

Servants Ministry
Small Group Assistant Leader 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?



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Section

1 Introduction

1.1 *Purpose of Document*

This handbook is to function primarily as a reference and a source of guidelines for those serving as small group assistant leaders within any given fellowship. The main points, as well as general and practical tips mentioned in this handbook, cover the fundamental principles behind the existence and proper function of the position.

1.2 *Target Audience*

This handbook is mainly for the use of small group assistant leaders who are serving as part of their fellowship Bible studies. Though it may be of interest to others who are seeking to serve in similar capacities, the given examples and tips may often be specific to the position of small group assistant leader and may not be applicable to others.



Section

2 Choosing to Serve as an Assistant Leader

Deciding to take on the role of Small Group Assistant Leader is a significant choice because it determines how you will serve and grow in the upcoming year. Furthermore, it is a choice which potentially establishes the character of a small group. Your importance as an assistant leader will be further emphasized in the next chapter, but for the time being it suffices for you to consider the fact that it is a commitment which should not be taken lightly, nor should it be a burden too great to bear. Consequently, as with any great decision, your choice to serve in this capacity must come with prayer. Lots of it.

“I can’t do it. I’m not good enough.”

A common approach to the initial thought of serving in any leadership role is an insecure outlook. It may seem like a humble thing to acknowledge your inadequacy, but in essence, this is the fear of failure and incompetence thinly disguised as humility – false humility, that is. It’s not wrong to doubt yourself and your capacity. It *is* wrong to stop there and fail to acknowledge the sovereignty of God.

Quite often, the individuals in Scripture whom God calls to do great work in His name happen to be the weak, the unskilled, and the overlooked. David was the youngest from the least of all households in the smallest tribe of Israel, but God raised him up to be king over His people. Peter was an uneducated fisherman, Gideon a coward, Ruth an outsider, and Jacob a conman who acquired his birthright through deception. Yet God did mighty things through each of these people. Need we cite more?

When God called Moses from the burning bush, Moses gave a typical response any one of us could have given: **excuses**. In fact, four of them. Essentially, they are:

1. “Who am I that I should go against the odds and attempt to do such great things?” (Exodus 3:11)
2. “Suppose they ask me questions about you and I don’t know how to answer?” (Exodus 3:13)
3. “What if they don’t believe me? What if they don’t believe You?” (Exodus 4:1)
4. “But I lack the ability to do what You’re calling me to do.” (Exodus 4:10)

Can you see God’s great patience with a man who has not yet fully realized that the answer to every excuse is, “I am God?” It was never about Moses, or you, or anyone else. It’s about God and what He can do through us. If you have weaknesses, then boast all the more gladly in them like the apostle Paul – God will do amazing things through them.

God’s call for you is not excellence, but faithfulness. It’s not talent He’s seeking, but a willing heart. Remember that our mighty Father can do anything through a heart that seeks His will alone.

My God, I shall not waste time deploring my weakness nor my unfittedness for the work. The responsibility is not mine, but Thine. Thou has said, “I knew thee – I ordained thee – I sanctified thee,” and Thou hast also said, “Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.” Who am I to argue with Thee or to call into question Thy sovereign choice? The decision is not mine but Thine. So be it, Lord. Thy will, not mine, be done.”

A.W. Tozer



“I’ll serve if there’s a need.”

Never make this approach the sole basis for your decision to serve. It spells out trouble for both you and the fellowship. Here’s why.

The need is always present.

This is true whether or not you decide to serve. “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few,” (Matthew 9:37) Jesus tells us. The Lord of the harvest is always looking for willing hearts to serve Him to the best of their abilities. Look around your fellowship. There is always a need for another discipler, another leader, another prayer warrior, another helper.

God doesn’t need you.

You read that right. Essentially, God doesn’t need any of us. If this is a hard pill to swallow, check your heart for any pride that may be clinging to a sense of entitlement over your accomplishments. God can just as easily use someone else for His work. In fact, He may even use someone who seems inferior, someone who is far weaker and less talented than you. The point is that our Mighty God is perfectly capable of carrying out His will regardless of your cooperation. So then why serve at all?

God wants you.

For His own good? Sure. But even more so for *your* own good. Being an assistant leader comes with a unique experience which edifies and challenges you, causing you to mature throughout various victories and hardships. It is a training ground for becoming a better leader, a better servant, as well as a true disciple of Christ and a discipler for Christ.

