

Community Group Leader's Guide

May 2013



1.	VISION AND VALUES OF COMMUNITY GROUPS	4
	Vision and Values	5
	What We Believe	6
	Purpose of Community Groups	8
	Goal: To develop healthy disciples of Christ	9
2.	THE COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER	10
	Community Group Leader's Position Description	11
	-a Follower of Jesus	12
	-a Shepherd	13
	-an Encourager	18
	-a Leader	21
3.	HEALTHY COMMUNITY GROUPS	22
	Balanced Meals	24
	Authentic Community	24
	Immersion in Scripture	28
	Plenty of Exercise	32
	Worship	32
	Service	33
	Outreach	34
	Planting New Community Groups	35
	Practicing Good Hygiene	36
	What does a group meeting look like?	36
	Suggested Formats for a community group meeting	37
	Community Group Covenants	38
	Regular Check Ups	39
	Sample Evaluation for members of a community group	39
	Sample Evaluation for Leaders of a community group	39
	Conflict	40

Plenty of Rest	41
Taking a break!	41
Ending a group	41
Prepared for the Emergency	42
Handling Sicknesses	43
4. APPENDIX	44
Leader and Apprentice Leader Covenant	45
Different Phases	46
Evaluation of our Community Group	
5. LEADER’S EVALUATION OF THEIR GROUP	47
Community Group Covenant	49
Leadership Resources	50
Leadership & Vision	50
Scripture Study Reference	50

“A people without a vision will perish.”

Proverbs 29:18

VISION AND VALUES OF COMMUNITY GROUPS

Vision and Values

*"A people without a vision
will perish."*

Proverbs 29:18

Vision Statement

We are called:

To glorify God by building an authentic community of maturing and ministry-minded disciples for the purpose of intentionally reaching those who have not yet responded to God's compelling love!

Core Values

We will be a Christian community that is:

- Permeated by grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- Pursuing personal spiritual maturity (Philippians 3:12)
- Accessible and compelling to the un-churched (1 Cor. 14:23-25)
- Culturally relevant and doctrinally sound (1 Cor. 9:19:23, 1 Tim. 4:16)
- Undergirded by prayer (Colossians 4:2)
- Marked by excellence in all we do (Colossians 3:17)

We will live out these values by:

- Encountering God in contemporary worship
- Relevant Biblical teaching
- Authentic community in Community Groups
- Excellent family ministries
- Service to the poor
- Racial reconciliation
- Every ministry partner a minister
- Relational evangelism
- Team based ministry
- Submission to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church
- World Missions

What We Believe

The Bible is God's completely true Story about who he is, what he has done, what he is doing, and what he will do. It was given by God to human writers and so reflects their backgrounds, styles, and use of language. The Bible is the final authority on all matters to which it speaks.

God There is one God, who exists as three persons living in perfect community - Father, Son, and Spirit. God created everything and sustains everything by his life. He is holy, all-powerful, all-knowing, unchanging, and full of mercy and grace.

Jesus Christ Jesus Christ, God's Son, became fully human when he was born to the Virgin Mary. He was fully human and fully God. He lived a perfect life in place of our imperfect lives; died, as our substitute, the death we deserved to die because of our selfishness; and physically rose from the dead. He offers us full life by the promise of his own resurrection. He then ascended into heaven and today is our representative, intercessor, and advocate with God the Father.

The Holy Spirit We experience the full life and presence of God in our relationship with God the Spirit, who convicts us of sin, points us to Christ, and applies Christ's work to our lives. He gives gifts and power to the church and he is the one who creates biblical community in the church. He reveals truth and guides our lives, individually and together.

Real Life We are connected to God in only one way - by choosing to accept the offer of forgiveness and reconciliation God offers to us by Christ's life, death, and resurrection. If we ask him to, God treats us as if we were Christ, because he treated Christ as if he were us. God's gift of grace makes us his adopted sons and daughters. There is nothing we can do to deserve this life - it is all a gift of God, and our job is simply to receive it. When we do, God begins the process of changing our hearts and minds from the inside out and making our characters more and more like Jesus'. And as we have been reconciled to God, we also have hope for being more fully reconciled to other people

Christ's Return In his own time and in his own way, God will bring the world as we know it to an end. According to his promise, Christ will return personally and visibly to judge the living and the dead and to begin the new era of God's universally visible reign which will last forever.

The Church If we are in relationship with Christ, we are part of the church. The church is universal, but is always expressed locally. The church is the visible and local demonstration of the new community Christ came to create. The Spirit leads our community life as we are devoted to worshiping God, understanding and applying the Bible to our lives, offering connection to others, living life together, serving our community, and using our Spirit-given gifts to serve Christ and others. The church celebrates the Sacraments (Baptism and Communion), which are gifts given by Christ and are experiences of his promise and his presence with us. The church is made up of imperfect people who are responding day by day in all their relationships to God's stunning grace.

The main responsibility of the church is to offer connection to people outside of relationship with Christ by offering Christ's full life and helping those who respond to become people who follow Christ with their whole hearts.

Lake Forest Church is a part of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC). The historic Westminster Confession of Faith is a larger explanation of our beliefs. The motto of the EPC is 'In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things love'. It describes God's heart and says a lot about the kind of community we want to be.

*"A people without a vision
will perish."*

Proverbs 29:18

The web address for the EPC is <http://www.epc.org/>.

The web address for the Westminster Confession of Faith is

<http://www.epc.org/about-the-epc/beliefs/westminster-confession/>.

Purpose of Community Groups

And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

—Acts 2:42

And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. —Acts 2:46-47

“A people without a vision will perish.”

Proverbs 29:18

“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

-John 13:34

In the New Testament, there are over 50 calls to God's children to be in community with “one another”. The church in Acts 2 was divided into two supportive meetings:

- ◉ a large gathering that illustrated their unity.
- ◉ intimate, small communities of individuals committed to growing together.

At Lake Forest, we believe that our culture is longing for this type of community and that there is no greater place to grow up in our relationship with Christ.

