

PEOPLE WITH A PASSION

A 10-Week Cell Boot Camp



This course will examine:

- the basic components and dynamics of cells
- how to grow and develop healthy relationships within the group
- how to train group leaders
- how cells can be a catalyst of community transformation

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INTRODUCTION

What Is a Cell?

A cell is an intentional gathering of three to twelve people who commit themselves to work together to become better disciples of Jesus Christ.

Within the broad context of this definition, small groups assume a variety of formats and focuses. All types of small groups are good to the extent that they are marked by a commitment to share the process of growth as disciples. In this study we will use these two expressions [Cell or small group] interchangeably to mean the same thing. But let it be noted that in CLA we prefer the term “CELL” because it expresses better the meaning and nature of these small groups.

The key words in this definition are emphases of this study—commitment, working together and discipleship.

You will see three words, and their related concepts, from beginning to end. They are:

- *Discipleship.* The purpose of small groups is to make disciples. This is in obedience to Christ’s command in Matthew 28:18–20, that the church should make disciples.
- *Leadership.* Disciples are not made unless there are disciplemakers who can help them learn and apply the Christian life. Therefore, leadership is essential to Cell ministry. The goal of this study is to help equip effective leaders who can make disciples through small groups. So while the goal of Cell ministry is discipleship, the foundation for Cell ministry is leadership.
- *Community.* People can only learn and grow in an atmosphere of love and acceptance. That atmosphere is Christian community. Community is not one aspect of group life, it is the very structure within which the group operates. A healthy community will produce healthy disciples.

Therefore, the goal of Cell ministry is **discipleship**; the foundation is **leadership**, and the structure of Cell ministry is **community**.

Leaders-in-training will only get from this study and its training course what they put into it. It is not meant to be an easy course (being a leader is not easy!). Daily work may be required, but if you put in the disciplined time that is needed you will greatly benefit.

This study is also beneficial for those not interested in being Cell leaders. Informed Cell members make good Cell ministry much more effective.

Stirring Up Your Spiritual Passion

Whether you are an experienced facilitator of small groups or a first-time leader, welcome! You are about to enter the process of making disciples for Jesus Christ. My ultimate goal in preparing this study is that, as the gospel is preached and disciples are made, Jesus will receive the honor and obedience that is due Him, and His kingdom will be extended to the ends of the earth. Small groups can play an important part in that process, so let’s get started!

The traditional local church structure of single congregations meeting in church buildings is no longer working. It cannot fulfill some of the basic New Testament requirements for church, such as every member ministry and expressing the body of Christ in the marketplace. The mega church model, which came to the fore in the West in the 1980s, was an eloquent testimony to God's love of bigness, but it has proved inadequate when it comes to equipping the saints and raising disciples of Christ.

The meta church model is the way of the past and the future. The Greek word *meta*, here meaning 'beyond' or 'between', points to the relationships between small groups and the larger gatherings in this networking model of church. Meta church sees the full expression of church consisting of a network of three New Testament units of *ekklesia* (church)—small cell groups, medium-sized congregations (i.e. zone gatherings) and large celebration gatherings. These cells, congregations and celebrations of believers work together as a single church to see the Mandate of Christ fulfilled. Meta church adopts a 'honeycomb' approach, linking each unit together to form the greater whole.

In a generation when secularists and false religionists are rampant and are using political power and social pressure to try and silence the church, we must surely rise up and fulfill our reason for being—to make, mature and mobilize disciples for Christ.

All this presupposes one indispensable thing—passion for Christ. Only people with a passion for His kingdom and His work in the world will be interested in the cell vision. It is too demanding for complacent 'Sunday Christians' who sit passively in the church. Jesus calls for passionate laborers to go to the harvest fields of our day. Only a love inspired by the Father's love for us and poured into our hearts by His Holy Spirit will rouse us from sleep and drive us to our knees to cry out to God for the lost. Only His passion burning in our hearts will cause us to rise up and win our world for Christ.

I pray that *People with a Passion* will inspire you in your love for the Master and help equip you to play your part in His Great Commission to make disciples of all nations.

1. MAKING DISCIPLES THROUGH CELLS

Bob, you sure are doing a great job on those pancakes,” said Sue, as she looked up from her own pancake griddle. “I wouldn’t be surprised if you eventually opened up your own restaurant!”

Sue had noticed that Bob was trying his hardest, with sweat pouring down his face and an apron liberally splattered with pancake mix. She wanted to encourage him to keep going.

“But my pancakes look nothing like yours,” moaned Bob. “Just look, yours are so golden brown and mine are either overcooked or undercooked.”

This was Bob’s first attempt at cooking pancakes, and he had chosen the annual “Keep Our City Clean” day to learn. Sue was the one who had invited him because she thought it might give him an opportunity to feel needed. She knew Bob as a shy, quiet man who didn’t like to be in the spotlight. Cooking pancakes was an ideal way to involve him without giving too much of a push.

She had set him up at his griddle, helped him through the disaster of the first few batches, and watched him improve as he became more comfortable in his new role. By the end of the morning he had loosened up and was even talking about cooking next year. As he felt useful, his confidence grew, and he even took the initiative to meet people. He was able to become a pancake chef and a friend because Sue had taken it upon herself to walk with him through the uncomfortable moments. It’s always easier to try new things with a friend at your side.

If we need encouragement to get through a pancake breakfast, consider how much more we need people who can guide us through our Christian lives! Learning to live as a child of God today is a formidable challenge. Many people feel uncertain, others overwhelmed. It seems that there are many people who can teach others to flip pancakes or play sports. Is it not even more vital that there are people who can show others how to live the Christian life?

Make Disciples

“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw Him, they worshipped Him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age’ ” (Mt 28:16–20).

Imagine that you are one of the eleven disciples who has met Him on the mountain. Three years ago you received the call to follow Christ, and you left your family, friends and livelihood to do so. You have been fascinated by this man who can heal the sick, raise the dead, and preach with an authority that draws multitudes to hear Him.

You have lived with Him, trying desperately to understand One so different from everyone that you have known before. You were present on the night he was taken by the mob to His crucifixion, and you had run. Three days later, while you were still in hiding, you had heard that he had risen, and you were terrified and relieved at the same time.

You have seen Him a number of times since His resurrection, and now as you meet Him on the mountain you somehow feel that he is preparing you for yet another good-bye.

You have met Jesus on the mountain to receive your final instructions. In these last words of Jesus—which you will reflect on many times in the coming days—you receive your formal “commissioning.” There is no mistaking that Jesus is giving a command that is to be followed. As His disciple, you are to respond in obedience.

But what is he telling you?

Some of the things that you will ponder include His claim to all authority, and His command to make disciples of *all nations*. (“What, Lord? Gentiles too?”). And what does he mean by “the completion of the age”? You can be excused for wondering about these ideas because 2000 years later the church will still be trying to grasp their meaning.

However, there is one thing Jesus tells you that is crystal clear. It is His command to “make disciples.” As one of His disciples, you know very well what he means.

Jesus’ Method of Making Disciples

In Jesus’ first-century world disciples were usually the students of a particular teacher, apprentices who learned all that their master could teach so that they could go on to become masters themselves. In addition to teaching the Jewish law and the traditions of Moses, the rabbis (or teachers) sought to train their disciples to live out their faith as obedient followers of God.

A number of times during Jesus’ ministry He, too, was called *Rabbi*. Observers felt that He had met the criteria necessary to be a disciplemaker in the line of Moses. Like the Jewish rabbis, Jesus had gathered His own group of disciples and was training them.

Jesus, however, was set apart from the rabbis of His day. In Matthew 7:28–29 we read that the people were amazed after Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount because “he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.”

What was it that set Jesus apart from the teachers of the law? Very simply, the rabbis encouraged people to follow the teachings of others by saying, “Moses said ...,” while Jesus taught people by saying, “I say...” Jesus claimed special authority from God because he was the very Son of God.

So when Jesus called the twelve disciples (and many others who followed Him during His ministry), His command was different from that of other disciplemakers. His words to Simon and Andrew in Mark 1 were “Follow me.” It was a simple phrase, yet one loaded with meaning. In Christ’s call to discipleship he challenged the disciples to *live with Him, to learn how to live as His disciples, and to prepare others to hear the Good News*.

Living with Him. The call “Follow me” had a very real physical application. Jesus did not say these words and then walk away never to be seen by the disciples again. He expected them to leave what they were doing in order to physically walk after Him.

For three years after this call the twelve disciples lived with Him. They travelled to many different places and sought food and shelter in a host of ways. They saw Jesus in the morning when he got up and at night when he laid down. They watched Him pray, heal, preach and teach. They observed Jesus in His dealings with difficult people.

Through all of their experiences with Him, they learned that Jesus' lifestyle was radically different from the one they had learned from birth. They were challenged to a new life.

Learning how to be His disciple. This new life did not come easily to them. They were naturally brash, selfish and uncaring. Jesus had to teach them to be gentle, giving and compassionate. On many occasions he took the disciples aside (for example, Mt 5–7) in order to instruct them. When he told parables, he would explain the meaning to them after the crowds had departed. (The disciples were as “deaf” as the crowds when it came to understanding parables!) He asked questions of them, taught them, admonished them, prodded them to take steps of faith, nurtured them, and loved them.

Theirs was a special relationship that, for two reasons, went much deeper than the one Jesus had with the crowds that followed Him for two reasons. First, Jesus committed himself to the disciples in every way. He made himself accessible to them and confided in them. He had great expectations for them and occasionally showed frustration with them. You might recall the time the disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee with Jesus asleep in the boat when a great storm came. Jesus chided them for their lack of faith. Because he had committed himself to His disciples, Jesus had great expectations of them.

The second reason it was a unique relationship was that the disciples were committed to Jesus in return. Since Jesus supplied the brains and purpose for the fledgling Christian movement, the disciples were not able to add much to the process. What they did bring was a growing love for Christ and an awakening desire to be obedient and loyal in everything. They struggled with their faith, sin and weaknesses, but they wanted to be faithful. They loved Jesus and became willing to give up everything (eventually most of them even gave their lives) for this man from Galilee.

Preparing others to hear the Good News. One of the marks of good students is that they are able to do what the teacher has instructed them to do—even when the teacher is not present. Knowing this, Christ trained His disciples by encouraging them to take steps of faith on their own.

As the disciples travelled with Jesus, they were able to do some helpful things, but they spent most of their time observing the master at work. Then, Jesus sent them out two-by-two to prepare towns for His coming. They preached as they had seen Jesus preach. They sought faithful God-fearing people in the towns as Jesus had done. They healed the sick and comforted the bereaved. And they learned what ministry was all about. In being sent out from Jesus, they learned even more about how to imitate their rabbi.

The Early Church and Discipleship

The disciples learned how to think and act based on their relationship with the master disciplinemaker. They in turn began to duplicate His kind of ministry after Jesus went back to heaven. In the book of Acts much can be discovered about the history of the church.

Following Christ's ascension into heaven, the promised Holy Spirit manifests in power at Pentecost, and the disciples start carrying the Good News to all people.

It was an exciting time for the church, a period of rapid growth in spite of tremendous persecution. Peter's sermon in Acts 2 brought three thousand new believers into the church in one day! These new believers combined with other disciples to worship in the temple each day. Just imagine the uproar their meetings must have caused in the already

crowded temple courtyard! Yet their lives were so different that they were viewed favorably by others, and the church grew daily.

From the beginning the church met together in larger groups for corporate worship. But small groups also had a place in the life of the church. The apostles not only taught large groups, but they also went from house to house, visiting small groups in homes as they taught and made disciples (Acts 5:42). People met together in their homes to break bread together and to use the opportunity to encourage each other to live out their faith in ever greater obedience. There were home prayer meetings like the one held while Peter was in prison (Acts 12:12), and Paul's letters allude to "house churches" (Rom 16:5).

Whether house churches were independent groups of believers or were part of larger churches is uncertain. It is likely, however, that small house fellowships were the building blocks of the church in each city or region. The early disciples met in groups small enough to fit into normal homes (for instance, Priscilla and Aquila were tentmakers and probably not wealthy—Acts 18:3).

The church needed the "house church" for its survival. There were periods of intense persecution for the first few centuries after Christ, so the early church was often not able to meet openly, nor were they allowed to purchase large buildings for gathering. They relied on the more protective environment of the home to nurture and protect the gospel in the lives of believers. Somehow (to our surprise) the church was able to multiply without large buildings, mass meetings, and a plethora of "how to" books!

In our own century we have examples of how the church can grow even during persecution. When the Communists came to power in China in the 1950s, all missionaries were expelled, and it was estimated that there were perhaps one million weak Chinese Christians. There was great concern that the church in China would be wiped out, and indeed large-scale persecution broke out.

Thirty years later in the 1980s, the doors to China started to open, and Christians were finally able to observe what had happened to the Chinese church during the 25 years that the borders were closed. Observers were surprised to discover that the church was alive and well! It is now estimated that there are somewhere between thirty and one hundred million Chinese Christians. Imagine, the church multiplied at least thirty times with few Bibles, a limited number of trained pastors, and no church buildings. Like the early church, the Chinese church relied on prayer and the "house church" for its survival and growth.

A fascinating aspect of discipleship is that Christians in the twentieth century are in the direct line that can be traced back twenty centuries to the original twelve disciples. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul illustrates the process of discipling in the following way: "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." Thus, all disciples of Christ have been entrusted with the gospel message which they are to continually invest in the lives of others. Rather than ending with us, the process must begin again with us, as with each new generation.

The Process of Discipling

But what do we mean when we talk about "disciples"? *A disciple is a committed follower of Jesus Christ who seeks to live a life marked by continued growth in understanding and obedience.*

How, then, can we continue the process of making disciples in this century? The following are a few key principles for today's disciplemakers to follow.

Disciples are made intentionally. Just as children don't grow up without personal care, nor do they learn mathematics on their own, so discipleship will not occur without faithful Christians being intentional about it. The word *discipleship* is a catchphrase in the church today, often without meaning. As a result, some people think of discipleship when they think of Bible-study workbooks or adult Sunday school. What they forget is that the process of disciplemaking is a dynamic relationship between fellow Christians and their Lord, and that it is marked by continued progress.

Disciplemaking must be intentional in order for small groups to take root and grow. You cannot pay "lip service" to disciplemaking, or look at it as one aspect of ministry. It must be the goal of all of ministry that people will come to faith and then grow to maturity as Christ's disciples. This first principle will become a reality in your church or fellowship if even just a few people take Christ's command to make disciples seriously and start acting on that basis.

Disciples are to be like Christ. Have you ever watched a group of people, perhaps children, who are devoted to a particular celebrity and dress, talk and walk like the individual they idolize? It is only natural to emulate someone you respect and look up to. And since "disciple" means "imitator," disciplemakers become models to those who are learning to follow Christ. We must be careful not to duplicate ourselves. (It is very easy to cross the line from being respected to being idolized.) Instead, our task is to help develop partners in discipleship. We must strive to be able to say (paraphrasing Paul), "We first imitated the Lord and then you learned from us how to imitate the Lord" (1 Thess 1:6).

It is difficult, however, for modern Christians to picture themselves as disciples. We ask people if they are "Christians" instead of if they are "disciples," as if you could be a Christian without being a disciple. In the early church followers of Christ were called *disciples* until someone in Antioch thought of the term *Christian* (Acts 11:26). There is nothing wrong with using the word *Christian* when it is properly understood because "Christian" means "belonging to Christ." A disciple imitating Christ does belong to Christ.

But who decides what it means to be like Christ? Is there anywhere to go for answers? Yes! We can go to the textbook for discipleship, the Bible.

One of the disciplemaker's key tasks is to direct disciples to the Word of God. The Bible studies in the appendix, "Key Bible Passages," are included specifically because growing disciples must spend time in God's Word on a daily basis. If we want to make disciples, the Bible can show what it means to be like Christ. The Bible is the only reliable source for the knowledge to live an obedient and meaningful life. Luke wrote His Gospel "so that you can know the certainty of the things which you were taught" (Lk 1:4). John wrote "so that you may trust that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you can have life in His name" (Jn 20:31).

Disciples are made in relationship. From the beginning of our lives we learn by watching others and then imitating them. For example, children are encouraged to walk and talk by watching others.

As you think back over your life, you can no doubt think of many things that you learned by watching, learning and then imitating. This is how we learn to ride a bike, drive a car, and lift weights. It is also how we learn to "act cool" in high school, move up the social

ladder in adulthood, and age gracefully in older years. In short, we learn about life in community.

The Christian life is exactly the same. There is no example in the Bible of a lone disciple. Even Paul, after His dramatic conversion and long stay in the desert, went to Jerusalem and associated himself with the apostles and later with the church at Antioch (Acts 9:26–30; 11:25–26). When he planted churches he always travelled in the company of others. He had a team-relationship at different times with Barnabas, Silas and Timothy. The relational, community-based model of discipling had been demonstrated by Jesus and the disciples, and it provided the necessary support for Paul and the early church in the turbulent period after Pentecost.

Since we learn best in relationship, we most effectively learn to be disciples that way. But disciples produced through loving community in churches are too rare. The self-sufficient individualism of Western culture has seeped into the church and led to situations in which individuals are trying, often without notable success, to mature alone as disciples. Many resources—Christian books, videos, conferences, tape series—are available for these lone disciples to increase their knowledge about Jesus, but an accumulation of facts and ideas is only the beginning of Bible-based discipling.

It takes a community of fellow disciples who can help each other learn to live a life transformed by the Holy Spirit. The aspect of “growing in community” is such an important concept in this study that it provides the basis for the names given to most of the chapters (“A Studying Community,” and so on). Without a community in which we can learn, practice, fail and eventually move out from as agents of change, we are left without a secure foundation. Without a foundation of community, the church will ultimately fail.

Disciples and Small Groups

In Ephesians and elsewhere the church is likened to a body, a living organism in which there are many interrelated parts that work together to make the body healthy and strong. Ephesians 4:11–16 says:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

This passage makes it clear that the church is intended to be a growing, dynamic organism, a community of growth. Is your fellowship growing? If so, is it growing as it can and should?

In most churches and fellowships the case can be made for an ever sharper focus on discipleship. Your church may be so large that individuals who need accountability in order to grow are getting lost in the crowd.

Or it may be so small that members aren't sure how to get started growing together as disciples. Perhaps some of the members of your church are looking for an opportunity to develop a Christ-centered lifestyle in partnership with others who feel the same calling, yet you've not found a way to get these people together. For whatever reason, churches often feel the need for something that will help them become more effective at making disciples.

So how does the church create specific opportunities for disciples to grow within the church? Small groups! Small groups lend themselves perfectly to growth in discipleship because people learn best when they are part of a caring and committed community. That is, they grow in understanding and obedience when:

- ☐ they experience things together with other learners
- ☐ they are held accountable to one another for continued growth
- ☐ they are affirmed and loved
- ☐ they are part of a structure that allows for and reinforces growth

Good small groups can provide each of the above, and much more by allowing people to learn through both affirmation and challenge. In a Cell, people meet regularly with committed fellow disciples. They learn together, formally and informally. They have opportunities to get to know each other better, to pray for each other, and to help out when there are needs. They can look for opportunities to reach out to others outside their group, and they may be involved in some kind of ongoing ministry together, either in the church or in the community. Their shared experiences reinforce the things they are learning together.

Then, as their knowledge of each other deepens, they are able to challenge one another to take new steps in growth. Through this process, each one becomes a source of encouragement to the other in the difficulties of life. As their commitment to obeying Christ and their gratitude for His work in their life increases, they find new reasons to worship and thank God together. Out of this kind of community comes a sense of joyful challenge that draws others to join them as they seek opportunities for growth. The possibilities are limitless.

Jesus' commission reverberates across twenty centuries to today. Are you willing to be a participant in the great "relay" of discipleship? Are you able, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to invest yourself in the lives of others, to challenge them (and yourself) to obey all that Jesus taught? Are you willing to be a disciplemaker?

Passion for Discipleship

Both Matthew and Mark pass on the Great Commission of Jesus with clarity and conviction. Their faithful records of Jesus' words complement each other, giving us the full picture of the task he entrusted to us. Mark focuses on preaching the gospel to the whole creation with accompanying signs, wonders and miracles:

"And he said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In my name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.'" Mark 16:15-18

Matthew stresses the discipleship aspect:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.”
Matthew 28:19-20

For too long the church has acted as if Jesus intended us to make converts, not disciples. The goal of evangelism is raising up followers of Jesus. Evangelical and Pentecostal preachers are adept at winning converts but not so focussed on retaining them and discipling them into the church. The vast majority of converts do not get rooted in the life of the church—let alone go on to become fruitful disciples themselves. In my view there are two main reasons for this. We often have a wrong understanding of church and we rarely make discipleship our focus.

I will say more about our poor understanding of church later on, but for now, let me highlight the weakness of much evangelism which separates ‘evangelistic decision’ from ‘Christian discipleship’. The word used of preaching the gospel in the New Testament means ‘to proclaim as a herald’. This is a concept borrowed from the City State in ancient Greece. The herald’s job was to announce the start of the city council meeting, the gathering of all the free men who deliberated on the affairs of the city.

The result of the proclamation was the council gathering, or *ekklesia*, which is the same word the New Testament uses for ‘church’. The parallel is clear. We have not finished the task of evangelism until those who respond to the message are gathered into church fellowship. Until we understand this, evangelism and discipleship will always be disconnected.

We have a responsibility to bring new converts into full and open expression of their relationship to Christ and to each other. We must make sure they have a good beginning in the Christian life and have every opportunity first, to be personally discipled and then, to be trained to become disciplemakers of others.

The scandal of an undisciplined church

Jesus placed discipleship at the heart of mission, but it is strange how the simple basics of Christ’s teaching are so easily set aside by our human ideas of church. Even ‘successful’ churches that attract large crowds, often do so by neglecting discipleship. This is evident in the superficial consumer-based form of Christianity skillfully promoted by leaders, eager to boost their church numbers. A few mega conferences with internationally renowned speakers and famous Christian musical artists can provoke a popular response and add thousands to your church provided you can keep up the hype.

I have seen with my own eyes thousands of eager believers come forward to receive the blessings of prosperity, healing, joy or generalised ‘success’ channelled through some superstar guest speaker, usually as part of an aggressive promotional campaign to build a church of thousands. ***It seems God’s people today will put up with almost anything, place almost any amount of money in the offering and be the most enthusiastic crowd possible, if only cross-carrying discipleship is off the agenda.***

I believe Jesus wants us to reach the multitudes. But we cannot do so by ignoring His true attraction. Jesus disappointed crowds of people who had attached themselves superficially to His ministry by testing their understanding of His true mission.

He did not come to be a popular preacher, but to give life. John section 6 records Jesus saying,

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." John 6:51

The offense was immediate. How could Jesus expect His followers to feed on His flesh? But he was talking about spiritual food. He did not come, in the first instance, to promise the comforts and provisions that lead to what is popularly understood as 'the good life' here on earth. He is our provider, but that is not the sole focus of the gospel.

The crowds forsook Him, disappointed by such a hard message, because they were focused on physical things not on the spiritual life Jesus came to bring. Peter got it right when Jesus later challenged His disciples. *"Are you also going to turn away from me?"* he asked. Peter replied with the inspired statement, *"Where would we go? You have the words of eternal life!"*

This is the essence of passionate discipleship. We are motivated to go where our desires lead us, and we desire most what we believe will meet our deepest needs. Jesus came to satisfy the deepest longings of our humanity, created by God for life in Him. Once awakened, this knowledge will lead us to feed on the very life of Christ. We are passionate about the things we believe will give us what we crave for. Once you understand that life—rich, satisfying, abundant life is found in Christ and only in Him, you will have no problem with spiritual passion.

That's why Jesus prefaced His invitation to discipleship with a call to awaken our spiritual desire.

