

The 5 C's of Small Group Leadership

A Handbook for Leading a Women's Small Group



Melanie Newton

The 5 C's of SMALL GROUP LEADERSHIP

A Handbook for Leading a Women's Small Group



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We extend our heartfelt thanks to the women who contributed to this small group leadership handbook, especially Joan Floyd, Liz Church, Robin Colley, Jodie Niznik and all those wonderful women who have been served the Lord as Bible Study small group leaders over the years at Crossroads Bible Church.

Melanie Newton

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We pray that you and your ministry leaders will find *The 5 C's of Small Group Leadership* a resource that God will use to strengthen you as a minister to others in a small group.

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The 5 C's of Small Group Leadership

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Welcome to small group ministry! Small groups provide a great opportunity for women to grow in their faith and to experience authentic, loving relationships with other believers. Your role as a leader of a small group is to maximize both opportunities for all participants, including yourself.

Women are best equipped for small group ministry through regular training and resources in the “how-to’s” of ministry to other believers and in how to use their unique personalities, spiritual gifts and calling to enrich the ministry within the Body. This guide is a resource that any small group ministry can use to train its leaders.

The most effective way to use this guide is for each new small group leader (or those who have not already been through this training guide) to read through and reflect on the questions included in advance of a designated “small group leader training” day. Consider the “small group leader training” day as a gathering time for all leaders (new and experienced) to discuss what they’ve learned from each section and to ask questions.

Since participants in small groups might be new Christians, long-time Christians who have never been discipled, or those who have not trusted in Jesus yet, be certain to include training in how to share the gospel and how to disciple young believers in the basics of the Christian faith. This information is included in the “Commission” section.

The 5 C’s

Character — This section covers the role and character qualities of a servant leader in Christ’s kingdom, the handling of doctrinal differences, and incorporating one’s unique personality, spiritual gifts and behavioral style in a ministry setting.

Connection — This section covers how a small group leader effectively connects and works with other members of her ministry team.

Community — This section covers the advantages of small group participation and ways to build and maintain community within a group.

Commitment — This section covers the ongoing commitment to the “nuts and bolts” of small group leadership including preparation, managing the time, and directing the discussion. It also includes managing crisis situations.

Commission — This section covers the role of the small group leader who is commissioned by Jesus to be a disciple-maker, encouraging the members of her group to follow Jesus as His disciple and to live for Jesus as disciple-makers in their sphere of influence.

The Joy of Small Group Leadership

Being part of a small group can be a most enjoyable experience for a Christ follower. The ideas in this handbook have been developed by those who have spent years being women’s small group leaders. Women of all ages enjoy community and benefit from it when it works well. We pray that you will take to heart these suggestions and become the best small group leader you can be. Enjoy serving Jesus through serving the women in your small group!

Melanie Newton

CHARACTER

Character of a leader



Acts 2:42-47 describes the Christian life applied in a small group setting—house churches meeting in Jerusalem led by the apostles. What each of those men brought to their small groups was their faith in Jesus Christ, their character, and the way they were uniquely gifted. Likewise, every small group leader in Christ’s Church brings to the small group those same things—faith, character, and uniqueness. Character is defined as “the mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual.” The health of the small group is no doubt impacted by the character of the person leading it, character springing from your faith walk with Jesus Christ and expressed through your unique giftedness.

Think About It:

Thinking back on your own experience with small group leaders through the years, what character qualities in your small group leader did you find essential for a healthy, functioning group?

THE ROLE OF SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

Jesus called them (the disciples) together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:42-45)

Jesus contrasted the world’s concept of leader with what He wanted for His Church. Leaders in Christ’s Church (which includes elders, deacons, and small group leaders) are to be servant-minded. The phrase “servant-leader” best describes this role and heart attitude.

Think About It:

Describe a servant-leader you have known. What made you think of that person? Be specific.

CHARACTER QUALITIES OF SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

Several Bible passages describe character qualities of servant leaders. Please read each passage below and the associated character descriptions.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 —

“When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.”

- **Humble & teachable:** Servant-leaders are to be humble and teachable. You don’t need to know all the answers, but you do need to be committed to your own faith walk with Jesus—living by faith and dependence on Him.
- **Christ-focused:** As a servant-leader, your role and privilege are to point the women to Jesus, encouraging them in their relationship with Him above all else. Your goal is to help them learn to place their dependence more upon Christ and less upon you as their leader.

Think About It:

Why would humility, teachability, and love be important qualities in a small group leader?

John 13:34-35 —

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

- **Love:** A servant-leader commits to love the women in her group as well as those on her ministry team.

1 Timothy 3:11 —

Note: Paul outlines the qualifications for the office of “deacon” in 1 Timothy 3:8-13; verse 11 particularly addresses women (the Greek term *gune* denotes a woman, married or unmarried). The term deacon (from the Greek meaning “servant”) is used in the New Testament for both men and women, although this is not always clear in many English translations. The early church had both male and female deacons who were servant-leaders in their churches.

“(Women) likewise are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers, but temperate and trustworthy in everything.”

- **Worthy of respect:** those who know her best recognize this. A respectful woman willingly submits to the authority structures in her life, including the authority of scripture. She strives to live a life worthy of her calling as she considers the well being of others.

- **Not malicious talkers:** Women in leadership must guard the confidences shared within her small group setting or ministry team. She must keep in mind how her words may affect others and be careful not to share sensitive information (personal and/or confidential) in inappropriate settings (with those who don't need to know that information). Use discretion when dealing with ministry concerns by only talking with those directly responsible for the solution.
- **Temperate:** Although some associate the word "temperate" with abstaining from alcohol, the character quality "temperate" means to be self-controlled. From 2 Timothy 2:23-25, we get a good working definition of temperate: kind, patient, and gentle. All of these are likewise fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). A temperate woman yields to the Holy Spirit's control of her behavior, attitude and emotions. She chooses unity over personal preference so is known as one who is cooperative and more interested in the goals of the ministry than her own.
- **Trustworthy in everything:** Being faithful as Jesus describes it, "faithful in the little things." The oversight and teaching of the church are to be entrusted to those who have proven themselves to be faithful. Leaders are held to a greater accountability; therefore, we must be diligent in pursuing and abiding in biblical truth.

Think About It:

Why would being respected, trustworthy, and disciplined in speech and behavior be important qualities in a small group leader?

Titus 2:3-5 —

"Teach the older women to be reverent in the way that they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home (manage their homes well), to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God."

Note: The term "older" can refer to age or spiritual maturity. Mentoring is someone older in the Lord helping someone younger in the Lord understand and apply biblical truth to every day life.

- **Reverent:** Don't let this term scare you. The Greek word translated "reverent" referred to the work of a priestess serving in the temple of her God. For us as Christ's women, all that we do should be done "as unto the Lord." Our daily life in all its aspects is continual ministry before God as we serve and represent Him before others.
- **Teach what is good:** knowing what is good comes from knowing Jesus Christ and the Scriptures as your source of truth.

Think About It:

Who has effectively modeled the daily Christian life for you? How?

- **Role models:** We want to draw women to God’s Word and truth rather than pushing them away from it. Women look to their leaders as examples to follow so no matter where we are in our own personal faith walk with Jesus, they need to see our desire to allow God to change us and grow us in our daily lives and roles as women.

Think About It:

What are some of your fears about being a small group leader?

LEADERSHIP AGREEMENT GUIDELINES

For most small group ministries, the leaders generally come from various church backgrounds. Each small group leader is also learning and growing in her faith walk with Jesus. Your ministry probably has a statement of faith associated with it. Some parts of that statement may be considered “non-negotiable,” that is, all leaders are expected to not only agree with those doctrines but also support those positions should they come up in small group. Some examples of non-negotiable doctrines might be:

- The Bible is the inspired Word of God
- God is a Trinity: three persons in one, or
- Jesus is God: not just a human religious teacher.

If you know the “non-negotiable doctrines” for your church or group, write them in the box below:

The “Non- Negotiable Doctrines” for your church or group:

-
-
-
-
-
-

Procure a copy of your ministry’s statement of faith and read through it. As you read, make note of anything you need to clarify or further discuss with your ministry team leader. After you read through it, do the “Think About It” activity on the next page

Think About It:

Is there anything in the Statement of Faith with which you don't fully agree or about which you have further questions?

Based on the list you wrote on page 4, is it a non-negotiable?

- **No**, it is not on the non-negotiable list. It's probably okay for you not to intellectually hold the same position as your ministry on those, but be sure to ask your questions to your ministry director for your own growth.
- **Yes**, it is on the non-negotiable list. Please make an appointment with your ministry team leader to discuss that issue.
- Usually if anyone in leadership should have varying degrees of agreement on the "non-negotiable" doctrines, the assumption of the ministry leadership is that she *will verbally support* the ministry position or refrain from discussion. And that, if she cannot agree when faced with defending the ministry's position, she *will direct* individuals to the proper authority who can explain and defend the ministry's position scripturally.

