

Small Groups Training Manual

(Updated: September 2008)

Fraser Lands
English Congregation

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WHY SMALL GROUPS?

Why Our Church Believes in Small Group Ministry

Fraser Lands English Congregation places a high value on small group ministry because through them many spiritual, social and emotional needs of participants are met. No other kind of grouping in the church offers potential for true koinonia (Christian fellowship) like small groups do. It is a place where we practice the “one-anothers” of scripture.

- Love one another – John 13:34,35
- Instruct one another – Romans 15:14
- Serve one another – Galatians 5:13
- Bear one another’s burdens – Galatians 6:2
- Honour one another – Romans 12:10
- Encourage one another – 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- Meet together – Hebrews 10:25
- Confess your sins to one another – James 5:16
- Pray for one another – James 5:16
- Offer hospitality to one another – 1 Peter 4:9

Small Group Vision

Our vision is to be worshipping, growing, and loving community that reflects the beauty of Jesus Christ to transform our community and the world.

Small Group Purpose

Community Building and Caring

They are a safe and nurturing environment where members can share in confidence and receive mutual support and care in their Christian walk.

Biblical Equipping

Regular reading, reflecting upon and applying God’s Word leads to life-transformation and spiritual maturity.

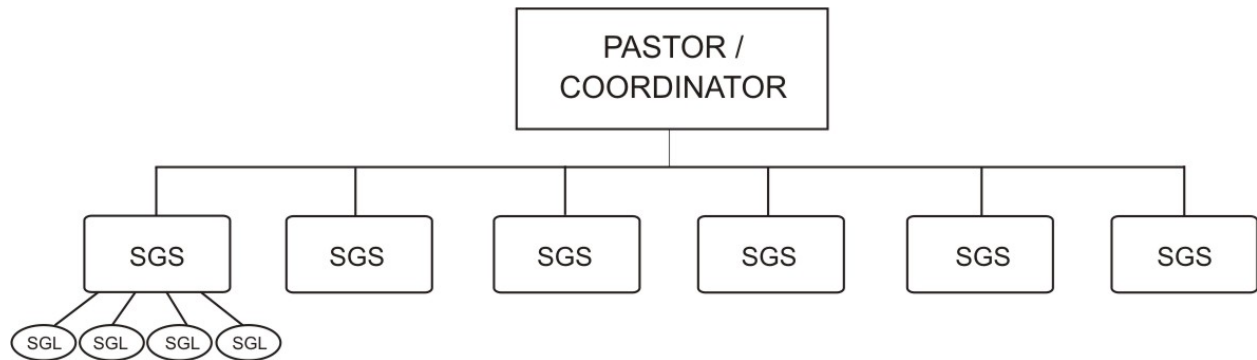
Prayer and Worship

Small group gatherings open opportunities for worship and thanksgiving for both the individual and the group.

Outreach and Mission

As recipients of grace, the group reaches out to the community with God’s love with expressions of care and the good news of Christ.

FRASER LANDS SMALL GROUP MODEL



SGS - Small Group Supporter
SGL - Small Group Leader

1. A Pastor/Coordinator will direct the Small Group Ministry.
 He/she initiates, promotes, gives direction, trains, empowers, and solves problems.
 He/she will pray for the Small Group Supporters and Small Group Leaders.
2. The Small Group Supporter (SGS) encourages, resources, and helps the Small Group Leaders in whatever way necessary. He/she will pray for the Small Group Leaders and small group members and is responsible to the Pastor/Coordinator.
3. The Small Group Leader (SGL) initiates and directs the leadership of his/her small group and equips the assistant(s). He/she will pray for the Assistant(s) and small group members and is responsible to the SGS.

FIVE CORE VALUES OF SMALL GROUPS

Our small groups are formed around these values:

LOVING, LEARNING, PRAYING, SERVING, MULTIPLYING

LOVING Our small groups provide an environment for Christians to tangibly love each other. This is facilitated through sharing, helping and praying for one another. Loving God through worship and testimony is part of the vertical dimension. The small group also provides opportunity and encouragement for compassion, outreach and evangelism, loving others as God first loved us.