"Then he said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after me, let Him deny himself, and take up His cross daily, and follow me. For whoever desires to save His life will lose it, but whoever loses His life for my sake will save it.'" Luke 9:23-24

Discussion/Study Questions for Session 1

1. Share 1 idea [from this section] that has been most meaningful to you.
2. Why do you think we need help learning how to be a disciple?
3. How did Jesus make disciples?
4. In what ways is our disciplemaking like that of Jesus? In what ways is it different?
5. What are the most important things to keep in mind when we make disciples?
6. How do you feel about the possibility of being a disciplemaker yourself?
7. If you're hesitant, what would it take to get you to that point?
If you're enthusiastic, what kind of support would you need?

2. BUILDING THE CHURCH THROUGH SMALL GROUPS

Have you ever seen the inside of a beehive? If so, then you have had the opportunity to observe thousands of tiny creatures working feverishly, going in countless directions. One group leaves the hive to locate and bring back nectar (used to produce honey) and pollen (to feed the young). Another group works in the honey section to fill and cap honey. Still another works with the “brood,” the eggs, nurturing them until they are born. A smaller group attaches to the queen bee in order to protect her.

The beehive is a good example of how different individuals can work together for one common goal. There is very little time to bicker when each bee’s contribution is necessary for survival. When each different group makes its contribution, the hive is strong.

The church is no different. If you consider the church around the world, there are millions of unique Christians supposedly working for one common goal—to make disciples of all nations. Sadly, however, not everyone carries their weight, so parts of the church are inefficient, understaffed and struggling to survive.

The ideal church would engage each member in discipleship while encouraging them to make a positive contribution for the growth of others. But who would coordinate such an effort? How does the church, with many different persons, put each person where they belong as if placing pieces in a giant puzzle?

Small Groups in Today’s Church

The answer to this complex problem may appear overly simple, but small groups can go a long way toward engaging people in personal growth. Small groups help them to grow in relationships and stimulate them to make a difference in their families, church and world. Once formed into small family-like groups of partners-in-discipleship, people begin to know themselves and others better. They move past surface conversation and the preliminary fears of opening themselves up to others, and they begin to experience real fellowship. While weekly worship services and a “fellowship hour” afterwards are undeniably important, they alone cannot provide the depth that is necessary for believers to take root and grow.

What does it look like?

Perhaps you were “sold” on the benefits of Cell discipleship before reading this study. Or maybe the first section alone got you excited to be passionate for Jesus and His desire for healthy cell groups in your church. But you may not know the next steps to take. Laypersons and pastors alike can be unsure when it comes to actual implementation, and that alone can render a ministry helpless. For this reason, I have included an overview of the development of Cell ministries in two fictitious churches—one with no previous Cell experience and one with an already established Cell ministry.

Emmanuel Church—a new program. John Frank became the pastor of Emmanuel Church, located in the suburbs of a large steel town. A recent graduate of seminary, he had been called to pastor this active church of 200 and to bring new and creative energy to its progressive-minded membership. He had been “discipled” in college and seminary, and had a burden for making disciples, so he decided to develop a Cell program.

He shared His vision with the ruling body of the church and started a small discipleship group with four men and women who wanted to grow in their faith.

The first months of the group meetings consisted primarily in getting to know each other by doing community-building exercises. In addition, each member of the group agreed to challenge each other to spend daily time with God and to take steps of faith in their daily lives. As the first year passed, the group gradually added Bible study, prayer and worship to their group time. Each of the five participants agreed to pray for non-Christian friends, and they were surprised when, later in the year, a few of their number started to actively share their faith with friends.

The group continued into its second year, but a new focus emerged under John's leadership. He challenged each of the four to go through a training course with Him and to start small groups of their own. In the fall he took them through the course, and then in January the four leaders moved out and started two new groups. Meanwhile, the original group met less frequently, once a month, for mutual support. The new small groups continued through the spring.

As the fall approached, more changes came. A group of interested church members wanted to start another group, so John agreed to lead the new group. Meanwhile, one of the newer groups outgrew its self-imposed limit of twelve members and split into two groups (since the newer groups had two leaders, there was a trained leader for each of the groups). At the end of the third year, there were four groups with thirty-three members, and the church began to feel the impact of this ministry.

The Cell ministry solidified its place at Emmanuel Church in the fourth year. The original leaders began nurturing other potential leaders within the groups, so John led another group of Cell leaders through the twelve-week course. In January, three new groups were formed. By this time, twelve people had gone through the course and, even though some leaders had already moved, there were plenty of experienced leaders. A few of the older groups died out, and some of the younger ones grew and continued to split, so by the end of the year there were nine groups with fifty-six members. Included in these was a support group for divorced women and an evangelistic Bible study.

The ministry at Emmanuel Church had changed dramatically during the four years. The ministry of the church had "followed" people to their neighborhoods and places of work, and many people had been awakened in their faith or been brought to Christ.

Harvest Church—a continuing program. Harvest Church had benefitted from small groups for ten years when they decided to hire Jackie Gordon as their Associate for Discipleship. Jackie had spent a few years working with a parachurch college campus ministry, and she considered small groups to be her main area of expertise.

Upon examining the groups that currently met at Christ Church, the first thing that impressed her was their resiliency. With no training or pastoral care, these groups met, died, started up again, and died with amazing regularity. There were three groups currently meeting, and Jackie wanted to be sensitive to their perceptions of her leadership. At the same time, she wanted to start a Cell ministry that utilized good foundational principles. With her guidance, some church ministry leaders who had a passion for cell ministry formulated a plan that included training leaders and forming new groups. These groups were not meant to replace the existing ones, which were allowed to continue as they had without interruption.

At the beginning, the church leadership was asked to compile a list of the people in the church with “pastoral” gifts and a strong relationship with Christ. These people were mailed a letter and invited to a training course for leadership starting in the fall. Jackie ended up with ten potential leaders, and she took them through the course. In January, the ten leaders formed three groups, and by June there were twenty-three new people in small groups.

During the second year one of the original groups ended, two of the newer groups split, and at the end of the year there were forty-five members. In the third year Jackie took ten new leaders through the course, and they started three new groups. The last original group died, as did one from the first training group. Taking into account a group split, there were nine groups at year end with eighty people, and people had to take notice of what was happening.

When Jackie had started her program there had been some skepticism from some of the Cell “veterans.” At the end of three years, however, many of these people had become the ministry’s staunchest supporters. Harvest Church had experienced a significant spiritual renewal, and new leadership had started to emerge.

Benefits to the Church

You can see from these two churches that implementation of a disciple-making ministry was well-thought-out. In both cases a full-time clergy-person combined a vision for the ministry with dedication and persistence, and they were rewarded. But laypeople can make a big difference as well, with equally significant results.

Once a healthy, thoroughly planned Cell ministry is implemented, the church can begin to enjoy some of many benefits. Among these are the discovery of spiritual gifts, the development of lay leadership, effective congregational care, worship, evangelism, and spiritual and numerical growth.

Discovering spiritual gifts. Imagine someone like Christina, a relatively new believer in the process of becoming involved in a local church. To Christina, the Sunday-morning service seemed so well planned and the choir so well rehearsed that, although she loved to attend, there really did not seem to be anything that she could do to help. There were plenty of activities in the church—suppers, work days and retreats—but someone else always seemed to be taking care of them. Of course there were needs in Kidz Connection and Kidz Extravaganza, but Christina knew she was not very good at working with children.

Then Christina joined a Cell that met in Bill and Sue’s home. One week Sue asked Christina if she would coordinate refreshments for the next few months. Christina agreed, and in the process she discovered a new and better way for the group to share responsibility for refreshments, cleanup and childcare. One night Bill asked Christina to plan the group’s upcoming workday at the community soup kitchen. She demonstrated a great deal of sensitivity when bringing together the Cell members and the soup kitchen staff, and the day was a success.

When the Cell decided they would like to have a weekend retreat together, Christina volunteered to organize it. She collected ideas from the members, delegated responsibilities, and worked out the many logistical details. Everyone agreed that the retreat was wonderful. By then Bill and Sue realized that Christina had the gift of

administration. They mentioned it to the church's central group of leaders, and the next time the church was planning a major project she was asked to take part in it.

Everyone benefitted from the discovery of Christina's gift. She was able to develop her gift of administration in the midst of a loving community where she was affirmed and encouraged to use her gift to serve others. Bill and Sue had the satisfaction of helping Christina mature and start using her gift. The church leaders had another resource for projects. And those in the church who were always called upon to do things, and who were already exhausted, were stimulated by her enthusiasm and help.

This story can be retold with respect to any number of gifts for ministry which are desperately needed in churches today—leading worship, teaching, giving money, showing mercy, doing evangelism (see Rom 12:4–8; 1 Cor 12:4–11), and so on. The bottom line is that individuals are often hesitant to explore their spiritual gifts in a large group. Sometimes they are willing to serve, but are overlooked in the crowd. Or perhaps they have been “plugged” into church ministries where they do not fit. Small groups allow people to stimulate each other and as a result, to put their God-given gifts to use for building the church.

In order for this scenario to become a reality, the Cell leaders need to be open to finding and using peoples' gifts. When people discover and practice their gifts in small groups, the whole church can benefit.

Developing lay leadership. Many churches now recognize that, in order to effectively carry out the various ministries of the church, a primary task of pastors and church leaders is to equip lay people to use their gifts. The pastor is properly viewed more as a facilitator than as the primary means through which ministry flows. He or she looks for gifted potential leaders and then spends time with them, helping them grow as disciples and encouraging them to use their God-given talents. But how does the pastor or elder, overseeing the congregation, find potential leaders?

Imagine what it was like when Bill and Sue came to our hypothetical church five years ago. They met the pastor and a number of new people at the regular Sunday activities, but it took a long time to get to know people beyond a surface level. The pastor and church members liked Bill and Sue but didn't really know much about them.

Eventually, Bill and Sue joined a Cell led by Steve. Steve soon realized that Bill and Sue were mature disciples who possessed leadership ability. He asked them if they would be interested in leading a Cell of their own since His group was growing and would soon be ready to birth. They prayed about it and agreed, so for the next few months Bill and Sue helped Steve with various leadership tasks in their Cell. They also joined a Cell leadership training course. Then, when Steve's group was ready to split, they were prepared to be leaders. Bill and Sue became Cell leaders, and as they became more visible within the church they were occasionally asked to take on other leadership roles that fit their gifts.

The pastor and other church leaders might never have recognized Bill and Sue's potential as lay leaders if there had not been an opportunity to know them better and observe them interacting with other people. Small groups provide that opportunity. They can be the key to finding “anonymous” members, discovering their leadership potential, and developing that potential for the benefit of the church. In this way the church finds that the ministry of the many replaces the ministry of the few.

Effective congregational care. Imagine another member of Bill and Sue's group. Tom's wife died several years ago but he had, to all appearances, been getting along very well on his own. He had a good job and could take care of the house and fix his own meals. In church he appeared to be happy and at peace.

In the privacy of his home, however, he often felt very lonely. He became very depressed on Sundays as he watched families leaving church together. He longed to have his family intact again. Unfortunately, his children and grandchildren lived too far away to visit on weekends.

One night while everyone was having coffee and dessert after a Cell meeting, Sue asked Tom how things were going for him. Since he knew Sue and trusted her, and since she had taken the trouble to ask, Tom shared his feelings of loneliness. Sue then discussed Tom's situation with Bill and the other members of the group. As a result, the Cell members took turns inviting Tom to spend Sunday afternoons with their families, and he felt cared for.

"Small" needs like Tom's often go unrecognized in a church. People like Tom are not likely to voice their needs without being asked. If there is nobody in the church specifically looking out for them, it might happen that nobody asks how they are doing. Even if someone does care enough to ask, who can meet the need? Bill and Sue were able to call on others in their group so that no one person or family felt overburdened.

A Cell which provides ministry to its members contributes to the overall care that churches should offer their members. But small groups can also help shoulder the burden of care within the larger body as well. They can plan outreaches, visit the sick, care for those in need, comfort the bereaved, greet and usher at services, and do whatever else needs to be done in the church family. Churches that care for their own members are healthy. And small groups, with their "grass roots" relationships, can contribute to the health of the church by loving those in need.

Thanksgiving and praise. Worship is a dynamic response to God, acknowledging who he is and what he has done in our lives. It is an overflow of lives which have been spent walking with God. When churches come together on Sundays and at other times for worship, they are to corporately respond to God. Together, they can experience God's presence and rejoice in knowing and loving Him.

Let's return to our imaginary group. Bill, Sue, Christina, Tom and other members of the group had been praying for the healing of one of their members, Michelle. Michelle recovered, and they all rejoiced in God's grace. When Kevin was looking for a job, they prayed, and he was able to find the job he was looking for. Once again the group was able to thank God. They found that God was ready and able to answer their prayers, even though they often discovered that their prayers were answered in ways that they had not anticipated. In community they were able to view the plan of God in its mystery and creativity, and they responded by offering heartfelt thanks and praise.

There were other ways that the group was able to worship. As they became closer to each other and enjoyed deeper fellowship, they appreciated God for allowing them to be a part of such a close community. When they confessed their sin together and sought God's mercy and forgiveness, they were able to experience God's mercy and were freed to worship Him without the burden of guilt. Little by little, they learned a lifestyle of responding to God.

When enough people in a church start experiencing these moments of responding to God, the worship of the whole church begins to change. If some of the praise and thanksgiving occurring in small groups overflows to the worship service, there can be a new intensity and sense of purpose felt in congregational worship. Revival can flourish and spread in a whole church this way.

Evangelism. If mature disciples like Bill and Sue find it hard to discover their niche in the church, you can guess how much harder it would be for someone like Carolyn, a woman seeking to know more about God. As the Holy Spirit drew her into faith in Christ, she knew that she needed to join other Christians to learn how to follow Jesus better. But she was intimidated walking into a church full of strangers. Then Sue, who took the initiative to know her, invited her to be in a Cell. For Carolyn the Cell was crucial in establishing her relationship with a new church.

Or what about someone who would be very unlikely to go near a church on his own? Christina had a friend at work named David, with whom she was eager to share Christ's love. David had refused to consider attending church with her, but when Christina told Him about her friends in a Cell, he was willing to visit. Bill and Sue and the others welcomed him and eventually talked with him about faith in Christ. He became a Christian and sometime later joined the church. This happened because God used the Cell to meet David at a point where he felt somewhat comfortable—a home. His resistance to Christ and the church was broken down in a loving environment.

Biblical evangelism is not a program, but a person-to-person process of sharing the Good News about forgiveness of sin and new life in Jesus. Because small groups are likely to be the most personal setting in a church, they are natural places for this kind of evangelism to take place. Churches that reach people with the gospel through small groups can benefit by watching “baby” Christians being “birthed” right in their midst. Very few things can touch a church in a more positive way than new Christians with their enthusiasm and desire to learn.

Spiritual and numerical growth. Many frustrated pastors have tried program after program to resurrect lethargic churches, often focusing on one particular aspect of the Christian life (such as prayer) at a time, as if one area can be dealt with apart from others. Small groups provide a format where *every area* of the Christian life can be experienced in a loving community.

Small groups can attract and keep new church members. When mature disciples like Bill and Sue begin attending a church, they find a place to belong and exercise leadership because of small groups. Seekers like Carolyn find a caring group of people to support them as they begin the process of growth in Christ. Unchurched people like David find a non-threatening community in which to test the claims of the gospel. In these ways and many more, small groups can take those members and visitors who are on the edges of the congregation and provide a place for them to sink roots and grow while allowing more mature believers to grow to even deeper levels.

What would happen if one-third of your church's members participate in a Cell? Would your church be any different from a similar church with no small groups? Absolutely! Your members will be cared for. Many will have a better understanding of their gifts. People will be exercising leadership. Corporate worship will become more meaningful. And the church will be growing.

The basic functioning unit of the church

Cells are not just one programme of the church. Rather, they are the fundamental means by which 'church' happens. We have to get used to the idea that the cells are responsible for every aspect of the church's ministry—evangelising, nurturing, training and mobilising the members. The beauty of the cell church model is that it reflects many New Testament principles of church. From Matthew 18:20, we can deduce that the most basic unit of church is the two or three gathered together in the name of Jesus.

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them." Matthew 18:20

Understanding the biological cell

Ask any student of biology, "What is a cell?" and they will explain that it is the basic building block of the human body. Our bodies consist of multiple billions of cells working in complex coordination. Without them, the body could not live and function. They are the basic 'building block' of life. Each cell carries our unique genetic code, the 'blueprint' of life itself. By nature, cells multiply themselves bringing life, health and growth.

Little over hundred years ago, not much was known about the human cell. However, as scientific knowledge developed so did our understanding of cells. We now know that our cells are highly complex 'factories' or 'mini-cities' carrying amazing diversity, working in finely tuned harmony and astounding biological precision.

There are many different types of cells in the human body, each with their own specialised characteristics to enable them to fulfill their specific function. For example, the cells in our muscles, nerves and skin are all different—adapted for their special purpose in the body. Some cells have the capacity to transition or 'differentiate', that is, to develop the specific characteristics needed in any particular part of the body.

Cells in the body of Christ carry exactly the same characteristics as described in this statement. They are microcosmic units of the life of the church. They are interdependent. They are part of larger structures in the body of Christ. They form a complex single corporate unit (the church) which is greater than the sum of its parts.

Spiritual DNA

We have seen that the discipleship process began with Jesus calling His 12. His master plan was to create a small intimate fellowship of disciples around Him, pouring His life and His 'DNA' into them. In this small 'cell' gathering, Jesus built a relationship with His disciples, he taught and trained them, he imparted His authority and power to them, and finally, he sent them out to minister and witness in His name.

"He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that he might send them out to preach and to have power to heal sicknesses and cast out demons." Mark 3:14-15

Later on, the Holy Spirit reproduced Jesus' ministry in the lives of subsequent believers. After Pentecost, we see the life and vigor of the early church expressed in the large gatherings in the Temple, complemented by their much smaller fellowship meetings in believers' homes (Acts 2:41-47).

Fulfilling the Great Commission

The Lord Jesus has given us His Great Commission. We are to go and make disciples, maturing them in the faith and mobilising them into the harvest of the world (Matthew 28:18-20). This can only be done effectively when every believer becomes a true disciple. The Cell setting is an essential part of this process.

The church is more than a building. It is also more than going to services in a certain building on a Sunday. To fulfill the Great Commission, we must be the church in the world—the church without walls. We have to live as the body of Christ every day and not just on Sundays. This means we will be active witnesses and representatives for Christ in our daily walk. The cells help us do that. They are established where people are—in homes, offices, schools, cafes and other places of recreation.

Reaching the lost

Evangelism is the responsibility of every believer. We are all called to make Christ known and to share His gospel with our non-Christian friends, neighbours and relatives. The vast majority of those who commit to Christ in any context do so through the witness of a believer whom they know and respect.

Cells can penetrate every part of the city we are seeking to evangelise—the schools, the businesses, universities, offices, and homes. A cell church is not bound by its building and so the whole of the city can come under the influence of the gospel.

Nurturing new believers

New believers need to be firmly established in their faith so that they become strong and go on to be effective, fruit-bearing disciples of Christ. The cells help consolidate new believers. That is where they can receive the level of care and nurture they need. Face-to-face interaction is the only way. The cells provide support for new believers from a group of people who are committed to praying for them, teaching them and helping them practically. The cells make sure that the fruit of evangelism is not lost.

Discipleship

Every believer is called to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. This means we need someone to instruct us personally and to lead us in the ways of Christ. The cells provide the setting for these discipling relationships to develop. The cell leaders are accountable to the training and discipline of the church as well as benefitting from the resources, wisdom and counsel of their leaders. This helps prevent people being drawn into false teaching or being ‘poached’ by unaccountable people on the fringe of church life.

The cell is also where a new believer can begin to take up the call to be a disciple maker. Through the support and example of the group, cell members get involved in the discipling process from the beginning. They learn how to reach out to others and begin to disciple them.

Fulfilling the ‘one another’ commands

There are many things we must do as an expression of our mutual relationship in Christ. There are over 45 different passages in the New Testament which specifically speak of the responsibility we have towards one another. We are called to love one another, care for, teach and encourage one another, and to exhort admonish and restore one another.

The cells are the practical context for these things to be done consistently and comprehensively.

Cell ministry makes sure that every member is cared for in a personal way. Large Sunday gatherings can be impersonal and the individual can be lost in the crowd. But, in a cell church everyone counts, everyone is important.

Finding and fulfilling our ministry

Every believer is called to life in the Spirit. One of the things this means is that the Holy Spirit has called us and gifted us with His abilities. He anoints us with these abilities to serve Christ and to help build and strengthen one another. Most people never get to discover and fulfill their ministry. The cells allow every member to respond to the call of God. The cell group is the ideal place to discover, develop and use the different ministries the Holy Spirit gives us. People can be trained in the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit and learn how to be released in their ministry.

Focusing our efforts

Cell groups help us coordinate our efforts as a church and become effective in reaching our goals. We work together and do not 'go it alone'. That is what it means to be part of the body of Christ. We benefit from the strength, wisdom, encouragement and support of the group. Also, when goals are openly shared, we become corporately accountable for them. That is a positive and productive experience for the church.

Cells enable us to work together strategically, as we break down a major task (like winning our city) into smaller, manageable and achievable units. For example, we have a godly goal to have a cell group in every street in London. That's between 50,000-60,000 cells! But, it becomes possible, as each cell takes its share of the work.

Bearing fruit

Disciples of Christ are called to become fruitful. The Creation Mandate: "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it", the Abrahamic call: "Become the father of a multitude!" and the Great Commission of Christ: "Make disciples of all nations!"—all have to do with reaching the multitudes.

The cells are the place of blessing and fruitfulness. They are where multiplication takes place. As we fulfill God's call, walking in agreement with Him, he blesses and prospers our work.

The Father is the vinedresser

"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me."

"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:1-5"

God wants what every good gardener wants—fruit. He is taking charge of your life, to tend it, and keep and to make it fruitful for Him.

He is absolutely committed to bringing you to fruitfulness. But fruitfulness is not automatic. No garden grows by itself. It must be cultivated. God does the cultivating, but you must allow Him to do it. It takes your willingness, responsiveness, cooperation and obedience.

It is easy to dream big dreams and long for easy, instant results—but that's wishful thinking. You must do something about it. If you want to bear fruit, you must become active in the fruit-bearing business. As Peter says, you must add actions to your faith, if you want to be fruitful.

"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 1:5-8

Imagine this: Christians who bear no fruit! It ought to be unthinkable, but it is not—this is exactly what Peter is warning us against. Surely you do not want to end up barren and unfruitful in your Christian life. I know I don't! Peter's exhortation is strong and clear. He says that we have obtained the precious gift of faith. This is saving faith and like your salvation, it's free.

However, if you want to be a fruitful believer, you cannot just sit back and do nothing. You must add to your faith the things Peter lists. Fruitfulness comes by responding to God's grace and living under His favour, so that he can begin to bless you and make you fruitful. Jesus wants to produce His fruit in you first, and then reproduce it through you in others.

Fruitfulness comes by cooperating with God. He provides us with the vine to abide in. He brings us into a living relationship with Jesus. He tends us and works the right circumstances into our life so that fruit can develop. Our part is to abide in the vine.

Abide in me

Abiding is linked with obedience. Without obedience, the obedience that comes from passionate abiding in Christ, there can be no fruit, as Jesus explained,

"Jesus answered and said to Him, 'If anyone loves me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love Him, and we will come to Him and make our home with Him. He who does not love me does not keep my words; and the word which you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.'" John 14:23-24

However, the obedience that leads to fruitfulness is not self-effort. Jesus said, "Without me you can do nothing." (John 15:4), which also means "With me you can do all things!" This is the quality of Christian living God wants you to aim for. This is true discipleship, abiding in the vine, staying close to Jesus and drawing from Him the fruit-bearing capacity of the Holy Spirit.

In the sessions that follow, we shall see how the cell structure supports the branches, enabling them to bear fruit—fruit that lasts. As a disciple who wants to be fruitful, you will welcome a model that helps you and your fellow disciples work together to be productive in the kingdom of God.

Discussion/Study Questions for Session 2

1. Share 1 idea [from the above reading] that has been most meaningful to you.
2. In what ways can churches benefit from small groups?
3. How have you seen some of these benefits in your own Cell experience?
4. What is your hope or desire for this ministry (or what would you like to see)?
5. Based on Romans 12:4-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, share 2 spiritual gifts that you strongly see active in your life.