There are many types of smaller groups at Lake Forest with each playing different roles within the church. The smaller groups that we will encourage all people within Lake Forest to get plugged into will be called Community Groups.

Goal: To develop healthy disciples of Christ

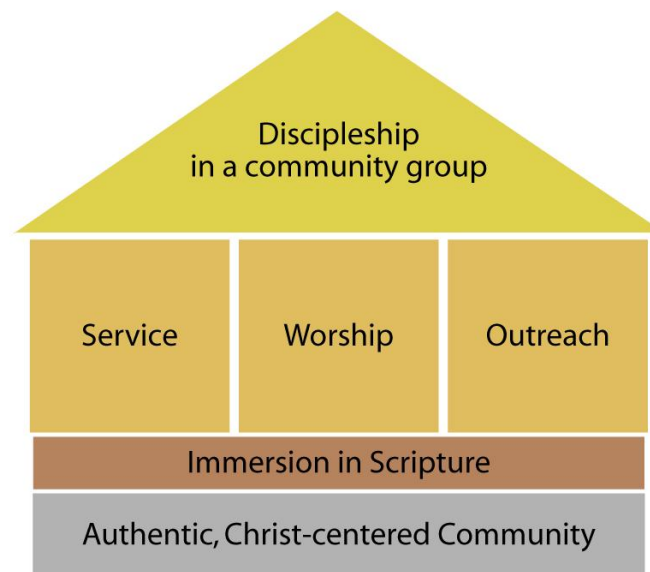
Discipleship or “apprenticeship” is a developing of the skills of the faith and not just our knowledge of the faith. In an apprenticeship, you are given knowledge, tools, practice, encouragement, correction and a commissioning to move on.

At Lake Forest, we believe the community group will be the greatest setting for “apprenticeship” to happen.

Authentic Community will be built in order for honest searching and applying of the Scriptures to happen and therefore it is the *foundation* of our groups.

Immersion in Scripture then becomes the *floor* that enables individuals to walk into the other rooms of the house and to apply what they have learned to their lives.

Worship, Outreach and Service are the *rooms* in which God’s word lives itself out in an individual and groups life.



Each part of the house develops under the *roof* of **discipleship** and is crucial to the apprenticeship of a believer.

“And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them.”

Psalm 78:72

THE COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER

Community Group Leader's Position Description

*"And he shepherded them
with integrity of heart..."*

Psalm 78:72

The mission of the community group Leader is to establish a group that provides:

- an environment for personal application of biblical truth in the daily lives of their members. (Heb 10:24-25)
- a setting for believers to identify and use his or her spiritual gifts as a functioning part of the Body of Christ. (1Cor 12)
- a setting in which people can grow in the relationships required for authentic biblical ministry to happen. (Gal. 6:2)
- a safe place for everyone in the church to be encouraged and cared for by someone while they respond to God's grace in all areas of their life. (Acts 6:1-7)
- a place for non-believers to hear and see the gospel of Christ. (Jn13:34-35)
- an atmosphere where gifts and resources are mobilized for group members to minister on their front porch. (Matt. 28:19-20)

The role of the community group Leader is to be a **follower of Jesus** that serves as a **Shepherd, Encourager and Leader** to those in their group.

Community Group Leaders work in partnership with an apprentice leader and a staff coach to best communicate God's grace while guiding the group in healthy relationships, prayer, interaction with Scripture, service and outreach.

-a Follower of Jesus

Strong biblical leaders are leaders that are continuing to grow in...

- ◎ Deep awareness of God's love for them.

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Rom 5:8

"And he shepherded them with integrity of heart...."

Psalms 78:72

- ◎ Deep awareness of God's love for people.

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Phil. 1:3-6

- ◎ Devotion to God in response to His love and grace shown through Christ.

"Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?" Rom. 2:4

- ◎ Intentional evaluation of themselves as being leaders and being teachable.

"May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones." 1Thess. 3:13

-a Shepherd

- ◉ Called by God to serve and encourage.

“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.” John 13:14-15

- ◉ Enabled and spurred on by God’s love to care for and love others.

“And he shepherded them with integrity of heart....”

Psalm 78:72

“The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.” 1Thes. 5:24

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” Colossians 3:23,24

- ◉ Compassionate and truth giver in times of need and despair.

“it was good of you to share in my troubles... for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need.” Philippians 4:14, 16

- ◉ Praying for the growth and maturity of the flock.

“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you...” Colossians 1:3

“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.” Ephesians 1:17-19

-a Shepherd

*"And he shepherded them
with integrity of heart...."*

Psalm 78:72

"With saving faith comes the gift of life...that gift means more than forgiveness and a guaranteed future. It also means that I now possess the life of Christ, the same energy that was released in everything he did, most visibly in how he related. When I realize the gospel has equipped me to relate with that energy, I get excited about what Christ could do through my life as I enter into other people's lives."

Connecting by Larry Crabb

Christ related to many people in need: The Samaritan Woman, the disciples, and the official's son are all examples just in John 4.

In caring for people within our community groups, we need to identify:

- ◉ What kind of needs will show up?

- ◉ What circumstances will lead to us learning about them?

- ◉ What do you as a leader have to offer them?

- ◉ What are your limitations and boundaries?

"We are no one's last hope! Like the friends of the paralytic in Luke 5, we simply carry people to their only hope!"

-a Shepherd

*"And he shepherded them
with integrity of heart...."*

Psalm 78:72

Boundaries for the Leader as a Caregiver:

- ◉ Be aware of yourself as a caregiver.
- ◉ Understand your limits and do not cross them.
- ◉ Lead people into Christ centered community.

Questions to ask yourself as a Shepherd:

- ◉ What does this person need?
- ◉ Does this person recognize their need?
- ◉ What can I, the community group and/or LFC realistically give?
- ◉ Am I the best person to care for them?
- ◉ Is the person moving toward community or away from it?
- ◉ Does the person have a plan for addressing their need?
- ◉ How can I and/or the community group help them follow the plan?
- ◉ Does the person need professional counseling or other assistance?