“My children, we should love people not only with words and talk, but by our actions and true caring. This is the way we know that we belong to the way of truth.” (1 John 3:18-19)

LEARNING In our small groups, we learn from one another as well as from God. We share our lives in a confidential and safe place and we study the Bible through various resources and listen to God through prayer.

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:24-25)

PRAYING A vital part of our small groups is prayer. In prayer we intercede for each other, for our loved ones, and for the world – we listen and watch for God’s response. In prayer the horizontal and vertical dimensions of our lives meet together.

“Therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.” (James 5:16)

SERVING Small groups are a context where we have opportunity to use our spiritual gifts – whether in teaching, hospitality, service or social justice. A small group relies on all the gifts of its members to create a community. The small group also functions as a place from where we are strengthened and sent out to serve those inside and outside the community.

“Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ’s body. We are all parts of his one body, and each of us has different work to do. And since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others.” (Romans 12:4-5)

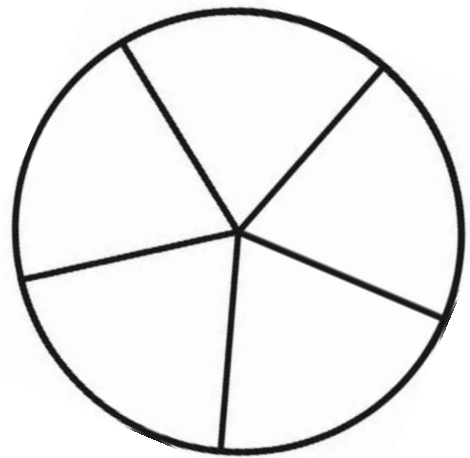
MULTIPLYING In the context of our small groups, the leaders help others to grow to Christian maturity – and enable them to minister to other people as well. The small group is a place where the “hands-on” pastoring takes place in the church.

“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-13)

BASIC COMPONENTS OF A SMALL GROUP MEETING

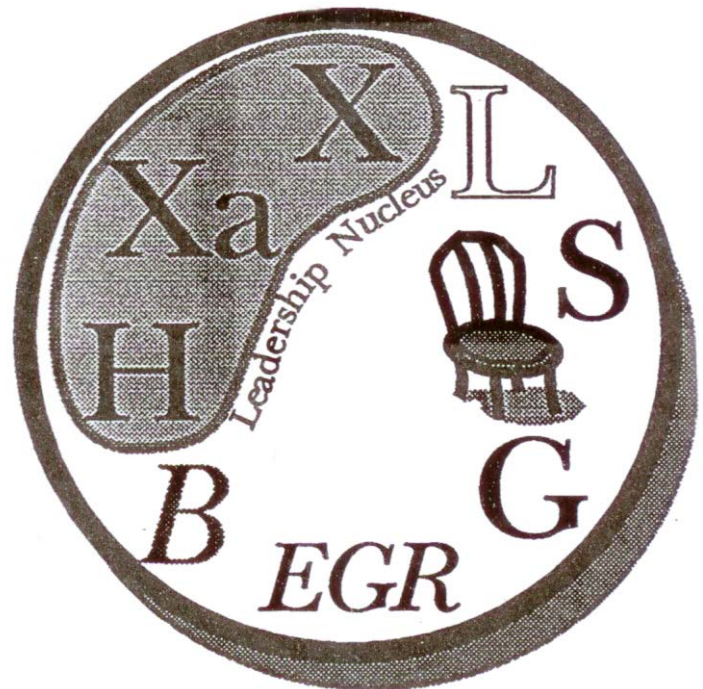
A. Necessary But Fluid Components

- ✓
Love – Mutual Caring
- ✓
Learn – Bible Focus
- ✓
Pray – Connection with God
- ✓
Serve – Using our gifts
- ✓
Multiply – Growing and Maturing



B. A Flexible Model

- X**
Leader
- Xa**
Leader-in-training
- H**
Hostess/Host
- G**
Growing Christian
- B**
Babysitter?
- EGR**
Extra Grace Required
- S**
Seeker
- E**
Empty Chair
- L**
Visiting SGS



SMALL GROUP LEADER

- QUALIFICATIONS AND MINISTRY DESCRIPTION

Qualifications for Small Group Leaders (SGL)

1. Having a passion for Christ
2. Holds a high view of the Bible
3. Known to have integrity
4. Called to be a shepherd
5. Able to lead
6. Holds membership or actively pursuing membership in our church
7. Cooperates well
8. Reputed to be committed
9. Ability to care for people

Job Description for Small Group Leaders (SGL)

I. Reaching *Upward*

- A. Consistently taking time with God.
- B. Growing in relationship with Christ.
- C. Praying for small group members, the small group meeting, and unbelieving friends.