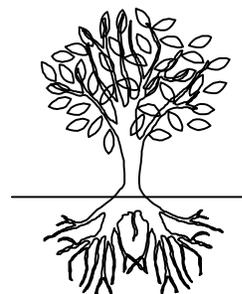
If you do not hold the exact position as your church or ministry on a non-negotiable doctrine, what are some gracious ways you can support that non-negotiable issue if it arises in your small group? See also page 25 for handling other controversial doctrines.

YOUR UNIQUE DESIGN

Have you ever asked yourself these questions?

- Why do I act the way I do?
- Why doesn't he or she do things the way I do them?
- Why can't I seem to connect with that person?

What you are really addressing is BEHAVIOR.



1. Observing behavior is historical.

From ancient times, people have been observing people. Centuries before Christ, the Greeks recognized 4 basic categories of human behavior, using the terms “Sanguine, Choleric, Melancholy, and Phlegmatic” to identify each. Other systems of classification have since been used.

2. Behavior is how you naturally tend to react to the environment around you.

This affects how you communicate with others and also how you receive their communication. Behavior can change over time. Your behavioral tendencies today may be somewhat different from what they were 20 years ago due to the many circumstances and life phases you have experienced.

3. Behavior is not personality.

Personality is a complex issue that deals with emotions and usually falls under the realm of psychology. Behavior doesn't deal with whether you are happy or sad, nervous or depressed, angry or calm. A visual used to describe the difference between behavior and personality is a tree (above right). Personality is like the tree roots—unseen but developed long before the tree grew tall. Behavior is the visible part—the trunk and branches.

4. Behavioral variety is good.

When God created Adam and Eve, He placed in them genes that would give variety to the human race in hair color, eye color, body shape, size and also in behavior. Since God made Adam and Eve to complement one another, we can assume they were different in their behavioral tendencies. But, together they made a team. It is a mistake to think that as we are conformed to the image of Christ, we will be cookie cutter images. That is not biblical thinking.

We know that one behavior type is not better than another. One strength is not better than another. Some are just more suited to specific tasks. All are needed in a society and definitely in the body of Christ.

5. Recognition of behavioral strengths and weaknesses is beneficial.

Everyone has behavioral weaknesses. The challenge for us is to be willing for God to grow us in those areas and to appreciate others who are strong in the areas where we are weak.

Think About It:

How would being aware of your behavioral strengths and weaknesses enhance your ministry as a small group leader?

We know we are not perfect but are being perfected by the Perfect One whose power is sufficient for our weakness. (2 Corinthians 12:9) In fact, when our tendency to self-sufficiency is overcome, we best recognize our need for Him. The main value of recognizing behavioral strength and weaknesses is to help you understand yourself better as well as those closest to you. You become more aware of what you bring to your ministry team and to your small group.

6. Behavior can be assessed through the DISC dimensions of behavior.

Many different approaches to human behavioral differences have been made through the centuries. In recent years, the one assessment tool used most often in ministry settings utilizes the DISC dimensions of behavior.

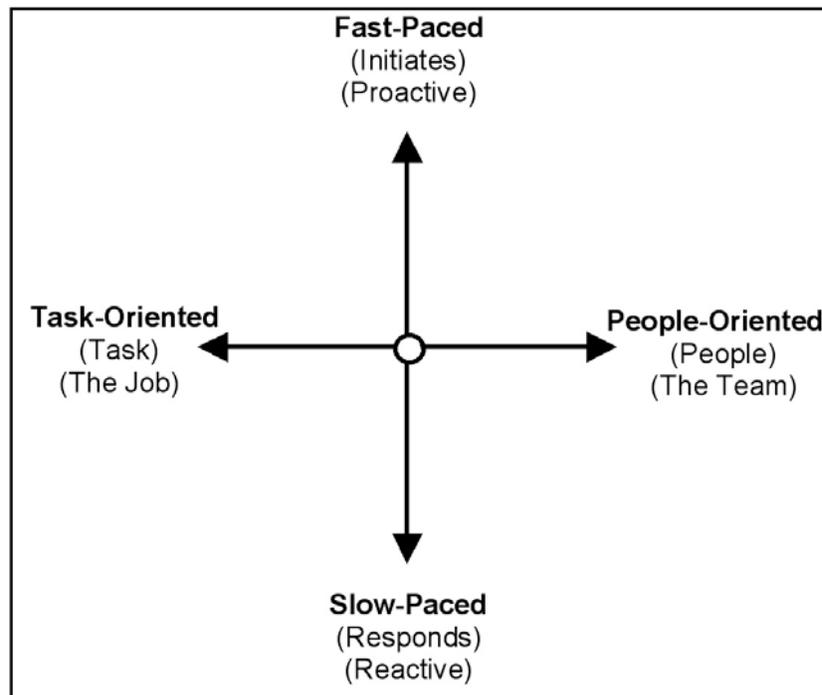
Developed in the early 1900's, this tool has been widely used by businesses and Christian ministries because it helps to enhance teamwork. The DISC dimensions of behavior are based on behavioral tendencies—not personality. Assessments incorporating these dimensions have been developed that you can do on yourself. One such assessment is found on the next few pages. It's simply a tool that will help you to understand yourself better, get along better with those around you, recognize and develop your strengths, and help you to develop teamwork with your co-leader or ministry partners.

7. DISC is based on 4 dimensions of behavior.

According to the researchers who first outlined these dimensions of behavior, people fall into four basic categories (or, dimensions) of behavior as described by the diagram below. The measure is based upon whether one is:

- fast-paced or slow-paced in reacting to one's environment
- task-oriented or people-oriented by nature

Examine the diagram below. Mark where you think you fit.



Discover Your DISC Dimensions of Behavior

Take the assessment online at <http://www.123test.com/disc-personality-test/> to get a more accurate description.

As you take the assessment, remember:

- This is not a test. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers, no "pass" or "fail." There are no "good" or "bad" behavior profiles or patterns.
- Rank your choices as honestly as possible from your point of view, not someone else's perception of you (husband, mother, friend...). You are the only expert on you.
- Go with your first impressions. Avoid the temptation to analyze or dwell on each word.
- Choose to focus on how you behave in a specific environment such as your home or ministry.
- The goal is to give you information to help you become more aware of yourself and others.

Once you complete the assessment, write your primary and secondary tendencies below.

Primary _____

Key words that describe me (see next pages): _____

Secondary (if applicable) _____

Key words that describe me (see next pages): _____

A description of each behavioral dimension is located on the next few pages in this handbook. Read yours carefully. (NOTE: If nothing seems to match "you," it's possible you took the assessment incorrectly. Retake the assessment.)

You can use this assessment to enable you to communicate and work well with others so as to encourage them to reach their potential as well. As you read through the various charts on the following pages, notice how the information can help to enhance communication and teamwork as well as help you to resolve conflict with others.

How You Tend to Behave if You Are a...

“D”

*Fast-Paced and Task-Oriented = **DOMINANT**, Direct and Active.*

Key word: RESULTS.

The “D” behavior tendency describes those whose emphasis is shaping their environment by overcoming opposition to accomplish results.

- D’s are comfortable at solving problems, making quick decisions, and accepting challenges.
- D’s struggle with impatience, overlooking cautions, and being demanding of others.
- Motivate a “D” by emphasizing goals and results and soliciting their help to accomplish them. Let them have control of something. Get in their face and challenge them. “I bet you can’t do...” often works.
- Resolve conflict with a “D” by being direct, ask what is necessary for a “win-win” solution while avoiding “who’s right or wrong” debates.
- Biblical characters who seemed to have “D” behavior patterns: Paul (combo D and C) and Joshua.

“I”

*Fast-Paced and People-Oriented = **INFLUENCE**, Interested and Lively.*

Key word: RECOGNITION.

The “I” behavior tendency describes those whose emphasis is shaping their environment by influencing or persuading others.

- I’s usually speak with ease so are valuable as lecturers, greeters, and making people feel very comfortable.
- I’s struggle with sensitive feelings, being unorganized, and telling long stories.
- Motivate an “I” by appreciating their efforts in front of others, letting them have fun, and putting them in a position of influence over others.
- Resolve conflict with an “I” by assuring her of your love and relationship, dealing with the issues without personal criticism, and caring about her feelings.
- Biblical characters who seemed to have “I” behavior patterns: Moses, David (combo I and C), Peter, and Abigail.

How You Tend to Behave if You Are a...

“S”

*Slow-Paced and People-Oriented = **STEADY** and Cooperative.*

Key word: RELATIONSHIP.

The “S” behavior tendency describes those whose emphasis is on cooperating with others to carry out the task.

- S’s are dependable team players, will do a job consistently week after week, and are good listeners.
- S’s struggle with resisting change, soft-heartedness, and procrastination.
- Motivate an “S” by emphasizing the need of the group, minimizing conflict, and doing things together.
- Resolve Conflict with an “S” by emphasizing what is best for the group or team, being calm and friendly, and offering a comfortable solution.
- Biblical characters who seemed to have “S” behavior patterns: Abraham, Hannah, and Dorcas.

“C”

*Slow-Paced and Task-Oriented = **CONSCIENTIOUS** and Correct.*

Key word: RIGHT.

The “C” behavior tendency describes those whose emphasis is on working conscientiously within existing circumstances to ensure quality and accuracy.