Process for caring for the "special needs" individual:

- ◉ Recognize your boundaries and care up to these limits.
- ◉ Recognize the community group's boundaries and care up to these limits.
- ◉ Seek counsel and help from the LFC Pastoral Staff.
- ◉ If needed, encourage the member to seek help from the LFC Pastoral Staff and/or outside professional counseling.

-a Shepherd

Most of the time, when we have an emotional need, we can lean on a friend, family member, or Community Group. Sometimes, however, we need the guidance of a professional, whether it's to navigate a current trial or to heal from a past one. Our Pastoral Staff can assist in many situations but do not do long-term counseling. They will help you anywhere from simply naming the issue to helping connect you to the proper growth solution, which sometimes includes a referral.

Counseling Referrals

*"And he shepherded them
with integrity of heart...."*

Psalm 78:72

For information on locating the appropriate next step for someone in need of counseling, please visit the Lake Forest website:

<http://lakeforest.org/contact/care/counseling/>

Models Prayerful Dependence on God:

Community group leaders introduce and lead their groups in prayer. Many members of your group are scared to death of not “doing it right”.

The greatest way for them to grow in this area is to watch and observe their leader and group practicing prayer.

This will also be the greatest way in which you can care for the one that has “special needs”.

- ◉ Take time out regularly during the week to pray for the member in your group.
- ◉ Pray with the individual in your group every opportunity you have.
- ◉ Pray as a group for and with the individual.
- ◉ If needed or desired, ask the LFC Pastoral Staff, and/or elders to join you and/or your group in praying over the individual.

*“with skillful hands he led
them.”*

Psalm 78:72

-an Encourager

“with skillful hands he led them.”

Psalm 78:72

- ◉ Intentionally promotes each members discovery, development, and display of their spiritual gifts.
- ◉ Identifies and invest in the development of an apprentice leader.
- ◉ Regularly gives ownership of the group to members by delegating responsibilities and empowering members to serve each other.
- ◉ Commits to helping the group move forward in reaching those on their front porches.
- ◉ Actively promotes a community that is outward focused and desiring to eventually plant new community groups in the Lord’s timing.

-an Encourager

“with skillful hands he led them.”

Psalm 78:72

Every believer in your group has been given at least one spiritual gift that they are called to discover, develop and use to the glory of building the church. A community group plays a crucial role in helping people recognize these gifts.

Things a group can do to help individuals discover their gifts

- ◉ Spiritual Gifts Inventory
(a good one is called [Discover Your Spiritual Gifts the Network Way](#))
- ◉ Communication as a group on gifts you see in each other
- ◉ Encouragement by each other to explore gifts they see
- ◉ Reading and exploration of what their gift looks like
- ◉ Opportunity to use the gifts in the group and/or in the church

Opportunities to use gifts within the community group

The community group itself will be the greatest place to help people explore their gifts. The community group Leader enables people to grow by delegating responsibilities:

- ◉ Hosting
- ◉ Providing food
- ◉ Leading worship
- ◉ Organizing community, outreach, service activities
- ◉ Helping develop the studies
- ◉ Keeping prayer request records
- ◉ Apprentice leading
- ◉ Mentoring others in the group

Delegation provides much more than just opportunity for growth. It also provides ownership of the group, a stronger sense of community, and helps prevent burn out in the leader.

-an Encourager

“with skillful hands he led them.”

Psalm 78:72

Another way a community group Leader encourages is by developing other leaders. The greatest way to do this is by having an Apprentice Leader.

Every community group at Lake Forest is encouraged to have an Apprentice Leader in place as soon as possible.

Apprentice leaders are crucial to the development and safety of the group. They are in place to:

- ◉ Provide support for the leader in various ways
- ◉ Lead the group periodically even when the leader is there
- ◉ Help care for the members of the group
- ◉ Help in the planning of meetings and future events
- ◉ Pray for the leader and the members of the group
- ◉ Gain training in order to eventually plant a new group or take over leadership of the existing group
- ◉ Provide leadership for the group at any time the main leader is unable
- ◉ Meet with leader and coach and leadership team for support

Recruiting an Apprentice Leader

- ◉ Observe members of the group and the way they interact with each other
- ◉ Look for those that demonstrate shepherd, enabler, and leader qualities
- ◉ Begin delegating responsibilities to them and observe how they respond
- ◉ Observe how the group responds to them
- ◉ Communicate your desire to see them pursue future leadership
- ◉ Have them go through training with a Pastoral staff and sign the covenant

-a Leader

- ◉ Lives out the vision, and values of Lake Forest Church within the group and within their personal lives.
- ◉ Committed to helping each member of the group develop their walk with Christ.
- ◉ Pursues the development of a “healthy community group”.

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together... but let us encourage each one another...”

Heb. 10:24-25

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together... but let us encourage one another...

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

Heb. 10:24-25

HEALTHY COMMUNITY GROUPS

Building Healthy Community Groups

To develop healthy followers of Jesus a community group must be healthy:

- ◉ **Balanced Meals** are important for a group to be healthy. They must have a balanced diet filled with Community, Scripture Study and Prayer. Too much of any category while neglecting the others can eventually cause sickness.
- ◉ **Plenty of Exercise** is crucial in order for the group to not get so fat that it can't move. A group that does nothing but eat becomes inward focused and never puts the food they eat into practice. Vertical exercises (Worship) as well as horizontal exercises (Service and Outreach) are a must to keep a body fit.
- ◉ **Practicing good hygiene** keeps a group from eventually stinking. Group hygiene --planning for the future, scheduling, and group covenants-- may seem like little things but if they are not taken care of regularly the group is susceptible to all kinds of diseases.
- ◉ **Regular check ups** should be done to avoid future problems. When a group checkup is conducted, you examine all parts of the body to be sure all parts are healthy. These are great times to make sure conflicts have been dealt with. Evaluations from each member help you to recognize areas of concern.
- ◉ **Plenty of rest** is crucial in order to help the group be rejuvenated and refreshed. Any group needs to take a break once and a while. A group that does not get enough rest will burn out. Rest is essential for a healthy body. December and the Summer months are good times to change up the schedule and provide additional time to rest.
- ◉ **Prepared for the emergency.** Even a healthy group will have an emergency. Taking care of it immediately is crucial and many times staff coaches are needed for advice and treatment.
- ◉ **Sicknesses** like chronic lateness or absence, unhealthy attitudes, sinful and unrepentant lifestyles, and lack of growth fester until you have a life threatening situation. They need to be dealt with in timely and healthy manners.