II. Reaching *Inward*

- A. Nurturing community, loving relationships, and fun activities within their group.
- B. Guiding their small group meetings to include the components of *Welcome* (Icebreakers), *Word* (Bible Study), *Worship*, *Witness* (Reaching Out to Un's – The Unconnected, Unchurched, and Unbelievers).
- C. Occasionally having the group extend love to Fraser Lands members in times of special need.
- D. Attending Leadership Team meetings and completing SG Reports to receive support and to keep their SGS and Community Life Pastors current with what is happening in the group.

III. Reaching *Outward*

- A. Envisioning the group to reach beyond itself in mission and outreach.
- B. Taking time as a group to pray for friends, family and co-workers who need Christ.
- C. Leading the group into some joint project at least once a year.

IV. Reaching *Forward*

- A. Encouraging potential leaders to come to our Fraser Lands Leadership Team meetings and Small Group Leader Training.
- B. Giving away ministry to others.
- C. Progressively handing over leadership of as many parts of group life as possible to others.

SMALL GROUP SUPPORTER

- QUALIFICATIONS AND MINISTRY DESCRIPTION

Qualifications for a Small Group Supporter (SGS)

1. Experience with leading groups
2. Commitment to Christ
3. Has a credible reputation in the congregation as a Christian
4. Commitment to the purpose and direction of VCAC and Fraser Lands English Congregation
5. Is a member of our church
6. Possesses a good balance of love and firmness
7. Evidence ability to lead

Job Description for a Small Group Supporter (SGS)

Fraser Lands English Congregation places a high value on SGS's of our small group leaders since they both set the tone for this ministry and they equip a large number of adults. SGS's encourage and support three to five small groups and their leaders by helping them recruit leaders, solve problems, and inject vision into small groups to experience and extend the truth, love, and power of Jesus. They do this by.....

I. Reaching *Upward*

- A. Regularly having their own time with God.
- B. Pursuing and expanding their relationship with Jesus Christ.
- C. Praying for small group leaders.

II. Reaching *Outward*

- A. Envisioning their groups to reach beyond themselves.
- B. Encouraging their groups to appoint an outreach coordinator (not the leader).

III. Reaching *Forward*

- A. Helping each group to develop and release new leaders.
- B. Encourage groups to send potential leaders to the equipping/training sessions.

IV. Reaching *Inward*

- A. Meeting with their leaders one-on-one monthly to remain current with what is happening in each of the groups.
- B. Pastoring their small group leaders through personal contact.
- C. Visiting each of the small groups at least twice a year.
- D. Attending all SGS meetings called by the Small Group Co-ordinator and annual SGS's review and training weekend.

How Fraser Lands English Congregation Supports Small Group SGS's

- 1. The Small Group Coordinator will hold regular connection meetings.
- 2. They will be on church prayer lists.
- 3. An annual SGS review and training weekend will be held.
- 4. Ongoing training and inspirational communication.
- 5. An annual leadership appreciation event.

HOW TO START YOUR SMALL GROUP

1. Pray
2. Discern who God has in mind for your assistant.
 - **Write down names of people that come to mind
 - **Pray about these names
 - **Watch these people
 - **Talk to these people to see where they are at spiritually/how they relate
 - **Ask others if they feel these people could develop into leaders
3. Consider who could be host/hostess (if you will need one)

_____ OR _____ OR _____
4. Who, in the church, could you invite?

_____, _____, _____, _____
5. Who, that is unchurched, could you invite?

_____, _____, _____, _____
6. Which of your friends could you welcome to join you?

_____, _____, _____, _____
7. Are there family members that would benefit from “belonging?”

_____, _____, _____, _____
8. Which of the people you work with might be invited?

_____, _____, _____, _____
9. Are there neighbours you might tell about your gatherings?

_____, _____, _____, _____
10. Speak with each one, personally. You could send a note to remind them after you have spoken with them but not as an initial invitation. Tell them what you are going to be doing. No surprises!
11. When you have spoken to a number of them, arrange a picnic, BBQ, potluck, etc., so they can be become acquainted on a casual level. At that time you could give specific information (or better, discuss) starting date, place of meeting. Answer questions. If you are new at this and are nervous, you can tell them. It will set them at ease.
12. Trust the Lord to bring the right people to your group. He is more interested in nurturing his people than you are.