3. THE BASICS OF CELL MINISTRY

A. Four Crucial Components of a Healthy Small Group

1. Nurture

Goal: To become like Jesus. Spiritual transformation.

Definition: Being fed by God through His Word, His Spirit and His people to grow in becoming more and more like Christ.

Scriptures: John 13:14; John 14:15 (Jesus' words); Romans 6:12-14,17-19; 8:29; Colossians 1:28; 2:6-7; Philipians 3:10

DISCUSS: How can we apply this PRACTICALLY in our cells?

2. Worship

Goal: To bring God joy and pleasure IN ALL WE DO!!

Definition: Praising and Magnifying God by focusing on His Nature, His Creation and His words, His People and the gifts he has given each of us to use.

Scriptures: Joshua 24:14; Col 3:23; Romans 12:1; Eph 2:10

DISCUSS: How can we apply this PRACTICALLY in our cells?

3. Community

Goal: To knit us together in love and build us as whole people.

Definition: Fellowship:

- ▶ Knowing & being Known
- ▶ Loving & being Loved
- ▶ Serving & being Served and
- ▶ Celebrating & being Celebrated.

Scriptures: Proverbs 17:17, Leviticus 19:18, Luke 10:27, Isaiah 1:17, Romans 1:11-12

DISCUSS: How can we apply this PRACTICALLY in our cells?

4. Evangelism (Missions)

Goal: To help people know Jesus Christ as personal savior and grow in knowledge of his word and likeness.

Definition: Reaching out with the good news of Christ's love to people who need Him.

Scriptures: Romans 1:16, 20; John 3:16, 10:9; Acts 2:38-39; Isaiah 61:1; Matthew 4:23

DISCUSS: How can we apply this **PRACTICALLY** in our cells?

B. Things that can kill a small group

| Spiritual Arrogance | Undefined purpose |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Betraying Confidence | Wrong leadership style |
| Overextending STARTING time | Lack of diversity in program |
| Overextending ENDING time | Repeated lateness or absenteeism |
| Lack of love and encouragement and openness | Negativity and critical spirit |
| OTHERS?!?! | |
| This can lead to groups that become: | But we want groups that are: |
| Irrelevant, Boring and discouraging | Relational and Relevant |
| Insensitive, Rigid and Formal | Encouraging and Engaging |
| Unprepared, Unorganized and Divided | Organized and Unified |

C. Knowing What to Do and When to Do It

There is so much that a Cell can do! Leading in any of the fundamental areas can be difficult, not to mention the issues that come with discovering and utilizing your own leadership style. There is help, however—for those who know how to utilize tools. Here are a few ideas that will help you to implement a more effective ministry.

1. Help the group to write a clear, concise covenant that communicates the nature of the group and its membership requirements. Simply put, the covenant is an agreement that the group makes in relation to its character and purpose. Included in the agreement should be the length of time of the contract (in CLA, geographic cells don't have an end. They reproduce naturally and when they die they die a natural death. But affinity cells must have a clear time when they will stop and dissolve into other cells). Other factors in the cell covenant include materials the group will study, a layout of group time, communication stipulations, and membership expectations.

We'll look at a sample cell covenant later in this course. For now it's more important for you to think about what you'd want to be included in your cell's covenant.

The covenant is the leader's friend because it will spell out exactly what is to happen in group meeting times. The leader simply implements what the group has already decided. For instance, suppose that the group decides to have two-hour meetings that include 30 minutes for community building, 30 minutes for study, 15 minutes for sharing, 15 minutes for prayer, and 30 minutes for relaxed conversation at the end. In this case, the group leader's responsibility is simply to initiate this program and see that it runs effectively. A good group covenant can go a long way toward making the leadership role an effective and fulfilling one.

2. Direct the group through the various stages of group life so that it becomes a loving community. Every group, like every relationship, goes through various stages. People often speak of marriage involving several stages, including: The "honeymoon stage" where everything seems perfect and the "disillusionment stage" [why does she/he leave the toilet seat up/down?]. It is much the same with groups. Groups often experience an early flush of success, followed by growing tension, perhaps even conflict, and ultimately, we would hope a healthy community.

Although every group will chart its own course, the goal is to develop a loving community, and you can enhance the process by emphasizing, and facilitating, two things. First, include in the covenant and continually remind the group that whatever is said in the group must remain in the group.

The second thing to keep in front of the group is the idea of honesty. It is a sad commentary on the Christian church that we are often extremely effective at masking the truth. The Cell should be a place where members can come to speak and hear truth.

3. Know your leadership role. Some leaders will be too laissez-faire, others too intense and controlling. You should obviously strive to maintain a positive balance between control and looseness, task-orientation and relationship building.

The Task That Lies Ahead

In this section we covered a great deal of ground—that will be built upon in the coming session. As you can see, there is a lot to think about, and the expectations upon leaders are great. But keep two things in mind. First, let your ministry be built upon positive principles, remembering that the goal of small groups is to make disciples, the foundation is leadership, and the structure within which growth occurs is community. Second, whatever fundamentals your group utilizes, do them well, using every possible means to build community.

Homework: (this will prepare you for Session 4)

1. Turn to the end of this manual and you will find one of the additional resources: "LEADERSHIP APTITUDES PROFILE". Please take time to do the assessment and look at the descriptions.
2. Read through the notes of session 4 "BECOMING A LEADER" and see how this connects with the homework.

4. BECOMING A LEADER

1. Who is IN CHARGE anyway?

Learning to be Good Leaders

2 Timothy 2:2 says: *The instructions which you heard from me, along with many witnesses, transmit and entrust (as a deposit) to reliable and faithful men who will be competent to teach others also.*

i. Understand Biblical Leadership

What is your motivation for leadership?

- ➡ Serve Christ. Bear fruit in your life. Be an example to the body. Use your gifts to serve others. Communication of the message of reconciliation

Small Group Discussion: What are the Biblical Characteristics of a good leader? The Bible gives many examples of good and bad leaders ... read the following passages: Exodus 18: 19-23; 1 Tim 4:11-16; 1 Tim 3:1-13

Do you as a leader have/display/use these? What do you find easy/hard?

ii. Understand and fulfill your Responsibilities

1. Build a Leadership Team

Small Group Discussion:

What do think it means to “Build a Leadership Team”? Why is this important?

2. Connect People to Community

You as the leader facilitate (make possible) self disclosure, understanding, care and support for people.

3. Develop the Members of your Group

You are to care and nurture your small group members so they become fully devoted followers of Christ and participating members of the church. In part you are taking on the role of a pastor!

4. Multiply the Ministry the Ministry

As growth comes, it is important to always have birthing a new group in your mind. This is so that appropriate care can be given to each member

iii. Know your Style of Leadership and seek to become excellent at all you do

A. AUTOCRATIC

Descriptors: Wields power, Has his way, Excludes others, Eyes on self, Leader-centred

- Maintains control, treating group members as listeners and followers
- Determines goals and policies
- Is more interested in subject matter (content) than people (process)
- Makes all the decisions, disregarding other's views
- Talks too much
- Focuses attention on self

B. LAISSEZ – FAIRE

Descriptors: Conceding, Omits, Gloomy

- Exercises minimal control, allowing members to direct
- Doesn't prepare; lets discussion go
- Doesn't seem to care
- Causes the group to accomplish very little
- Encourages fragmentation through lack of discipline
- Makes no attempt to regulate events
- Lacks courage in making plans

C. DEMOCRATIC

Descriptors: Non-controlling, Equips others, Tender-hearted

- Shares control with members
- Shares leadership responsibility
- Believes in other people
- Creates a sense of security and belonging
- Ensures that others have leadership opportunities
- Makes certain that if he withdraws, the group will not fall apart
- Sees that the group discusses all policies

D. AUTHORITATIVE

Descriptors: Workaholic, Empowers others, Blends the group

- Maintains strong control, yet actively involves members in the discussion
- Has a definite purpose and plan, but is open to modification
- Is active and energetic, and seeks the involvement of others
- Is prepared to give necessary direction and support
- Uses communication skills to involve others
- Takes responsibility until others can assume it

Small Group Discussion: When you look at the leadership styles of leading a small group, you can see that there are pro's and con's to all of them. What do you think about the following:

- What leadership style would be best to start a new small group?
- What leadership style would be best to keep a healthy small group?
- What leadership style would be best to birth a new cell?
- What leadership style would be best to maintain a cell at where it is and keep it there? (risk is death of cell)

iv. Stay committed to Personal Growth

1. Study God's Word
2. Practice Spiritual Disciplines (Solitude, Fasting, Sacrifice, Service, Fellowship, Confession,)
3. Prayer. How?
4. Reaching out to the lost (Evangelism is best done in relationships). How?
5. Sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, to be led by what He says/desires.
6. Commit yourself to excellence in your leadership skills (continue to get better through training, teachings, books, mentoring) How?

Points to ponder:

Are you committed to personal growth? What is one thing that you would like to get better at? Ask your group members if anyone feels strong in this area and ask them to share some of their "secrets" to keeping this discipline/commitment! Gather a list of ways that you could try!

"Group life – in meetings and between them – is what people are searching for. They want to be understood, cared for and developed. For this to become a reality, leaders need to create a group environment that will meet those needs and move members toward Christlikeness."

But in order to get there, there may be some bumps and bruises, some cuts and some healing, some victories and some failures, some stretching and shrinking ... GROWING PAINS. How can we reduce the amount of pains and increase the amount of growth?

Review

GOOD SMALL GROUP LEADERS:

1. Understand Biblical Leadership
2. Understand and fulfill their Responsibilities (Build a team, connect people to community, develop members, multiply)
3. Know their Style of Leadership (AUTOCRATIC, AUTHORITATIVE, DEMOCRATIC, LAISSEZ – FAIRE) in small groups and are seeking to become excellent at all they do.
4. Are committed to personal growth (Study God's Word, Practice Spiritual Disciplines, Prayer, Reaching out to the lost, Spirit-led, despite to be excellence in skills)

Tools for Personal Growth

If you have been honest with yourself during this session, you realize that we all have a long way to go in improving our leadership ability. On this side of heaven, we will always struggle with deficiencies in some areas. At the same time, each and every leader must continue growing throughout His or her life. Leadership effectiveness will be validated by the way that Christian leaders apply discipleship principles to their own lives.

2. Freedom to Fail Gracefully

What happens when we are not growing in the way that we should? What if we believe that God wants us to do a particular thing, and we refuse to do it? What if a relationship we are in becomes broken and we know that at least part of the blame is ours?

The most liberating thing about the gospel is that it provides a solution for failure. If you were a humanist, who believed that human beings represent the world's highest potential, and you failed at something important, where would you go? There would be nowhere for you to go for help except to other failing humans. As Christians, we know that human beings are always failing, and living in constant need of God, but we can go to God. We can tell God about our failures and ask Him to forgive us and help us to go on. In response, God tells us, "Yes, I saw that. You did blow it. But Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is enough to cover your mistake. Consider it a closed issue. Go and don't do it anymore. I still love you." This is what the Bible calls "grace"—undeserved favor.

Imagine how tormented Peter felt when he came to His senses in the temple courtyard and realized that he had publicly disowned his master and friend during Jesus' most difficult hour (Jn 18:15–18, 25–26). Only a few days later, however, he ate breakfast with Jesus on the beach, and their relationship was restored (Jn 21:1–19). Think how relieved Peter must have been to receive forgiveness from Jesus. Few disciples had blown it worse than Peter, and few disciples went on to become more useful to God. In spite of failure, God's grace allows us to move on as disciples.

Remember what Paul wrote:

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained.
(Phil 3:12–16)

Discussion/Study Questions for Session 4

1. Knowing this, with God's help, are you willing to be a Cell leader who becomes a disciplemaker? And more importantly, are you willing to be a growing disciple?
2. Why is it necessary to know that you are sometimes going to fail as a leader?
3. How can you balance the demands of leadership with a healthy understanding of your weakness and frailty?

5. A CARING COMMUNITY

“I can’t be a part of this group anymore. It is tearing me apart, because of all the tension that has not been dealt with. And I am tired of lying awake late at night after our meetings because I am so hurt. I hope you all know that I care about you, but I can’t deal with this group any longer. Please understand.”

You had come to the Cell meeting this Wednesday evening prepared, as always, to get deep into Bible study. But your study was suddenly interrupted by Brian when he started sharing his pain. It was as if a dam had burst, and there was nothing that could hold back the flood.

As he speaks, you want to object to what he is saying, to fix the situation quickly before it gets more out of hand. But you find yourself listening intently, believing deep down that what he says is true.

You, too, leave the Cell meetings frustrated at times. You wonder if you talk too much, and your spouse wonders if she sometimes comes across as stupid and uneducated. You are able to talk to each other and calm each others’ concerns. But Brian has no one he can vent his frustrations to. Even so, you wonder how Brian can feel as he does. He is smart, has a great personality and a good job. Why does he feel rejected and misunderstood?

Fortunately for Brian, your group reaches out in love, and His feelings are affirmed. The problems that he has addressed are dealt with, and Brian feels accepted as a person. Little does he know that he has just helped your group become a more loving, accepting, caring group.

But what went wrong? Why, after months of meeting with the Cell, did he feel that people were rejecting him? How could this be when everyone wanted this group to be a place where they could find refuge?

What Is Left to Give?

Statistics, studies, reports and surveys all inform us of what we already know—our lives are fragmented, stressful and just plain hard. Many families have two working parents encountering frustration at work as well as overwhelming responsibilities at home. Children who need their parents are left to themselves because their parents are struggling to make ends meet. Singles often struggle with loneliness. Elderly people are neglected. In short, many people are just trying to survive.

The survival mentality carries over into the church as well. People need a break, and the worship hour is often the best time they have to just relax, take a few breaths, and stop thinking. This is why many church leaders become frustrated with a membership that is not engaged in active Christian living. Other members who do become involved in the work of the church tend to back away when tensions flare because they don’t want to deal with another kind of stress. Church leaders must be concerned with people who are attempting to just survive, rather than to grow.

The social sciences teach us that human beings have various needs which they seek to fulfill in a variety of ways. As Abraham Maslow has pointed out, these begin with the physical and move “upward” until self-actualization needs are met.

Maslow emphasized that we will take care of physical needs before we move on to meet deeper ones. In other words, we first learn to survive before discovering how to live fulfilled lives.

There are many people in the church who are trying to cope with the busyness of their lives. They have enough trouble addressing the problems that come with everyday living without also focusing on spiritual, mental and emotional growth. So these needs often get put on the back burner for a day when there is enough time and energy. And that day often doesn't come.

The process of discipleship, however, involves moving people past the daily effort of living and into the joy of being Christ's children in the world.

Survival and the Cell

Going back to the problem with Brian, it's not very difficult to understand why the group never recognized his pain, even though other members were also struggling. We can be so occupied with everyday pressures that we miss the subtle relational messages that are exchanged. In addition, we are better at focusing on and understanding our own feelings than understanding others'.

Nobody meant to hurt Brian, and nobody meant to ignore His needs. Unfortunately, his need for acceptance was not being met by the group. Yet, if small groups are ideal places for people to grow and are the best way to provide care for individuals, why is it that people are frustrated by small groups?

While small groups are indeed an ideal place for individuals to be cared for, there are potential pitfalls. Cell leaders who want to develop a caring community need to understand individual needs, how they can affect the group's perception of individuals, and how to care for those with special needs.

Individual Needs

"Oh, isn't he cute!" The young parents beam as they present the young child to the excited gaze of family and friends for the first time. Very few things generate as much enthusiasm as a young child who is brought into a room.

We think of children as little bundles of joy, but they are also bundles of responsibility. Their physical needs require constant attention, and parents spend many stressful hours determining what particular cry fits which need.

There are many other needs that must be met at birth and for the rest of their lives. Their minds need to be stimulated, so parents invest countless hours introducing them to different sights and reading them books. In addition, children must learn that they are not the only people on the face of the earth, so they will need discipline in order to learn consideration for others.

And then come the esteem needs. Children need to be shown, in a myriad of ways, that they are loved. Without the foundation of solid love at home, the child is often handicapped in other areas of life. Rejection by parents can be worked through, but at great cost.

Finally, they need to be encouraged and stimulated to grow. They might take up musical instruments or sports. Perhaps they will edit the school yearbook, or they might run for student government. A big part of growth, their spiritual growth, must be encouraged in order for them to become all that Christ wants them to be.

In adulthood, these needs are just as important. Perhaps you are aware of your need for approval or stimulation. Or you may understand the importance of discipline when it comes to certain areas of your life. A good Cell ministry which understands individuals will seek to minister to these unique needs.

There are four basic needs that the Cell can, and should, seek to address in love. They are the need for reality, acceptance, stimulation and leadership development.

Reality

Reality is an important concept to grasp if we are to live balanced lives. You probably know people who have lost touch with reality. They may think that they are somebody or something that they aren't. Or, their handicap may be a little more subtle, so that they think others are out to get them, when in fact they are the cause of their own problems. Unbalanced people are unlikely to get their lives together until they are able to gain a more realistic understanding of life.

All of us have areas in which we are not exactly realistic. Often those who think that they are great counselors encourage people to depend on them. People who want the lead part in a play or in the choir may not realize that they don't have the necessary gifts. We may picture ourselves as great speakers, or leaders, or athletes, when in fact we are nothing more than ordinary. We all need a healthy dose of reality so that we can realize our limitations and our potential.

But just what do we mean by "reality"? There are two parts to reality. First, reality involves an understanding of the way things actually are. We are realistic when we understand that a large part of the world is at war. Or when we perceive that drugs and other powerful influences are destroying our culture. We are also realistic when we recognize our own limitations and sins.

The second part of reality seeks to perceive reality as God created and intended it. In this kind of reality we come to understand the way things could, and indeed shall, be. We truly comprehend reality when we understand and attempt to live as God intended—loving God and one another.

Ultimate reality is seeking to move toward God's way of living while coming to grips with an evil world and one's own life situation. And it is the responsibility of the Cell to help individuals deal with the present reality of their lives while coming to grips with the future challenge of God's reality. What better place than a Cell to discover about ourselves and God's plan for our lives?

A caring community enables us to understand how we need to change. We can also learn our limitations. And as we learn to rely on these friends to teach us, they will point us in the direction we should be going in order to experience growth.

Unfortunately, there are many things that hinder this process in the Cell. We aren't always honest when we deal with one another.

We sweep problems under the rug, saying in effect that we don't want to rock the boat—until finally some incident causes us to take action.

In order for realism to be a part of the Cell, three ingredients are essential. First, *humility* must be present in both giver and receiver. It is impossible to share weaknesses with those who you know will make fun of you later, or with those who will use it to their advantage. It is also impossible for weaknesses to be dealt with when we know that the subject is unable to take loving correction.

The second ingredient is *honesty*. If you think about it, we are often not very honest with each other. Even when we are hurt repeatedly and even tell other friends about it, we don't usually confront the person who causes our pain. When we don't, we allow people to go on hurting others or even themselves. We also hinder the growth process when we lie by our actions or words.

The Cell is a good place for caring, sensitive honesty to be utilized. Some people cannot accept the truth, and they are better left alone. Many others, however, are relieved that others know their weaknesses and still accept them. In this environment people can overcome their weaknesses and grow.

The third ingredient is *self-examination*. When was the last time you went back to someone whom you might have hurt, and asked them if indeed you had done something to offend them? It's probably not something we do very often. Yet Jesus spoke about setting relationships in order when he said these words in Matthew 5:23–24: "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."

We need to pay attention to how we interact with others so that we can learn from our own mistakes. In fact, if we would pay close attention to how our actions affect others, they probably would not need to confront us. When it comes to providing a sense of realism, you will set the pace. It will require concentrated effort, and some risk taking, for this to happen.

Acceptance

We can't do better in life than to have a few close friends who know, understand and accept us. You have probably heard people say, "We like you because ..." and "We love in you spite of..." Everyone possesses certain character traits that could potentially turn others off. We guard these areas carefully, only letting people see our inner selves little by little. When we finally find a friend who loves and accepts us even when there is reason not to, there is no better feeling in the world. Unconditional love is the greatest gift one person can give another.

We come to Christ understanding that we are sinners, and we should also live with Christ's community in the same way. Small groups are effective only if people are accepted with both good and bad qualities and encouraged to try new things. When we stumble, we need loving hands, not condemning shoves. When we fail, we need approving looks, not disdainful glances. When we succeed, we need gentle encouragement, not silence. Nurturing happens when we learn to accept ourselves and each other before God.

Stimulation

Have you ever listened to someone talk about a very exciting topic, while droning endlessly in a monotone voice? Instead of getting excited, you want to go to sleep. Why expend your energy getting excited for the program of a person who doesn't seem to care?

Small groups need to stimulate people to move forward in the Christian life. People will leave an exciting Cell meeting believing that the challenge of living as a Christian in the world is possible and rewarding. People in a backbiting or boring Cell will feel as though they are facing insurmountable challenges in their faith.

There are three steps involved in growth stimulation. The first is *fascination* with a particular issue that could change your life. Perhaps it starts with respect for the way a friend treats her spouse, and it produces questions about how it might change your own marital relationship. Maybe a timid group member looks up to another member who is not afraid to take risks. Then again, it might be a non-Christian observing how Christians in the group interact. People are more willing to grow when they are attracted by the lifestyle of someone they want to imitate.

The second step is *intellectual knowledge*. In this step people attempt to learn more. The learning hasn't yet produced much fruit, but the knowledge necessary for growth has entered the thought process. As they think through the new information they have received, they become convinced that a particular course of action would benefit them.

The third step is actually *acting on acquired knowledge*. In section one we talked about playing tennis. A person sees others playing tennis and becomes fascinated with the possibility of being a tennis player. She then needs to understand how the racket, court, net, balls, rules, and other player(s) fit together. Finally, she gets to practice her brand new knowledge on the court. As time goes on she become better and better, perhaps even reaching the professional level.

People actively engaged in learning go through these three basic steps. Knowing this, the Cell leader can better understand why, even after a particular topic was covered, the actions of a group haven't changed. Unless they have been shown the reality of Christian living in another person's life, they will not understand its relevance in their own.

The Cell will also produce leaders when the group atmosphere is realistic, accepting and stimulating. This happens when people are allowed to speak about what is on their minds, make positive contributions in relationships, and share ways that they are growing. They become more confident in their ability to use their gifts to make positive things happen.

Relating to Individuals

"Hey, Sharon, I love ya!" shouts Jim, as he wraps his arm around your waist. He pulls you into a hug, asks you how you are doing, and pats you on your shoulder as he waltzes away. You know better than to respond to his greeting. Jim is already reaching for the next person as he comes into contact with you. You find yourself cringing inside when you see him because you sense his insincerity.

How would you like a Cell leader like Jim, who feels that his physical touch and outgoing personality are adequate to reach each member of the group?

Or what about a leader who is detached? How about a leader who looks down on some or all of the group? What if your leader put people down for their answers, or always had the right answer?

Leaders like Jim do more harm than good, with their “feel good” message which makes “ministry” easier on them. Cell leaders must learn to focus their ministry on the complex needs of individuals.

How can the leader facilitate the realistic, accepting, caring, empowering environment that we are speaking of? The place to start is to consider how you view people. This influences your attitude and actions. People will feel loved, judged, inadequate or empowered according to the way you act and speak with them.

If you don't like someone in your group, it will be communicated whether you want it to or not. If you think someone talks too much, or if you consider someone a weakling, your words and actions will subtly demonstrate how you feel. Even if you do not recognize your attitude on a conscious level, individuals will sense your feelings one way or another.

On the other hand, if you genuinely care for each person and make every effort to help people grow, your group will be effective. If you strive to be free of negative attitudes, you can concentrate your leadership efforts on ministering to people. Here are a few principles that will help you develop a positive atmosphere for individual growth in the Cell:

1. Understand that the Cell will, over time, learn to perceive individuals as you perceive them. Not only do your words and actions influence individuals, they also influence how the group will perceive its individuals. If you use guilt to get people moving, your group will learn to thrive on guilt. If you compete for glory, your group will also compete. If you are threatened by an individual, others will become threatened as well. Instead, the apostle Paul would tell you to “build others up” and “take on the mind of Christ in humility.”