The Body of Christ does not need a haughty leader. Nor does it need a grumbling servant. These are some of the pitfalls we may be prone to the moment we decide to serve merely to fill a perceived need. It’s one thing to gauge the needs of the fellowship and strive to meet them with the heart of a willing servant. It’s another to indulge in the sense of self-importance over your practical ability to serve. Let’s boast in Christ alone and depend fully on Him to carry you through each decision and experience.



Section

3 The Position: Purpose and Description

3.1 *The Body of Christ*

We are one body, many parts (1 Corinthians 12). Within this context, if we considered small groups to be different parts of the body, the leader and the assistant leaders could be seen as the arteries and veins. In order to vitalize and nurture the body, small group leaders act as conduits through which nutrients that cause growth are delivered to each part.

On a more tangible level, a small group assistant leader can be viewed simply as a helper to the leader. But this role must not be taken lightly, because the presence of such a helper can mean the vital difference between a healthy small group and one that is slowly decaying through division or neglect. In addition to supporting the leader with administrative and moral aid, small group assistants take an active part in instructing, edifying, and nurturing small group members.

3.2 *The Biblical Basis for Small Groups*

Why do we have small group ministry? The Bible does not say, “You must have Bible study every week.” What it does say is this:

“...let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Hebrews 10:22-25

And how does this pertain to us? In drawing near to God, holding on to hope of His faithfulness, and spurring one another on toward love and goodness, we distinguish the need for community. In his famous book *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren writes, “You were formed for God’s family.”¹ He also writes, “Because God is love, he treasures relationships.”² In essence, your small group is to be your immediate spiritual family within the greater family of God, in which you develop relationships that may last for all eternity.

In studying the Word with other brothers and sisters, you gain a range of insights you may never acquire on your own. Fellowship also naturally prompts the cultivation of relationships – in some cases – intimacy. In times of suffering, the sharing of pain lessens it, while the sharing of good news multiplies joy. You can affirm one another in your faith, as well as challenge and sharpen one another to grow. And when you participate in outreach so as to fulfill your calling to minister outside the Body, you will find that the power of many can be infinitely more effective than that of

¹ Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002). 117.

² *Ibid.*, 117.



one. Ultimately, fellow members of a small group will point one another to God and draw closer to Him together.

In this way, small groups are essential building blocks for the fellowship.

3.3 *The Heart of Learning*

“Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.”

Proverbs 9:9

Notice it doesn't say, “A wise man knows everything.” By definition, a wise man must be teachable. Humility and the desire to learn are the primary attributes of a small group assistant leader. Above all else, consider your year as an assistant leader a time to learn and grow. There may be trials, rebukes, and conflicts along the way. But your job is to learn from them and to see the hand of God in every situation. Most likely, your small group leader will have had more experience than you and will be acting as a mentor figure. Take this opportunity to ask questions, observe leadership styles, and be disciplined as you cultivate a God-centered relationship. Also, don't forget that God might even use your small group members to teach you. The key is to have an open heart and a yearning for wisdom.

“Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise.”

Proverbs 19:20

3.4 *The Ministry of Help*

The position of small group assistant leader is very much a role that requires mostly supporting and helping. This may seem unfair at times because you are held up to the same standard of leadership as your small group leader (i.e. setting an example, initiating relationships, etc.). But remember that you are not the one who is fully in charge of your Bible study. Do take ownership of the Bible study; don't feel entitled to head the Bible study on your own.

Your Leader is Human

Most times you will not be the one making important decisions about the Bible study. In fact, you may or may not be asked to contribute to the decision, depending on the kind of leadership your small group leader exercises. What you *will* be asked to do is to submit to your leader and to support his/ her decisions.

Yes, there will be instances where because your leader is human, he or she will make a blatantly wrong decision that clearly goes against God's will. In such a situation, you may be called to challenge the decision, with much prayer and humility, and with the wellbeing of the small group in mind.

But the most common differences you will find amongst yourselves will have less to do with issues of right or wrong, but varied ways to do the right thing. Small group leaders and their assistants happen to be individuals who come from very different backgrounds, with different personalities, preferences, and especially administrative inclinations. There will be times when your leader doesn't seem to emphasize enough the things that are important to you as pertaining to the Bible study. There will also be times when your way seems far better, but you are called to do your leader's way. In times like these, it's okay to offer suggestions as long as your leader is



open to them. But remember, the ultimate decision is up to him/her, and it's your job to support that decision to the best of your ability with a willing heart. Doing so begrudgingly can and will be noticed by your members, potentially generating conflict and confusion. At the very least, in submitting to your leader you will learn to see things in a different perspective and grow in character.