- C’s are valuable at organizing information, problem solving, and maintaining accuracy.
- C’s struggle with getting bogged down in detail, hesitancy to reveal true feelings, and taking a long time to make decisions.
- Motivate a “C” by emphasizing quality in a task, giving her time to do things right, and working closely with her so she knows her work will be approved.
- Resolve conflict with a “C” by stating the issue calmly and logically; ask what is necessary for a “win-win” solution, and giving her time to think about the situation. Be sure to schedule a follow-up discussion.
- Biblical characters who seemed to have “C” behavior patterns: Luke, Mary, and Ruth.

Think About It:

How would understanding behavioral tendencies have helped you to relate to a past ministry partner or small group member?

Using DISC Behavior Tendencies To Improve Communication with D, I

How to relate to a...	How to lead/motivate a...	Resolving conflict with a...
<p>D → <i>Be Direct</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start with results or benefits first, then provide details only as needed • Show how you can help the "D" get those results done • Talk to her in terms of the benefits • Be quick, to the point 	<p>D → <i>Emphasize Goals, Results</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give her the what; let her determine the how • Let her have control, be in charge of something • Use laissez-faire leadership, give her as much free rein as possible to do the job • Get in her face and challenge her 	<p>D → <i>Tends to Be Direct, Aggressive</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid "right/wrong" debates by stating differences without judgment • Ask what is necessary for a win/win solution • Use open-ended questions to get to the real issues • Wrap up discussion by stating what each person has committed to do to resolve the conflict
<p>I → <i>Be Enthusiastic</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be positive, friendly • Provide praise • Validate her self-worth • Give her the feeling of "I need you" • Give the "I" the opportunity to express her opinion • Talk to her in terms of who else has done this 	<p>I → <i>Emphasize Group, Recognition</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with her about ideas, projects, people • Recognize her efforts in front of others • Let her have fun • Use participatory leadership, give her ownership of the leadership process • Put her in a position of influence over others 	<p>I → <i>Avoids Direct, Open Conflict</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize her discomfort with loss of approval • State the issue factually without criticism of her as a person • Limit her attempts to minimize the problem or sidetrack the discussion • Wrap up the discussion with a clear statement of what is going to happen, by when, and affirm your relationship with her

Think About It:

What did you learn from these charts that will help you relate to someone whose behavioral tendencies are opposite of yours?

Using DISC Behavior Tendencies To Improve Communication with S, C

How to relate to a...	How to lead/motivate a...	Resolving conflict with a...
<p><i>S → Be Relational</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be friendly, easygoing, low key on objectives • Don't push; let her respond at her own pace • Talk in terms of how the team will be affected • Let the "S" know that you value her personally • Talk to her about why you want things changed 	<p><i>S → Emphasize Group, Community</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing things together is important • Always maintain the relationship • Let her have peace; minimize conflict • Use any leadership style, but maintain variety • Reassure her she is part of a team, is appreciated 	<p><i>S → Tends to Avoid Hostility & Conflict</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State the need to resolve the conflict in order to maintain stability and harmony in the relationship • Draw out uncomfortable issues by asking open-ended questions • Ask her what she would need to resolve the issue in a way that is reasonable and effective • Be calm and friendly
<p><i>C → Be Analytical</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present clear facts and objective ideas • Don't rush • Be specific and thorough • Speak to the "C" in terms of quality • Focus on the details • Talk to her about how to do what is to be done 	<p><i>C → Emphasize Goals, Quality</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be available to work closely with her • Let her have time to do things right • Use relaxed leadership if it is competent leadership • Assign tasks that play to her strengths of quality & accuracy; doing it the best way 	<p><i>C → Tends to Withdraw & Get Defensive</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State the issue calmly, logically, factually, citing specific behavior • Ask what she would need to resolve this conflict on a "win-win" basis • Recognize her need to think about the situation before responding by scheduling a time to have a follow-up discussion

Think About It:

What did you learn from these charts that will help you relate to someone whose behavioral tendencies are opposite of yours?

INVEST YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Not only are you uniquely designed in your behavior, you have also been gifted by the Holy Spirit to serve the Body of Christ. A spiritual gift is a supernatural capacity for service to God in the Body of Christ.

All believers receive the same gift of the Holy Spirit but individually receive spiritual gifts that differ, according to the will of God, to be used for the common good.

Although opinions differ on the actual number of spiritual gifts, the Bible clearly indicates a variety of gifts understood from such key passages as Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. Listed below are some of the gifts and how they are beneficial to the Body of Christ, especially the local church body. *The following list is adapted from "The Gifts of the Spirit" by Kenneth Boa accessed at <https://bible.org/article/gifts-spirit>.*

Administration (1 Cor. 12:28) — The ability to steer a ministry toward the accomplishment of God-given goals and directives by planning, organizing, and implementing what is needed to accomplish the goal including supervising others. A person may have the gift of leadership without the gift of administration.

Discernment (1 Cor. 12:10) — The ability to clearly discern the spirit of truth and the spirit of error (cf. 1 John 4:6). With this gift, one can distinguish reality versus counterfeits, the divine versus the demonic, true versus false teaching, and in some cases, spiritual versus carnal motives.

Evangelism (Eph. 4:11) — The ability to be an unusually effective instrument in leading unbelievers to a saving knowledge of Christ. Some with this gift are most effective in personal evangelism, while others may be used by God in group evangelism or cross-cultural evangelism.

Exhortation (Rom. 12:8) — The ability to motivate others to respond to the truth by providing timely words of counsel, encouragement, and consolation. When this gift is exercised, believers are challenged to stimulate their faith by putting God's truth to the test in their lives.

Faith (1 Cor. 12:9) — The ability to have a vision for what God wants to be done and to confidently believe that it will be accomplished in spite of circumstances and appearances to the contrary. The gift of faith transforms vision into reality.

Giving (Rom. 12:8) — The ability to contribute material resources with generosity and cheerfulness for the benefit of others and the glory of God. Christians with this spiritual gift need not be wealthy.

Helps (1 Cor. 12:28) — The ability to enhance the effectiveness of the ministry of other members of the body. Some suggest that while the gift of service is more group-oriented, the gift of helps is more person-oriented.

Leadership (Rom. 12:8) — The ability to discern God's purpose for a group, set and communicate appropriate goals, and motivate others to work together to fulfill them in the service of God. A person with this gift is effective at delegating tasks to followers without manipulation or coercion.

Mercy (Rom. 12:8) — The ability to deeply empathize and engage in compassionate acts on behalf of people who are suffering physical, mental, or emotional distress. Those with this gift manifest concern and kindness to people who are often overlooked.

Service (Rom. 12:7) — The ability to identify and care for the physical needs of the body through a variety of means.

Shepherd or pastor (Eph. 4:11) — A person with this spiritual gift has the ability to personally lead, nourish, protect, and care for the needs of a group of believers. Many with this gift do not have or need the office of pastor to be useful to the body.

Teaching (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11) — The ability to clearly explain and effectively apply the truths of God's Word so that others will learn. This requires the capacity to accurately interpret Scripture, engage in necessary research, and organize the results in a way that is easily communicated.

Wisdom (1 Cor. 12:8)--The ability to apply the principles of the Word of God in a practical way to specific situations and to recommend the best course of action at the best time. The exercise of this gift skillfully distills insight and discernment into excellent advice.

Discover Your Spiritual Giftedness

Various spiritual gift assessments are available to further help you understand how you have been gifted. We recommend the online spiritual gifts analysis freely provided by “Ephesians Four Ministries” of the Church Growth Institute at the following website: <http://www.churchgrowth.org>.

Please take this assessment (or any other assessment you have available to you). Be sure to allow yourself at least 15 minutes to answer the questions for this analysis. At the end, you will receive a detailed description of what may be your main spiritual gift. Often, a second gift is evident, and that description will be displayed as well. If possible, print these descriptions for future reference.

Primary gift: _____

Brief description of this gift: _____

Secondary gift (if applicable): _____

Brief description of this gift: _____

Ministry Team Value

Please let your ministry team coordinator know the results of both your DISC Dimensions of Behavior and the Spiritual Gifts Analysis. Your coordinator and your ministry team will benefit by knowing your strengths, weaknesses, and spiritual gifts.

Think About It:

What did you discover about yourself regarding your spiritual gift(s) and how they could benefit your ministry as a small group leader?

The purpose in doing these assessments is to:

- Help you gain a better understanding of yourself, to recognize your innate weaknesses, and to appreciate your own God-given strengths
- Help you better understand those closest to you
- Enable you to better communicate with others
- Enable you to better encourage others to reach their potential

Celebrate your unique design and giftedness by bringing Jesus Christ glory as you use your gifts in the Body of Christ. And, although you are gifted with many strengths, even in using those natural strengths and spiritual gifts be ever mindful that you need to continually depend on His power to use them for His purposes and for His glory. Ask Jesus to show you how to use your strengths. And, pray for Him to be working through you in both your strengths and your weaknesses.