2. Make it a habit not to talk about one member of the group to others when that member is not around. Gossip tends to make us feel self-righteous, thereby feeding our pride. Additionally, it hurts the person who is not present. And then it causes a breakdown in trust, because we know that if one person is talked about when they are not present, it could just as easily be us. If things need to be said, tell them to the whole group. If your concern for one member of the group is strong enough, speak to your pastor or another qualified person. But don't talk about members who are not present.

3. Foster interpersonal group caring. One of the most positive things that can happen in your group is that each member is genuinely cared for by the others. The leader cannot demand that the group be loving toward its members. Neither can you use guilt or manipulation. But you can facilitate the process of caring by first modeling genuine concern and then encouraging the group to follow your lead.

Suppose one member criticizes another, and you see it causing pain. Bringing it to the attention of the offender could save a lot of damage. Or, perhaps two people have differences and one comes to you to talk about the other. You could send them to each other and perhaps act as the mediator. Or, a member might end up on the fringe of the group because of being ignored. You could make the others aware that this is happening so that they could draw the person in. Through modeling and gentle direction, you can effectively teach the group how to care for each individual.

4. One of the greatest gifts you can give anyone is your loving prayer on their behalf.

Shortly before Jesus was crucified, we are allowed an intimate look at the prayers of the Savior on our behalf (Jn 17:20–26). Jesus was praying for one thing—that all Christians would know the Father as he knew the Father. The cry that welled up from deep within His soul on the night before he was to die was that the intimacy he possessed as part of the Trinity would be shared by all who would call themselves His children.

This prayer should be yours as well. What is it that allows you to be a leader if not a heartfelt desire to connect people with God? The only difference between Jesus' prayer and yours is that you must also pray that you receive the same blessing of intimacy that you desire for others.

5. Finally, know that the way you perceive yourself is, in a great part, responsible for how you deal with individuals. Every person in the world possesses a degree of insecurity, whether realizing it or not. But leaders need to be aware that their feelings about themselves can hinder or harm good leadership skills.

Do you like yourself? Then you will tend to like others because you won't be easily threatened.

Do you feel inadequate? If so, you may try too hard to win approval, or you may compete, or do something worse. We need to take seriously the command to "love our neighbor *as we love ourselves*." Healthy love of others starts with a genuine love for self. If you need help in this area, please talk to your pastor or someone else who can help you.

Handling Special Needs

In a healthy, caregiving Cell, people will be dropping their guards. As they do, they allow each other to see more of their struggles. We all experience insecurities and problems, and sometimes we need help. Even though peer helping is a difficult part of community building, and despite the fact that there are pitfalls when attempting to meet individual needs, *helping is necessary* because Christian love offers itself in good times as well as in bad.

Every group struggles at one time or another with special needs. Someone may be struggling with depression or the loss of a loved one. Another may be struggling with issues from childhood. A businessperson may be frustrated in His or her job. You should do all that you can to be prepared to minister to special needs within the group. Think back over your life in the past few years. Was there a time when you went to another person for counsel? If so, you will remember that it involved your relationship with God, others or yourself. People are relational, and we become imbalanced when any or all of these three relationships causes undue tension. Understanding this, the goal of Christian helping is to enable a person to find restoration with God, others or self.

A Christian helper recognizes God's role in the lives of people. Knowing that we are created in the image of God, we understand that a part of us will never be right until we are in good standing with God. We might help someone through a particular crisis by focusing on the situation at hand, but we must always keep in mind that each individual needs a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Basic Helping Principles

Here are a few principles that may help as you deal with people in a helpful manner:

1. One of the basic premises in a helping relationship is that people are responsible for their own actions. Some people do not want to walk alongside you; they want you to carry them. Your relationship with them must lead them to independence, not dependence.
2. People may come to you with what they think is the problem (or what they want you to think is the problem) when there is another, deeper issue. Make sure that you gently probe until you find the full extent of the situation.
3. People come to you assuming that you will keep their problems in confidence. You do not have the prerogative to discuss one person with another unless—perhaps—you need to seek help from someone who is more qualified than you.
4. On the other hand, never swear or promise your own secrecy when someone asks for it before telling you something. As a lay helper you are not bound by law to confidentiality, and you might need to act on a rare occasion in someone's defense (in the case of suicide, for example).
5. You need to be careful not to get in over your head. You can do a lot as a peer helper, but there are many problems that should be handled by professional counselors. If you feel that you are not equipped to help a person, you should say so and consult your pastor.
6. It is wise to let men help men and women help women. There is a special kind of intimacy that occurs in many helping relationships, and sexual attraction can easily complicate things.
7. It is very easy to want to "fix" peoples' problems, especially when you see that the "answer" is very simple. But what is obvious to you may not necessarily be apparent to the one being helped. You shouldn't try to rush the process of helping just because you think you know the answers. Your job is to empower people to discover for themselves what their problems are and what they should do in response. Until they reach that point, they are not ready to deal with their problems.
8. As you become involved in helping relationships, you will find yourself wanting to express your opinions. But sometimes your statements will come as judgments. The best way to show people their weaknesses is to ask the right questions (in a sensitive manner) or restate the problem so that they start listening to what they themselves are saying.

For instance, a man might be saying about his wife, "She's a real loser, and I wish that she were dead. Why, she's never even tried to love me. I don't know why I stay with her."

In response, you could say, "Don't you think you're coming down a little hard on her? My goodness, nobody is as bad as you say."

But in fact that response would probably cause him to feel stronger about his original statement because you have attacked his original idea. Instead, you should try this response: "It sure sounds like you are mad at your wife. You are saying that she has never really loved you." This kind of statement allows the speaker to hear what he is saying, so that his next words are directed at his own statements rather than yours.
9. Please, avoid pat answers like "You just need to pray," or "God loves you, and so do I." People need real relationships with caring friends, not pre-programmed brush-off maneuvers.

10. Feel free to pray with people. You will find that people discover real peace when you pray with them, and this can serve as a model to help them discover restoration with God.

Handling Crisis Situations

There will be times in your ministry life when special situations arise that stretch you to the limits of your ability. For example, in the case of accident, illness or death, you should become involved as a friend. You need to avoid pat phrases, seeking instead to become a good listener. People who are grieving need caring, nonjudgmental people to share their grief.

Suicide is another problem you might face. Some people are always talking about suicide and never try it. Others “attempt” suicide, doing just enough to draw attention to themselves. Still others keep quiet and do what it takes to terminate their own lives. No matter which situation you find yourself involved in, suicide is a very serious concern.

In the course of normal conversations, someone might make an offhand comment about suicide. Don’t treat it lightly. When people talk about suicide, find out what caused them to mention it, and help them to understand what it is they are talking about. If you are scared for their lives, don’t hesitate to act.

You do have a few weapons at your disposal. You can first try to help the person as much as you can. You should also involve your pastor and any church members who have expertise in helping people. Then, you might want to call local psychologists or psychiatrists for advice.

When things are going along as planned, we seldom take the time to think about individuals and their needs. But when a crisis takes place, we are reminded that ministry to individuals in the Cell is crucial to the strength of the community. And that ministry begins with the leader.

Discussion/Study Questions for Session 5

1. In your own words, what is the main issue that is presented in the opening section as well as the sections “What Is Left to Give?” and “Survival and the Cell”?
2. What other problems might hinder ministry to individuals in the Cell?
3. Which of the five principles highlighted in “The Leader and the Individual” is most important to you, and why?
4. What are some ways that you can teach the cell group to care for its members?
5. Why is prayer “one of the greatest gifts you can give”?

6. A DYNAMIC COMMUNITY

Have you ever worked on a complicated jigsaw puzzle? While you worked, you probably had the cover of the box with the picture of your final goal propped up as a silent but constant reminder of the end result that you hoped to attain. Surveying the pile of hundreds of pieces, you observed that each one is uniquely cut, possessing its own color pattern. And each piece made sense only when placed together with other specially shaped, different colored pieces. Your job as the puzzle-solver was to search for pieces that fit together. No matter how you went about putting the puzzle together, if you put in the time you ended up with the picture that was on the box top.

Some people are better at building puzzles than others, but most people are capable. Hard work, strategy and studious concentration are all keys necessary to bring hundreds of pieces together into one scene.

And this is where we have come in our discussion of community: How do we bring together a group of 3 to 12 individuals in such a way that all needs are met in one group? How can we “fit” unique people into a picture representing God’s idea of community?

God’s Design for Community

The challenge in community building is that we need to bring a number of individuals together in such a way that they are headed in one direction without losing their uniqueness. And it is a great challenge. There are over four billion distinctly unique people sharing the same planet. If all of these people went their separate ways in order to meet their own needs, we would have a great problem. Without unifying factors such as laws, dreams or causes to unite people, there would be total anarchy.

Like the world, the church is a composite of millions of people. We already have our unifying factor in Jesus Christ, who is the head of the church. But put twelve different Christians in the same room for a few days, and you will discover the incredible diversity, and potential for conflict, that exists. Many wonder if indeed they even want to be part of the same movement when they discover how different they are from others.

But what did God intend for the church? Are we just to know each other on a surface level so that we get along better? Should we get together only with those who believe, think and act as we do? Or should we unite around a particular cause, such as missions, so that we keep busy enough not to emphasize differences?

God’s plan for community building in the church is that people who would not necessarily be friends in another setting come together and start the long, difficult process of becoming co-disciples. The Black man, the White woman, the Indian child, the businessperson and the construction worker all belong in the church. In community we learn that ours is not the only race, or life situation. We also learn that we are not the only person with gifts, or sins, or trials. In short, the egocentrism that marks each of our existences is slowly dismantled when we confront and love people who are as special as we are.

The Bible says that even spirit beings will watch in amazement as God creates a unified church out of very different groups of people (Eph 3:6–11). It is a beautiful plan, although one full of dangers, and we have a part in fulfilling it.

Cell Dynamics

Every group, like each individual it represents, has a distinctive character. However, there are dynamics in every group that we can explore together. Awareness of each of these can help you as you prepare to make disciples through small groups.

Communication patterns. You have probably seen the communication diagrams that portray what happens in the course of ordinary conversation. The “sender” speaks to a “receiver,” followed by the “receiver” becoming the “sender.” The two individuals in the diagram interpret, or decode, the messages by using their own “filters.”

In extreme conditions, two people might use the same phrase(s) and mean opposite things (for example, to one person “I am going home” might mean His present dwelling place, while to another the phrase might mean the place where she grew up), or they might say different things and mean the same thing. Each person interprets communication from personal experience.

This highlights the importance of discovering each person’s past and present so that individuals in the group can become more sensitized to what others may think and feel. A person who had grown up in an extremely strict family might cringe inside when present at a conversation on the importance of discipline. Another person going through a long and painful crisis could feel guilty if the discussion centered around being joyful in the Lord. In these cases, two perfectly legitimate topics could bring very negative feelings because they are interpreted through different filters.

In every group, there is a possibility of misunderstanding, confusion, doubt and guilt occurring through ordinary conversation. Every Cell must consciously work to overcome the problems of communication if it is to become a loving community. So the leader can strive to both model and teach rules for communication. These can include, but are not limited to, honesty, a non-judgmental attitude, and affirming what each person says before responding.

Expectations. Group expectations affect group dynamics because people have ideas about where they are going in the future. People in the Cell have both conscious and unconscious ideas about how the group can meet their needs. These thoughts, often unexpressed, provide the motivation for their actions.

As long as the group knows what each person expects, this area can be very fulfilling to both individual and community. The problems come in when people have not communicated, for one reason or another, their hopes for what the group can do for them. In this case members might appear content when in reality they are frustrated by the group.

You cannot stop people from desiring what they will. Indeed, you also will have your own expectations. You must make every effort, however, not to let one person’s agenda destroy the group. A group with good communication patterns will be able to deal with this problem much better than one with poor communication. A positive way to handle group expectations is to develop a clear group covenant which deals with the issues of who the group is and what they do. (More on covenants in section thirteen.)

Consensus. The Cell is not a democracy, where the majority rules. Neither is it a republic, where elected officials rule. Instead, decisions are made by the group for the good of the

group. Each person is vital to the survival of the group, so each person's opinions and feelings can and should be expressed on any relevant issue.

The process of reaching group solidarity is difficult, but the consequences of not doing so are potentially devastating. The potential pitfalls of not reaching group consensus can be seen when the group must make decisions such as what new people to invite into the group, what to study, or where and when to meet. Satan works best through division. Arriving at decisions through majority rule or the will of one strong personality opens the door for problems. When consensus exists, people are affirmed and built up because their opinions are necessary. Leaders are developed through consensus.

Stages of Community

A major part of group dynamics is the life stages that groups will encounter. Each Cell must go through one form or another of the following four basic stages of community building:

Stage 1: Exploration—unity at the expense of diversity. Imagine that you are ready to lead your own Cell. It may be your first Cell or your twenty-first. You find yourself sitting in a parlor with eight other people who have expressed their desire to be in a Cell. Your job as their leader is to help them become the best group that they possibly can. Needless to say, everyone in that room (if they are typical) will want the Cell to be a positive experience. As a result, each person will do what seems to best insure the success of the group. The foundation for later group life is being laid, and it should be laid properly.

In the beginning, this means that people will often push aside personal feelings, small differences, and personality clashes. The unifying factor in this first stage is generally the common desire to begin a Cell. So you will spend the first few weeks developing a group covenant and preparing to move forward. Then you will settle into the weekly ritual of being a Cell. Like a newly married couple, you will be flushed with early successes. People may have gushed forth praise in these first weeks, and you may even be basking in the glow of being a good Cell leader.

You should enjoy this stage, because it is the easiest. People generally lay their individuality down and are content just being a part of a group. If some are feeling tension, they keep it to themselves in order to avoid rocking the unified group's base. The group is free to behave as it thinks a Cell should. Unity at all costs has been earned, but at the expense of diversity. Sooner or later, diversity will make a comeback.

Stage 2: Transition—diversity at the expense of unity. Many groups bog down in the first stage, contenting themselves with the ease that comes with keeping relationships on a surface level. These groups often rely on a strong leader to keep them functioning. Unfortunately, discipleship does not occur when people are merely followers.

Some groups, who are willing to pay the price and who have allowed themselves to maintain open communication, will move to step two. If step one represents the honeymoon stage, then step two is the "Hey, stop squeezing the toothpaste tube in the middle!" stage. Like a newly married couple just learning some of the faults of their mates, individuals in a Cell will take issue with one another. Frustrations that were forgotten come back in a rush, and differences become accentuated.

People are somehow surprised when this occurs. In gearing up for the group's birth and maturity, they have forgotten their own unique ness as well as the distinctiveness of

others. Chances are that there are great personality differences within each group of people. There are also a wide variety of personal beliefs, ranging from parenting ideas to theological issues. Add personal biases, bigotry, pride, competition, and you have a recipe for disaster!

Fortunately, a healthy Cell will move into step two and begin to confront its own diversity. A group may be “going along its merry way” when one member suddenly interrupts the conversation and raises concerns or hurts. The group will often be shocked, for its unity is being called into question. If all goes right, however, others will soon join in, and the leader will have a number of hot issues to work through.

At this point it is essential that you avoid trying to fix everything in order to make things right again. In order for your group to grow, they need to go through this stage. You should be prepared to facilitate the process as well as you can, knowing that great harm, as well as great good, can come from a time like this.

First of all, you can help them discover that *everyone thinks differently*. In times of tension, people often retreat to what they know instead of opening up for compromise (or admitting they are wrong). For example, someone may imply that you are raising your children incorrectly. Or a health enthusiast might get on your nerves because she thinks people should eat better than they do. One man may be so legalistic that you feel he stifles the group. A loving woman with a wonderful disposition may threaten you because everyone gravitates toward her. When they see how different they are, the group may wonder if things can be worked out.

The next thing you can help the group see is that *people have different beliefs* which influence their lives. Some of these will be, in your estimation, totally incorrect. In fact, some of their beliefs will probably go against all that you have been taught about the Bible. One woman might not believe that a particular book of the Bible belongs in the Bible. A man preoccupied with end times might believe that Jesus is coming in the year 2000. Someone who had a dramatic conversion might believe that everyone has to celebrate a “Christian birthday.”

Finally, you can help the group see that *each person has a personality that is unique*. Your group might have a man who picks His teeth during a meeting. An abrasive woman might butt in when you need to talk to another person. Maybe a particular woman is a frustrated leader who wants everyone to be like her. Or perhaps a successful businessman thinks he can run the Cell like he runs His company. One is egotistical, another terribly insecure. You may ask yourself how you ever got stuck with such a group of people!

The beauty of this stage is that you are forced to recognize that people are not at all like you, even when you thought your group was homogeneous. The ugly part of this stage is that your perception of others is clouded by insecurity and fear. Like the married couple in our example, you wake up to the realization that this relationship will involve either hard work or miserable coexistence. And one of the biggest lessons you learn, if you are willing, is that it is impossible to “convert” another person. You may want to reach out and change a person who is not like you, but you discover you are unable to change anyone but yourself.

So, you either make a commitment to work things (as a group) out until you can honestly love another, or you pretend to love, or you reject the other. If you are willing to work and make every effort to understand and love that person who is different, then you can go on to the next stage.

Stage 3: Action—unity alongside diversity. When you are busy trying to convince others of their faults, they pull back and deny them. But when you allow people to come as they are, they are often the first ones to let their faults be known. Your group is now entering a time when you can focus on your tasks. This doesn't mean that you forget what you have learned through the first stages, only that you apply your knowledge to build others up in Christ. You know that each new person who comes in will mean adjustments, but you feel secure in the structure of community that has been constructed. In this environment, people can "let down" their guard and start to grow. While this stage is not clearcut or smooth, it is a time when you can focus on the present and future of individuals and the group. Adding the reinforcement of periodic self-evaluation by the group will enhance your progress as a group.

By God's grace, many small groups should reach this stage and "take off." If you are willing to work within this open, honest, caring environment, you can enjoy the benefits of being affirmed as an individual while discovering the unity that Christ offers.

Stage 4: Plateaux—Decline or Multiplication. When a cell has come to a level of unity and sustained growth, one of 2 things will follow. The group will either get to the plateaux and declining path or it will multiply into one or several other cells. While discipleship and community transformation are the end goals for cells, it's important to recognize that health and growth lead to reproduction. A cell that refuses to multiply eventually loses the quality fellowship and commitment of the members. Some will be inside-focused clicks for a while but eventually decline will follow.

We must also accept the fact that sometimes termination or death will come for some cells for a number of unavoidable reasons. When this happens, members should evaluate their experiences, celebrate the wins and then move on with dignity. These members will either dissolve into other existing cells or they might be part of a resurrection/resurgence of a cell.

Roles and Personalities

In the process of building community you will undoubtedly discover that there are many different gifts, abilities and personalities in the body of Christ. We all function more effectively when we learn to affirm and encourage people to use their gifts for the benefit of all. People who develop and use their gifts invariably become Christian leaders.

It is helpful when discussing roles to remember your high-school days. Remember the many different types of people and groups that existed? Without oversimplifying, or allowing for the bigotry that comes through putting labels on individuals, you can learn to see people for who they are and what they offer the group. Our focus will be on roles, personalities and gifts that people bring to the group setting.

Me-Centered Roles

Everyone wants to make a good impression. We generally dress in a way that is appropriate to different settings, and we say things that we hope will demonstrate our intelligence, wit and charm. There is nothing wrong with trying to come across in a good way. The problem arises, however, when we use different settings solely for our advantage. There are several such "me-centered roles" that group members assume.

First, there's the *group clown*, a person so insecure that he or she has something witty to say for everything. While this individual could bring the group together for a time, his or her behavior keeps the group from serious discussion and positive growth.

Then, there's the *group expert*, who makes others feel like losers. The result is that people often feel stupid for raising questions. In the end, this person does all the speaking, and everyone else listens. A similar type is the *egocentric*, who has a bigger and better story than the one just told. Eventually, this person will inhibit others from opening up.

The *one-issue individual* manages to turn every discussion into his or her one area of expertise or fascination. Group members are turned off when their own concerns are constantly twisted to fit this person's ideas. Another type, the *counselee*, is adept at turning any Cell meeting into a counseling session. Unless the group is specifically for counseling, and especially if this person is not trying to help herself, people either ignore this person or they are destined to listen to countless tales. Eventually, some or all of the group members drop out, and the counselee has to find another group.

Another type, the *group gossip* is always good for a few juicy tidbits about others. While he often expresses the desire to help others in a positive way, he influences group perceptions about people in a negative way. Eventually, the group members learn to watch their own backs around this person.

There are many other negative roles, but they all have one thing in common—they draw attention to the individual and away from others. The root problem is usually insecurity, so the leader must not only deal with the negative behavior, but also try to find more positive outlets for the people playing me-centered roles. Negative behavior must be dealt with firmly and in love if the group is to survive.

Other-Centered Roles

Perhaps you know someone who is a fatherly or motherly type, one who can look on others with incredible kindness, listen with terrific sensitivity, and care with warm compassion. These people are indispensable in the group setting, for their main ministry is to the individuals within the group. Their strength is making people feel wanted, loved and cared for, and their gift is empowering others to live life with confidence and gusto.

Included in this category is the *friend*, the person who is able to reach across race, gender and other barriers to develop a significant relationship with others. (We would also call this person a disciplemaker!) This individual often gives advice, can be counted on to listen when others don't hear what is being said, and will stand beside people when everyone else has gone.

There are many kinds of friends, and a number of qualities that go with being a friend. One role is the *group affirmer*, finding the good qualities in others. Like the one leper, out of the ten that were healed, who returned to thank Jesus, this person is able to say, "Thank you," and "You did a great job," when others might miss the opportunity.

A second role is the *group sensitizer*, the individual who senses what others are thinking and feeling. A great deal of hurt is hidden during group meetings. The group sensitizer can make others aware of a member's reaction to the rest of the group. Then there's the *servant*, quietly moving from person to person and from situation to situation, doing the things that need to be done, without fanfare.

There are very few real servants, but when we come into contact with one we can picture the Master himself, towel around waist, teaching the disciples how they were to think and live.

The other-centered person not only meets the ministry demands of the group, but also shows the rest of the group how to care.

Group-Centered Roles

There are also individuals who contribute to the composite group. The “group” is the intangible means by which people are drawn together, and there are three different kinds of group-building persons. First, there are those people who help the group understand “what it is.” Then, those who will help the group to function effectively in “what it says.” And, finally, others who will help the group in “what it does.”

1. What the group is. The basic role in this category is the *group-focus person*, who never allows the group to forget why they come together and where they are going. Because of the importance of the role, this person is a leader, whether or not he or she is the “official” leader. Many groups wander aimlessly, some for years, with no clear direction. The group-focus person does not allow that to happen.

2. What the group says. Discussion is the trademark of small groups, but good problem-solving discussion is often hard to find. Some pastors are unsure about small groups because they feel that in that setting people tend to “share their ignorance” about the Bible, which could reinforce harmful beliefs. This is not too far off base where some groups are concerned. Fortunately, good mind-stimulating discussion with people filling some of the positive roles listed below can go a long way toward solving this problem.

Since groups are easily bogged down and sidetracked, the *issue clarifier* has an indispensable role in discussion. This person can remind the group what they are trying to learn and can help take a number of seemingly unrelated ideas and sum them up for the benefit of the group. From there, the *question asker* can probe by asking tough questions. A good question asker, who is encouraged to do so, can help a group learn many things. Then there are people who react positively to the question askers by posing possible solutions. The *problem solver*, like the issue clarifier, can keep the group on track. This person is often frustrated until issues are worked out. At the end of the discussion, the *summarizer* can bring together what was said, while the *reality tester* tries to determine if truth has indeed been discovered. The reality tester is one who can especially keep the whole process free from shared ignorance.

3. What the group does. All of the above roles are sometimes hard to pinpoint in any one person. This is not to say that they are unimportant, for they are essential for the survival of a healthy Cell. But this final category is very tangible because it involves fairly well-defined roles within the group. In fact, your group might attach special titles to some of the following people.

