. Serving should be an outflow of love and worship. Seek His face before anything else. All else will naturally follow.

It's very simple. Rather than trying to change other people's lives, if you seek to change your own life, God will naturally use you. It is not about how much you can teach and how well you can lead discussions. As you grow as a man/woman of God, you will naturally become a leader, who not only talks the examples, but lives it as well. This is the reason behind the personal study in preparation for Bible study; so that you can grow, rather than simply jotting down information. This will also broaden your scope of understanding as well as your trust in God for everything.

Have faith, brothers and sisters! When you are putting in all your heart, thoughts, time, and efforts, it is natural to expect results. I mean, if you're giving it your all, of course you should see immediate changes in people's lives. However, a lot of times, you will not be able to see what you anticipated. You might even see opposite outcomes from your expectations. At times like these, you must be patient with people and have faith in Him. Changes generally do not come overnight. It is a growing process. Although you may not see it now, do not lose hope. God is going to honor your services onto Him. If you are ever going through times of questions and doubts, refer to Appendix G to find answers and encouragements.

All of which has been shared in this handbook, may seem overwhelming. Do not be discouraged. It may feel like there are so many rules and expectations to meet. And honestly, you will not be able to meet them all. Therefore, simply rely on God to do the work through you.

Leading small groups is not meant for you to put yourself upon a pedestal or flash to others because it's on your "Christian resume". All credit should be given to God and Him alone.

Being a leader definitely is challenging, and you might doubt yourself as well, whether you are ready or "holy" enough, but do not think that God can't use you. If He can use normal, sinful, lacking men and women in the Bible, He can most certainly use you!

God is going to take you on a rollercoaster ride that you're never going to forget. Just grab hold onto that safety harness of grace and really enjoy the ride! God bless you all!



Appendix

A Loving Your Small Group

1. Pray for your members.

2. Love your members.

- Notes/Calls... Surprise them.
- Unexpected gift, candy bar, baked goods, etc.
- Help according to their need — run errands, moving furniture, drive them to the store for food, invite them over for dinner, tutor a student who needs help in calculus (make sure you know what you are doing!)
- Volunteer to bring your international neighbor home with you for Thanksgiving or Spring Break.
- Ask how you can pray for them.
- Give your phone number for emergencies.
- Sit with them during Large Group.
- Take snacks over for a study break.
- Let them borrow some of your CD's or videos.
- Remember birthdays with cards or small gifts.
- Cut out magazine/newspaper articles of members' interests.
- Offer advice on professors, classes or majors.
- Help freshmen make friends on campus.
- Offer them advice on how the campus works: parking stickers, football tickets, where to find the best food, etc.
- Go to the gym and work out together.
- Make a midnight-snack run.
- Watch a favorite TV show together.
- Hit the books together at the library.
- Take a personalities (Myers-Briggs) or spiritual gifts test together.
- Give them a call just to chat.
- Play a mild practical joke on them.
- Get the small group together to order pizza out.
- Offer to proofread their term paper.
- Get involved in community service as a small group
- Call each of your members and assistant leaders over breaks. Show them you care and that you're thinking about them even when they're not around.



B Discipleship

Discipleship should never be taken lightly. It is a long-term commitment between the mentor and the disciple to keep each other accountable and an agreement to be absolutely vulnerable to each other. It goes beyond the Bible study to discover your life and the pursuit of becoming a man/woman of God.

When you commit to discipleship, you are committing your heart, thoughts, actions, ears, lips, and time to the other person. I cannot stress enough the importance of dedication in discipleship. Both parties must be fully devoted to one another to prayer and be there for each other **WHENEVER** they need it.