“For in Him we live and move and have our being.” (Acts 17:28)

CONNECTION

Connecting with fellow leaders



“Love creates community. Jesus gave to His disciples a new commandment: ‘Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.’ The call to or the commendation of love within the fellowship of Christians is repeated in every Epistle. God has through Christ laid the basis for a relationship more intimate than that experienced in many families. It is in the context of the family of God that, rooted and grounded in love, believers are to grow in their experience of God’s love and reach Christian maturity.’ (Larry Richards)

Think About It:

What did you find out about yourself from the DISC dimensions of behavior and spiritual gifts assessment that would be significant information for your co-leader or ministry partners to know?

Every small group leader is part of the greater ministry of either a local body of believers or the universal Body of Christ in general. No one is alone. Jesus not only gathered together His group of apostles, He taught them how to work together to carry on the ministry after His earthly departure. The Holy Spirit is given to every believer to equip each one with gifts needed to grow Christ’s kingdom on earth.

We were never intended to work alone but in connection with others who have a faith walk with Jesus Christ. A connection is “a relationship in which one person is linked or associated with another person.”

“If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” (Ecclesiastes 4:10-12)

Ministry leaders need to pursue love for and connection with one another to share the burdens and joys of ministry as well as to support and encourage one another in the use of one’s gifts.

Every small group needs someone who can manage the discussion and the time plus someone who can build relationships and nurture the group. Rarely is one person gifted to do both.

Think About It:

Who are your partners in small group ministry?

CONNECTING AND WORKING WITH OTHERS

Small group leaders and co-leaders should be deliberate in how they work together to meet the ministry needs of their group. This involves getting together and discussing how you will work together, incorporating your spiritual gifts and behavioral style to best advantage for the group.

Spend some time working through the following questions to see how you foresee being able to manage your group. If you have a co-leader, plan a time when you can talk through these things with her. If you do not have a co-leader, look for a mature woman in your group that can help you manage some of the tasks that you will have difficulty doing alone.

“Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” (Hebrews 10:24)

While you are going through these questions, pray through them as well. If we become accustomed to depend on our natural strengths, we may feel no need to cry out to God for help. In both your strengths and weaknesses, ask Jesus to do them through you and to do them His way. We can do neither without the help of our God.

Getting to know your co-leader:

What is your natural bent in leadership: Do you like to lead the discussion? Do you like to write notes, e-mail, & call the women? Do you like to spend time getting to know the women one-on-one?

What do you foresee as a struggle for you as a small group leader? How can your co-leader or another leader help you grow in this area?

What will be your role in leading the small group discussion? (For example, some co-leaders alternate leading the discussion; others decide that one will always lead.)

If a group member shares a prayer request or a prayer need comes up, how will you (and your co-leader, if applicable) make sure to remember to pray for that woman's need and follow up with her? (Be sure to maintain confidentiality.)

Make a plan for connecting:

How will you regularly connect with your co-leader (if you have one) or another leader?

How do you plan to regularly connect with and communicate with your small group? If you have a co-leader, how will the two of you handle this (divide list/trade-off weeks/one leader mainly does this)? If you do not have a co-leader, will you need to find someone from your group to help you with this? If so, pray about this and make finding this person a high priority.

What kinds of outside activities would you like to do with your group occasionally? Will you need to ask someone else to oversee any scheduling/arrangements? Gather some ideas from others who have had success in this area.

What is your plan for warmly greeting the women as they arrive (at the door, at the table, etc.)?

Talk to your co-leader on a regular basis. You will benefit from having the other person's perspective. Pray together for the women in your group. Periodically review your plans and see how you are doing. What needs to change? Working together as a ministry team (leader/co-leader for each group and leaders in the ministry) benefits all the participants in the ministry. And, our Lord Jesus is glorified by our unity.

*“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that **they may be one as we are one**: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to **complete unity** to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (John 17:20-23)*

MANAGING CONFLICTS AND EXPECTATIONS

“I appeal to you, ... in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.” (1 Corinthians 1:10)

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.” (Philippians 2:3)

Unity or like-mindedness with your ministry team is essential for a servant-leader of a small group. Remember that your goal is to have them focused on their relationship with Jesus Christ and connected with a local church. The larger a ministry grows, the more difficult unity becomes. Conflicts will naturally arise between women who have different behavioral tendencies, backgrounds, and/ or approaches to ministry. We must all work hard to resolve conflicts quickly for the health of the ministry. Conflicts usually fall into 2 categories: 1) conflict with the ministry operation or 2) conflict with a ministry leader or co-leader.

Think About It:

Have you experienced or witnessed a conflict between women in ministry? How was it managed/resolved? What, if anything, could have been done better?

Some conflicts that might possibly arise between co-leaders or between a leader and the ministry itself are: behavioral clashes, how one does/does not nurture the group, childcare issues, and/ or misunderstanding of ministry directives.

We've given you some suggestions for resolving conflicts on pages 11 & 12. We offer you more guidelines below.

Concerning the Ministry

We realize that there may be times when issues come up that need to be addressed. We ask that you please bring these issues to the coordinator or staff member that oversees your ministry. It is our hope that this will give you a new perspective on why we do things the way we do and an avenue for your concern or idea to be discussed and considered for the benefit of the entire group.

Concerning a Co-leader

If you have an issue with another ministry leader, assume good will on her part and ask the Lord how best to proceed in your relationship with her. If you need to discuss the issue in order to get guidance on how to proceed, set aside some time to talk with your ministry leader. Do not gossip about the situation with others. When needed, talk directly with the other leader for the purpose of reconciliation.

If your attempts to reconcile with another leader do not resolve the issue, please set a meeting for the two of you to discuss the issue with the ministry coordinator or the staff member that oversees your ministry. See Matthew 18:15-17 for a good passage on dealing with conflict biblically.

What if I am going to be absent from our small group meeting?

If you have a co-leader, tell her as far in advance as possible when you will be absent. Your ministry coordinator may want to be told as well.

If you will both be absent on the same day, contact your ministry coordinator or staff member that oversees your ministry to make arrangements for your group to be properly served.

Gratefulness

Remember those who serve your ministry—set-up, childcare, hospitality, or any other areas. Thank them often for their service, which makes it possible for your small group to meet. Help your group also practice gratitude toward them.

COMMUNITY

Building community in a group

“Salvation is individual, but not individualistic. God’s people are called together in community.” (Francis Schaeffer)



Group community can be defined as “a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals.” The life of following Christ was never meant to be solitary. The early Christians pursued it in groups not much larger than our small groups. They met exclusively in homes for the first 200 years or so of the movement. By meeting in a small group, we are imitating a time-tested format for spiritual life. Small groups are the ideal setting in which women can learn what it means to take on the character of Christ.

Women join a group to meet some type of need. Some want to mainly study; others want to mainly socialize. Most want a balance of both.

ADVANTAGES OF SMALL GROUP PARTICIPATION

Some of the advantages of participating in a small group are:

- Encouraging one another during good and bad times
- Solving problems together
- Asking thoughtful questions when one has a decision to make
- Benefiting from one another’s insights into the Word of God.
- Listening to God together
- Praying for each other
- Practicing how to love one’s neighbor
- Learning to receive care from others
- Seeing Christianity is real as you see God work in others’ lives
- Experiencing the pleasure of helping another person grow

Think About It:

What have you gained by participating in a small group?

Since women join and/or participate in a small group in order to have some need met, we as small group leaders can help to meet some of those needs. How we do that is often as unique as we are. But, every small group is likely to experience some challenges to community.

CONNECT, CONNECT, CONNECT!

“Connection” is the key word to building community. You must connect with your co-leader as described in the previous section. Then, your role in your group is to also connect them.

1. Connect the women with *you*.

You as a small group leader set the tone for the group. Through your actions, you say, “I care about you.” Here are some ways to connect the women with you.

- Try and sit by a different woman each time your group meets. Break out of your comfort zone, it’s worth it!
- Get to know the women in your group by name and face. Greet them by name whenever you see them.
- Become familiar with their husbands’ and childrens’ names and general ages (preschool, elementary, highschool, college, adult). Ask about them and if needed, keep notes and refresh yourself before a meeting.
- Know where they live, where they lived before, and what job or career they have (or had before motherhood).
- Love them through smile, words, and touch.
- Be transparent and honest about yourself.
- Actively seek interaction with them outside of small group.
- Be on time. Being on time sends a very positive and welcoming message.

Think About It:

How important do you think it is for a small group leader to intentionally connect with each member of the group?

2. Connect the women with *each other*.

- It has been said that every woman needs 3 connections to stay in a small group. The connection with you is the first one, also with your co-leader if you have one. They need to connect with at least two more group members.
- Be a “matchmaker.” Pay attention to common interests (occupations, hometowns or home states, pets, # of kids, ages of kids, live in the same neighborhood). Encourage those with common interests to get together outside of group time.
- Plan times for your group members to get together. Even if only 2 can attend, they can connect with one another.
- When one is absent, let the rest of the group know what is going on and encourage them to join together to pray or help her.
- Discourage discussing controversial topics (denominations, politics) that may isolate anyone or divide the group.
- Look for ways to build community in your small group.