These functional roles can either be assigned or understood and are based on what people do best or what they believe most strongly in. Groups might have a *prayer coordinator*, *song leader*, *mission chairperson*, *outreach coordinator*, *community builder*, *Bible study leader*, or any number of other roles. It is not necessarily expected that these will be the Cell leader’s roles. Instead, as the leader, you become the group coordinator by placing people in areas they have expertise in and want to focus on.

There are two more roles required by the group. First, the *group evaluator*, who can help the group obtain a realistic picture of its progress. And finally, a *time-keeper* to help you stay on track timewise.

As you can see, there are many different types of personalities and roles that can be found in the Cell. Most people possess more than one of these roles—you should try to implement a group environment in which unhealthy roles are minimized, individuals are ministered to, and the group understands what it is, what it says, and what it does.

The Leader and Group Dynamics

You may be feeling a little overwhelmed with your responsibility. Even though I may appear to be speaking about Cell ministry as if it were a scientific process, nothing could be farther from the truth. Indeed, it would be impossible to design a course that listed a step-by-step recipe for small groups. You will learn to rely on the Holy Spirit, prayer and positive implementation of leadership qualities as you put the principles in this study to work. And this final section provides a framework which will enable you to ask the questions which you need to answer in the course of discipling through Cell ministry.

Good honest evaluation will be your key to discerning how you are doing. Leaders tend to be threatened by evaluation because they might discover things that are negative. But that is the very purpose of evaluation—to change what is bad and emphasize what is good. We're not in ministry to be God, so we don't have to be perfect. Evaluation can show us the areas where we are weak so that, with God's help, we can become better leaders while building a strong group atmosphere. The following are a few questions that leaders should regularly ask and answer:

- ☐ *Are we as a group making disciples?* It is easy to lose sight of our goal when we are just trying to keep up with the demands of life, family and ministry.
- ☐ *Am I, the leader, an effective discipler?* A good leader is growing, willing to lead others in the process of discipleship, and willing and able to empower others to become leaders in Jesus Christ.
- ☐ *Where is our group presently?* Develop the habit of *studying* the individuals and the group to discover where you are as a group. Unless you know the emotional, spiritual and mental state of your group, you may operate under a serious leadership handicap. A group of baby Christians might not be ready for heavy systematic theology. A bickering group should not take in new members. When evaluating the past and present reality of the group, you will want to evaluate group strengths and weaknesses, the status, contributions and problems of each individual, and the relationship of each individual to the group.
- ☐ *Where is our group headed?* Once you know where your group is, you can realistically set group objectives and start moving forward. This evaluative step is the goal-setting stage. You will want to evaluate the group both in its present state and for its future potential. Does your group want to get better at prayer? outreach? Bible study? interpersonal relationships? If so, then what would you like to see happen in the group?
- ☐ *How are we getting there?* Once you have set your goals, you can move from them right to the program.

If community will be your emphasis, then you can develop a program that will stimulate sharing, fun, honesty and other aspects of community building. If you also want to study the Bible together, then you can pick a resource and move forward.

Community building is not easy, and sometimes it is not fun. But it is indispensable in the church. The church often makes great noise about world peace, and yet we find it difficult to coexist in a Cell together. No matter where you go as a Cell, you will accomplish little if you have not developed a loving, caring, honest atmosphere.

Discussion/Study Questions for Session 6

1. Why do you think God wanted to bring so many different Christians together as one body?
2. How does working through “who we are and what we do” (Cell Dynamics) define a group’s identity and help the group understand its expectations?
3. In your own words, what happens in the first stage of community?
second?
third?
fourth?
4. In the area of roles and personalities in the cell, what can be done if the cell leader is one of the people playing Me-Centered roles because of insecurities?
5. What do you think are some of the most important roles to a group?

7. A LEARNING COMMUNITY

You have waited for the box to come for quite some time. Inside is the gas grill that you ordered. Without waiting for your spouse to come home, you unpack the box and start assembling the pieces. You cannot wait to surprise her with a good charbroiled meal.

It doesn't take long, however, for you to realize that you have gotten in over your head. You have pieces all over the floor, but you cannot make sense of the large assortment of nuts, bolts and other parts. Eventually, you give up and push the box out of the way. Maybe you and your wife can work on it together when she gets home.

When your wife arrives she notices the mess in the corner. She runs to the box as excitedly as you had at first, and she starts to pull things from the box. You tell her how confusing it will be to assemble the parts, and then you busy yourself in the kitchen preparing an oven-baked supper. After a while, and wondering what has become of her, you wander into the garage. To your embarrassment, she is successfully assembling the parts.

How did she do it? Unlike you, she had gone straight for the owner's guide, complete with assembly instructions. You had decided that you could do without the guide. She had been much more realistic and was coming up with much better results.

You cannot do without the owner's guide when putting together a complicated gas grill. The same is true with the Christian life. You can learn about God from nature, and you can discover a great deal in relationship with others, but it is impossible to be an effective Christian without an understanding of God's Word. Unfortunately, even though we have a wealth of Bibles, Bible helps, and books about the Bible, most people spend very little time studying and meditating on Scripture. And until we discover the Word and its importance in our lives, we will be as frustrated and confused as the man who tried to put the grill together without instructions.

Reading the Bible can be stimulating and invigorating. Our lives, which are often full of seemingly unrelated pieces, come together under God's direction.

Approaching the Bible

Most Christians believe that the Bible is essential. But just how should you approach the Bible? The following are good guidelines to use in your own reading and application of the Bible.

Fact #1. The Bible is God's complete written Word. It represents all that God wanted to communicate directly to humanity about how to live within His truth.

Fact #2. The Bible is authoritative in every area of faith and life that it addresses. There may be things in the Bible that we cannot understand, but if we take its teaching seriously we can accept it with all sincerity, humility and obedience.

Understanding that the Bible is God's Word and is applicable to our lives, our first responsibility is to read the Bible and attempt to understand what it is saying. Since the Bible is recorded in human language and was written at specific times with special information, we first need to determine the original intent of the author (this is called

exegesis). Then, we can discover what the Bible says to Christians in our day (this is called *hermeneutics*).

Many religions beside Christianity have used the Bible for their own ends. It is possible to twist the Bible endlessly when verses are taken out of their original context and put together with other verses out of context. Thus, our second responsibility is to make sure that integrity guides our study, so that instead of manipulating the Bible, we study its different parts in context.

This means that a verse must be understood by its surrounding sentences and paragraphs. Sentences and paragraphs are interpreted by other paragraphs and by chapters. Chapters are interpreted by other chapters and by the book. And the book is interpreted by the other books of the Bible. Only by interpreting Scripture with Scripture will we be enabled to achieve a closer understanding of what God intended when His Word was recorded.

Then, our first response to God's Word must be willing submission to what it says. This does not mean that we become blind to our own feelings, questions and hang-ups. Instead, we are ultimately putting our faith in the One who authored the Book. With God's help, and our submission, the Word can "be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our paths" (Ps 119:105).

Our second response to Scripture is obedience, the byproduct of submission. If the Bible is truly our guide, we will attempt to become the kind of obedient disciples that God wants us to be.

It is said that, when trying to capture monkeys, trappers will put some food in a box and cut a small hole, just big enough for a little hand to slip through, in the side of the box. A monkey sees the box, reaches for the food and grasps it, then tries to pull its hand back through the hole. Unfortunately for the monkey, it is only possible to remove its hand when it lets go of the food. The trappers discovered something about monkey (and human!) nature when they realized that monkeys never let go. The foolish animal will hold on, caught in the trap, until the trappers return for their prize.

Like the monkeys, we have trouble letting go of our own sins and shortcomings, but there is something very freeing when we give in and turn things over to God. We discover that there is tremendous peace that comes with being in God's will. John 15:9–11 tells us what happens when we are obedient to Christ:

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

This passage makes the connection between obedience and joy. The church, or Cell, or family, or individual, that follows Christ will have joy in life.

The Bible in Small Groups?

There are some who might make a case, and it carries some legitimacy, that since the Bible is so precious, we should keep its interpretation in the hands of trained leaders who can teach us all that we need to know. The problem with this kind of thinking is that it *overestimates* the role that trained professionals should play in biblical application.

Pastors and church leaders are human and just as subject to error and sin as any other person. While not downplaying the pulpit and teaching ministries, we need to view them realistically. Without the balance of an educated laity, ministry can be used to lead many astray.

Secondly, this view *underestimates* the role of the Holy Spirit, who provides understanding and direction to the reader. The Spirit, God's "God with us" in the lives of believers, specializes in applying the Word to our lives. Only the Spirit can change a heart. Only the Spirit can convict a person in sin. Only the Spirit can convince somebody of the wisdom of God's plan. God's Word and the Holy Spirit are inseparable. When we remove people from directly reading the Bible, we tamper with a means that God finds effective for reaching tender hearts with His message. The Spirit will work in your life as you learn to apply principles of biblical interpretation that bring forth the clear meaning of God's Word.

And finally, this way of thinking *underestimates* the value of people. Church history has shown us that people who have been allowed to read and respond to God's Word directly have been Christians on the move. One of the greatest battles of the Reformation involved whether people were capable of reading the Bible for themselves. Wonderful results came from places where people had access to the Bible.

We need the same sort of movement today. We need to put down our "how to" books and books about the Bible and approach the Word of God itself with fresh vigor. Satan wants to keep us away from God's Word. God is waiting to reward those who read and apply His Word. Whose voice will we heed?

The Bible and Small Groups

Small groups are ideal settings for people to study the Bible. In Cell study, *people have ownership in the process of study and change.*

It doesn't take a world-renowned scholar to figure out that people learn best when they are accountable for the learning process. This is why teachers are stimulated by researching their subjects. In preparation for the teaching event, they not only need to put the information into their brain, they must also process it so they can present it in an understandable way.

Students, on the other hand, are much more inclined to put information down on paper in preparation for test day without caring about the information they have been given. They often have no feeling of responsibility for the class time—their concerns are focused on exams and papers.

Good small groups are helpful because they can bring teacher and learner roles together into one. Everyone in the Cell is responsible for what happens in the Cell. In this sense, *each person is a teacher.*

Because they have a part in the learning process, *all members are held accountable* to complete what the group has agreed to study.

If group consensus has been properly utilized, everyone will find the work reasonable and within reach. Knowing that others in the group will be expecting their participation, they are stimulated to complete their work. Whether reading a section of the Bible per day or answering questions in a workbook, they will be much more inclined to work on a consistent basis with a weekly meeting to look forward to than if they were studying alone.

Then, because they decide what they want and need to study, the topics will *challenge members within the framework of their lives*.

You learn soon enough if people in a Cell possess ownership in the group. If they come prepared and ready to share, they feel like the group is theirs. The Cell leader can encourage the group to choose study materials that bring the whole group together as co-teachers in the process of learning.

Small groups can teach orthodoxy and encourage orthopraxis. There are two parts to living in God's truth. Orthodoxy, or "right belief," means discovering what is true about God. Orthopraxis, or "right action," means living a life of obedience to God's way.

The Christ-centered Cell will want to teach its people God's truth. In the Bible, people come face to face with teaching about gossip, lying, bitterness, salvation, the Holy Spirit, holy living and a host of other issues. More importantly, they discover God's plan for the world and begin to find their place in history. Without an understanding of God's plan, the foundation for holy living is built on sand.

Once we understand what God wants, we are then able to act in obedience. The process of sanctification (Christian growth) is one that involves constant enlightenment. The more we learn about God, the more we learn of our own failure and weakness. We are encouraged by the Holy Spirit and our brothers and sisters in Christ to work on different areas of our lives, and we grow. Although we will not attain perfection in this life, we can move closer to God's model as displayed through Jesus Christ.

Bible Study Methods

There are many choices that are yours as you and your group decide what you would like to study. You can utilize discipleship booklets and other options listed in "Resources and Activities" under the heading "Deciding What to Study," or you can choose one of the Bible study methods below.

1. Scripture memory. Joshua 1:8 says, "Do not let this study of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." This verse in Joshua commands us to allow the Bible to permeate our thought processes until we are able to think spontaneously about its truths. This happens best when we spend enough time on a portion of Scripture to memorize it.

There are some wonderful topical memory systems, such as those produced by Navigators, that allow a group to learn, meditate, and benefit from the Bible. They are broken down topically so that a Cell can discuss each week's subject while sharing the weekly memorization verses.

2. Character study. Your group can locate each part of the Bible that tells a person's story and follow that character from beginning to end. As groups study like this, they are able to "climb into the skin" of Bible heroes. They learn that each is portrayed in graphically honest terms. Many were reluctant servants. Some were gifted speakers. All had glaring weaknesses. And God used each one to work His will in history.

You might, for instance, choose Elijah. Elijah was a fascinating person. All alone he stood up to King Ahab and Queen Jezebel with holy boldness. He faced down 400+ prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel. He lived in a cave, a widow's home, and by a brook. He suffered

defeat much of his life. Tracing His story throughout the pages of 1 and 2 Kings can be fun and challenging at the same time.

One benefit of this type of study is that, although there are books that can guide the study of a particular individual, all that's really needed is a Bible concordance, some diligence, and a notebook.

3. Themes. Another type of study that utilizes the Bible concordance, diligence, and a notebook is the study of Bible themes. Perhaps the group wants to learn about the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Or it might want to understand faith, or hope, or love. It is a great challenge to root out the whole Bible teaching on a particular matter so that the group can better understand its meaning. Group results can then be checked against other resources.

4. Bible study helps. There are a good number of Bible study materials that have been written to help Christians study a particular book of the Bible. These often take the inductive approach, allowing the Bible student to answer directed questions. People feel comfortable with these studies because the authors have designed them to allow for maximum student involvement. The group is allowed to draw its own conclusions from the study.

5. Inductive Bible study. Some people like to get right to the heart of Bible study and are willing to put in the time that is necessary. For these people inductive Bible study is a wonderful tool. Inductive study teaches you how to approach the Bible so that you can arrive at biblical truth with confidence. Through the use of questions, and the careful analysis of each text in its context, inductive Bible study can be the most exciting kind of study.

6. Book Bible study. Some people want to study books of the Bible without printed material and without the in-depth study that inductive Bible study often requires. For these, studying the Bible in the group could very simply involve each person reading a portion of Scripture and sharing what they have learned from their reading. The benefit of this type of study is that all conclusions are original and people are forced to think for themselves. A possible drawback is the potential for error that exists if passages are studied out of context.

Characteristics of Good Group Bible Study

Leaders often get scared when they think of leading a Bible study. Handling of the Word of God brings great responsibility, and no sincere leader wants to lead people astray. Some of this fear is legitimate, coming from a desire to be faithful to the biblical text. Many ministers experience the same feeling when they are preparing to preach on Sunday mornings.

But some of the fear need not be present. People in the church are often intimidated by pastors and other "experts" who seem to know all the answers and who appear well trained. But we don't need to compare ourselves with others. God can use our attempts to do good work, just as well as those of a charismatic speaker.

Are you a disciplemaker? If so, then you are more than qualified to lead a Bible study. People respect a disciplemaker. People are empowered by a disciplemaker. People are stimulated by a disciplemaker.

There are five things that lead to good study. If these five are present, and if the Cell has the goal of discipleship, the foundation of leadership, and the structure provided by community, then group study can be extremely challenging.

1. The nature of the study has been agreed on by the group, and each person expects the study to meet needs in their lives. This is one place where “the rubber meets the road” in group consensus. If a strong leader has pushed a particular pet study through, or if the majority has overruled a minority, then people in the group may not feel that the study is relevant. The place to start in group study is where everyone has legitimate, and felt, need.

2. The study has been broken down into legitimate units of study, and each student knows what is expected in weekly preparation. People are going to benefit from the Cell study if they have work to do on their own during the week, but this can also be counterproductive. If half of the group members are setting aside times alone with God and the other half are not, then home assignments will do more damage than good. It is better to start with small assignments and work up as people feel fulfilled in their study.

3. The study has definite application in the life of each group member. There is a potentially limitless number of study possibilities for a group, but not all studies will be beneficial. The goal of discipleship must always be kept at the forefront of group study. A group might be fascinated by Near Eastern architecture and its theological implications, but if this course of study does not help the group become better disciples it should not be done.

4. The group does justice to proper study of the Bible. Another characteristic of good group study is that the study utilizes exegesis (discovering author’s original intent) before attempting hermeneutics (understanding the passage in today’s world). It is easy to make up for our Bible comprehension weaknesses by jumping to quick conclusions. But the Bible is not trivial reading, and we are wise when we read it carefully.

Studying a complete book thoroughly, in a systematic and careful manner, is the best way to conduct a study. This allows you to see the book as a unit before getting into specific verses.

When this is not done it is easy to read a passage and discuss it without truly getting to the heart of the author’s intent. Misunderstanding the Bible’s message is like miscommunication—if you miss what I am trying to say, then we are most likely going in opposite directions.

5. The leader understands his or her role in the study process. The process of discipleship does not call for Bible “know-it-alls,” but for people who can stimulate learning and application. Cell leaders need not come prepared with extensive notes, thousands of questions, or cute illustrations. Instead, the leader should come prepared to facilitate the learning process.

First, the leader can *use study resources* like the ones we have talked about in this section. These studies can greatly aid in your preparation because you will be doing the same work as everyone else. If you understand the study’s intent, you will be able to chart your own course by following and adapting that of the material.

There is a pitfall to avoid, however. Some leaders will woodenly follow a study, question by question, not allowing for deviation.

If everyone has prepared, repeating each question will insult the intelligence of people who, having answered the questions, will want to move on to deeper levels of discussion. So the leader will want to keep discussion on course while allowing individual expression of concerns as well. A prepared group will need very little stimulation for great discussion to occur. Don't let a printed study hinder group creativity.

Second, the leader *does His or her homework before the Cell study*. Most Bible study helps are written for those who are not experts on the Bible. Use of resources and basic preparation can help you to effectively deal with your perceived inadequacies.

Before studying a particular book of the Bible, and in order to give yourself a "jump" on everybody else, read a synopsis of the book in order to determine author, purpose, themes, historical setting, and other relevant information. Then, get a leader's guide if it is available, since this will also provide valuable tidbits. Next, work through the study carefully to insure that you have dealt with every issue in the study. And then, when someone asks you a question and you don't know the answer, admit it. It may do the group good to wrestle with deep questions nobody knows the answers to.

Third, the leader will want to *direct the group discussion* in such a way that people feel free to express themselves within certain bounds. You don't necessarily want a discussion on prayer to turn into a conversation on how to hang drapes. You might, however, allow a person to raise her concern about why God doesn't answer yes to every prayer. If allowed, people will often chase tangents for the sake of chasing tangents. The leader could keep things on track by saying, "I'm fascinated by drape-hanging as well, but I have a question on prayer that I'd like to address," or "Speaking of drapery, I have a question on prayer...." People appreciate a leader who keeps them moving in the right direction.

Fourth, you will want to *ask open-ended questions*. The fastest way to build roadblocks in a group is to ask yes-or-no questions. Much more exciting are questions that begin with who, what, where, when, how and why. So instead of asking, "Do you think this is as important as the apostle Paul seems to make it?" you will want to ask, "Why do you think the apostle Paul felt this was so important?" Good questions lead to further discussion.

Fifth, you need to *affirm each person* who speaks so that their answers will be given value by others. Many people are scared to speak up, afraid that they will give a wrong answer and make fools of themselves. Imagine the pain of someone who finally does speak up and is laughed at!

Perhaps the best way to affirm people is by your paraphrasing back to them what they are saying. In this way, you are showing them that you take what they say seriously and that you are not judging them, even if you might disagree. If they are wrong, they will often discover it when hearing you recite what they have just said.

For example, someone might respond to the question "What does the phrase 'he makes me lie down in green pastures' in Psalm 23 mean?" by answering, "I think that it refers to the necessity of sleep." You could then say, "Barbara thinks that David is talking about sleep." Even though you think Barbara is wrong, by saying this you do not judge her response. Instead, you let Barbara, and the rest of the group, hear what she is saying. As she listens to your interpretation of what she says, she may amend her response to "Actually, what I meant was that God helps us to slow down when we become compulsive, and sleep is one aspect of His care." If she does not respond, the group probably will. But in the whole conversation, Barbara must feel affirmed so that she will speak up at another time.

Choose the Right Tools

Beside the study materials and your own creative approach to Bible study, there are other resources that provide help in group study. I suggest the following Bible study tools, in descending order of importance:

1. A good study Bible. (The *NIV Study Bible* is excellent, but there are other good choices.)
2. A good concordance—either in back of a study Bible or a complete concordance like *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* or Young's.
3. A Bible dictionary or encyclopedia.
4. A book-by-book analysis of each book of the Bible including author, recipients, date, purpose, setting and outline—a good study Bible has one.
5. A good commentary.

Avoid the Pitfalls

When you have done everything possible to prepare, the final step is that you can watch out for the following pitfalls that accompany group study.

- ☐ “Shared ignorance,” which results from a group approaching the Bible with no clue about what it is saying to them, will lead to easy—but incorrect—answers.
- ☐ Taking verses out of context and using them to fit your own circumstances and desires, inhibits God's Word from speaking.
- ☐ Overemphasizing certain themes which a group feels comfortable with. Sooner or later the group must take a more balanced approach to study and life.
- ☐ Allowing group experts to take over makes others feel inadequate.
- ☐ Focusing on only academic study, so that no application is made, and people come together for mental stimulation.
- ☐ Using one study method repeatedly. Groups can become bored when they do the same thing year in and year out. There are many options available and they need to be used.
- ☐ Leaders must have a general idea where they want the study time to go, and they must feel comfortable with the material. An unprepared leader hinders a group.
- ☐ If students are not prepared, either they are being lazy and need to be challenged or the work is too much for them. A correction needs to be made in these situations.

Become a Student

Nothing will stimulate your group more than seeing its leader excited about God's Word. You need to spend time in God's Word on a daily basis so that you are grounded in the Bible. In a loving community with positive leadership, disciples will be encouraged to learn about the Bible and apply it to their lives.

Discussion/Study Questions for Session 7

1. How is the Bible like the owner's manual to a complicated piece of machinery?
2. In your own words why is it so important to read and apply God's Word?
3. According to John 15:9–11, what happens when we are obedient to God's commands? Why is this so?
4. What are some benefits that come with studying the Bible in small groups?
5. What are the five characteristics of good group study?
6. What kinds of questions should the leader be prepared to ask?
7. Why is it important to get the "big picture" or purpose of a book before studying specific verses?

8. A PRAYING COMMUNITY

You are trapped, and you know it. There appears to be no way out, at least no easy way. The only thing you can do is attempt to make the best of a bad situation. You had come to church to let go, to worship, to find refreshment and stimulation. Instead, you find yourself pinned in a corner of the Fellowship Hall listening to the endless ramblings of a very needy individual. If only this person would catch His breath, you might find a way to leave. But he somehow maintains His stamina while connecting an endless series of run-on sentences.

After a while you go numb. You perceive that His face has doubled in size. His ears multiply themselves, then disappear, as he moves His head back and forth. His hair becomes a forest, and you imagine yourself lost among its foliage. His nostrils flare and you recoil at fire that seems to be coming out. Then, when he laughs and punches your arm, you are brought back to reality with a jolt. How will you ever remove yourself from this predicament? Will your youngest child remember you when, and if, you finally get to go home?

Eventually, and with tremendous feelings of guilt, you extract yourself from the situation with a mumbled excuse and a hasty retreat. He follows you for a while, then gives up and heads for another person. As you hurriedly exit the Fellowship Hall, you remind yourself to take drastic measures the next time you see Him coming. If there is a tree handy, you will jump into its welcome branches. If there is a chandelier, you will swing to freedom. No matter what, you will get away!

This person is frustrating because he is unable to communicate. He can talk, and he thinks that he has a lot to say, but when it comes to meaningful dialog he has very little to offer. And this is where your difficulty lies. You cannot connect with this person because he will never understand you. He has used up all His time and energy on himself. You want to help this person, but as a realist you understand that you will probably get nothing in return.