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

Heb. 10:24-25

Balanced Meals

Authentic Community

Authentic Community is the Foundation: If the foundation is not built, the rest of the house will fall!

Human beings are created by God, who exist in community (Father, Son, Holy Spirit), to be in community with God and one another.

*“And let us consider how we
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Heb. 10:24-25

Authentic community in Acts 2:42-47 is characterized by various expressions in the smaller communities that met together:

- ◉ Devotion to growing in their relationships with God. Each had received the grace of Christ and wanted to understand it more. They understood the greatest way to do this was in fellowship with one another, studying, worshipping, and praying. (Acts 2: 42)
- ◉ Service to and care for one another. They took care of each other’s needs and ministered to one another according to their ability. They were open about their needs and generous with their possessions. (Acts 2: 44-45)
- ◉ Reaching out to those around them. They reached out to share with others the grace they had received. They took what they understood and gave it away to those that did not understand. (Acts 2:47b)

For people to resist being in community is to choose not to experience the very nature of God Himself.

Balanced Meals

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Heb. 10:24-25

How do you go about building a strong foundation?

Trust and Vulnerability

- Leaders model openness
- Confidentiality is agreed upon
- There is freedom to share where you are
- Caring for each other's families

Accountability and Commitment

- Form a Community Group Covenant
- Expectations communicated
- Pray and keep records of the prayers
- Stick to time commitments

Shared Experiences

- Socials/ Icebreakers
- Retreats
- Dinners

Balanced Meals

*"And let us consider how we
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Heb. 10:24-25

How to develop Community through Prayer:

Be aware of the fears involved with people praying out loud

- ⦿ Will I sound stupid? What if I mess up?
- ⦿ What if someone prays what I want to pray?
- ⦿ What should I say?
- ⦿ I can't pray as well as...

Be sensitive to the fears

- ⦿ don't pray around the circle
- ⦿ don't call on people you don't know well to pray
- ⦿ don't assume everyone feels comfortable praying outloud
- ⦿ don't assume everyone is comfortable praying

Emphasize

- ⦿ Prayer is communicating with God from the heart.
- ⦿ Not spending a lot of time discussing request and leaving no time to pray.
- ⦿ Praying to God and not each other. Be brief.
- ⦿ Listening and agreeing with one another is part of prayer.
- ⦿ Prayer for Lake Forest Church.

Have someone keep records of your prayers and updates on them.

Balanced Meals

*“And let us consider how we
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Heb. 10:24-25

Ideas on how to create shared experiences:

- ◉ Camping/ Beach trips/ Mountain trips
- ◉ Friday night hang outs at the pool
- ◉ Summer time hang outs at parks/ music concerts
- ◉ Dinners / Pancake breakfast's together
- ◉ Serve together (greeting, children's ministry, etc.)
- ◉ Cook-outs for your community
- ◉ Social nights
- ◉ Game nights (include the children)
- ◉ Service Projects
- ◉ Gather with other community groups
- ◉ Cross-Cultural Missions Trip Together
- ◉ Other Ideas:

Balanced Meals

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Heb. 10:24-25

Immersion in Scripture

Immersion in scripture is the Floor: The floor must be solid and continue into every room.

How do we develop a sturdy floor to walk upon?

Prepare well

Leaders can't expect a solid scripture study if they prepare at the last minute. You must be very aware of the material you will be studying and already have thought through questions you intend to ask.

Be a guide not a teacher

A leader is a guide and a participant who uses questions that help the community group discover, understand, and apply Biblical truths. Your goal is to help the group discover and grow as they interact with truth. Community is developed as all interact with one another.

Ask good questions

It's very important to ask questions that peak the community groups interest in the passage and at the same time get to the main points of the passage. Your goal is to help the group understand why the author wrote that section and how they are to apply it to their lives today.

Listen well

Active listening involves not only what you hear, but also what you say. This means actively engaging the person who is speaking.

Facilitate dynamic discussion

This is key to good scripture study. If the leader teaches, discussion does not happen but members wait for the right answer to be given by the leader. After the leader speaks, all discussion stops.

Balanced Meals

*"And let us consider how we
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Heb. 10:24-25

Preparing and developing good questions:

The same steps you take in preparing should be the same steps you take your community group through in studying the passage.

Observation- Listen to what God is saying through the passage

- ◉ Context of the Passage: who, what when, where of passage? What's going on?
- ◉ Context around Passage: How does it fit into the rest of the book?
- ◉ Context of your .COM: What's going on in the group that influences what they see in this passage?
- ◉ Recognize key words, phrases, ideas, settings, punctuation, similarities, contrast

Interpretation- Seeking to understand the original intent of the author

- ◉ Must keep the .COM focused on the big idea of the passage and off tangents.
- ◉ What do the facts mean? Why did the author write this?
- ◉ Make sure the group draws conclusions based on observations.
- ◉ Define Key words and analogies, examine culture habits, determine significance

Application- Responding with humble obedience

- ◉ How should I respond to what I have seen God say in this passage?
- ◉ What is the inward transformation, the outward action and plan of repentance?
- ◉ How does the passage change your beliefs or lifestyle; what example is there to follow, command to obey, truth to hold on to, or encouragement to receive?