Here are the steps to discipleship:

1. Meeting your disciple. This comes in many forms. However, remember that whatever method that God may direct you, He will make it perfect according to His wisdom.
 - a. You may pray to God about a certain individual that He has placed in your heart. After His allowance, you may go ask if he/she is interested in discipleship with you. Let him/her know the importance of discipleship and allow for time in prayer. After much prayer and deliberation, he/she will get back to you with an answer.
 - b. The disciple comes to you and asks if you can mentor them. You may ask if he/she has prayed about it. Let him/her know that you will take some time in prayer and give him/her the answer. After much prayer and deliberation, you may give the answer. Remember that it's ok to say no.
 - c. Easiest of all, God ordains you and the disciple to both pray about discipleship at the same time and He puts you together on the spot.
2. Hang out with him/her. Get to know each other better. This step will take time. Since discipleship is a long-time commitment, you don't have much to worry about 😊
3. Discipleship training will begin once you are completely comfortable with one another. The reason for this is that discipleship is never the same with people. Depending on the character and history of the person, discipleship will vary. It does not mean that you need to know **EVERYTHING** about the person, but you need to be aware of the person's background, current thoughts, conditions, and surroundings.
4. As mentioned, discipleship training will take form based upon the need of the disciple. As you get to know each other better, think about the need of the person. Does he/she need more Biblical training/knowledge? Does he/she need guidance in walking in wisdom? Does he/she need academic assistance? The most important thing about discipleship training is meeting the need and want of the disciple. Pray to God for His direction and approval.
5. Being a mentor does not necessarily mean you teach all the time. You are as much in need as anyone else.
6. Lastly, make the discipleship your own. Everyone has different personalities, gifts and talents. Use what God gave you honestly and genuinely to lead. There is a reason why God **SPECIFICALLY** put you two together. If He thought you did not match, He would not have put you together.

Here are some final advices on discipleship. **YOU ABSOLUTELY CANNOT BACKOUT OF DISCIPLESHIP! YOU CANNOT LEAVE YOUR DISCIPLE HANGING!** This is why the time spent in prayer before engaging in discipleship is **SO** crucial. Let me also mention that it is very difficult to do discipleship and lead a small group at the same time. Each involvement takes a lot of time. Trying to find a balance between your disciple and the rest of the small group can be very strenuous. You must be absolutely **PASSIONATE** for discipleship for you to effectively lead discipleship. Please consult with Pastor IJ if you are interested in investing in discipleship.



C Discovery Questions

1. What did you like best?
 - a. What did you find encouraging?
 - b. What did you find helpful?
 - c. What was the best part (of this story) for you?
2. What did you like least?
 - a. What was disturbing?
 - b. What was difficult?
 - c. What was surprising or hard?
3. What did you not understand?
 - a. Discuss anything in which you find confusing.
 - b. Is there anything you would like to know more about?
 - c. Which part puzzles you?
4. What did you learn about God?
 - a. How is God different than humans?
 - b. How does this change or illumine your picture of God?
 - c. What impression of God do you get from God in this reading?
5. What do you personally need to do about it?
 - a. If this is true, what is your next move?
 - b. Is there something you have learned about yourself that needs to change?
 - c. What are some practical ways in which you can respond?
6. Pick a phrase or verse to take with you and think about this week.
 - a. What nugget of truth will you take with you for a treasure this week?
 - b. Which part of this story will make a difference and how?
 - c. What do you most need to remember and how will you apply it?

D Evaluate Your Meeting

1. Did everyone show up? Why didn't some people come?
2. Were you prepared?
3. Did you have an attitude of expectancy? Were you prepared if you had someone extra show up?
4. Did you set a warm atmosphere?
5. What adjustments need to be made? Better lighting? More questions? More time in prayer?
6. Was the Bible study enjoyable? Did the members have fun?



E Creative Icebreakers

1. What room was the center of warmth in your home? Describe your relationship with your parents. How would they show their love to you?
2. What is your favorite way of spending your spare time?
3. When did God become more than just a word to you?
4. Describe a time when you have felt close to God?
5. What makes you feel loved? What makes you cry?
6. What characteristic in a person irritates you and why?
7. What kind of vehicle would you like to drive if cost were not a factor?
8. What would you like to be said at your funeral?
9. What were your best and worse moments this week?
10. Describe your week using a movie title and explain why.
11. A personal scavenger hunt – Take 5 minutes and find the following items in your wallet or purse:
 - Something that you have had for a long time
 - That you're proud of
 - Reveals a lot about you
 - Reminds you of a fun time
 - Concerns for worries you
12. Your house is on fire, and everyone is safe. You have 30 seconds to run through the house and collect 3 articles you want to save. What would you grab? Why? After everyone has done this, the group can discuss what they learned about the things they value.