CHALLENGES OF SMALL GROUP PARTICIPATION

“Hospitality is the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy.” (Henri Nouwen)

The small group leader “facilitates.” To facilitate means to “make an action or process easy or easier.” As the servant-leader for your group, your role is to make being part of a group “easier” for those who participate. At the start of a small group, most of the women are strangers. The challenge for the leader is to help build community within this group of “strangers.” That involves overcoming hesitancy, incorporating authenticity, and working at connection.

Hesitancy

First-time participants will often have underlying questions and concerns about their participation in a small group setting. These are more often felt rather than verbalized: *Will I be accepted or rejected here? I’m afraid I’ll look stupid or nervous. Will I feel pressured and pushed to perform in some way?*

Some other feelings, concerns and fears that women might have when they are meeting with their small group for the first time are:

- Who will be the real leaders here?
- Will I tell too much about myself? What if I really open up my feelings? Will I embarrass myself?
- What if everyone rejects me? If the group attacks me?
- What if I’m asked to do something I don’t want to do?
- Feelings of silence and awkwardness or high anxiety.

The central issue of all these fears and feelings is trust vs. mistrust. Whom can I really trust in this group?

Authenticity

Authenticity is an essential ingredient of a small group, but it requires trust. Building trust takes time, though, before women may open up and share what’s really going on in their lives. You, as a leader, need to share some of your own joys and struggles. Be authentic yourself. This gives them insight into your own faith walk with Jesus and helps them to identify with you as an ordinary woman, not the “superior” leader.

Connection

Connection is valuable for building community in a group as well as between ministry partners. It is important for group members to connect with one another and connect with the message of transformation being shared through the Bible study or life modeled by the small group leader.

Many groups will naturally connect with one another. If at any time your group is struggling to connect, be proactive to step in and create stronger connection within your group through any means you think might work with your women. One way is to connect them with you by spending time with them individually. That encourages women to attend the group more regularly. Another way is to pick a project the group can do together to serve other people.

Think About It:

How did you feel when/if you joined a small group (Bible Study or other) for the first time?

What are some ways to facilitate building **trust** within a group so as to encourage **authenticity**?

What are some ways to facilitate **connection** within a group?

THE COMPLEXION OF A SMALL GROUP

The complexion of a small group will be as varied as the women attending. Every woman has a need to **feel** heard, a need to **be** valued, a need to **experience** love, and a need to **contribute**. Occasionally, leaders will face some challenging situations emerging from the personalities and life situations of the women participants. How we handle these challenges may influence how well our group experiences community.

A leader can help the individual and the group to meet these challenges by loving each woman and by redirecting and giving perspective as needed. *First...pray for ideas*; our God knows that woman best. Here are some gracious yet practical ideas others have discovered for dealing with the following challenges:

The Overly Talkative Gal

What you can say:

- Good answer, I appreciate that. (Quickly) Okay, now someone else.
- Okay, I need some of you shy ones to speak up on the next question.
- It's not fair to expect _(talker)_ to carry the discussion. (Ha, ha)

What you can do:

- Recognize that some people are just uncomfortable with silence so they feel the need to answer every question. Model to them that you are not uncomfortable with silence.
- Ask her apart from the group, "What clue do I use to let you know you're talking too much?"
- Enlist the talker's help in getting the others to participate.

The Excessively Shy Gal

What you can say:

- I can see you have something to share.
- I can see those wheels turning.
- I'm sure you have something to contribute.

What you can do:

- Ask her if she wants to be encouraged to speak up.
- Observe if she has anything written then ask, "Would you like to read what you've written?"
- Encourage her prior to small group to be willing to share for the benefit of the group.
- Most do want to join in, but be sensitive to those who don't. Some quiet women like to just listen but will speak up when they are ready.

Think About It:

What have you seen small group leaders do to effectively facilitate a group including "the overly talkative gal" or "the excessively shy gal"?

The Argumentative Gal

What you can say:

- I understand how you might feel that way.
- Can we save that question until we get through with the study?
- Let's get together and go over that outside of small group.
- Let's see if we can find a really smart lady to join us for lunch!
- (Controversial doctrine): For years, theologians have disagreed on that one! I wouldn't argue that point, but you may enjoy talking to one of our pastors.

What you can do:

- Gently talk to her later about what we need to accomplish in a short time frame.
- Remind women at the beginning of the year that there will be different doctrinal views represented in our groups and that we are not here to discuss them but to study the Bible.

Extenuating Illness

This can be frightening because of the potential time demands. Don't try to do it all. We have to balance our care of others with our commitment to our own families.

Here are some ways to realistically and graciously meet needs without overwhelming yourself or the group:

What you can say:

- I have to go to the grocery store. Is there something you need?
- I had just a few minutes but wanted to call and check on you.
- I can do that. I'll just need to be home by 3:00 for my kids.
- My plate is kind of full today. Can this wait a day or two?

What you can do:

- You can set aside half a day to help with the need. Communicate this clearly to her by saying, "I'm free for half a day tomorrow. Is there something I can do for you?" OR "I have a couple of hours this afternoon. Can I come to do your laundry?"
- It doesn't matter if you don't know what to do, just "be."
- Keep a willing heart, stay connected, meet needs, be realistic and set boundaries.

Think About It:

What have you seen small group leaders do to effectively facilitate a group that included "the argumentative gal" or an "extenuating illness?"

The Occasional Woman

Some women are hesitant at making a commitment to a group. Whether it's rarely preparing for a class, sporadic attendance throughout the year, or consistently not showing up on the days when your group is providing the brunch food, we as leaders must do what we can to make them feel welcome and wanted in the group.

In a Bible Study group —

If you are leading a group that is doing a Bible study and has homework, please encourage all women to come and learn from the discussion time, even if they haven't done the lesson for that day. It's not unusual for someone to not get the lesson done for that week. However, some women routinely come to a study without doing the lesson yet freely participate in the discussion, giving their own opinions.

Here are some suggestions for handling this graciously during group time:

- Glance at everyone's books to see if there are answers written. When you notice one with a blank page, be cautious about calling on that woman to answer a question.
- If she feels comfortable joining the discussion or answering a question, let her do so. Especially encourage her to answer the observation questions, which are from the text.
- Reinforce the need to go to the biblical text as the source of truth. Keep the group focused on what's in the lesson.

Some ways to encourage her to do the lesson at home yet not discourage her from coming:

- Gently ask her privately if she has had trouble finding time to do her study or if she needs help in walking through and answering questions.
- Ask her to research something in particular.
- Offer to come to her house and work through a study with her. Perhaps she's intimidated into thinking she can't do it on her own. (See the *Commission* section for helping women learn to do a study.)

In any group —

Some women stay on the fringes of the group (examples: attending sporadically, forgets to bring food when promised, rushes in/out). You will need to devise ways to keep her connected to the group so that when she does attend, she feels welcomed.

Here are some suggestions for doing that:

- Pursue a regular connection with her through text, email or phone call to find out what's going on in her life and to let her know about the group. Share what you can from your conversation with the group so that when she does attend, she is not perceived as a stranger.
- Keep mentioning her name every group gathering so they'll remember her.
- Continually let her know that she is needed and wanted.

Think About It:

What have you seen small group leaders do to effectively facilitate a group that included "the occasional woman?"

Emotional Pain:

A little girl was sent on an early errand by her mother, but she took far too much time to return home. When she finally did return, her mother wanted to know what had taken so long. The little girl explained that on the way she had met a little friend who was crying because she had broken her doll. "Oh," said the mother, "then you stopped to help her fix the doll?" "Oh, no," replied the little girl, "I stopped to help her cry."

This little girl knew exactly what her friend needed. When people are hurting, they need comfort. But, we often respond to hurting people in unproductive ways. None of us can know the depth of someone's emotional pain; we can only direct them to the reality of God's comfort.

Here are some ways we can give comfort to someone who is emotionally hurting:

What you can say:

- Support. "If you need a shoulder to cry on, I'll be there."
- Encourage. I can't fix it, but I know Who can help. And, I'll be here also.

What you can do:

- Be God with skin on.
- Keep a willing heart, stay connected, meet needs, be realistic and set boundaries.
- Sometimes her pain may need pastoral counseling or professional help. If that is the case, please direct her to staff who can make that evaluation.

Think About It:

What have you seen small group leaders do to effectively facilitate a group that included someone with "emotional pain?"

Other Situations Affecting Community

How would you graciously respond to the following situations in your group?

- The Advice Giver —
- The Pessimist —
- Group size getting noticeably smaller as women drop out; how to keep the rest from getting discouraged —

COMMITMENT

The commitment of leadership



Imagine with me that you're on a plane to Greece. You've wanted to go there all your life, but you've also been hesitant because you don't know the language or the culture ... AND there is SO much you want to see and do, you don't know where to start! You're excited, but getting more and more nervous that this was a mistake. What made you think you could travel alone to a foreign country! The plane lands. Where do you go? What if customs won't let you through? What if you can't even find the bathroom? What if.....wait, there is a smiling face holding a sign with YOUR NAME. You approach the smiling face, and she welcomes you to Greece IN ENGLISH and tells you that your travel agent back home contacted her to help you as you begin your journey. She comfortably navigates you through baggage and customs until you are standing in the beauty of the country you've always wanted to explore. She equips you with local maps, landmark suggestions, historical information, and makes sure you know the words for "bathroom" and "McDonalds hamburger" (in case you need some American food). You are now free to roam and discover Greece, always KNOWING that your guide, and new friend, is there to help you when needed. Soon what was unknown becomes familiar. Your trip is a huge success and the experience of a lifetime. And, you're eager to return to discover more!! Ladies, YOU are the smiling face, and YOU can make a difference to women coming to your small group for whatever reason, with whatever anxieties. You can help navigate your women to discover an experience of a lifetime in their walk with God, and to become more familiar with His Word and truth so they are eager to return and discover more! (Joan Floyd, Small Group Leader Training at Crossroads Bible Church, 2006)

What is "commitment?"