In the meantime, it's also worth noting that there is a precise reason why God chose to group particular individuals together in your small group. The opportunity of leading together engenders a spiritual relationship through which you will learn from one another. If it seems that you and your leader have vast differences in personality, character, and leadership style, it will be so that in working together God will teach you how to offer balanced guidance to your members.

Prayer and Encouragement

Praying is a critical part of your duties as a small group assistant leader. It is not only something you can do for your small group, but also an essential way to help your leader and to function in your role within the fellowship. Why? Because you are calling upon God's faithfulness and sovereignty to provide for your group's needs.

Along with that, your job is akin to that of Barnabas in the New Testament. Barnabas literally means, "*encourager, enabler.*" It was with his aid that key apostles such as Paul and Mark were able to minister properly in their given roles. With your encouragement, your small group – from the least committed member to the leader – can flourish on an individual basis. And as an "enabler," God will use your Spirit-filled words and actions at various times to lift up your weary leader, restoring his/her enthusiasm and enabling him/her to minister more effectively.

3.5 Setting an Example

"In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us."

Titus 2:7-8

Serving within your fellowship creates a natural accountability system. Whether you like it or not, taking on a leadership role means that eyes will constantly be on you. We all know what hypocrisy looks like and what it can do. Do not underestimate your impact upon those around you, including but also not limited to your own Bible study members. Every little thing you do or say will affect especially the younger brothers and sisters who look up to you. Do not let your careless words or irresponsible actions cause the Body of Christ to stumble.

Actions speak louder than words. If it is faithfulness you seek in your members, live a life of faithfulness worthy of imitation. Obviously, nobody is perfect, and you are not being asked to become a saint overnight. The idea is that you won't be saying or doing the right things because you are required to, but that in striving to lead by example you will grow in integrity and encourage others through your efforts.



Section

4 Responsibilities as an Assistant Leader

The nice thing about being an assistant leader is that you get a chance to begin learning about the responsibilities of leading a Bible study without taking on full responsibility. It is an advantageous position from which you can both learn and teach.

4.1 Meetings, Meetings, Meetings

As an assistant leader, you are expected to attend Sunday services, large group meetings, and possibly other meetings held by your fellowship in addition to Bible study meetings. Naturally, you will find that much of your time must be committed to attending various gatherings. The basic reasoning behind the mandatory nature of these meetings is that you cannot expect your members to be involved and faithful when you yourself are not.

In addition, there should be weekly leaders' meetings between the Small Group Leader and his/her assistants. During these meetings, you will discuss administrative details as well as take time to pray over the small group and one another.

4.2 One-on-Ones

One-on-ones are personal meeting times between leaders and members. Ideally, you want to be holding one-on-ones with some if not all of your members on a regular basis (i.e. weekly). The purpose of a one-on-one is for the leaders to develop God-centered, discipling relationships with the members, and especially for the leaders to be attuned to each individual member's needs. Depending on the progressing depth of a relationship, this may entail anything from eating out or studying together to reading the Word and praying together.

4.3 Preparing Bible Study

Typically, a small group assistant leader will get a chance to practice leading a Bible study session during his/her first semester of serving. By second semester, you might be taking turns with your leader or fellow assistant leader in leading Bible study, which could turn out to be as frequently as every other week. Below is a brief overview of different types of Bible study:

- Inductive Bible Study³: the study of a passage from Scripture (i.e. Romans Chapter 12)
 1. Observation – background, context, related references, etc.
 2. Interpretation – understanding the meaning and implications of the text
 3. Application – how to live out the message
- Topical Bible Study: a study focused on a specific topic (i.e. Perseverance)
- Book/Guide: use of published study materials well-suited to group's needs and interests (i.e. *Believing God* by Beth Moore)

³ Jimmy Long, Ann Beyerlein, Sara KEiper, Patty Pell, Nina Thiel, and Doug Whallon. *Small Group Leaders' Handbook* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 59-61.



As you begin to get a grasp of what a Bible study must consist of, bear in mind that the making and leading of Bible study is often most effectively learned through observation and experience. Furthermore, while it is fundamentally based on a literal study of the Word, Bible study can also be compiled from an assortment of sources: sermons, seminar notes, famous quotes, personal stories, etc. One nifty habit is to compile in a binder the various sermon/seminar notes you acquire through fellowship or church functions. Such a collection can later become a valuable resource readily available at your fingertips. Another important and accessible resource is your small group leader. Don't be afraid to ask for guidance as well as feedback on your work.