F Crew Ideas

1. Cooking crew
 2. Dishwashing crew
 3. Activities crew
 4. Prayer request crew
 5. Small group praise leader
 6. Passage reader for the week/meeting
 7. Prayer for the week/meeting
- For #6 and 7, you will need to assign a different person for each meeting

Use your imagination =)



G When You're in Doubt...

Questions/Doubts	Encouragements
<p>Am I ready? I don't have much to offer... Can I really do this?</p>	<p>God placed you into this position for a reason. He sees you fit to take care of His flock. But at the same time, remember that God does not need you for His ministry. He has everything under control. It is simply your privilege to be able to serve Him. So do it out of love for Him and for His people and not on your availability or readiness.</p>
<p>This small group thing is hard... I don't know how much longer I can go on...</p>	<p>Reflect on these questions: How powerful is my God? Can He be limited to how much I do? Then what is my role as a leader in reference to how much He can use me? What should be my attitude?</p>
<p>I don't think I'm right for the job...</p>	<p>The potential that you see in yourself is so insignificant compared to what God sees. God has a MUCH GREATER plan for you. You won't even be able to imagine His ultimate plan. Do not underestimate what God can do through you.</p>
<p>How can I lead others when I'm not even doing well with God?</p>	<p>All God asks is your faithfulness. He knows that you're not perfect, but He still uses you. Simply seek His face. Come before Him as a sinner, ready for His grace, and He will not only restore you, but honor your willingness to seek Him by blessing your small group.</p>
<p>This is all so new to me. Maybe I'm not doing this right...</p>	<p>Leading small groups is an art, not a science. The old adage, "practice makes perfect," is only partially true. Even after much practice, the study will rarely ever be "perfect" and usually will not go as planned. But, as a leader gains more experience, better group results will follow.</p>
<p>What if I fail...?</p>	<p>Since it is ultimately God who is doing the work, remember that ministry is not a "success" or performance-driven work. It is a grace-driven work. It isn't something that you can mess up. God never messes up.</p>
<p>I don't feel appreciated... Do they really need me? I feel so alone...</p>	<p>Leadership can be a very lonely place. You may give everything that you have and not receive anything in return. But remember that God will NEVER forget your service for Him, and there is an even greater reward waiting for you.</p>



Questions/Doubts	Encouragements
<p>My small group seems to be getting nowhere... I don't see any changes in people's lives</p>	<p>Ministry is filled with invisible results. Just because you do not see any immediate results does not mean that God is not moving. Your genuine heart and efforts definitely are not going to waste. You might not see it now, but you will definitely see His glory one day.</p>
<p>No one is coming out to small group... Maybe one or two... I don't think they like me...</p>	<p>Remember that numbers in small groups mean little. As long as the word of God is shared and love is being communicated, that defines a great small group.</p> <p>However, something you CAN do is to try a different approach of inviting your members. Call/visit them individually and show them that you REALLY want them there. A lot of times, people do not come because they do not feel like they need to go. Show them you care, that you want to get to know them better and to share/exchange the word of God with them.</p>
<p>What do I have to gain out of this...?</p>	<p>Being a small group leader is one of the most challenging, yet most rewarding you will experience in college. Taking care of others is not an easy task. But when God starts bringing about changes in people's lives that you have invested in, you will experience God's goodness to the max.</p>

H Reading Suggestions

Improving Your Serve by Charles Swindoll

Small Group Leaders' Handbook by Jimmy Long, Ann Beyerlein, Sara Keiper, Patty Pell, Nina Thiel, and Doug Whallon

Leading Life – Changing Small Groups by Bill Donahue

Why Small Groups? by C.J. Mahaney

Growing People through Small Groups by David Starks

I Helpful Websites

Remembers to cite if used

InterActa Bible Studies – <http://www.godsquad.com/squadroom/discipleship/interacta.htm>

World Wide Bible – <http://www.ccel.org/wwsb>

Reverend Fun (Christian Comic Strips) – www.reverendfun.com