A commitment is "a devotion or dedication to a cause, person, or relationship." As a small group leader, you are making a commitment both to your group and to the ministry as a whole. What does that look like? What is involved in the day-to-day, ongoing management of a small group?

Think About It:

What do you think your commitment to your small group will look like?

The following pages will cover 7 responsibilities of a small group leader that are considered the "nuts and bolts" of your commitment to your small group. Paying attention to these will help you be an effective servant-leader for your small group.

#1 PREPARE BEFOREHAND TO SERVE YOUR GROUP

Preparing ahead of time frees you to focus on the women in your small group during your group time. This may take the form of knowing the discussion topic for the day, knowing who is leading that day (if you have a co-leader), knowing which women are struggling that week, or even how to set up the room.

Here are some other ways that will help you prepare beforehand:

Bible study group leader —

- Prepare the next lesson before going to your group. This allows you to offer suggestions to your ladies on interesting or difficult questions as they prepare for the next week.
- Review the current lesson and be prepared to either lead the lesson or support the leader during the discussion.

All groups —

- Talk with your co-leader about your group on a weekly basis. You are a team with different perceptions and unique observations and ideas. Work together to offer your ladies your combined "best."
- Attend leaders meetings or ministry planning meetings.
- Be committed to spending time with Jesus and His Word yourself. Keep your relationship with Jesus fresh.

Think About It:

What will be your biggest challenge in doing this?

#2 ESTABLISH A CARING ATMOSPHERE

How many of you can walk into almost any room, anytime, and feel comfortable? Your group will have the confident, the nervous, the insecure—all kinds of women. You need to be their "welcoming guide" so they will want to continue their journey week-to-week.

Here are some ways you can help make walking into the group a highlight of a woman's week:

- Arrive early enough to your group to greet the first woman.
- Ensure emotional comfort by asking non-threatening questions such as "How long have you lived here?" or "Tell me a little about yourself." Some questions that may be considered threatening are "Do you have kids?" and "Are you married?"
- Only mention personal issues when no one else is listening unless the group already knows about them.
- Do not speak in a critical manner about any church, denomination, or political figure. Try to quickly diffuse any such topics when they come up.
- Communicate unconditional acceptance in your eyes, manner, and the way you respond to what a group member shares. They need to trust you won't make quick judgments about them. They need to be assured of confidences being kept.

Think About It:

What did a past small group leader do to establish a caring atmosphere for your group?

#3 ENCOURAGE INTERACTION WHILE DIRECTING THE DISCUSSION

A good discussion leader encourages all the women to contribute to the discussion and interact with one another while retaining control of the group and maintaining biblical integrity. Your group depends upon you to be the “thermostat” (sets the tone; the group adjusts to that) rather than just a “thermometer” (adjusts to the group, let’s the group set the tone).

Here are some suggestions for accomplishing this:

Bible study group leader —

- **Guide** your small group into the living, transforming Word of God by opening and reading the Bible together in your small group. (See steps for Inductive Bible Study on page 43.)
- **Encourage** the women to discover God’s Word on their own during the week, taking time to complete the lesson, and to share with each other what they have learned. Model having your own lesson completed each week.
- **Provide** an accepting environment that allows the women to openly wrestle with God’s Word as a small group through interaction with one another. Mark the application/share questions clearly so you won’t accidentally call on anyone for a share question, especially if it asks a woman to reveal personal information.

Think About It:

Why is it important for the leader to encourage interaction between the group members and not just with yourself as “answer woman?”

All groups —

- Ask questions that will get the discussion going and then help direct it once it starts. How would some of you answer this question? What do you all think about that? Does anyone else feel that same way? What might this look like in a person’s life?
- Limit your own talking except to “prime the pump” to get a discussion going and to direct the discussion once it begins.
- Affirm a woman after she shares. (For example, “Thank you for sharing that.”) Clarify the truth, though, should the comment need further explanation. Correct error gently, if appropriate.
- Ensure emotional comfort by diffusing critical remarks.
- Encourage the women to say, “I would like to hear what someone else has to say,” if they are uncomfortable answering a question.
- Consider calling on specific women to answer the question rather than asking for a volunteer. This avoids the same women volunteering, consumes less time, and allows you to call on each woman. If you sense someone prefers not to be called on (or she has told you so), honor that request. However, try to find out if she feels insecure about her answers or the element of surprise. Then, include her in ways she feels comfortable.
- If a woman asks a question, and you don’t know the answer, that’s okay! You are not expected to have all the answers. Share with her you are not quite sure but will find out for next time.
- Silence is okay! Count to 10 or 25 before jumping in and breaking it! Let the women have time to think.

#4 MANAGE TIME WISELY

You and your co-leader (if you have one) need to ensure that group time is wisely used not only for discussing small group questions but also for caring for one another. Here are some suggestions for accomplishing this:

- Start your small group on time. Even if only a few women are present, they will soon learn to be prompt.
- If you are not leading the discussion, learn to help your co-leader move the group along. Watch the time and any signals given by the leader. Use a comment such as, “*We had better move along, or we won’t finish*” to graciously interrupt a discussion when needed.
- Bible study group leader: move quickly through basic observation questions. Call on one person for an answer then move on. Or, sum up several questions into one.
- End on time - whether or not any of your women have children in childcare.

Special Situations —

What do I do if a woman breaks down in tears? Some suggestions for managing this graciously:

- After a couple of minutes of letting her share and/or cry, stop and pray. The leader can say, “*Let’s see what God has for us in His Word that applies to this.*” If appropriate, move on to the other discussion questions.
- Sensitively listen while at the same time keeping the group from asking more questions that might prolong the sharing. Judge whether the issue is one that the group might help to “fix.”
- After ~5 minutes, if the woman is still overcome by emotion, the co-leader (or another woman) should **take her aside** to continue giving her support through listening and prayer.

Think About It:

Why is it important to manage group time wisely?

#5 PURSUE RELATIONSHIPS

Picture each woman wearing a sign that says, “Do you care about me?” She wants you to pursue a relationship with her. Spend time connecting with each woman in your group. If you successfully connect her with you, you have a greater chance of her connecting with the other women in the group because she’ll want to come. Here are some suggestions for accomplishing this:

- Establish immediate contact with women by calling them and welcoming them to the group (including before the first session). Also, ask if she has any questions about the group or childcare (if applicable). For new women joining the group or those who missed the first session, make sure she has her study book or other ministry materials she needs. Deliver them personally if necessary. Also, tell her about the group members since she missed the first day’s “Get to Know You” time.

Think About It:

Why is it important to pursue relationships with the women in your group?

- Pray regularly for your women. Pay attention to the needs and hurts expressed by the women in your group. Discuss with your co-leader (if you have one) the needs you can help meet, either as a group or individually, or the hurts that you may need to address.
- Stay in touch with your women—by phone, card, email, lunch, or chat at church. Find ways to connect with your women outside of Bible study.
- Take notice of their skills, interests, and gifts and suggest opportunities for them to be used. For example: if you have a photographer in the group, ask her to take a group photo.
- Keep their phone numbers handy—in purse, near phone, etc.—for a quick call when you have a free moment.
- When women share with you, really listen, taking notes as needed. Listen not for what you want to hear but to truly understand.

“The more you get to know a person, the more you get to teach them.” (Howard Hendricks)

#6 PRAY TOGETHER AS A GROUP

Sharing one another’s burdens in prayer helps to build community within the group. Managing the time and ways to do so is a challenge. Here are some suggestions for gathering prayer requests from group members or encouraging group prayer:

- Group Journal: Pass a common prayer journal around the group. When it is time to pray, one woman can read aloud the requests while the others write them in their own books.
- Verbal Requests: At prayer time, let the women briefly share requests and quick updates on previous requests.
- Individually Written Requests: Provide sticky notes or index cards so that each person can briefly write her prayer need. Put them in a basket for women to pick from and pray for that day and all week. Or, pass them around the table for prayer time and then give them all to one person who types them and emails them to the group.
- 2-3 Together: group 2-3 women together to share prayer requests and pray for each other. Change the groups weekly.