Finally, planning a Bible study requires much prayer and preparation. A thoroughly prepared Bible study with no heart is just as bad as a poorly conducted Bible study, and vice versa. Yes, God redeems your shortcomings, but it's your job to give to the best of your ability.

4.4 *Miscellaneous Tasks*

You may also be asked to perform various other tasks, some of which may include:

- Leading praise during Bible study
- Facilitating discussion in smaller groups within the Bible study
- Preparing activities/games
- Preparing snacks
- Administrative duties
 - Sending out reminder e-mails
 - Making reminder phone calls
- Providing rides to and from Bible study for members
- Outreach efforts (i.e. making care packages, visiting members, etc.)



Section

5 Practical Tips

5.1 Time Management

As you can tell by now, serving as a small group assistant leader takes a considerable time commitment. It will require a good chunk of your physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual energy because you will be helping care for others in a very specific way.

Your time belongs to God. When God says, “You are not your own,” you can also take it to mean that everything you take to be your own is in fact not yours. Your time is not your own. This means every minute you spend away from God’s will and His work is considered to be stealing from Him. Keep this in mind as you read the following practical tips.

Prioritize

Needless to say, a priority that should top all others is God. Practically speaking, you must remember that spending time with God is of utmost importance and should not be compromised. Losing sight of your Lord as your priority will have a devastating effect on all other areas of your life as well. Other priorities that follow should include (in any order particular to your life and what is important to you): family, academics, ministry, personal relationships, etc.

It is worth noting here that academics should take precedence to ministry. Surprised? *Your first calling is to be a student.* This is a fact we often forget, sometimes quite willingly. But the reality is that just because you spent the night praying for a Bible study member instead of studying, you will not get an ‘A’ on that Physics exam. By all means, pray for that Bible study member. But be wise about when you do it and how you generally spend your time.

Yes, serving the Lord is the highest calling, and He honors that. But currently you are first called to be a student, and college is a transitional stage, the training ground in which you are being honed as a tool in the Master’s hands. If this were not true, we should all be quitting school now and going into full-time ministry, no?

Don’t let ministry be an excuse for your poor academic progress. In fact, let your excellence or at least your efforts in those areas become a testimony of His faithfulness. As His representatives, we are expected to do our best in our given spheres. One helpful way of thinking is to treat academics as a prerequisite to serving: simply put, if you can barely handle one responsibility (school), how can you assume that you will handle another (ministry) well? Strive to do both well!

Don’t spread yourself out too thin.

If you chase two rabbits, you will not catch either one.

-- Old Russian Proverb

Know yourself. Know your limitations. You are only one person, and God is only asking you to be one person. Even as you push and stretch yourself beyond your limits in faith, be realistic about what you can and can’t do. It’s better to do a few things well instead of doing everything unsuccessfully. In the Appendix you will find a schedule worksheet. It’s a very basic chart just for initial use as you start out. If you’d like a more personalized weekly time table, it’s easy to design your own in Microsoft Word using the “Insert Table” function.



At the beginning of your semester, please take the time to fill out the table to gauge how your time will be spent throughout the year. At the very least, fill out the time slots for fixed and recurring events such as classes, weekly meetings, and mealtimes to get a basic idea of how much free time you'll have. Based on your priorities, be aware of how much of your time is going where, and make changes to your schedule accordingly. Improper use of your time can result in problems ranging from laziness to burnout. It takes true wisdom to properly allocate one's given time.

5.2 Taking Care of Yourself

"Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer."

Romans 12:11-12

Key words: *keep your spiritual fervor*. This may prove to be the single-most challenging undertaking yet. It is not uncommon to see a person who has served in the past saying, "I'm burnt out. I can't serve anymore." The number one reason why they would say such a thing is because they were not able to take care of themselves as they were serving. Can a sick man tend to another sick man? Unless you keep up your physical, emotional, and most importantly, spiritual health, you will not be able to serve your small group members to your maximum capacity.

Rest requires humility.

Have you ever wondered why God designed us in such a way that our bodies require sleep every day? Imagine all the things you could do with your time if you never had to rest. So why would God deliberately create us in this way?