Discussion Question

- ◉ Use this question to lead and point people to the purpose of the passage.
- ◉ Emphasize one main idea to leave with and implications for their life.
- ◉ Can be asked toward end of study or to lead into study.

Balanced Meals

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

Heb. 10:24-25

Sample Discussion Questions

- ◉ Who is your number one advisor in life and why?
- ◉ If you suddenly lost your eyesight, what would be the thing you missed seeing most?
- ◉ What is your biggest fear?
- ◉ What day in your life would you most like to relive and why?
- ◉ What’s one of the greatest adventures you’ve ever been on?
- ◉ Where do you go and/or what do you do when life gets too overwhelming?
- ◉ Who was your hero when you were growing up? Why?

Effective listening also includes effective observing

- ◉ Facial expressions: does it line up with their verbal expression?
- ◉ Tone of voice: does it portray more than their verbal expression?
- ◉ Body Movements/Posture: does it indicate interest or boredom?

Facilitating Dynamic Discussion

- ◉ Summarize what has been said or ask someone else to summarize.
- ◉ Ask for clarification and how it applies to the passage you are studying.
- ◉ Focus on the Big Idea and what you do know about Scripture. Get back to people about questions when no answer is found rather than side-track the whole group.
- ◉ Follow-up after with questions that did not relate to the discussion in order to get to know a person or group better.

Balanced Meals

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

Heb. 10:24-25

Suggestions for Encouraging Good Communication

- ◉ Model what it means to “listen” and “shepherd” for the members.
- ◉ Never give advice unless asked (verbally or non-verbally).
- ◉ Always affirm/thank a person for sharing, and do not force people to share.
- ◉ Keep people off long tangents and on the agenda.
- ◉ Avoid theological/scholarly debates.
- ◉ Ask open-ended, non-threatening questions.
- ◉ Model what it means to be teachable and vulnerable.
- ◉ Physically and emotionally focus all attention on person who is speaking.
- ◉ Involve “silent” members with opinion questions and by meeting with them informally outside the group.
- ◉ Ask for clarification if an answer is not clear.
- ◉ Paraphrase what you have heard (i.e. reflective listening).
- ◉ After a comment is made, ask if anybody else has any input.
- ◉ Re-direct the questions of members to other members instead of always answering because you are the leader.
- ◉ “I” statements instead of “you” statements are better.
- ◉ Take abstract concepts and ask how they would be applied to an individual’s life personally.
- ◉ Break eye contact with talkative members and sit them next to the leader. Ask talkative members, outside of the group setting, to help you bring out the other more silent members in the group.

Plenty of Exercise

Worship

Worship is the Center Room : Worship is connected to and expresses itself in all other rooms as well.

Worship is the act of taking our eyes off of ourselves and placing them on the God that has created us to be in community with Him.

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

Heb. 10:24-25

Ways to grow in worship as a community group

- ◉ Give this responsibility to someone in the group with this heart.
- ◉ Emphasize that Sunday mornings are times for your community group to worship with other community groups.
- ◉ Do a study or series of studies on worship.
- ◉ Invite someone from the worship team in to lead a discussion.
- ◉ Talk about different experiences and traditions of worship.
- ◉ Worship in various ways as a group:

Prayer

Music

Scripture Readings

Have your meeting in a traditional sanctuary

Plenty of Exercise

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

Heb. 10:24-25

Service

Service is one room that enables a group to move outward.

This ministry room leads to the rest of the church body and helps the group members discover and use their gifts.

Service as a community group will be one of the greatest tools to help members become great disciples. If done well, the group will:

- Discover and/or use their spiritual gifts
- Become a tighter community
- Apply the truths that they’ve discovered in Scripture study
- Gain new insight for future studies

For help in finding ways to serve through Lake Forest, please visit <http://lakeforest.org/share/>

Service opportunities within the church

Children’s Ministry	Church Events
Missions	Men’s Ministry
Set-up	Book/Tape Ministry
Worship	Youth Ministry
Community group leader/apprentice	Caring
Hospitality	Administrative
Women’s Ministry	Room in the Inn

Other Opportunities

Habitat for Humanity

Easter Basket/Christmas Presents/School supply projects

Visiting members as a group that are sick, new baby, etc.

Volunteer to baby-sit another community groups children

Plenty of Exercise

“Let us not give up meeting together... but let us encourage one another...”

Heb. 10:24-25

Outreach

Outreach is a room that enables a group to move outward.

The Outreach room leads to the front porch and is open for non-believers to enter into the group at any time.

The greatest mission a community group has is to reach out to those on the member’s front porch. This is at the heart of LFC’s vision. Our community groups need to be safe places in which a non-believer can see a real God by way of a real community.

Community Groups at LFC will be our greatest resource for developing disciples and there is no greater way to develop into a mature disciple of Christ than to share the grace you’ve experienced with one that has not.

Open Chair Policy

The “open chair” is a way of reminding the leader and members of a community group that our goal is to offer groups to as many people as possible. The “open chair” attitude should be an element in every community group. The “open chair” is primarily for a non-believer but open for a believer as well. It’s purpose is to keep the group looking outward.

The “open chair” person should be prayed for every meeting and everyone in the group is encouraged to help fill this chair.

Open and Closed Community Groups

Community groups will never be closed off to non-believers. This will always leave the door open for members to invite those on their front porch. Community groups can be closed to other believers for 2 reasons:

- 1)A group has reached a maximum number of members that adding someone new would keep community from being built effectively.
- 2)The group has gotten so large that inviting anyone (especially a non-believer) would be awkward for the group and/or the new comer.

Plenty of Exercise

“Let us not give up meeting together... but let us encourage one another...”

Heb. 10:24-25

Planting New Community Groups

At LFC, our hope is that no community group will ever close, but instead, it will plant new community group . The greatest way to plant a new community group is from an existing group that has clear vision and has experienced what a healthy group could be.