#7 MANAGE CRISIS SITUATIONS

To prepare for potentially dangerous situations, you need to know some basic bits of information:

- The physical address of your group meeting location
- The phone contact of your group meeting location (church office, director’s cell phone, etc.)
- The location of first aid kits, AED (defibrillator), fire extinguishers, and any medically trained personnel within your group or ministry, especially those trained in CPR.
- The evacuation routes to designated safe areas from your meeting room in case of fire
- The location of the shelter area for your meeting room or the nearest safe location for a weather emergency—interior room away from windows.
- Any other emergency instructions for your building
- Whether or not parents are to meet their children to help with evacuation

1. *What do I do in case of a **SUDDEN ILLNESS OR ACCIDENT** within my group?*

- In the case of an obvious medical emergency (symptoms of heart attack or stroke, unconsciousness, severe bleeding), call 911. Do not attempt to handle anything other than normal first aid responses while awaiting emergency services.
- Also, contact your ministry director or a church staff member. To access church staff quickly from within your building, use a cell phone to dial the church office.

Think About It:

What do you need to do to prepare yourself mentally for any of the potential crisis situations on this page?

2. *What do I do if the **FIRE ALARM** sounds or a fire is discovered?*

- If a fire emergency exists, remain calm, which will help your group members to remain calm. Count the number of people in your group. Keep that in mind as you head to the evacuation area.
- Once evacuated to the designated area, make sure all your group members are with you. A ministry leader should bring you first aid. Do not leave your group to obtain first aid. Await further instructions from a ministry leader.

3. *What do I do if there's an **EXTREME WEATHER** alert (tornado, damaging winds)?*

- During periods of inclement weather, designate someone to maintain a watch on the current conditions, and if needed, to inform ministry leaders when to take action.
- Should action need to be taken, remain calm, which will help your group members to remain calm. Count the number of people in your group. Keep that in mind as you head to the shelter area. Upon arrival, count again to insure all your group is with you.
- Instruct everyone to sit on the floor, back to the wall, hands interlocked covering neck. Do not evacuate the building unless given instruction to do so by a ministry leader. First aid should be brought to you as needed. Do not leave your group to obtain first aid. Await further instructions from a ministry leader.

4. *What do I do if there's an **ASSAILANT** in the building or other security breach?*

- When anyone needs to be secured in a classroom for any reason, the ministry director should access the door key, go to each classroom and say, "Please secure your classroom." The ministry director should then lock the classroom door.
- Small group leaders should calmly direct group members to a corner of the room out of sight of the main doorway, close the door, and close any blinds if windows are present. Tables turned sideways can be used as barriers. If in an auditorium, go to a side room.
- Group leaders then wait for further instructions from the ministry leader.

COMMISSION

Commissioned to Be Disciple-Makers



JESUS FOLLOWERS BECOME DISCIPLE-MAKERS

Christianity is Christ! It is not a lifestyle, not rules of conduct, and not a society whose members were initiated by the sprinkling or covering of water. It is about Christ and our relationship with Him.

Jesus Christ calls us to a new life, clothes us with himself, commissions us with a purpose, and empowers us to fulfill that purpose—to follow Him as His disciples and to live for Him as disciple-makers.

Jesus calls us to a new life —

A 20th century Bible teacher put it this way:

He gave His life for you so He could give His life to you, so He could live His life through you. (Major Ian Thomas)

Paul described this relationship in Galatians 2:20,

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Jesus clothes us with Himself

Galatians 3:27 says that we are clothed with Christ. God sees Jesus when He looks on us. We are in Him; that is our new identity. We become the walking talking, visible representatives of the invisible God.

Jesus commissions us with a purpose

Actually, it is a two-fold purpose. First, to follow him as His disciples. In John 12:26, Jesus said, “whoever serves me must follow me.” And, we are to live for him as disciple-makers. Before returning to heaven after his resurrection, Jesus said to His followers:

“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.” (Matthew 28:18-19)

When Jesus gave that command to His followers to go and make disciples, it was not to ordained preachers, hired church staff or mission organizations. He spoke those words to average, every day kind of people like you and I are. Jesus commissions us with a purpose: to follow Him as His disciples and to live for Him as disciple-makers.

Think About It:

What do you think Jesus' commission to you as a disciple-maker would look like in your life?

Jesus empowers us to fulfill that purpose

He empowers us through the Holy Spirit present in our lives.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses ... (Acts 1:8)

Ephesians 3:20 - Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, (Ephesians 3:20)

Our response is to live dependently on His power...by faith. You and I can be disciple-makers not because we are so great or smart, not because we have been a Christian for a long time or know the Bible well. Who makes us able to do what He asks us to do? Jesus! We are simply to obey Him and trust His Spirit in us to work through us. Being a little scared is a good thing because we will rely on Him more.

The bottom line is this: Jesus followers become disciple-makers.

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE-MAKER?

It is always good to understand the terms we use. So, let's define three terms and use a recent movie to illustrate them.

Disciple — A disciple is an active follower or learner. A disciple studies the teachings of another person whom they respect and applies those teachings to her life.

Discipleship — Discipleship is the normal process for Christians to get established and grow in their faith. That would include small groups whether Bible studies, moms groups, or general fellowship groups. This is traditional discipleship. It has a tendency to be inward-focused on how much I as a believer am growing in my faith.

Disciple-Making — Disciplemaking is the full process of trusting in Christ, choosing to follow Him and grow in Him while at the same time being equipped to reach new people for Christ, build them up in the faith, and help them reach their peers. It is outward-focused. That is full discipleship.

Discipleship is incomplete without disciple-making. We tend to cut off the second half and call it discipleship. Jesus didn't leave that option open to us.

Here's the illustration:

The movie *Julie & Julia* portrays the young woman Julie Powell becoming a **disciple** of master chef Julia Child through Julia's cookbook, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Julie studies the recipes and follows the procedures. As a result, she experiences the joy of cooking and eating delicious food as Julia has taught her through a book. She wears her apron and pearls like Julia. Towards the end, one realizes that Julie got to know Julia Child "personally" though they never met. That is traditional **discipleship**.

Julie Powell didn't keep her good cooking to herself, though. She wrote a blog about her cooking, bringing others along with her and introducing them to Julia Child and her book. Then, Julie wrote a book about her experience. Soon, a movie came along. How many women do you think bought that book and started cooking through it because of Julie's influence?

While Julie Powell was following Julia Child as a disciple, she was engaging others and introducing them to Julia and sharing what she

Think About It:

How long have you been a disciple of Jesus? Why did you decide to follow him?

In what ways have you helped others to also know Jesus and follow him?

was learning with her readers so that they were being taught how to cook that way. That's **disciple-making**.

The point is Julie was a follower and a disciple-maker at the same time. That's what Jesus calls each of us to do. Small groups are great fishing pools for fulfilling this purpose. You, as a small group leader, have the opportunity to pursue disciple-making as you minister to the women of your small group, and you can encourage them to become disciple-makers as well. Let's see what this would look like.

SMALL GROUPS ARE FISHING POOLS FOR NEW DISCIPLES

Small groups attract new Christians as well as those who have been believers for years but have never been discipled. Even non-Christians are attracted to small groups because they are seeking truth and/or fellowship. This is true for Bible studies, mothers' groups, or other small groups. What a great opportunity to help someone grow in their relationship with Jesus and in his truth.

Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. (Acts 18:24-26)

This is a great example of someone in leadership listening to what is being shared in a group setting, realizing that the person sharing is lacking some beneficial information, and personally discipling that person so he can influence others more effectively. How important do you think it was that the couple invited Apollos to a private place for discussion?!

Since your group may contain mature Christians with tons of Bible knowledge alongside those who have limited Christian understanding, it is very important that you do two things in an **intentional** and **relational** way:

1. **Pay attention.** Do not assume that woman sitting next to you in your Bible study group knows who she is in Christ. Listen to what she says. She may not even be a believer yet. She may be a new believer. She may be a long-time believer who has never been discipled and feels ignorant compared to others. What if her answer reveals she doesn't know the truth? Maybe she is leaving blanks because she doesn't know how to do a study or can't figure out how to answer the question. Many Bible studies are written using one particular translation so the question wording often reflects that. If she doesn't use the same translation, she may not know how to get the answer. So...
2. **Come alongside her.** If you catch that she's new to Bible study, church, and/or doesn't know much, invite her somewhere to visit—maybe in your home as Priscilla and Aquila did or any place where you can be together and have enough quiet to discuss. Find out what her background is, what she already knows, and what she'd like to know. If she's interested in meeting with you one-on-one to get more established in her faith, agree on a first time to get together. Be intentional and relational.

Think About It:

Why is it important to come alongside someone in your group who is struggling or lacking truth in her life rather than assuming she will "catch up" just by being in the group?

- If she is just new to Bible study, help her work through 1-2 Bible study lessons until she feels more comfortable with the process.
- If she is a new Christian who doesn't know much yet, walk her through a new believers study such as *Graceful Beginnings: New Believers Guide* (available at melaniemnewton.com/gracefulbeginnings.html) or other books designed for new believers. (See melaniemnewton.com/Disciplemaking_Resources.html for some other selections.) This will give her roots in the Christian faith.
- If she has been a Christian for years but was never discipled, take her through *Graceful Living* (available at melaniemnewton.com/gracefulliving.html). This will firmly establish her in her identity in Christ, Christ's finished work on the cross, what the resurrection means for her now, and how to live by the Spirit.
- You can **customize** what you'll cover with her by asking, "What do you already know? What do you want to know? What do you know about Christ? Do you know your identity in Christ? What do you know about living by the Spirit? Many people in our churches don't know what that is."