The need for rest is a tangible reminder that you are not God. Our physical limitations are an obvious need to surrender fully to our Creator on a daily basis. At times it takes quite a bit of trust and humility to go to bed at night. "But, Lord, I can do so much more today." "I have to prepare for tomorrow." "Just a little bit more." What remains in the end is the fact that you still need sleep and God will unquestionably give you renewed strength to take on tomorrow.

The physical realm is the most basic venue for the Enemy to strike us down. When you're physically debilitated, there are few things you can do. But if you remember that your body is God's temple (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19) and treat it accordingly, your physical well-being will serve as a steady reinforcement to your spiritual and emotional health as well.

Emotional Support

Surround yourself with close brothers/sisters with whom you can be your absolute true self. There are times when you need a tangible reminder that God cares – that He listens – and this is part of the reason why God has given us the Body. When trials come, share your pain with close brothers/sisters and ask for prayer instead of bottling up your emotions. Asking for prayer is one thing you should never be afraid to do. Yes, it's humbling to admit that you need prayer, but there is nothing like the prayers of fellow believers to heal, support, and inspire you.



Overflow vs. Underflow

God calls us to give out of an overflow, not an underflow. If you've hit rock-bottom but you're still trying to give, you're basically setting yourself up to be "burnt out." When this happens, you are left with the dismal realization that you are the one that ran dry, not the Spirit. For as long as you are in His presence and asking to be filled with His Spirit, you will not be disappointed. But the moment you leave God behind and step out on your own to function independently, you will be met with the painful reality of your human limitations, even if you set out with the best of intentions.

So before you remind others to be right with God, let your heart first be attuned to Him. Spend time with Him. Study His Word. When you feel your heart running dry, go back to God for more; be fed. It makes no sense to barrel on in self-righteousness and sacrifice when God has said,

"Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams."

1 Samuel 15:22

Obey and concern yourself with God's heart. When your soul is filled with Him, everything will naturally overflow – into your personal life, into your relationships, and into your ministry.

5.3 Vulnerability: A Paradox

A common, though unintentional, misunderstanding between small group leaders and members is the notion that leaders are infallible. This often creates unwelcome distance between leaders and members, giving off the impression that leaders are unapproachable, much less understanding of the members. Given that you are to serve as an example in every circumstance, it's no piece of cake to find the ideal balance between perfect model and fellow fallen human being.

Nobody is perfect.⁴

Apparently, even the apostle Paul felt this way. "I have not arrived," is the main gist of what he says in Philippians 3:12-13. And this is the man who lived a life shamelessly devoted to Christ.

Look at it this way: if in fact you *were* perfect, your ministry would be severely impaired. Why? Part of a small group's ministry is to meet your members where they are. If they feel that you are too distant or unapproachable, there is no way for you to understand and fill their needs. In effect, this defeats the purpose of being a leader!

Furthermore, you are not perfect. Anyone claiming or pretending to be so would be a lying hypocrite. So this leaves you with, "Then what am I supposed to do? I'm expected to set a perfect example, but I also shouldn't be a hypocrite?"

Don't be afraid to share.

There are some things you may never want to share with your small group members. These would be the things you knew for sure would cause them to stumble. But you'd also be surprised at how many daring confessions have actually turned out to encourage, not disgust, others. Members who only see perfection in their leaders absorb the deluded message that they also

⁴Charles R. Swindoll. *Improving Your Serve* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group). 74-75.



should be flawless. The result is a heavily self-deprecating individual who is constantly discouraged by the reality of his/her own shortcomings. More often than not, the member will hide behind a façade, attempting to appear in a manner which they mistakenly believe is expected of them.

Vulnerability about your struggles dispels any such notions of perceived perfection. This is a unique position ascribed to leaders because small group members will take their cues from your initiation. It lets them know that they are not alone in their imperfections, and that it's okay to share burdens with brothers and sisters in Christ. It encourages them to know that you're human, too, and that you're perfectly approachable. This, in turn, will enable them to entrust to you their hearts.

A word of caution, however: vulnerability must not end with a simple admission of sins and failures. This may only yield a collective spirit of despair and discouragement. What encourages others should not only be your courage and honesty in sharing, but also the hope you find together in the strength and sovereignty of God. For every bit of human inadequacy there is healing, redemption, and hope. Turn your sharing into an excuse for generating more prayer and affirmation among the believers of Christ.