God created us to be relational creatures. We need to be understood. We also need to be understanding. Relationship occurs when two persons meet, reach out, and love one another. In understanding, we are understood. In loving, we are loved.

This principle of reaching out in relationship—communication—is also true of prayer. Prayer is a major part of our relationship with God. In prayer we seek to be known (by God). In prayer we also seek to be knowing (of God).

If you learn nothing else from this section, you will begin to comprehend the importance of relationship in prayer. If you are not involved with God in relationship, you will miss much that the Christian life has to offer. And every relationship starts and ends with communication.

Poor in Spirit

When prayer is mentioned, many things probably come to mind. On an objective level, you may recall that prayer is communication with God. Or you may think of the various parts of prayer, like confession or worship. Then again, you might focus on theological truths, such as God's power and love.

On another level personal feelings also reveal a great deal about what we think of prayer. It is here that we address our insecurities—every praying person has them. Many people struggle because they feel that they don't pray enough. Others feel inadequate because of sin or insecurity. Still others wonder if anyone is listening, for it takes great faith to believe that God is listening.

There are those who feel so bad about their relationship with God that they don't know quite what to think about prayer. Perhaps intimidated by super-religious people, or maybe without a good Christian role model, they feel completely overpowered when it comes to living a life of prayer. They say, in essence, "We don't know Him, and we have no idea how to get to know Him."

Insecurity comes out in small groups as well. Most people, even those willing to try, are intimidated by group prayer. Because of this, prayer times may be characterized by silence and tentativeness instead of boldness and joy.

With our many insecurities, we may seem to be like the man in the story at the beginning of this section. We bring many deficiencies and needs to our relationships with God, and we appear to offer nothing in return. And this brings up a vital question: Is it possible that, like the man in our example, our intense need for God causes us to turn Him off when we approach Him in prayer?

No. We part ways with our needy friend when *we care* how God is responding to us. In trying to understand God, we are making an honest effort at communication. The tension that results from our insecurities may come from a desire to be close to God in a healthy way. It is important to address each insecurity, and this section can help, but their presence can be a healthy sign that we are reaching out and trying to know God better.

Pharisee or Sinner?

In Luke 18:9–14, Jesus tells a story that sheds light on what our attitude should be when approaching God in prayer:

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat His breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

In this parable we see two very different people. The Pharisee was a righteous, well-respected spiritual leader. The tax collector, on the other hand, was probably a liar, cheat and thief. The Pharisee had spent His life learning how to be good. The tax collector had used His position to receive financial gain. We could fully expect Jesus to tell a story about how the Pharisee would be blessed for His goodness. But Jesus didn't do that. Instead, the "punch line" of His story was that the tax collector received the blessing instead of the Pharisee. Why is that?

In His prayer the Pharisee drew attention to himself by telling God (and anyone listening) how good he was. He was, if you will, a braggart. And we notice two things about Him. First, he seemingly lived a good life in order to inform the world that he was good in and of

himself. And second, he talked about what he offered to God and humanity (“see what I give?”) while needing nothing in return. He had it all.

The tax collector prayed in an opposite way from the Pharisee. Where the Pharisee stood tall before God, the tax collector could not even raise His eyes to heaven. Instead, he beat himself on the breast and begged God to have mercy on Him. He drew God’s loving and compassionate attention by telling God that he was a sinner in need of God’s grace. He came with empty hands, in need of God’s mercy. He needed it all.

This parable underscores two points about how we are to approach God. We begin by approaching God with an understanding of who he is. And then, we are to approach God with an understanding of who we are. We are sinners at the core—poor and frail in our abilities. We need God. We don’t need to convince God of how good we are, or that we can be independent from Him. Good communication occurs when two individuals understand each other. God already knows us, for he created us and made himself available to us. So the burden of communication in prayer is ours. If we want God to hear us, we must learn to approach God as sinner, not Pharisee.

Cell prayer will be enhanced when we begin and end with a clear understanding of our place before God. A group of truly humble people will be powerful in prayer. “Blessed are the poor in spirit.”

What Is Prayer?

Prayer is our attempt to communicate with God through worship, confession and petition. And the purpose of prayer is, through intentional communication with God, to get to know God while worshipping Him and asking Him to act in response to our requests.

You will notice that we don’t say that the purpose of prayer is to ask God to act on our behalf. Instead, the purpose of prayer is to get to know God while we worship and make our requests. The primary focus in prayer is our relationship with God.

In this definition I have listed three things that we do in prayer—worship, confession and petition. Prayer can take any number of forms, and it will vary with each unique God-human relationship, but these three broad categories cover what is communicated.

Worship

In worship we begin to understand and appreciate God. In essence, the One we approach in prayer is first known in worship. For this reason, all of section nine is devoted to this topic.

Confession

The first response to worship is penitence. In Isaiah 6, the prophet Isaiah had a vision of the Lord. He saw God seated on a throne, surrounded by angels singing His praises. At the sight, he cried out in terror, “Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”

Why does confession come from worship? Quite simply, a sinful person comes into contact with a loving and pure Being. We are laid bare. Fancy suits, high-powered

executive positions, and vacation homes don't help at all. As the tax collector stood before God in humility, so we also must stand.

You may wonder why we need to confess if we have already asked Christ into our lives, and he has forgiven our sins. On an objective level it is true that Christ's work on the cross, and His forgiveness of our sins, is complete. Psalm 103:12 says that "as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

However, on a subjective level, it is essential that we confess our sins to God. When we sin, we damage our relationship with God, and it takes effort to make things right. On a human level, this is necessary when one friend does something that hurts another.

An example on a human-to-human level is when Mike lies to Steve, and Steve finds out. Even though Mike may be fairly sure that he will be forgiven, there is no way that he can ignore His sin. He has breached the special trust involved in friendship, and it takes heartfelt repentance to heal the injury.

The same is true with sin. When we sin, we defy the Law of God. Yet we want to be God's friend. From a relational aspect, we need to come with heartfelt repentance and a desire to be the kind of friend that we have been called to be.

We don't need to be unreasonable in confession, however. It would take a long time to confess each sin we do in one day, and focusing exclusively on sin can be counterproductive. Our purpose in confession is to try to restore our relationship with God on a personal level. We know the sins that hinder that relationship (whether pride, greed, lust, or any number of others), and we can focus on these. Then, on a more general level, we can approach God as the tax collector: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

In the Cell, special times, possibly in silence, can be taken for confession in group prayer. And when people begin to trust each other they can confess their sins to each other, knowing that not judgment but empowering help will be given.

Petition

Along with confession and worship, we make requests of God in prayer. And while it has taken us a while to reach this part of prayer, most of our prayers take very little time before we start petitioning God. Many prayers go something like this: "Dear God, thank you that we can be here. Now, we pray that you would...."

It is not bad to make requests of God. However, you are communicating with a Person, not a robot. You might place an order at a drive-in window without exchanging pleasantries, but you cannot carry on a fulfilling relationship without meaningful dialog.

When you know God and feel close to Him, you can have great confidence talking to Him about what you need. In fact, the more you know and love God, the more your desires fall in line with His will. You will end up praying for what God already wants. John 15:7 says, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you."

When making our petitions, we naturally focus our attention on three distinct areas—self, others and special needs.

Praying for ourselves. Many people feel uncomfortable when praying for themselves because they feel that their prayers are somehow selfish.

And this might be the case if you are praying for cars, homes, money, power and other such human toys. But in the areas of Christian growth and effectiveness, provision and protection, praying for yourself is crucial.

Your first prayer for yourself should, under normal circumstances, be in the area of Christian growth and effectiveness. Each day you have the opportunity to consecrate yourself to God and ask for help from the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' model prayer, the Lord's Prayer, he prays for God's kingdom to come and God's will to be done. God's kingdom will not become a reality until you learn to live in obedience to God the King. And, God's will must first be done in your life before you can expect it to be done in the lives of others.

Then, you can also pray for God's provision and protection. The Lord's Prayer includes petition for daily bread and protection from temptation. We pray for these things so that we can believe in God and take Him at His promises.

Praying for others. We live in a world of need. We watch people suffer, observe tension in homes, and see the results that come from a world that has ignored God. Each person reading this section could conceivably spend ten hours per day praying for others and still have things to pray for. And it is need that prompts our prayers—need for personal reconciliation, for family, friends and/or work associates to meet Jesus Christ, for our churches to experience renewal through the Holy Spirit, for the mission of the church to go forth into all parts of the world, and for healing. When we pray for others, we expand our personal prayers for Christian growth, provision and protection to others.

It is in our prayers for others that love often finds its greatest expression, for it demonstrates a willingness on our parts to invest our time in secret for another's benefit. It is very easy, apart from prayer, to manipulate circumstances or people to get our way. But when we pray for others, we relinquish some of our personal control when asking for God's will to be done. True love seeks the best for others. Loving petition on another's behalf allows us to move beyond our own realm of thought and into God's. And God knows what is best.

Praying for special needs. Nobody can get through life without experiencing some degree of pain and suffering. As we mature in life, we learn that, no matter how well things seem to be going, hard times could always be lurking around the corner. And Christians are not exempt from pain. We have the same chance as any one else to get cancer, or to be in a car accident. Christians struggle with depression and chemical dependency. Christians also experience the loss of loved ones.

But we do have one thing that others do not. We are part of a body, the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12:26, Paul says that "if one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it." We are not alone, in good times and bad. We have others who can share in our lives, tempering the good times by reminding us to continue to rely on God, and smoothing out the bad times by demonstrating God's love. Small groups that support their members through times of pain demonstrate precisely what this passage is about—God's people helping each other during hard times.

We can also pray to God in special times of need. Our first prayer is often for healing, whether emotional or spiritual. We want God to put things right, and this is not unreasonable. Our "Daddy" has the ability to make everything work out in the end. Our faith can grow when he answers our prayers according to our requests.

But our faith can also grow when things don't work out the way we would like them. First Peter was written for those who were experiencing great suffering. But there is nothing in the book about God "fixing" things so that they could enjoy life again. Instead, Peter reminded the believers again and again that they had a special calling before God (1 Pet 2:4–5), complete with benefits and responsibilities. Suffering, rather than bringing an end to things, instead brought great opportunity to grow in Christ (1 Pet 1:3–9). And this should also be our prayer—that suffering would allow us, and others, to grow strong in Christ.

In Acts Peter and John were arrested for healing a crippled beggar and for using the occasion as an opportunity to spread the gospel. The temple court was convened and the disturbed religious leaders had listened in fury to how the people were continuing to follow the teachings of Jesus, whom they had put to death. Not knowing exactly what to do, they had threatened Peter and John with terrible persecution if they continued preaching the gospel.

Peter and John had taken the threats seriously, and Acts 4:23–31 describes how they had found other believers in a Cell and had given them the report. No doubt the young Christians were scared for their lives, and their prayer serves as a model prayer for how we respond to life's circumstances.

They started by acknowledging who God is and what he has done:

"Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

' "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together

against the Lord and against His Anointed One."' (Acts 4:24–26)

Notice that they immediately reached for the One who is always in control. In worshiping, they were no doubt reassured.

Then, they proceeded to make their requests:

Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus. (Acts 4:27–30)

They first identified themselves with Jesus, who had also suffered. But they affirmed that God had been in control when Jesus had suffered, just as God was in control in these circumstances. Their requests came from a knowledge of God's power and sovereignty. Then, instead of asking for protection, and rather than asking God to change the hearts of the temple court, they prayed for boldness and effectiveness in ministry. We would probably have prayed for the situation to change in our favor; they asked that they would be enabled to use it as an opportunity to spread God's love.

Finally, notice the result of their prayer. "After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly” (Acts 4:31). God heard and answered their prayer. Each person went forth in peace, knowing that God was with them.

Like them, the end result of our prayer should be peace, a deep satisfaction that God has heard and will answer. Philippians 4:6–7 makes the exciting connection between prayer and peace: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” If you are not experiencing such peace, then you might memorize these verses and practice *leaving* your requests at Jesus’ feet.

We can learn many lessons from such prayers as the one in Acts that we just examined (and there are more in Acts). We can, and should, pray for God’s intervention. But the *focus* of our individual and group prayers should be that we will use every circumstance in life as an opportunity to exercise our faith. As God’s friends, and as His children, we can approach Him with our petitions, in full confidence that he will work things for our good (Rom 8:28).

Meeting Each Other in Prayer

True prayer belongs in the Cell because its effects are enhanced in community. It allows a group to learn more about God. Cell prayer also helps people know each other better.

When we share communication with God, we are also communicating with each other. In prayer our greatest desires often pour forth. We exchange, with God and each other, our vision, love for God, and motivation to follow God. Listening to a new believer pray is like receiving a breath of fresh air. Hearing a mature believer converse with the master is a rich experience. Sharing prayer with teachers, young mothers, teens, construction workers, and other kinds of persons, helps you understand their world much better.

Suggestions for Cell Prayer

Envision yourself as a Cell leader with people who don’t know how to pray or are intimidated by prayer. You are not going to start out with deep, joy-filled times of prayer. It can be extremely awkward at first, but with practice you will find prayer can be the part of the Cell that people look forward to the most. Here are some suggestions related to what you can pray for and how you can initiate group prayer:

- *Deciding what to pray for.* To start with, you could occupy your time praying for each member of the group, asking God to help you grow in Christ. Most groups don’t do this enough because it feels uncomfortable at first, but you should seek to strengthen each other *by name* in prayer. Then, you could pray for any of the following:

- ☐ personal needs shared in the group
- ☐ family and friends of group members
- ☐ the needs of your church or fellowship group
- ☐ sick, shut-in, suffering and/or bereaved people that group members know
- ☐ non-Christian friends, family and/or neighbors

- ☐ missions and missionaries
- ☐ and don't forget worship!

You might also go back through the sections on worship, confession and petition and make your own list of possible prayer items.

As you pray for these and other requests, you may want to keep a "prayer notebook" so that you can record answered prayers and further enhance group worship.

- Initiating group prayer. As you think about how to introduce prayer into the group, remember that, no matter what you try, it could be very awkward at first. Fears about prayer are often based on what others think, rather than on what God thinks. As the group begins to feel more comfortable together, prayer will come more easily.

To start, you can open and close your meetings in prayer. When you open group meetings in prayer, you are consecrating the time to God and inviting His presence. When you close, you are offering yourselves to God and asking Him to go with you. In the beginning, the burden for these prayers will often fall on the leader. You don't need to impress anybody with your prayers, least of all God. If you keep prayer simple and yet genuine, others will pray much more readily when given the opportunity.

If you want others to pray, make sure that you ask them before group time. Some people are embarrassed when asked in public. Rather than being a scary experience, group prayer should be an affirming exercise.

Practice Makes Perfect

Prayer in the Cell will more readily become a reality if the leader is a praying person. If you worship God, keep the lines of communication open through confession, and find freedom to bring your requests to God, then you will be the kind of person who encourages others to pray. Start now. Become a person who knows God in prayer.

Discussion/Study Questions for Session 8

1. Why are "relationship" and "communication" such important concepts in prayer?
2. Why is it important to be humble when approaching God? What is humility?
3. What is your definition of prayer? What do you think is the purpose of prayer?
4. When presenting petitions to God, how do you think faith in God's ability should be balanced with humble submission to God's will?
5. How did the Christians pray, in Acts 4, when faced with a threat to their lives? How could this prayer guide your own?
6. How can prayer minister to the individual needs of people in a Cell?
7. What are ways you can initiate praying in a Cell?

9. AN EVANGELIZING COMMUNITY

The “Conquerors,” a Cell at Covenant Church, have met at Rachel’s home for two years now. The group started with seven members, and all seven members still come. The weekly meetings at Rachel’s are the highlight of the week for each individual. The Bible study is intense, the prayer victorious, and the fellowship deep. God has used the group to bless each member, and they feel stronger in their faith as a result.

Rachel has proved to be an effective leader. She has faithfully kept the goal of discipleship before the group, encouraging them to take risks in their faith. She has exerted positive leadership as well, leading the pack when they needed someone to follow, and following the pack when they needed to lead. In addition, she has allowed an honest, loving community to develop. And within the context of their caring community, the group has studied, worshiped, prayed and taken group outings together.

But now tension is starting to enter the group. The group is studying Acts because they want to learn to identify with the early church. Like their early brothers and sisters in Christ, the Conquerors meet in a home, eat together, and enjoy talking about their master. The study started with great promise, with the group members reading a portion of Acts each day in their time alone with God.

Then Sam changed the direction of their study. The group had been skipping over the practical emphasis of Acts, that the Holy Spirit was using the disciples to spread the gospel throughout the whole world (Acts 1:8). One Wednesday Sam came to the group with the following composition, which he felt that Acts 2:42–47 would say about the Conquerors:

They focused their energy on the study of Scripture, because they were fascinated with what they were learning. Also, they couldn’t wait to be together. Their meals and their prayer times were very enlightening. They got excited when they were together, exchanging hugs and talking about how they couldn’t make it through a week without each other. Some of the members even allowed their study to bring positive change in various areas of their lives. For instance, when one member needed help, others would chip in, whether they needed money or sympathy or physical help. Each week they came together, but they also got together outside the group. Many called each other throughout the week, and they often had dinner together after church.

Because of their love for each other and for God, the group felt close to God and enjoyed worshipping God. The pastor of the church was thrilled with the Conquerors because they were growing in their faith. But others in the church and world felt left out, for the group decided that it was better to stick with a proven group than to risk a new person ruining things for everyone.

Blessed to Be a Blessing

What was Sam pointing out in His version of Acts 2:42–47? He is chiding the group for being ingrown, allowing themselves to enjoy God’s blessing while withholding it from others.

Sam’s honesty, and willingness to ask tough questions, led the group in a new direction with their study. The question that arose from His paraphrase was, “What would have happened if the early church had hoarded God’s blessing, keeping it from others?”

The answer to the question is simple. The growth of the church would have been slowed or even stifled.

In the book of Acts, everything occurred within the context of evangelism. Acts 2 (along with numerous other passages in Acts) contains a reference to people being saved. “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (v. 47). Peter preached His sermon, and people were saved. Later, believers met together in homes, and others were saved. Christians met at the temple for prayer, and the Lord added to the church. The church was scattered through persecution, and the worshiping, praying, studying community of faith went forth into the world to make other disciples.

Just as the early church was blessed so that they could carry God’s blessing to others, small groups are an extremely effective means through which people can be brought to Christ.

What Is Evangelism?

Evangelism is the conscious attempt, through word and deed, to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others, so that they can become disciples of Christ.

To expand on this definition, we will first consider how evangelism involves a conscious effort, through word and deed, *to share the message*. Second, evangelism is sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with another. Therefore, we want to take a look at the *process* involved in sharing the Christian faith. And third, the goal of evangelism is that people will become disciples of Jesus Christ. In the final section we will talk about how *small groups* can help, not only to evangelize, but also to lead people into the process of discipleship.

The message of evangelism, called the “Good News” in the New Testament, is that salvation has come through Jesus Christ. In John 10:10 Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

The message that we carry has both an objective and subjective side. We not only must know what is true, but also allow that truth to influence and penetrate our lives before we can be positive witnesses.

The Subjective Message

If you want to lead someone to Christ, you first have to know what you are talking about. Do you remember the rappelling instructor in section four who had never gone over the edge of a cliff? We saw how absurd it was for Him to presume that he could lead others over the cliff edge when he had no idea of the challenges that lay ahead. This same illustration applies in witnessing. If Jesus Christ has not made a difference in your life, indeed if you are not striving to grow in Christ each day, then witnessing is a very difficult proposition. There are a number of motives that may lead you to witness (including guilt and obligation), but none is as compelling as a deep love for God. It is this experience of God that flows from your life to those around you.

Amy Grant has said it this way: “It’s not a song till it touches your heart; it’s not a song till it tears you apart. After what’s left of what’s right and what’s wrong, till it gets through to you, it’s not a song.”

You cannot understand the words of the gospel until they have touched your life. Objectively, they are true and full of meaning.

Subjectively, they have no place in your life until you have accepted their truths and watched them transform you through the working of the Holy Spirit.

There are two evidences that the gospel of Christ has changed your life. First, *you have fallen in love with God* and begun to develop a life of intimacy with Him. This shows in both your thinking and behavior.

Look at an example of how someone responded when changed by Christ. In Luke 7:36–50, Jesus was anointed by a sinful woman while he was eating at the home of a Pharisee. This woman entered a home in which she was not welcome and approached Jesus unannounced. She wept over Jesus in front of all the guests. Then, she lovingly washed His feet with her hair, spreading perfume on them as she bathed them.

When Simon, a Pharisee, wondered why Jesus let a sinful woman do this, Jesus said:

“Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay Him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love Him more?”

Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled.” (Lk 7:40–43)

The woman was willing to expose herself to ridicule because she had been changed by Jesus and wanted to express her love. While anyone could question her previous life, nobody could question her love for Christ. And we can also demonstrate this same sincere love for Christ.

This is especially relevant in a Cell whose members are, often for the first time, beginning to sink their roots deeper into God’s love in a loving community that studies, prays and worships. Lively, Spirit-filled small groups put people in touch with their Creator, and therefore they allow their people to be more effective witnesses simply because they are growing in Christ.

Your love for God will, sooner or later, cause you to view human relationships in a new light. So the second evidence of a changed life is that *you are growing in your ability to love others*.

Colossians 3:1–4 commands us: “Set your hearts on things above.” And what are those things that are “above”? “Kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.... And over all these virtues put on love” (3:12, 14). As God works in our lives, change is produced in human relationships.

Compassion and love, among other traits, are important in witnessing. People respond to love much more readily than to ideas and concepts. You can try to witness to people by sticking tracts in their faces and demanding answers, or you can witness by developing loving relationships and demonstrating that Jesus is the reason you act as you do.

Can you see how much sense it makes to be loving and alive in Christ when you witness? Instead of speaking time-worn phrases, you can share living, vital truth. And people will respond when they see your love for God and for others.

Small groups allow this kind of personal, subjective growth to complement the objective truth of the gospel. Small groups encourage people to love God. They also teach people how to love one another. Without perhaps knowing it, they are preparing people to be effective witnesses of Jesus Christ!

The Objective Message

So perhaps a non-Christian has entered your Cell and is “turned on” by the genuine love in your midst. Now what?

Sooner or later you will need to verbalize not only your personal (subjective message) testimony but the objective representation of the gospel so that others can receive Christ as their Savior as well.

There are a great number of devoted followers of Christ who do not know how to lead another person into a saving relationship with God. However, there are helpful tools available. These include Campus Crusade’s “Four Spiritual Laws,” The Navigators’ “Bridge” model, and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship’s outline, “First Steps to God.” These different methods present in a simple manner the process by which individuals can give their lives to Christ.

The key facts to remember are (1) we are sinners; (2) we need Christ; (3) we must respond to Jesus. Once we acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, we are to seek to live as children of God for the rest of our lives.

Is that all there is to it?

Basically, yes. But it is difficult to gauge people’s sincerity as they respond to God. A probing question can help. For example, Evangelism Explosion trainees are taught to ask, “If you were to die tonight and stand before God, and he were to ask you, ‘Why should I let you into heaven?’ what would you say?” The response to this question reveals whether people have assurance that they are truly a child of God.

You can begin to see how small groups are perhaps the most effective way to bring evangelism into focus today. But the message is only part of the story of evangelism....

The Process

Very few people come to faith by picking up a Bible and reading it. Indeed, most people give their lives to Christ because they see the Christian life being lived out (subjective message); they have become aware of the truths necessary to become a Christian (objective message), and they have been loved by a Christian (the process).

Many people may be involved in the salvation of just one person. In the past of most Christians is someone who prayed for that person, as well as a number of others who patiently planted seeds in the hope that they would someday bear fruit. Jesus told His disciples in John 4: “I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”

The place to start in the process is with God’s part. God is the power behind the salvation of an individual. Jesus said in John 6:44, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws Him, and I will raise Him up at the last day.”

When we pray for the salvation of a person, we pray believing that God is not only involved working through us, he is also involved directly in the person we are praying for. God the Holy Spirit convicts people of their sin and need for God, and he slowly draws people to himself.