Think About It:

What did someone use to establish you as a new believer?

3. **Encourage mature group members to do the same.** If you have several mature believers in the group and several new believers, encourage the mature Christians to pay attention and come alongside at least one younger believer in the group. Follow the same procedures as above. Encourage the women to be doing this outside the group as well with those in their sphere of influence who need to be more firmly established in their faith.

What about those who come to your group who are not yet believers?

BE READY TO SHARE CHRIST WITH UNBELIEVERS

As you *pay attention* to your group members, you should recognize those who have yet to trust Christ.

They [believers] overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony (Revelation 12:11)

This verse tells us that we have two very powerful tools to introduce others to Jesus that cannot be stopped. We have the gospel **facts** (the blood of the lamb) and the story of our own **experience** validating the power of the gospel. People can reject the facts of the gospel and even its logic, but it is very hard to argue with someone about their experience of the gospel.

Every Jesus follower needs to have these two tools to fulfill your purpose — **1) a way to share the gospel facts** and **2) a readiness to share your own story**. That's intentionally partnering with the Holy Spirit in bringing others to Christ.

Learn to Share the Gospel Message

There are different ways to share the gospel—4 spiritual laws, the bridge diagram, Romans road, and others. Hopefully, your church or organization will offer you training in how to share the gospel relationally. If training is not offered, you can ask others and find out what's available in your area and when. Ask your ministry coordinator for help.

Find a presentation that works for you and practice it until you know it well. The idea is that when the opportunity comes up in conversation, you will be ready to share the gospel without stressing about remembering the “details.” Gather the members of your small group together to get trained along with you. It’s more fun to do in a group, and it is more likely to be done!

Here are two ideas:

Evantell.org — You can go online to evantell.org to watch the online training videos available there. This follows the good news/bad news approach. The training gives you opportunity to introduce your own illustrations including those from your own faith story. (See the next section for ways to work on your faith story.)

John 3:16 — This familiar verse is often referred to as the Gospel in a nutshell. Using four simple elements, you can introduce someone to Jesus in a concise way. Open with, “Has anyone introduced you to Jesus so you could know Him? May I?”

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Think About It:

If you were saved as a teen or adult, what was life like without Jesus?

What triggered your need for him?

What did God use to draw you to himself?

GOD LOVES

- God is real. He loves you with an unconditional, never-ending love. **“For God loves you _____ (name) so much...”** He created you to have a relationship with Him. But, we can’t experience this loving personal relationship because of sin in our lives. Sin is disobeying God. It puts a barrier between us and a holy God. No matter how hard you try, you cannot be good enough on your own to overcome this sin barrier. The penalty for sin is death. But God’s love had a plan...

GOD GAVE

- **“God gave His one and only Son”** *Jesus* – to live as a human without sin and then to take the penalty for our sin on himself when he died on the cross. He was buried as a dead man then raised from the dead to be alive again. He did this so that our sins could be forgiven.

WE BELIEVE GOD’S LOVE

- **“Whoever believes in Him”** – Faith is trust. God asks that we trust in His plan, admit our sin and desire for a relationship with Him. Accept what Jesus did on the cross for us out of love.

WE RECEIVE WHAT GOD GAVE

- **“Shall not perish but have eternal life”** – Everyone dies and ends up somewhere. To perish means to die separated from God and His love for you. Eternal life means you can enjoy a forever family relationship with God and promise of living securely with Him now and after your life on earth ends.
- When offered a gift you want, you take it and say thank you. It’s forever yours. Is there anything keeping you from trusting in Jesus right now? Lead them in a short prayer. Prayer is simply talking to God. If you are unsure about how to pray or what to say, you can say something like this:

“Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. Please forgive my sins and give me the gift of eternal life. I ask you into my life and heart to be my Savior. I want to serve you always.”

Be sure to meet with her afterwards to walk her through a new believers guide such as *Graceful Beginnings: New Believers Guide*. See above for information. Introduce her to the group as their new sister in Christ. Lead a celebration of her new life.

Learn to Share Your Faith Story

Once called “testimonies,” the more friendly term is “faith stories.” Be ready to share YOUR faith story with the women in your group—either one-on-one or in the small group setting—whenever appropriate.

PREPARE YOUR OWN FAITH STORY

Now, I am hearing the hesitation out there. Are you unconvinced that your story matters? Do you think your story is boring, not sensational enough? Jesus Christ died for you so He could give His life to you so He could live His life through you. It’s His story in your life. Only you know it. Share it. If you grew up in the church and stayed faithful to Jesus for the most part until now, you have the story every parent of young children wants to hear. What influenced you to stay faithful?

1. For help in preparing your story, a worksheet is available at melaniNewton.com/Disciplemaking_Resources.html. Once you have your story thought out, prepare a 10-minute version, then whittle it down to a 5-minute version.
2. Consider **simple statements or questions you could include in conversation that could lead into your sharing your story**. Then, be ready for openings in the conversation where you can share simple statements of what God has done in your life. Give her a peak into the life you have in Christ. Create curiosity for more.

Here are some transitions from common topics about which people are already passionate:

- **Corruption, evil and sin** – “in the end, I find that though I am not guilty of that particular sin, I am just as guilty as...”
- **Community** – “Part of why I am so passionate about authentic community is because we are created by God to live in real community, first of all with Him...”
- **Family** – “I am so glad God cares more about my family than even I do. What would I do without Him helping me to...?”

Think About It:

What are some conversation starters to stimulate meaningful conversation that might reveal a woman’s heart and give you a chance to invite it somewhere?

ENCOURAGE GROUP MEMBERS TO SHARE THEIR FAITH STORIES

Suggest all the women in the group work on their faith stories. Direct them to the worksheets mentioned above or any other outline you may already be using.

Give opportunity for each to share for 5 minutes during group time, or plan a group get together over dinner or dessert where there is plenty of time for each one to share her story.

PREPARE FUTURE LEADERS

Identify the woman in your group who demonstrates a greater level of spiritual interest and commitment to your group who might also be challenged to become a small group leader herself. You, in essence, help her develop as a leader who is capable of ministering to others.

- Give her some responsibility within the group and watch what she does.
- Challenge her to reach out to at least one other member of the group in the ways described above for disciple-making.
- Pray for her regularly.
- Enjoy your new relationship and leave the results up to the Holy Spirit!

Think About It:

Why would developing future leaders be important for a ministry? Has someone done this for you?

YOU CAN DO THIS – BY FAITH

You can become a disciple-maker as Jesus commissioned you to be — by faith:

In your personal life and already-existing church life. Disciple-making is a lifestyle, not a program. It's investing your life in THE purpose.

At any age or stage of life — teens and college students, senior adults, singles, married, widowed, moms, and empty-nesters. Someone around you needs to know Jesus or needs to know him better.

Along any stage of your Christian growth. Just beginning or doing it for years. Give yourself permission to not know all the answers first. No one does anyway!

Because whatever Jesus calls us to do, he empowers us to do through His Spirit. Say "yes" and jump in with both feet!

For more information about Disciple-Making, and especially the Disciple-Making Pathway training, visit my website at www.melaniNewton.com. Consider hosting a Disciple-Making Pathway training at your church so that all your small group leaders will be onboard with their commission as DISCIPLE-MAKERS for Jesus!

FOUR STEPS TO INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

Setting the context: “ABCs”

- a) Author — Who wrote the passage?
- b) Background — When did the author live? In what culture?
- c) Context — How does the passage fit in with what comes before and after it?

What does the passage say? (Observation)

- a) Pray for the Holy Spirit’s guidance. Read and reread the passage. Read it in another version of the Bible if available.
- b) Gather all sorts of facts like an investigative reporter. Ask questions to help you observe the facts: Who? What happened? What was taught? When? Where? How? Why? This is where you see and discover what the author is saying.
- c) Locate and mark any key words, repeated words or phrases, and commands.

What does it mean? (Interpretation)

- a) What is the author’s intent in this passage? What is one principle or lesson the writer/God was trying to communicate? What was he saying to the people of his day? What would they have understood?
- b) Look at other scriptures that relate to the passage. These are usually found in the margins of Bibles or in footnotes. What do other verses say about this thought or idea?
- c) Use Bible study helps to get a clearer meaning of the passage as needed: commentaries, Bible dictionaries, concordances, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary* or a Bible study guide for the text, subject, or person your studying. Use a dictionary to define any unfamiliar terms or ideas.
- d) Pray for the Holy Spirit’s guidance. Why do you think God put this in the Bible?

How does the principle apply to one specific area of my life? (Application)

- What is the Holy Spirit saying to me in this passage? Ask Him.
- What is one way I can apply the heart of this passage to my life?
- What will I do differently because of what I’ve learned?

This information is taken from:

1. *What Is Inductive Bible Study?* by Bill Cook, <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Valley/6135/inductive2.htm>
2. *Walk This Way? The Book of Mark*, Irving Bible Church, pages 73-75, 207.
3. *Effective Personal Bible Study* by Mike Messerli, Crossroads Bible Church.