5.4 *Being Faithful in the Small Things*

Many of the things you do as an assistant leader will appear insignificant, especially in comparison to what your leader seems to be doing. In fact, all that your leader asks you to do may be to pray. At times like these, you may feel like a benched athlete in the heat of a close game. But there is always a reason for everything which God allows.

Our Master Delights in Small Acts of Worship

Obedience is not determined by the measure of an action's value. You either obey or you don't. Instead, whether or not you obey determines the value of your action. Regardless of your assignment's seeming significance or lack thereof, God delights in your obedience. Every thought, word, and action can become worship when infused with an obedient heart.

Brother Lawrence spent much of his life in the kitchen preparing meals for others. Compared to those who busied themselves with clerical duties, his task may not have seemed to be much. But while the one hundred some clergymen in that monastery have been forgotten in history, Brother Lawrence is remembered today through *The Practice of the Presence of God*. This is because he lifted every small action – peeling a vegetable, stirring a pot of soup – as an act of worship unto his Lord. No doubt, his worship was more fragrant to God than his cooking was to hungry men.

Small Things Lead to Big Things

Notice in the "Parable of the Talents" what the master says to his fruitful servants:

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.'"

Matthew 25:21a

If you know the story well, you should also remember that in the end the master takes the talent from the lazy servant and gives it to the one who has ten talents. Logically, this doesn't seem to make any sense. The man with ten talents already has much, so why give him another talent?



The answer: he had proven himself to be faithful with what he was given. Therefore, he was given more to manage.

Clearly, this applies directly to your role as an assistant leader. Even if you start out with small responsibilities, the more you prove yourself to be faithful, the more your leader will learn to trust you. With the passage of time, bigger and greater tasks will be entrusted to you, not only by your leader but ultimately by God.

Expecting to do great things without managing to do small things would be like signing up for a marathon even if you got out of breath just walking from your couch to your fridge. If you have time to complain, put that time to better use in striving to accomplish your given duties.



Section

6 The Fruit of Your Labor

6.1 Consequences and Rewards of Serving

“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.”

II Cor. 4:8

Hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down – such is the plight of every believer, every servant of Christ. Can you commit to such a life?

Serving as a small group assistant leader will not be easy. Amidst discouragement, rejection, and confusion, by far the greatest difficulty you may encounter will be the struggle of feeling unappreciated. And the truth is, *you will be unappreciated*. Most of the efforts you pour out into your small group may in fact go completely unnoticed by others.

But when you’re feeling unappreciated, the first thing you want to ask yourself is what your motive might be.⁵ The feeling usually comes when we feel entitled to certain rewards because of what we have done. We begin to tally all our acts of service and compare them to the meager returns.

True love flowing from authentic servants does not keep a record of who did what, and it does not look to others for the credit. In other words, real servants stay conscious of the blindness pride can create.

A.W. Tozer

Yes, in essence, this is pride – the pride that breeds dissatisfaction, bitterness, and resentment. If you were doing all things with only the glory of God in mind, it should not matter to you whether or not glory awaits you.

There is Hope!

You are not alone in your struggle against feeling unappreciated. Our human nature calls out to be recognized for the things in which we invest ourselves. And by no means is it wrong to hope for encouragement – we all need encouragement from time to time. In fact, that is one of the rewards of serving: you will find yourself surrounded by a family of encouragers/supporters as you seek to do God’s will together. You will be affirmed in the knowledge that there are those who are fighting alongside you, and you will also be refreshed by the purely fun times you have with one another.

Furthermore, although there are consequences to mistakes we make, our Almighty God redeems every failure and shortcoming. In the end, He is the one who sustains you and your ministry.

True Rewards

Remember that though the world may be indifferent to your faithful service, our Master sees and honors each and every effort.

⁵ Swindoll, *Improving*. 147-150, 157-158.



“God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.”

Hebrews 6:10

Also remember that in serving God, you are storing up treasures in heaven. Matthew 6 says, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. There is no greater reward than to know that your heavenly Father acknowledges you and that you are storing up eternal treasures in His house.

6.2 The Big Picture

Oftentimes, the fruit of your labor as a small group assistant leader may seem scanty. But this could be because God may in fact be asking you not to do great things but merely to plant seeds in each life you come across. They may take days, months, years to grow and bear fruit, but in the meantime you need to have faith that God is working in ways both seen and unseen. Have faith that He is using you to have long-lasting impact in the lives of others. Whether you are praying, helping, supporting, leading, confessing, learning, crying, or rejoicing, know that He is doing mighty works in and through you.



Appendix

A Schedule Worksheet