Eight Keys to Effective Planting

1. Talk and pray about planting a new community group from the very beginning. Healthy planting usually occurs between 18-24 months but different groups will grow at different rates.
2. Begin “sub-grouping” as soon as you reach 12. Sub-grouping is breaking the group in half for the Scripture study. The Leader and apprentice leader each lead a group. The purpose of this is a)to allow each person to share, b)to break resistance to planting, c)so the apprentice leader can get training and an idea of who would plant with them.
3. Announce a “pregnancy” period and freeze the “sub-groups”; meaning to keep the groups the same each week. Announce that in X weeks the new plant will happen.
4. Celebrate this at all times! Throw a party when it happens.
5. At same time, always allow people to express the two primary emotions of anger and grief and remind them that the group is not abandoning them but blessing them.
6. Allow for a bonding period in two different homes, but get back together for dinner occasionally for “family gatherings”.
7. Honor Core relationships; spin off those that feel called to plant a new group.
8. Once you plant a group, immediately begin talking about the plant of another.

Practicing Good Hygiene

What does a group meeting look like?

Every group's need is different. The leader should be constantly aware of what elements need to be focused on week to week. They need to balance all 5 areas to developing strong disciples over a months period of time.

A typical meeting would look like:

Arrival, Gathering, Icebreakers: As soon as two people are in the same room, your group meeting has begun. It's critical that the seating is arranged in a circle and that all members have good eye contact with all others. Introduce new comers.

Sharing, community building: This is the time for "catching up", sharing needs and caring for one another. Time management is critical here as you don't want your share time to crowd out the Scripture study unless emergency's arise. This is also a great time to mention the "open chair" and pray for that person(s).

Scripture Study: One of the greatest criticisms of community groups is that they often major on community and are weak on the education. We live in an increasingly biblically illiterate culture that desperately needs to know God through His word.

Application: It is no good to just study Scripture without having some sort of way to apply what you've learned. This happens by challenging people individually and the group as a whole to apply this in worship, ministry and/or outreach.

Prayer: Prayer often occurs throughout the meeting, and it is critical to model dependency upon God for strength, insight and change through prayer. Always pray for God to do the teaching before you open his Word.

"Let us not give up meeting together... but let us encourage one another..."

Heb. 10:24-25

Practicing Good Hygiene

Suggested Formats for a community group meeting

“Let us not give up meeting together... but let us encourage one another...”

Heb. 10:24-25

Format A: 1.5 hour meeting

Arrival, Welcome, Food, Introductions	15min
Opening Prayer	2min
Community Building Activity	15min
Group Sharing	15min
God Stories	
Singing	
Thanksgiving	
Prayer Concerns	
Conversational Prayer	10min
Scripture Study and Application	30min
Closing Prayer	3min

Format B: 1.5 hour meeting

Arrival, Welcome, Introductions	5min
Opening Prayer	2min
Community Building Activity	15min
Group Sharing	15min
God Stories	
Thanksgiving	
Conversational Prayer	10min
Refreshments and Fellowship	10min
Scripture Study and Application	30min
Closing Prayer	3min

Practicing Good Hygiene

“Let us not give up meeting together... but let us encourage one another...”

Heb. 10:24-25

Community Group Covenants

Covenants are check points to make sure that everyone is still on the same page. They provide vision for the future of the group, agreement on commitments as a group and safe points for new members to join and others to depart if necessary.

Covenants should be created within the first 4 meetings of a group, after each study series, or after every 3-4 months.

Covenants are to be created by the group as a whole with strong facilitation by the leader. Each member and leader is to sign the covenant.

Sample:

1. Over these next few months, our emphasis as a group will be to grow in _____
2. The Material we intend to study is _____
3. Our Leader(s) will be _____
4. We will meet together until _____ (date), after which we will review and evaluate our group.
5. We will commit to meeting every _____ (week, other week, etc.)
Day of week: _____
Beginning and closing time _____
Location: _____
6. We are committed to living out the Open Chair Policy
7. Our child care will be provided for in the following manner:
8. Other ground rules we have agreed to are as follows:
___ Attendance: to give priority to the group meetings
___ Confidentiality: to keep anything that is said strictly confidential
___ Accountability: to give permission to each other to hold me to goals I set
___ Accessibility: to give one another the right to call upon you for help in need
___ Food Plans: _____

Group Members Signatures:

Regular Check Ups

“Let us not give up meeting together... but let us encourage one another...”

Heb. 10:24-25

Regular evaluation of the group provides a place to pinpoint what is not going well so it can be corrected sooner than later.

A great time to do them is when you write the group covenant.

Sample Evaluation for members of a community group

Your name and name of group Leader _____

What have you understood the purpose of your group to be?

Why did you decide to be a part of this group?

What did you hope to get out of the group? Has this happened?

What was the most enjoyable aspect of the group meetings?

What was the most beneficial?

How do you think your group could have been better?

What gifts are you using within the group? Want to use?

What have you appreciated about your leader and the way they lead?

Sample Evaluation for Leaders of a community group

Your name:

Apprentice Name:

Host/Hostess:

Time/day of meeting:

What has been the groups purpose for meeting?

What materials have you used? Please evaluate it. Would you recommend it to other groups?

What has been the most enjoyable aspect of the group? Most beneficial?

What do you think the group could have done better? What about you as the leader?

Who are the people you are most excited about growing?

What kind of ministry and outreach has your group done?

Who in your group would you love to see become a future leader?

What do you need from your coach/training meetings to better equip you?

Regular Check Ups

“Let us not give up meeting together... but let us encourage one another...”

Heb. 10:24-25

Conflict

Conflict must be dealt with immediately and appropriately. If handled well, it can be a great growth point for your group. If it is not handled well, it can make the entire group very sick.

Four-Step Strategy for Conflict Resolution

(Neil McBride, *How to Lead a Small Group*)

1st **Recognition**: Recognize and acknowledge the difficulty.

2nd **Personalization**: Put people at ease and don't place blame on someone. Problem solving is natural and needed.

3rd **Clarification**: Clarify the exact nature of the problem and pursue the potential solutions. At times the real problem is not what you see, hear, or think it is.