God also works in and through the life of a witness. He leads us to specific relationships, puts a burden for particular people upon our hearts, and gives us the right words when we speak. God wants to use us to bring salvation to others.

Our response to God's role in the process of evangelism is simple—obedience. We know that he is powerful enough to change lives, and loving enough to know what people need. What he uses are vessels who can bring His life-changing Word to those in need. For a willing Cell, evangelism always begins with prayer.

The witness serves as a complement to God's part in evangelism. God uses witnesses who are willing to reach out in humility, love and confidence. Paul describes the evangelistic relationship that he had with the Thessalonians:

For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord. (1 Thess 1:4–6)

As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. (1 Thess 2:6–12)

The witnesses in this passage were willing to give everything, including their very beings, in order to bring people to Christ. In John 15:13 Jesus says that the greatest love is to lay down your life for another. But if our life is the greatest gift we can give, it is also the most difficult. The needs we naturally seek to meet are our own.

This creates a dilemma. In witnessing we want another person to experience the same joy we have found in Christ. But even though this appears to be selfless, there is the real possibility for selfishness and manipulation to enter the process. So we should emphasize the following three attitudes:

□ *Humility*. The focus in evangelism should be the potential convert, not the witness. We often worry about how we look and whether we'll know what to say. Instead, we must seek the heart of God and learn to identify with others by putting them first.

□ *Love*. There is nothing more compelling, and more powerful, than true love in action. It cannot be ignored. While you may find this kind of love difficult to carry out alone, with the support of a Cell—or with the whole Cell working to love someone together—you will find that it is much easier. "A cord of two or three strands is not easily broken," as Proverbs says.

□ *Confidence*. A witness should be confident in the power of God, the effectiveness of love, even when mistakes are made, to break through barriers, and in the joy that will be His or hers when a person responds in faith. God will use your weakness as well as your strength.

Remember the parable of the sower in Matthew 13? Jesus told about a farmer who went out to plant seed in a field. Some seed fell on hard soil, some on rocky, some among weeds, and some in good soil. Jesus ended the parable by saying, "He who has ears, let

Him hear" (13:18). The point of the story is that some people are ready to hear the gospel message, others are unprepared.

It is our job to plant seeds which represent the objective and subjective message of the gospel and have been nurtured in humility and love. Then, we can wait patiently for God to prepare the right hearts at the right time.

The Vision for Cell Evangelism

One of the most exciting Cell stories is found in Korea, at Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho's church in Seoul. Using a few basic church-growth principles, including prayer, small groups, and Cell evangelism, the church has grown to include over 500,000 members in just a few short years.

How did they grow so quickly? They encouraged each Cell to pray for non-Christian friends, and they taught leaders how to lead people to Christ. With thousands of small groups in operation, each group bringing in a few new Christians every year or so created phenomenal growth.

What does this mean for your church or fellowship? You can grow through small groups as well.

A group of people, meeting together weekly, can start to pray for a few non-Christian friends, knowing that they will want these friends to eventually join their Cell and come into the church. Sooner or later, if the group is serious, the prayers will start to work. The potential convert will be invited to the group and, surrounded by love, will respond with faith. In this way the Cell can be used to touch one life for Christ.

How many small groups do you have? Ten? Then, can you envision ten new people coming to faith through the small groups in the next two years? What a great victory that would be! By God's grace and power, what can be done through Cell evangelism in your fellowship?

Principles of Cell Evangelism

As you begin to implement Cell evangelism in your church, here are a few principles that can help:

1. Remember that the goal of Cell ministry, and of evangelism, is to make disciples. When new people come into a group, they come into a context of growth and challenge. Your job is not just to "win" people. It is also to nurture them into maturity. This is why small groups, with their emphasis on discipling, are ideal places for people to come to faith in Christ.

2. The leader can have a grand vision for evangelism, yet until the Cell is ready they will not respond. It takes prayer to prepare the group's heart and your own heart. It also takes patience because it may take months or years before the group is ready to respond. Keep sharing your vision for evangelism, but don't push your agenda onto the group.

3. A good group is necessary for effective Cell evangelism to occur. You don't want to bring people into a group that backbites, fights, or has other unhealthy elements. While the group is not expected to be perfect, it should be healthy.

4. *Evangelism needs to be intentional.* The Cell needs to decide what they are doing, how they will accomplish it, and why they are doing it, before anything will actually be done.

5. *A growing, evangelistic Cell ministry will soon begin to burst at the seams.* When groups grow past twelve members, they tend to become less intimate and more confusing. There will come a time in a healthy, growing group, when it has to split. The group leader should be prepared for this (it is a sign that you are doing a good job!) and nurture leaders who are prepared to lead the new groups.

Incorporating Evangelism in Small Groups

You may be wondering what you can do to bring evangelism into a Cell. Here are a few ideas.

First, start with prayer. Pray that the group becomes an evangelizing group. Then, when group members' hearts are prepared to move forward in evangelism, the group can start praying for a few people to come to faith.

In order to emphasize that your group is one of the means that God uses to bring people to faith, consider praying for people that at least one group member has frequent contact with. This allows you to be updated by that person and to start acting in humility, love and confidence. It could also allow the group to "coach" the person(s) who are in frequent contact with the potential convert.

Next, you could use what Lyman Coleman of Serendipity calls the "empty chair." In order to remind the group that it needs to grow, put an empty chair into the circle at each meeting.

The group could do a study together on either Cell evangelism or evangelism in general. There are some wonderful resources on the market, including Richard Peace's *Cell Evangelism* training manual, the book and video seminar available through NavPress, *Your Home a Lighthouse*, and *Living Proof*, a video seminar also available through NavPress which works through the basic relational aspects of sharing your faith.

Along the same lines, you could memorize Scripture verses or work your way through an evangelism "technique" (like "Evangelism Explosion" or the "Four Spiritual Laws"). These will prepare you to give the objective message of the gospel.

You can also make choices about how exactly you plan to implement evangelism. Some groups will "disband" and re-cast themselves specifically as evangelistic Bible studies. These groups may choose to work through the Gospel of John or another Gospel by focusing on what can be learned about the person of Christ.

Other groups will maintain themselves as traditional Covenant groups that are always seeking to bring people into the group. These groups, while not always focusing on evangelistic themes, will choose topics relevant to all and will shower potential converts with love.

You and your group can have fun exploring these and other ways to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with people who need to find true hope. May God bless you as, acting in humility, reaching out in love, and demonstrating Christ in confidence, you share the message of Christ in its objective and subjective truth so that people respond in faith and become His disciples.

Discussion/Study Questions for Session 9

1. How would you define evangelism?
2. Is evangelism something that you feel confident doing? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think the subjective message of salvation is placed before the objective message in this section?
4. What do we mean by “subjective message”? “objective message”?
5. What is God’s role in evangelism?
6. How can the one sharing his or her faith include God in the process of evangelism?
7. What is the most important thing that you learned from this section?

10. THE MARVELOUS BODY OF CHRIST

A. FINAL GROUP ASSIGNMENT

Divide in groups of 4 and take some time before next Wednesday to pray together and work on this assignment. Each group will have to select a speaker who will use no more than 10 minutes to present their work.

1. Share 4 most important lessons you have learned in this 10-week course on cell ministry.
2. Take a moment to examine our current world with the church as we see it today. In your view(s), how is the church going to truly be the light of the world and the salt of the earth?
3. How do you feel about the possibility of being a disciplemaker yourself? How do you feel about your readiness for this?
4. How could we redesign our cell groups to be more life giving? What is going to be your role in making this happen?

B. MAKING THE CONNECTION

Imagine a world without the church. Where would society be without the light of the gospel shining from countless communities of Christian believers all over the world, both large and small? The church is the biggest blessing the world has seen since the actual physical presence of Jesus of Nazareth, the Word made flesh. Through actions, words and miraculous demonstrations of his power, the church makes visible the invisible kingdom of God.

The grace and truth of God that is Jesus, was first manifested in the incarnation, and is now being expressed to the world through the church and the message he has given us to proclaim. Jesus said, “A city set on a hill cannot be hidden”, and then he went on to say,

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:16

Comparing the church to the human body

The analogy between the human body and the church was first made by the apostle Paul. He described the church as the “body of Christ”.

“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.” 1 Corinthians 12:27

Paul develops this analogy speaking of headship, unity, diversity, functionality and interdependence. Recent discoveries of modern biological science help us apply Paul’s analogy to the cell church model.

All living matter is composed of cells, and the human body is no exception. It is made up of around 75 trillion cells. This sheds new light onto the truth of the scripture which says,

"I will praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are your works."
Psalm 139:14

If the human body is so marvelous, can we expect anything less of the body of Christ? We should certainly not build doctrine on biology, but modern science helps us understand Paul's analogy in a deeper way. The correspondence between how the cells of the human body function and the workings of the body of Christ are remarkable.

1. The human body is structured into cells. Cell-based church follows this principle by encouraging every member to be an active part of a cell group.
2. The cells of the human body are the basic functioning unit of the life of the body. Cell groups are also the basic unit of life in the cell church.
3. Cells in the body have a nucleus which acts as the control centre of the cell. Cell groups also have a system of leadership which regulates the group according to the vision of the church.
4. Human cells carry the DNA of the body they belong to. The characteristics of *ekklesia* are present in microcosmic form in the cells groups. They also carry and reproduce the spiritual DNA of their church.
5. Cells in the human body reproduce and multiply. Cells in the church also reproduce through evangelism and discipleship.
6. Human cells do not have a totally independent life of their own. Cell groups also are not independent. They have an interdependent relationship with each other and the body of Christ.
7. Individual human cells work together for the good of the whole body, each having a special place and function. Cells in the church also work together the growth and development of the whole body.
8. The cells in the human body have systems of communication and reporting. The cell groups also communicate and report to the church.
9. Human cells generate power and energy. Cells in the church are also centres of power and energy for the good of the body of Christ.
10. Human cells have specialised functions. Cells groups can also develop areas of expertise and can have specialised ministries reaching different members of the community. These can be ethnic groups, professional groups or those with special interests such as the arts or science.
11. Some cells (stem cells) in the human body have the capacity to transform or differentiate into cells of a different type in order for the body to develop every necessary capacity. This is also seen in cell groups where an open cell can transform into a leadership cell for the purpose of coaching and mentoring.

Fully mobilized

This short excursion into the world of human biology highlights the benefits of the cell vision. Healthy cells mean a healthy body. The cell model enables Christ's body on earth to function effectively. The body of Christ is his 'agent' in the world. Just as our bodies enable us to be present in any specific place and do what we want it to do, so Christ acts in the world through his body. Whatever he wants to do on the earth, he must use his body to do it. As the apostle Paul says, "*The Head cannot say to the body, 'I have no need of you'*" (1 Corinthians 12:21).

That's why his body must be mobilized, not paralyzed. We would never wish the tragedy of physical paralysis on anyone. We should be equally concerned to see the body of Christ fully active and mobile. However, for the most part, we expect Jesus to work through a severely restricted body.

Imagine the effects on our nations and the world at large of a fully mobilized body of Christ, where every believer is a disciple and every disciple is a minister. This must be our goal. The only way the church will rise up and accomplish the task set by the Master, is for every member of his body to be fully responsive to the direction of the Head. This is in line with the New Testament's view of the church. The whole is only brought to fullness as each part does its share of the work:

"... the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." Ephesians 4:16

In order for the church to be healthy and grow to maturity, all the ministry gifts of Christ must be active in the body. Only then will every member be equipped to do the work of Christ. Leadership exists to equip every member of the church for the ministry, that is, to do the work of Christ.

When all the ministries are working together in harmony and equipping the body to do the work of Christ, we become a formidable entity. We are able to take the presence of Christ into our daily lives, evangelize the lost and bring transformation to our society.

Taking the giants

Jesus told his church to be salt and light in the world. That is, to penetrate society with the healthy influence of our salt-like presence, and to illuminate society's thinking with the light of gospel values. We cannot withdraw from the world as if we were not living in it, and neither can we allow the world to remain in us, neutralizing our saltiness and dimming our capacity to shine. The cell vision is not just about growing our numbers, but making disciples who influence the world.

The cell groups are part of the 'go and show' thrust of the church. Traditional church has a 'come and hear' emphasis and largely holds its activities within the sanctity of its buildings. Cells have the capacity to penetrate every part of society and to exercise influence for Christ in the heart of the *agora*, or marketplace of today. That is where the church is needed most. Christianity is a lifestyle and we are called to be good news right where we are—in our homes, our places of work, our centres of education and in every other part of society. For our members who spend most of their life in the marketplace of our society, remember that "*your occupation is the location for your true vocation.*"

Cells reach people where they are. We need to equip our members to ‘take the giants’ for God. The giants of our society are the great institutions and professions which exercise the most influence over our lives. We need to regularly hold regular giants forums in which cell members from each of the major professional or occupational groupings can get together to encourage one another and to find ways of influencing their environment. That way we are facilitating cells in every major profession and section in society. We group the giants in the following way:

The giants of influence:

1. Business and Finance
2. Ecology and Environment
3. Education and Training
4. Law and Order
5. Marriage and Family
6. Media and Arts
7. Medicine and Health
8. Politics and Government
9. Religion and Belief
10. Science and Technology
11. Sport and Leisure
12. Thought and Philosophy.

As believers become active witnesses to the kingdom of God in these areas, people are won to Christ, discipled, and begin to exercise a godly influence over these giants. ***It is not just about having Christians working in these sectors, but disciples influencing their environment for Christ.*** We are aiming for the total transformation of our society. That is exactly what the body of Christ is called to do.

Church without walls

Cell church is church without walls. People are reached right where they are. Christian witness happens in the marketplace and not just in the meeting place. The cells build bridges for the community to see Christ in action. Cultures are penetrated through the informality and accessibility of cell ministry. Discipleship happens through relationships formed from within the heart of the non-Christian community and not merely through church programmes which appear to be mere religious institutions to those outside.

This is the church as it is meant to be—not a closed book, but “*living letters, known and read by the world*”. This is the vision of Christ, the very heart of God expressed in the living, breathing body of Christ on the earth. The plan has not changed. God is still working out his purposes on the earth through his church.

A great multitude no one can number

The book of Revelation gives us a glimpse of the multitudes that are coming. It will be a number no one can count and it will be made up of people from every conceivable corner of the earth, every culture and every society of the world. Read these exciting verses:

“And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.’” Revelation 5:9

“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands.” Revelation 7:9

Through the cell vision everyone can be a part of God’s big plan. Every one of us can win, consolidate, disciple and send. We can all live under the blessing of fruitfulness and multiplication.

The multitudes are coming! Not just through big meetings and evangelistic crusades, but through the cells meeting in the homes, the streets, the cafes, the offices, the theatres, the farms, the fields and the factories that make up the *marketplace* of today.

As we work out the model of cell groups in our lives and churches, it is always important to keep the main purpose in view—to make, mature and mobilize disciples. It is vital to maintain the three essential elements of daring faith, bold prayer and total dependence on the anointing of the Holy Spirit. These will ignite and sustain our passion for Christ and make sure that we build his vision in the world.

CHRISTIAN LIFE ASSEMBLY

CELL GROUP AGREEMENT

Purpose

To build a healthy small group community where participants pursue life-giving relationships and spiritual growth.

Values and Goals

Focus

While fellowship, worship, prayer, Bible study and community engagement are key elements, the driving force behind this group is spiritual growth and discipling.

Authenticity

This is an environment where people should feel free to be themselves. We aim to create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved (no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes).

Confidentiality

For authenticity to occur, members must be able to trust that issues discussed within the group will not be shared outside the group. Any member who violates this will be held accountable and subject to church discipline.

Conflict Resolution

We will avoid gossip and will endeavor to immediately resolve any concerns by following the principles of Matthew 18:15-17 which begins with going directly to the person with whom you have an issue.

Commitment

We understand that we are members of the body of Christ and we all have a vital part to play. This requires a willingness to be available to meet one another's needs and to consolidate our efforts in reaching out to the community.

Limiting our Freedom

We will limit some of our freedoms for the greater good. For example, we will not serve or consume alcohol during CLA cell meetings or events so as to avoid causing a weaker brother or sister to stumble. (See 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Romans 14:19-21)

Multiplication

Group members recognize that one of the goals of this group is to start a new group within the life cycle of the cell. We will invite our friends and neighbors to benefit from this community, we will warmly welcome newcomers and we will regularly pray for the activities of this cell group.

Group Guidelines

1. The group will meet on _____ (day of week).
2. The Cell meetings/sessions will begin at _____ (am/pm) and end at _____ (am/pm).
3. The group time will typically consist of _____ minutes of fellowship/catching up, _____ minutes of study/discussion, and _____ minutes of prayer and/or planning (90 minutes in total is recommended by CLA).
4. I will attend and participate on a regular basis. I will call if I am absent or late.
5. I agree to pray for cell activities and other group members on a weekly basis.

I commit together with the other members of this group to honor this agreement.

Cell Member: _____ Date: _____ / _____ / _____
(name and signature)

Cell Leader(s): _____ Date: _____ / _____ / _____
(name and signature)

CLA CELL GROUP MEMBER ASSESSMENT

The purpose of this tool is to take an honest look at where we are individually in respect to our three vital relationships — intimacy with God, community with insiders, and influence with outsiders. When the results of this evaluation are honestly viewed as a group, hopefully we'll be able to better set goals that will help us grow holistically. Cells are encouraged to make this review every 6 months.

Please answer the following questions as openly and honestly as possible using the following scale:

| STRONGLY DISAGREE | DISAGREE | AGREE | STRONGLY AGREE |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Intimacy with God

- ___ The personal time I spend with God (private devotions, personal Bible study and prayer, journaling, etc.) is improving the quality of my personal relationship with God.
- ___ The approach I use in my personal time with God is effective.
- ___ I currently devote sufficient time in my daily schedule for personal time with God.
- ___ My daily actions are progressively aligning with the priorities of Scripture.

Community with Insiders

- ___ I am growing in my relationships with the other members of this group.
- ___ The members of my group regularly exhibit openness and transparency within the group.
- ___ The members of my group express interest in my needs and make themselves available to help.
- ___ The members of my group act on my requests for accountability.

Influence with Outsiders

- ___ I am intentional about how I invest in my relationships with unbelievers.
- ___ I can explain my spiritual story to others.
- ___ I am confident in my ability to clearly share the Gospel to others.
- ___ My group regularly expresses encouragement and concern about each others' personal relationships with unbelievers.

Overall

What's your total score? = _____ (Highest possible score is 48). Share/compare results in cell.

General Questions

Is there any particular part of Scripture that you are particularly interested in studying now?

Keep in mind that God requires more obedience than knowledge. We need to grow in knowing, being and doing.

Is there any particular life issue that is preventing you from growing or being fruitful in your walk with God?

Life issues include but are not limited to: *Emotional Problems, Sexual Problems, Marriage and Family Problems, Freedom from Occult Bondage, Developing a Healthy Self-Image, Forgiveness and Inner Healing, Dealing with Drug and Alcohol Problems, Financial Problems.*

On the scale of 1-10, how would you now rate the overall health of this cell?

What needs to be done on a leadership level for us to get to the desired results in our cells?

Any other general comments?



THE LEADERSHIP APTITUDES PROFILE

There is no leader alive who can provide all of the leadership substance that people need. Considerable research has shown that there are four different types of leaders. None is better or more important than the other; each of these forms of leadership is needed for an organization/ministry to maximize its potential. Each leader possesses a form or type of leadership that is valuable but incomplete. That form of leadership is known as a leadership aptitude. Knowing which aptitude you possess will enable you to focus on that strength to maximize your impact for Christ, as well as to identify the types of leaders you would ideally be partnered with for maximum impact.

Like any effort to evaluate a person, this tool is just that – a human-created device that is generally accurate but flawed. Scripture tells us that only God truly knows the heart and the mind of a person. This Profile is merely a man-made instrument designed to point you to God and His purposes for you, not to inflate or deflate your ego. I trust that you will find the Profile to be useful as you continue to grow spiritually and professionally.

Getting Accurate Results

Because you alone provide all of the information on which your leadership assessment is based, the accuracy of this tool depends largely upon your self-awareness and your determination to answer every question honestly. Do not answer based on what you assume the purpose of a question is, or how you think a godly leader is “supposed” to answer. You cannot be a useful servant to God if you cannot be honest with yourself about who you are.

As in any standardized test, it is best to go with your initial inclination; if you spend too much time on an item, you tend to “over-think” it and the quality of your response will suffer. Read it, answer it, and move on.

May God use this tool to help you serve Him and lead others more effectively!

INSTRUCTIONS: Thinking about your leadership, read all the 32 indicators and give each of the statements a score using the following 1 to 5 scale (by circling the relevant number), to indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements:

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = to some extent (somewhat), 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

| 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = to some extent (somewhat), 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 1 | You are a person who lives for the big picture – thinking about making that compelling vision happen and about future possibilities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 2 | You are virtually invisible because you do the “dirty work” behind the scenes – and love it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 3 | The vision is central to everything you do, but you approach its accomplishments on the basis of analyzing information. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 4 | You are not much of a vision conceiver and vision communicator but you take great joy in developing and shaping the vision. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 5 | Nothing gives you greater joy than being with people – especially those who share your vision of the future. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 6 | You are the structural architect of the organization/ministry, devising effective systems, plans and policies that hold everything together and facilitate high levels of productivity. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 7 | You are passionate about conveying that vision to others and getting them as excited about it as you are. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 8 | You exploit your charisma and popularity to motivate people to get involved and to give it their best shot. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |

| 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = to some extent (somewhat), 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 9 | Although you have feelings and care for people, you have a deep-seated mistrust of feelings—and, often, of people. You are generally happier working with ideas than with people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 10 | To make the vision a reality you take risks, blaze trails, respond creatively – willing to do whatever it takes. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 11 | You are a great networker – it comes easy to you and people like to be with you. Being with people energizes you. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 12 | You can handle the spotlight, but prefer remaining in the shadows. Your forté is developing plans and strategies based on detailed information. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 13 | Your best friends are the computer, the Internet and a number of other productivity gadgets. Unlike many of your colleagues, you balance management and leadership skills – two different but related capacities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 14 | Although you are a great team player and defuse conflict through impressive interpersonal skills, you can't stand sitting around in highly-structured, information-driven meetings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 15 | You have a way of communicating that encourages and inspires people to follow your leadership. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 16 | People generally appreciate your easy- going, upbeat, lovable and empowering presence. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 17 | Without your organizational planning and resource management skills, chaos would prevail. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 18 | Your choices are objective, logical and well-reasoned. You have the ability to synthesize information from disparate sources to develop creative solutions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 19 | Often, you act on impulse, but your instincts often prove to be right. People sometimes marvel at how steady you are under pressure, and at your ability to make tough decisions with great confidence. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 20 | A strength is your willingness to "go with the flow," although that sometimes means missed deadlines, opportunities and details. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 21 | You are a master juggler and a tiger on details. Your efforts provide stability, predictability and consistency—all qualities that strengthen the leadership team and the fulfillment of the vision. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 22 | When meetings are called, you always arrive well-prepared with documents and information, and have thought through answers to likely questions or challenges. Among your faults are a tendency to over-prepare, a need to be perfect and missing deadlines. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 23 | At the end of the day, you measure your success by how many items you cross off the to-do list – many of which were completed by people whose efforts you managed. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 24 | You do not juggle multiple tasks particularly well and you are uncomfortable taking major risks unless the opportunity is foolproof. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 25 | You have laudable patience with people but are persistent about remaining on top of their delivery of promised and needed outcomes. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 26 | You work well in the midst of chaos – in fact, some say you create or need such an environment in order to thrive. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 27 | You tend to ignore procedures, work assignments, legal cautions, operational budgets, internal memos,... Your inattention to structure and time management sometimes burns the people who work with you. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 28 | You struggle with confusing or vague instructions or promises. You avoid conflict, delivering bad news and getting into emotional battles. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 29 | You understand the “hot buttons” that move people to action but are not emotionally equipped to push those buttons. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |

| 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = to some extent (somewhat), 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 30 | You tend to be restless, favor action over reflection, and have been described by fellow leaders as a loose cannon. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 31 | You are competitive and energetic but administrative and financial details tend to fall through the cracks if left to you. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 32 | You are undoubtedly a people-savvy leader but sometimes you invest too much trust and confidence in people who do not (or, sometimes, cannot) pull through as promised. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |

THE LEADERSHIP APTITUDES SCORING GUIDE

This summary uses your responses to the questions to examine how you relate to the 4 aptitudes of leadership. **No one of these aspects of leadership is any more or less important than any of the others.** They complement and balance each other. Clearly too, this report is based only on your answers. For each area your answers are combined to give a rating between 8 and 40, where a score of 40 would suggest that you see yourself as very strong in this area, and a score of 8 indicates that you do not see this as your area of strength.