RECRUITING AND GROWING AN ASSISTANT

Finding an Assistant (Leader-in-Training)

- PRAY (Luke 6:12-16)
- OBSERVE – Watch people around you and LOOK FOR...
- A SPIRITUAL TRACK RECORD
- A GROUP MEMBER who is COMMITTED to the group
- Someone with a PASTORAL HEART
- DEMONSTRATED STABILITY
- A SELF-STARTER
- Someone who RELATES WELL WITH OTHERS
- Someone who CONTRIBUTES WITHOUT CONTROLLING
- Someone who LISTENS WELL
- Someone who THINKS BIBLICALLY

Growing Your Assistant

- DEBRIEF AFTER EACH MEETING
- RELINQUISH RESPONSIBILITY INCREMENTALLY
- SHOW THEM HOW
- DO IT WITH THEM
- LET THEM DO IT ALONE
- AFFIRM THEM IN THE GROUP
- SUGGEST IMPROVEMENT PRIVATELY

Asking Someone

- MEET THEM FACE TO FACE.
- “There is a rewarding ministry I’d like you to pray about.”*
- GIVE THEM A WRITTEN JOB DESCRIPTION.
- “This is how I’d like to involve you and train you.”*
- ANSWER THEIR QUESTIONS.
- “I will be back to you next week to hear what the Lord has been saying to you.”*

GOAL SETTING FOR YOUR SMALL GROUP

What do you want your group to be like six months from now?

A. In spiritual maturity? What do you want to see? _____

As a leader, I will take these steps: (provide dates when you will do these)

B. In relational and caring abilities? How will this look? _____

As a leader, I will take these steps: (provide dates)

C. In reaching out? What would be both faith-stretching and reasonable? _____

As a leader, I will take these steps: (provide specific plans with dates)

D. In preparing our group to hive-off a new group? What options could you consider and when? _____

As a leader, how will you plant these seeds of expectation in the group? Steps:

E. In encouraging prayer in and outside the group? _____

As a leader, I will take these steps:

FACILITATING THE ACTUAL GATHERING

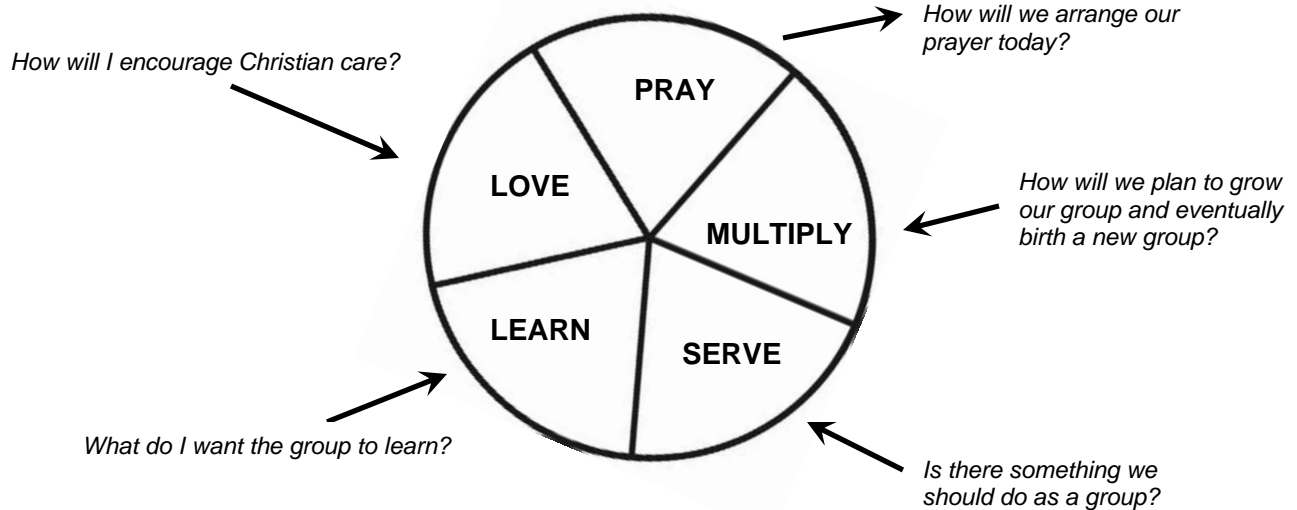
Thinking Through the Gathering Beforehand