4th **Resolution**: Select the best alternative and put it into action.

Problem solving is easier said than done. Why? Because dealing with problems is dealing with people, and people do not always fit into nice four-step strategies.

In extreme cases when a member is unwilling to cooperate with the group's attempts at problem solving, you will need to deal with that person outside the group.

In a really rare case, you may find it necessary to ask the person to withdraw from the group. Do not hesitate to seek outside help if needed.

Plenty of Rest

“Let us not give up meeting together... but let us encourage one another...”

Heb. 10:24-25

Taking a break!

Even the best groups sometimes need a break to add a new spark in the group. Consider taking a break during times when schedules get busy for many group members, such as around holidays. During that time, look for opportunities to gather as a group or individually for socials and to catch up.

Reasons breaks can be good:

- ◉ Time to see if relationships among individuals are pursued
- ◉ Builds an “I missed you” attitude and new appreciation for the group
- ◉ Gives an easy and healthy place for new members to come in and others to move out if necessary
- ◉ Gives the leader rest, a new vision and a new drive

Ending a group

(taken from smallgroups.com)

Some groups are planned to last for a specific amount of time. Others begin with no such stipulation and continue until a good reason for ending presents itself. In either case, the final phase in the course of a group’s life must not be overlooked. Careful attention must be given to ending the group on a positive note and paving the way for members’ future involvement in groups.

The strong relationships that have developed needn’t be severed. Instead, the members have the opportunity to experience the joy of making new friends among the Body of Christ. Reflecting on and celebrating the struggles and successes experienced by the group during its lifetime is a vital element in this final phase.

The Leader must lead the group through:

- ◉ Recognizing the dynamics of group termination
- ◉ Assisting the group to understand and deal with ending
- ◉ Facilitating reflection and celebration of what God has done in the group
- ◉ Paving the way for new groups and new involvement

Possible reasons for the ending of a group:

- ◉ Most members decide to become leaders of other groups
- ◉ Relationships just don’t seem to be clicking no matter what you try
- ◉ Group is just not growing but running through the motions and resist planting
- ◉ Unhealthy issues that can’t be resolved

Prepared for the Emergency

In times of emergency, please rely on, the LFC pastoral staff, and/or other community group leaders for help and advice.

Each group leader will have a staff coach that will commit to the following Ministry Responsibility to support the assigned group leader:

- ◉ Communicate regularly with assigned leaders
- ◉ Resource leaders in all areas of leadership
- ◉ Attend leadership meetings
- ◉ Be open to visiting leaders group
- ◉ Hold leaders accountable for group covenants, recruitment of Apprentice Leaders, recruitment of Host/Hostess, evaluation sheets and outreach.
- ◉ Coach will take time to pray with the leader on the phone or in person regularly.

Questions your Coach will regularly ask

- ◉ What, if any, major issues are going on in your group that you are having trouble handling?
- ◉ What changes have been going on in the group: people coming/not coming, life circumstances, relationships between group members, etc.
- ◉ How have you seen yourself grow in the last few weeks?
- ◉ How can I pray for you and the group?
- ◉ What do you need from me?
- ◉ How is the study going? What are you studying? Would you recommend it to other groups?
- ◉ Where has your group grown in the last month? Where does it need to grow?
- ◉ What things have you done to build community that you would suggest another group to try? How about worship ideas? Outreach ideas? Ministry ideas?
- ◉ Has your group thought about planting another group?
- ◉ How are you doing personally and ways I can pray for you?
- ◉ Do you need anything at all from me?

Handling Sicknesses

Very often, you will have those in your group that tend to bring out the symptoms of a common cold. They are the “scratchy throat” and “runny nose” of your group. How do you deal with these symptoms to keep the sickness from becoming life threatening?

Tommy Tangent

That person that tends to take the group way off the topic over and over and has a hard time staying on the point.

- ◉ Make it very clear at the beginning of the group that you will throw up the “T” hand signal in order to bring the group back to the point or have the group appoint a “tangent police”.

Michelle Motormouth

This person talks all the time, hates silence and dominates the group.

- ◉ Try to sit beside Michelle to regulate their participation through eye contact.
- ◉ Ask specific questions after they talk a little like, “What do others in the group think?” or, “What about this other side of the room?” or “Everyone has 30 seconds to answer this one.”
- ◉ If still hard, talk to them outside the group and explain 2 things: 1)Affirm their input but help them understand the importance of all group participation. 2)Silence is OK and good.

Johnny Come Lately

Always shows up 15 minutes late with apology and excuses.

- ◉ Remind the group of expectations and covenant including starting on time.
- ◉ Always start and end the group on time to let them see your commitment to the times.
- ◉ Confront the person outside the group time or have someone pick them up if convenient.

Dogmatic Dana

They are confident they have all the right theological answers. Open ended questions that are meant to bring discussion are met with hard, abrupt, short answers.

- ◉ Great time to help Dana grow in the value of the learning process for herself and others. Point out to them how the group will benefit from taking time to reach conclusions.
- ◉ Play “Devil’s advocate” even when you agree with their point.

APPENDIX

Leader's Covenant
Apprentice Leader's Covenant

Different Phases of a Group
Evaluations
Sample Group Covenant

Resources:

Smallgroups.com

LFC Facilitators to invite in
Leadership & Vision

Scripture Study & Reference

Leader and Apprentice Leader Covenant

Community Group Leader:

As God enables, I commit to serving the Lord Jesus Christ as the highest priority of my life by walking in obedience to His word in my personal, family, ministry and vocational life. As a ministry partner of Lake Forest Church, I commit to caring for the members of my community group and to fulfill all other responsibilities as described in the community group Leader Position Description.

Community Group Leaders Signature _____

Date: _____

Community Group Apprentice Leader:

As God enables, I commit to serving the Lord Jesus Christ as the highest priority of my life by walking in obedience to His word in my personal, family, ministry and vocational life. As a ministry partner of Lake Forest Church, I commit to helping care for the members in my Community Group and to fulfill all other responsibilities as described in the community group Apprentice Leader Description.