Do take time to appreciate, and thank God for the strengths you have in leadership. If this feedback summary gives you any surprises, do talk it through with someone who knows you well. It may be that one or two particular questions or your interpretation of them have unduly impacted your scores.

Transfer your scores from the indicator to the table below, taking care to subtract the score you assigned to the questions given in the final row of the table. This will give scores for each of the areas.

| Pioneering Leader | Strategic Leader | Team-Building Leader | Operational Leader |
|-------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Q1 | Q3 | Q5 | Q2 |
| Q7 | Q9 | Q8 | Q6 |
| Q10 | Q12 | Q11 | Q13 |
| Q15 | Q18 | Q16 | Q17 |
| Q19 | Q22 | Q20 | Q21 |
| Q26 | Q24 | Q27 | Q25 |
| Q30 | Q29 | Q32 | Q28 |
| Add 6 | Add 6 | Add 6 | Add 6 |
| Subtotal: | Subtotal: | Subtotal: | Subtotal: |
| - Q4 | - Q14 | - Q23 | - Q31 |
| TOTAL: | TOTAL: | TOTAL: | TOTAL: |

=====

APTITUDE DESCRIPTIONS

The Pioneering Leader:

In a Christian context we can quote Philippians 3: "*forgetting what is behind, and straining for what lies ahead*". Pioneering leaders are passionate about the vision, and are wholly committed to it. Paul is a great example of a leader who was focussed on pushing out the boundaries of the church, despite the personal risk.

Pioneering leaders are at their strongest in the early stages of a vision or project, excited by seeking out where God is calling. However, as time passes they may lose interest in the implementation of a vision, eager to be looking ahead to the next challenge. Pioneering leaders are proficient at making decisions.

These leaders recognize the need for getting the facts and considering all relevant options but they rarely throw themselves into that process. These individuals possess little appetite for long debates over procedure and may rudely cut off colleagues in mid-sentence once they reach their limit. Their interest is in making good things happen—now!

The Strategic Leader:

Leaders who can break down visions and large aims into manageable chunks are vital for the church. Strategic leaders have the insight and focus to work out ways of achieving the vision, the "how", and are able to persuade the rest of the church to accept this plan. When Nehemiah led the Jews in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, he demonstrated great strategic leadership in dividing the work up, and in keeping the task manageable. His plan was so good, the walls were rebuilt in 52 days.

Strategic leaders can bring common sense to a difficult task - able to help people see how the seemingly impossible can be achieved. However, like pioneers, they can be less engaged with the implementation of a task, preferring to leave this to others. They tend to be quite thorough in their explorations—much to the distress of the impatient pioneering leader and to the perplexity of the team-building leader who wonders why the process is such a big deal! It is rare to find a strategic leader who is at a loss to explain something. They almost always over-prepare for meetings. Should you ask them a question, you are likely to get more detail than you care to hear.

The Team-Building Leader:

Here we include leadership in a group context, whether the leader has a formal leadership role in a group or not. For the church as 'the body' (1 Cor 12), working together is clearly important. The key strengths of team-building leaders are a desire to work with others, and an ability to trust them. Their main aim is that the team achieves its goals. What they as individuals achieve is secondary. The greatest contribution Silas made to the church was probably training and developing Paul's ministry so he could go on to achieve greater things later.

Team-building leaders are invaluable - if the church is truly to function as a body, these leaders are needed to ensure harmony and effectiveness in the way the team works. By focussing on matching people's abilities with the tasks at hand and with people who possess complementary abilities these leaders develop effective work groups and coalitions that produce significant, vision-related outcomes. They are upbeat and happy people but they find it distasteful to sit in long meetings, to develop systems or to turn in paperwork. They also have a tendency to waffle on details.

The Operational Leader:

Any vision or change will require people who are able to plan and solve problems, delegate and organize. Without this gift, the best plans may well not get implemented! Pioneering leaders love the chase. Strategic leaders love the mind games involved in mapping out the chase. Team-builders are captivated by the interactive dimension of the chase. Operational leaders enjoy managing the resources that allow the chase to be consummated.

Operational leaders may struggle to relate to the visionary pioneers - dreaming of achieving the impossible is not their home ground! Pioneering leaders excel at creating tension in order to facilitate change. Strategic leaders add value by crafting a persuasive case for the vision. Team builders get the horses in place and moving in unison. Operational leaders build the systems that tie everyone's contribution together.

But there is a significant and clear distinction that must be made between leaders and managers. Whereas managers tend to maintain and improve upon what exists, operational leaders create new opportunities and solutions that result in breakthroughs. They conceive and introduce new routines designed to facilitate the accomplishment of the vision.

FINAL REMARKS

1. Potential Disasters:

We typically prefer working with people just like ourselves since they agree with our views, care about the same things we do, and don't obsess on things we aren't passionate about. But this tendency is destructive. Although there is a significant learning curve involved, working with leaders who have different aptitudes multiplies our efforts. It will push a team to greater heights of productivity, innovation and unity.

2. The Ultimate Combination:

It is personally and corporately debilitating for one individual trying to be the answer to everyone's problems. If you are a leader, you must determine how to utilize your aptitude in concert with others who possess a passion for the same Godly vision and yet operate with different aptitudes. Tension within the team is inevitable but it can either be constructive or destructive. Destructive tension is caused by ego, inflexibility, insecurity and selfishness. Constructive is natural and beneficial.

As a team, you need to figure out how you can maximize each leader's contribution and to minimize misunderstanding and unproductive conflicts. To help pioneering leaders, colleagues need to state their cases short and sweet, with persuasive facts and personal passion. Strategic leaders respond well to genuine and deserved compliments for the ideas they present. Most team-building leaders will support a plan simply because a person they like and trust is promoting it. You can better connect with them on a heart (emotional) level. Operational leaders are not quick to let go of a system, policy or procedure they developed, even when it has outlived its utility. They need more support during confrontational episodes that must take place to move the organization/ministry forward.

So, you need to know what kind of leader you are so that you do not wind up with leaders who possess your aptitude. Armed with that knowledge, endeavor to identify all of the leaders involved in your organization/ministry and their dominant leadership aptitudes. In relation to each leader, check to see if they have a **"team spirit"**—that is a willingness and capacity of working well with others. That capacity is evidenced by being teachable, having spiritual maturity, perceiving leadership to be an act of servanthood, having passion for the vision (and for leading people toward it), and having a sufficient skill level (or the potential to get to that level in a reasonable time) that would enable them to add value to the team. Look for Calling, Character and Capability.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS SURVEY

DIRECTIONS

This is not a test, so there are no wrong answers. If you have been a Christian for at least a few years, you should use your personal experiences as the basis for your responses. If you consider yourself to be a new Christian, then your responses should be based on how well each statement describes the desire of your heart (even if you have not yet done what the statement talks about).

Please keep in mind that this test was written by a human being, not by God, and as such it is certainly imperfect. It should be used as a starting place to begin to discover how God has gifted you, but not as an absolute indicator. It is just one tool in what should be a life-long search for how God has blessed you so you can bless others and build His church.

This ***Spiritual Gifts Survey*** consists of 95 statements. Some items reflect concrete actions; other items are descriptive traits; and still others are statements of belief.

1. Select the one response you feel best characterizes you and place that number in the blank space provided. Record your answer in the blank beside each item.
2. Do not spend too much time on any one item. Remember, it is not a test. Usually your immediate response is the best.
3. Please give an answer for each item. Do not skip any items.
4. Do not ask others how they are answering or how they think you should answer.

Your response choices are:

- 5—Highly characteristic of me/definitely true for me
- 4—Most of the time this would describe me/be true for me
- 3—Frequently characteristic of me/true for me—about 50 percent of the time
- 2—Occasionally characteristic of me/true for me—about 25 percent of the time
- 1—Not at all characteristic of me/definitely untrue for me

-
- _____ 1. I have the ability to organize ideas, resources, time, and people effectively.
 - _____ 2. I am willing to study and prepare for the task of teaching.
 - _____ 3. I am able to relate the truths of God to specific situations.
 - _____ 4. I have a God-given ability to help others grow in their faith.
 - _____ 5. I possess a special ability to communicate the truth of salvation.
 - _____ 6. I have the ability to make critical decisions when necessary.
 - _____ 7. I am sensitive to the hurts of people.
 - _____ 8. I experience joy in meeting needs through sharing possessions.
 - _____ 9. I enjoy studying.
 - _____ 10. I have delivered God's message of warning and judgment.
 - _____ 11. I am able to sense the true motivation of persons and movements.
 - _____ 12. I have a special ability to trust God in difficult situations.
 - _____ 13. I have a strong desire to contribute to the establishment of new churches.
 - _____ 14. I take action to meet physical and practical needs rather than merely talking about or planning to help.

- _____15. I enjoy entertaining guests in my home.
- _____16. I can adapt my guidance to fit the maturity of those working with me.
- _____17. I can delegate and assign meaningful work.
- _____18. I have an ability and desire to teach.
- _____19. I am usually able to analyze a situation correctly.
- _____20. I have a natural tendency to encourage others.
- _____21. I am willing to take the initiative in helping other Christians grow in their faith.
- _____22. I have an acute awareness of the emotions of other people, such as loneliness, pain, fear, and anger.
- _____23. I am a cheerful giver.
- _____24. I spend lots of time reading books and digging into facts.
- _____25. I feel that I have a message from God to deliver to others.
- _____26. I can recognize when a person is genuine/honest.
- _____27. I am a person of vision (a clear mental portrait of a preferable future given by God).
I am able to communicate vision in such a way that others commit to making the vision a reality.
- _____28. I am willing to yield to God's will rather than question and waver.
- _____29. I would like to be more active in getting the gospel to people in other lands.
- _____30. It makes me happy to do things for people in need.
- _____31. I am successful in getting a group to do its work joyfully.
- _____32. I am able to make strangers feel at ease.
- _____33. I have the ability to plan learning and teaching approaches.
- _____34. I can identify those who need encouragement.
- _____35. I have trained Christians to be more obedient disciples of Christ.
- _____36. I am willing to do whatever it takes to see others come to Christ.
- _____37. I am attracted to people who are hurting.
- _____38. I am a generous giver.
- _____39. I am able to discover new truths.
- _____40. I have spiritual insights from Scripture concerning issues and people that compel me to speak out.
- _____41. I can sense when a person is acting in accord with God's will.
- _____42. I can trust in God even when things look dark.

- _____ 43. I can determine where God wants a group to go and help it get there.
- _____ 44. I have a strong desire to take the gospel to places where it has never been heard.
- _____ 45. I enjoy reaching out to new people in my church and community.
- _____ 46. I am sensitive to the needs of people.
- _____ 47. I have been able to make effective and efficient plans for accomplishing the goals of a group.
- _____ 48. I often am consulted when fellow Christians are struggling to make difficult decisions.
- _____ 49. I think about how I can comfort and encourage others in my congregation.
- _____ 50. I am able to give spiritual direction to others.
- _____ 51. I am able to present the gospel to lost persons in such a way that they accept the Lord and His salvation.
- _____ 52. I possess an unusual capacity to understand the feelings of those in distress.
- _____ 53. I have a strong sense of stewardship based on the recognition that God owns all things.
- _____ 54. I have delivered to other persons messages that have come directly from God.
- _____ 55. I can sense when a person is acting under God's leadership.
- _____ 56. I try to be in God's will continually and be available for His use.
- _____ 57. I feel that I should take the gospel to people who have different beliefs from me.
- _____ 58. I have an acute awareness of the physical needs of others.
- _____ 59. I am skilled in setting forth positive and precise steps of action.
- _____ 60. I like to meet visitors at church and make them feel welcome.
- _____ 61. I explain Scripture in such a way that others understand it.
- _____ 62. I can usually see spiritual solutions to problems.
- _____ 63. I welcome opportunities to help people who need comfort, consolation, encouragement, and counseling.
- _____ 64. I feel at ease in sharing Christ with nonbelievers.
- _____ 65. I can influence others to perform to their highest God-given potential.
- _____ 66. I recognize the signs of stress and distress in others.
- _____ 67. I desire to give generously and unpretentiously to worthwhile projects and ministries.
- _____ 68. I can organize facts into meaningful relationships.
- _____ 69. God gives me messages to deliver to His people.
- _____ 70. I am able to sense whether people are being honest when they tell of their religious experiences.
- _____ 71. I enjoy presenting the gospel to persons of other cultures and backgrounds.

- _____ 72. I enjoy doing little things that help people.
- _____ 73. I can give a clear, uncomplicated presentation.
- _____ 74. I have been able to apply biblical truth to the specific needs of my church.
- _____ 75. God has used me to encourage others to live Christlike lives.
- _____ 76. I have sensed the need to help other people become more effective in their ministries.
- _____ 77. I like to talk about Jesus to those who do not know Him.
- _____ 78. I have the ability to make strangers feel comfortable in my home.
- _____ 79. I have a wide range of study resources and know how to secure information.
- _____ 80. I feel assured that a situation will change for the glory of God even when the situation seems impossible.
- _____ 81. I feel strongly that my prayers for a sick person bring recovery for that person.
- _____ 82. Making music, singing or dancing always lifts my spirit.
- _____ 83. Sometimes when I pray, it seems as if the Spirit steps in and prays in words I cannot understand.
- _____ 84. When I pray for the sick, either they or I feel sensations of tingling or warmth.
- _____ 85. Singing, dancing to, or playing songs of praise to God for pure enjoyment is personally satisfying.
- _____ 86. I can speak to God in a language I have never learned.
- _____ 87. I enjoy praying for sick people because I know that many of them will be healed as a result.
- _____ 88. People have said they see the love of Jesus on my face when I sing, dance, or play music.
- _____ 89. Praying in tongues has been meaningful to me in my personal prayer life.
- _____ 90. Sometimes I have a strong sense that God wants to heal someone through my prayers or words.
- _____ 91. People have told me they were moved spiritually by my singing, dancing, or playing music.
- _____ 92. When I give a public message in tongues, I expect it to be interpreted.
- _____ 93. I have prayed for others and physical healing has actually happened.
- _____ 94. I enjoy using my musical talents to make music that glorifies God and benefit people.
- _____ 95. When I speak in tongues, I believe it is edifying to the group I am with.

SCORING YOUR SURVEY

Follow these directions to figure your score for each spiritual gift.

1. Place in each box your numerical response (1-5) to the item number which is indicated below the box.
2. For each gift, add the numbers in the boxes and put the total in the TOTAL box.

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|---|------------------------------|---|------------------------------|---|------------------------------|---|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| LEADERSHIP | <u> </u> Item 6 | + | <u> </u> Item 16 | + | <u> </u> Item 27 | + | <u> </u> Item 43 | + | <u> </u> Item 65 | = | <u> </u> TOTAL |
| ADMINISTRATION | <u> </u> Item 1 | + | <u> </u> Item 17 | + | <u> </u> Item 31 | + | <u> </u> Item 47 | + | <u> </u> Item 59 | = | <u> </u> TOTAL |
| TEACHING | <u> </u> Item 2 | + | <u> </u> Item 18 | + | <u> </u> Item 33 | + | <u> </u> Item 61 | + | <u> </u> Item 73 | = | <u> </u> TOTAL |
| KNOWLEDGE | <u> </u> Item 9 | + | <u> </u> Item 24 | + | <u> </u> Item 39 | + | <u> </u> Item 68 | + | <u> </u> Item 79 | = | <u> </u> TOTAL |
| WISDOM | <u> </u> Item 3 | + | <u> </u> Item 19 | + | <u> </u> Item 48 | + | <u> </u> Item 62 | + | <u> </u> Item 74 | = | <u> </u> TOTAL |
| PROPHECY | <u> </u> Item 10 | + | <u> </u> Item 25 | + | <u> </u> Item 40 | + | <u> </u> Item 54 | + | <u> </u> Item 69 | = | <u> </u> TOTAL |
| DISCERNMENT | <u> </u> Item 11 | + | <u> </u> Item 26 | + | <u> </u> Item 41 | + | <u> </u> Item 55 | + | <u> </u> Item 70 | = | <u> </u> TOTAL |
| HEALING | <u> </u> Item 81 | + | <u> </u> Item 84 | + | <u> </u> Item 87 | + | <u> </u> Item 90 | + | <u> </u> Item 93 | = | <u> </u> TOTAL |
| MUSIC | <u> </u> Item 82 | + | <u> </u> Item 85 | + | <u> </u> Item 88 | + | <u> </u> Item 91 | + | <u> </u> Item 94 | = | <u> </u> TOTAL |
| TONGUES | <u> </u> Item 83 | + | <u> </u> Item 86 | + | <u> </u> Item 89 | + | <u> </u> Item 92 | + | <u> </u> Item 95 | = | <u> </u> TOTAL |
| COUNSELING | <u> </u> Item 20 | + | <u> </u> Item 34 | + | <u> </u> Item 49 | + | <u> </u> Item 63 | + | <u> </u> Item 75 | = | <u> </u> TOTAL |
| SHEPHERDING | <u> </u> Item 4 | + | <u> </u> Item 21 | + | <u> </u> Item 35 | + | <u> </u> Item 50 | + | <u> </u> Item 76 | = | <u> </u> TOTAL |
| FAITH | <u> </u> Item 12 | + | <u> </u> Item 28 | + | <u> </u> Item 42 | + | <u> </u> Item 56 | + | <u> </u> Item 80 | = | <u> </u> TOTAL |
| EVANGELISM | <u> </u> Item 5 | + | <u> </u> Item 36 | + | <u> </u> Item 51 | + | <u> </u> Item 64 | + | <u> </u> Item 77 | = | <u> </u> TOTAL |
| APOSTLESHIP | <u> </u> Item 13 | + | <u> </u> Item 29 | + | <u> </u> Item 44 | + | <u> </u> Item 57 | + | <u> </u> Item 71 | = | <u> </u> TOTAL |
| SERVICE/HELPS | <u> </u> Item 14 | + | <u> </u> Item 30 | + | <u> </u> Item 46 | + | <u> </u> Item 58 | + | <u> </u> Item 72 | = | <u> </u> TOTAL |
| MERCY | <u> </u> Item 7 | + | <u> </u> Item 22 | + | <u> </u> Item 37 | + | <u> </u> Item 52 | + | <u> </u> Item 66 | = | <u> </u> TOTAL |
| GIVING | <u> </u> Item 8 | + | <u> </u> Item 23 | + | <u> </u> Item 38 | + | <u> </u> Item 53 | + | <u> </u> Item 67 | = | <u> </u> TOTAL |
| HOSPITALITY | <u> </u> Item 15 | + | <u> </u> Item 32 | + | <u> </u> Item 45 | + | <u> </u> Item 60 | + | <u> </u> Item 78 | = | <u> </u> TOTAL |

Now that you have completed the survey, list the 3 most prominent gifts that you have discovered in your life:

1. _____

2. _____ 3. _____

Spiritual Gifts Reference Material

Definitions and Biblical References

Introduction

The main places in the Bible where we learn about Spiritual Gifts are:

1 Corinthians 12-14, Romans 12, Ephesians 4

From Scripture, we learn the following key information about Spiritual Gifts:

Biblical Summary about Spiritual Gifts

1. Every Christian has at least one Spiritual Gift (1 Peter 4:10)
2. No Christian has all the gifts (1 Corinthians 12:28-30)
3. We cannot choose our gifts; God does that job (1 Corinthians 12:7-11)
4. There is no gift that every Christian possesses (1 Corinthians 12:29-30)
5. Believers will account to the Lord for how they use their gifts (1 Peter 4:10)
6. Spiritual Gifts indicate God's call and purpose for a Christian's life (Romans 12:2-8)
7. Gifts used without love do not accomplish God's intended purposes (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)
8. Spiritual Gifts are for the common good to build up the Body (1 Corinthians 12:27)

Biblical Guidelines for using Spiritual Gifts

1. Usage of the gift(s) conforms to Biblical teaching (2 Timothy 3:16 ; Romans 12 ; 1 Corinthians 12-14 ; Ephesians 4 ; 1 Peter 4)
2. There is affirmation and positive feedback within the Body of Christ for the expression of the gift (1 Corinthians 12:7 ; Ephesians 4:16)
3. There is agreement within the Body of Christ that the Holy Spirit is at work (1 John 4:1 ; 1 Thessalonians 5:21)
4. The Holy Spirit provides peace in our spirits as we offer our gift(s) to the Body of Christ (John 15:26 ; Romans 8:16)
5. There is evidence of godly fruit in the life of the Body (John 15:8 ; Matthew 7:16-20)
6. Believers offer their gifts for the common good as others have need (Acts 2:44-45 ; 1 Corinthians 12:7)
7. Unless gifts are offered in love, they have no worth (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)
8. We should strive to live a life worthy of our calling (Ephesians 4:1)

How Many Different Spiritual Gifts Are There?

There is little agreement among Christians as to exactly how many different Spiritual Gifts there are.

- Some people look at the key Bible passages on Spiritual Gifts and limit the Gifts to the ones listed there:
 - Romans 12 - Prophecy, Service, Teaching, Encouragement, Giving, Leadership, and Mercy
 - 1 Corinthians 12 - Message of Wisdom, Message of Knowledge, Faith, Healing, Miraculous Powers, Prophecy, Distinguishing between spirits, Speaking in Tongues, and Interpreting Tongues
 - Ephesians 4 - Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, and Teacher
- Some say that the Gifts of Administration and Leadership are the same Gift.
- Some say the Gifts of Service and Helps are the same Gift.
- Some add the Gifts of Craftsmanship and Music because of the skills that God gave to people to help with the Old Testament Tabernacle.

Personal Profile

My SHAPE for Ministry

Names: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Spiritual gifts I believe I have (from list in Spiritual Gifts Survey):

1

2

3

I feel I may have these gifts because:

1

2

3

HEART

1. What I have a heart for, what I'm passionate about or what motivates me most. These would include but not limited to: design, develop, pioneer, organize, operate/maintain, serve/help, bargain, compete, influence, perform, improve things, repair, be in charge, persevere, follow rules, etc

- I love to

- I love to

- I love to

2. Who I love to work with most, and the age or type of people:

3. Church issues, ministries, or possible needs that excite or concern me most:

4. If I knew I couldn't fail, this is what I would attempt to do for God with my life:

ABILITIES

1. My current vocation is:
2. Other jobs or skills I have experience in:
3. I feel I have these specialized abilities:
4. I have taught a class or a seminar on:
5. I feel my most valuable personal asset is:

PERSONALITY

This is how I see myself (circle one for each):

| | STRONG | MILD | STRONG | |
|-----------------|--------|------|--------|-----------------|
| Introverted | | | | Extroverted |
| Self-Controlled | | | | Self-Expressive |
| Routine | | | | Variety |
| Cooperative | | | | Competitive |

You may add here more details about your personality:

- When it comes to how we react to emotional pleas, are you a "thinker" or a "feeler"?
- When it comes to finances, are you a "saver" or a "spender"?

EXPERIENCES

THIS IS MY SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

- This is how and when I became a Christian, and what it has meant to me since then:

- Times when I have felt closest to God, and meaningful spiritual experiences that stand out in my mind:

MY PAINFUL EXPERIENCES

- These are the kind of trials and problems I could relate to and encourage a fellow Christian that is going through:

MY EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

- My favorite subjects in school were:

- Seminars or training that has been very meaningful to me:

MY MINISTRY EXPERIENCE

- This is where I have served in the past (if applicable)

Based on this profile and after reviewing the list of ministries at CLA, I feel I am best "shaped" for:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.