1. Does everyone know where and when you will meet?
2. Does the host/hostess know what is expected of him/her? (e.g.: Who is responsible for refreshments? etc.)
3. Work through the checklist (see next page).
4. Have you prayed that the Holy Spirit will use your mouth to say the right things?
5. Have you prayed for each person you know is coming (that they will use their spiritual gifts, that they will move on to the next step spiritually, that each would contribute spiritually)?
6. Do you have a plan? Include:
 - the sequence you hope to get through.
 - how you will get them involved.
 - how you will get their attention.
 - which truths would you like to see emphasized.
 - how you will direct the discussion so the message is applied.
 - how you will conclude the learning time.
 - how you will finish up the evening.

GROUP GATHERING CHECKLIST

In Charge Will Be: _____

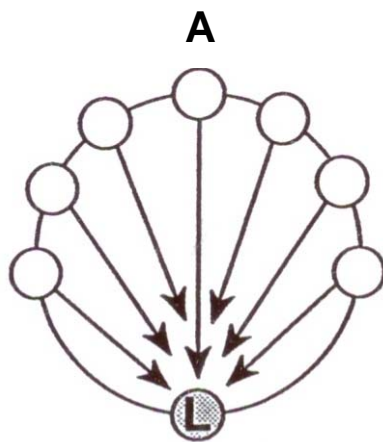
Date: _____



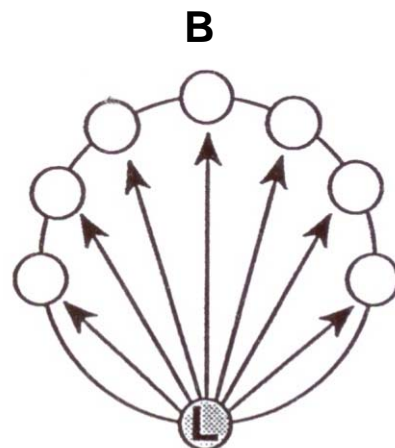
- WRITTEN OR MENTAL AGENDA.** Do I have a written or mental agenda?
- SEATING.** How will we sit today? (Vacant chair?)
- SEATING ARRANGEMENT.** What will be the seating arrangement?
- DISTRACTIONS.** Have I anticipated distractions (TV, children, too much or too little light, members with personal agendas)?
- MEETING OPENER.** Do I have a creative ice-breaker?
- PRAYER.** How do I guide the prayer today?
- MATERIALS.** What materials will we need?
- ANNOUNCEMENTS.** Will any announcements need to be made?
- UNSOLVED PROBLEMS.** Are there any unsolved problems between members that need to be resolved?
- HEALTH NEEDS.** Do any members have health needs that need prayer or consideration?
- MONEY ISSUES.** Do any members have monetary needs that need consideration?
- PARENTING / MARRIAGE ISSUES.** Are there any parenting / marriage issues within the group that need to be considered?
- CURRICULUM.** Have decisions about the curriculum been made?
-
-
-

THE BEST INTERACTIONAL MODEL

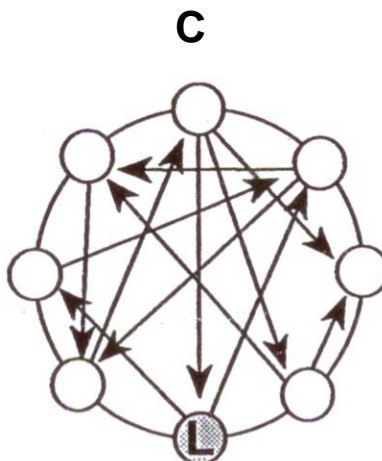
1. Discussion promotes action.
2. Discussion develops boldness to witness and explains faith.
3. Discussion promotes openness.
4. Discussion inspires greater desire for Bible knowledge.
5. Discussion provides reinforcement and clarification.
6. Discussion develops new insight.
7. Discussion develops self-esteem.
8. Discussion provides the leader with clues as to how he should minister.