Community Group Leaders Signature _____

Date: _____

Different Phases

(Small Group Leaders' Handbook –IVP)

Member's Thoughts, Feelings and Behavior	Leader's Attitude, Approach and Needs
Phase 1: Start-Up	
Can I find friends here? Will I be accepted? What's expected of me? Hopeful, yet cautious	Set tone of openness and acceptance Create safe atmosphere Communicate clearly "Get to know" you activities Needs affirmation and prayer
Phase 2: Shake-Up	
Can I trust this group? Can I be more honest? Will this group really work? Some anxiety and impatience over differences Sporadic attendance	Encouragement and Active Listening Hang in there as people begin to settle in Trust building exercises Manage conflict Clarify and redefine commitment
Phase 3: Live-It-Up	
I like and trust this group I'm committed Security and Freedom Contribute ideas, gifts and leadership	Keep goals clear Challenge to risk and take initiative Delegate Needs support of other .COM Leader Serve One Another
Phase 4: Wrap-Up	
How have I grown? What have I learned? Mixture of great joy and sadness Laughter and Tears	Reflection, Affirmation and Thankfulness Activities for Evaluating and Celebrating Needs Appreciation and Evaluation from the Coach

Evaluation of our Community Group

6. Name of Leader _____
7. What have you understood the purpose of your group to be these last few months?
8. Why did you decide to be a part of this group these last few months?
9. What did you hope to get out of the group? Has this happened?
- 10. WHAT WAS THE MOST ENJOYABLE ASPECT OF THE GROUP MEETINGS?**
11. What was the most beneficial?
12. How do you think your group could have been better?
13. What gifts are you using within the group? Want to use?
14. What have you appreciated about your leader and the way they lead?

Leader's Evaluation of their Group

Your name:

Apprentice Name:

Host/Hostess:

Time/day of meeting:

1. What has been the group's emphasis for meeting these past few months?
2. What materials have you used? Please evaluate it. Would you recommend it to other groups?
3. What has been the most enjoyable aspect of the group? Most beneficial?
4. What do you think the group could have done better? What about you as the leader?
5. Who are the people you are most excited about growing and why?
6. What kind of ministry and outreach has your group done?
7. Who in your group would you love to see become a future leader?
8. What do you need from your coach/training meetings to better equip you?

Community Group Covenant

Over these next few months, our emphasis as a group will be to grow in:

The Material we intend to study is:

Our Leader(s) will be:

We will meet together until _____ (date), after which we will review, evaluate our Community Group and rewrite our covenant.

We will commit to meeting every _____ (week, other week, etc.)

Day of week: _____

Beginning and closing time _____

Location/Host: _____

We are committed to living out the Open Chair Policy and are familiar with it.

Our child care will be provided for in the following manner:

Other ground rules we have agreed to are as follows:

___ Attendance: to give priority to the group meetings

___ Confidentiality: to keep anything that is said strictly confidential

___ Accountability: to give permission to each other to hold me to goals I set

___ Accessibility: to give one another the right to call upon you for help in need

___ Food Plans: _____

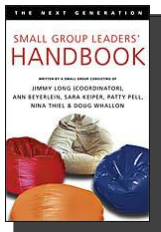
___ Other: _____

Group Members Signatures:

Leadership Resources

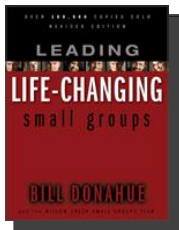
Resources: All of these are available for checked out from our resources room located off the Kitchen.

Leadership & Vision



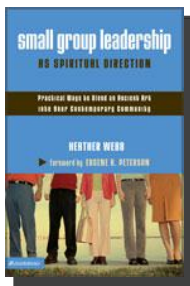
Small Group Leaders Handbook

<http://www.ivpress.com/cgi-ivpress/book.pl/code=1139>



Leading Life-Changing Small Groups

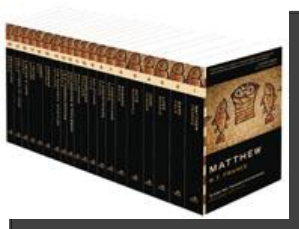
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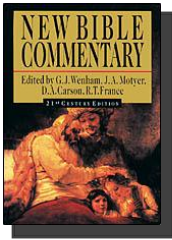
Small Group Leadership as Spiritual Direction

<http://www.zondervan.com>

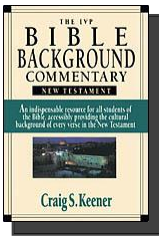
Scripture Study Reference



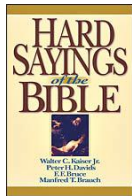
These Tyndale volumes are designed to help readers understand what the Bible actually says and what it means. The introduction to each volume gives a concise but thorough description of the authorship, date, and historical background of the biblical book under consideration. The commentary itself examines the text section by section, drawing out its main themes. It also comments on individual verses and deals with problems of interpretation. The aim throughout is to get at the true meaning of the Bible and to make its message plain to readers today.



This readable and accessible volume brings together many of the finest scholars of our day to meet the needs of students, teachers and Bible readers. The 21st-century edition of the New Bible Commentary offers 66 solid, concise, evangelical commentaries--one on each book of the Bible. These detailed (passage-by-passage or verse-by-verse) commentaries, based on the NIV text, are accompanied by introductory material on date, authorship, purpose, key themes, outlines and discussions of recent developments in biblical scholarship.



Only with the background can you grasp the author's original concerns and purposes. This unique commentary provides, in verse-by-verse format, the crucial cultural background you need for responsible--and richer--Bible study.



Here you will find explanations of over 500 of the most troubling verses to test the minds and hearts of Bible readers. Four seasoned scholars, all with a notable gift for communicating, take you behind the scenes to find succinct solutions to a wide variety of Bible difficulties, ranging from discrepancies about numbers to questions about God's justice.