NOT THIS: ...Each of the group members responding to the leader in answering question.



NOR THIS: ...The leader doing all the talking and the people all the listening.



BUT THIS: ...The group members interacting with each other, the leader guiding the discussion.



HOW TO MAKE A BIBLE FOCUS MEANINGFUL

Your most important aim is to study the Bible itself. “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the faith and correcting error, for resetting the direction of man’s life and training him in good living. The Scriptures are the comprehensive equipment of the man of God, and fit him fully for all branches of his work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17, *Phillips*).

Because of this supreme value of Scripture, we want to *discover* the truths of the Bible, and to *understand* or interpret their meaning and relevance. This should be the focus of the group’s time together.

Another important aim is to *apply* the Bible to our daily lives. God wants to change us, not just inform our minds. Keep thinking about these questions.

- Which of these truths in the Scriptures do we need to act on now?
- What are we already doing about this, and where are we failing?

Application can also mean *using* what you have learned to help someone else, or *remembering* such things as important scriptural doctrines, God’s attributes, and his promises.

So the three basic aims of a Bible focus and discussion are:

1. Discover – finding out what the Bible says
2. Understanding – recognizing what it means
3. Application – doing, using, and remembering what it says

SENSITIVE, INTENTIONAL PRAYER DEVELOPMENT

A. From Beginning to Extemporaneous

- Teach that prayer is communication with God and that no special vocabulary is needed.
- Be an example by being genuine and honest in your prayer.
- Keep prayers short.
- Keep prayers simple.
- Allow the Spirit to lead.
- Teach the group that silence is okay. Use silent prayer as a method.
- Avoid praying in a circle.
- Pray at each gathering.
- Try a variety of prayer methods.
- Do more praying than talking about prayer.
- Review the principles of prayer for your group.
- _____
- _____
- _____

B. Varieties of Prayer

- Altogether
- In two groups
- Topical
- Conversational, each adding a thought about a topic.
- Everyone starts with the same phrase, like “Today, Father, I thank you for...”
- _____
- _____
- _____

ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS

What is the Purpose of Asking Questions?

- To involve people.
- To make them think.
- To brainstorm ideas.
- To bring them a decision to act.

Examples of How to Ask Questions:

- Is this true? (closed because it can be answered with a “yes” or “no”) Give us an example of how this is true. (open-ended because the answer requires at least one sentence)
- Did Jesus actually live? (closed) Tell us how we know that Jesus lived. (open)
- Paul had an affliction, right? (closed) What do we know about whether or not Paul's affliction was his mother-in-law? (open)
- Questions that are open-ended and cannot be answered with one or two words, usually are answers to why, where, when, what and how.
- We have established our mission statement. What should we do next? (open)
- Did you see the driver strike the pedestrian? (closed) Who do you think is responsible and why? (open)
- Who do you think is right, the manager or the dealer and why? (open)
- What was there about your vacation that you enjoyed? (open) Will you tell us about your vacation? (closed)
- What could you gain by asking the right kinds of questions? (open)

Other Examples:

- What are your reasons for saying that? (open)
- What other information do we need to know? (open)
- Is there good evidence for believing that? (closed)
- What do you think is behind his action? (open)
- When you say he gambles, are you implying that he can't be a Christian? Why? (open)
- Could you be more specific? (closed)
- What would this look like from the point of view of Jesus? (open)

KEEP JESUS CENTRAL IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

A. IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS

As Christians we are defined by Jesus. See the first part of the word “Christian”.

He is our beginning as a believer and He is our source for life and Godliness (II Peter 1:3) and our energy (John 15).

B. HE WILL COME IF HE IS WELCOMED (Matthew 18:20)

“Where two or three are gathered in His name.”

Rev. 3:20 “If anyone...opens the door, I will come in...”

C. HE WILL FELLOWSHIP WITH US (Revelation 3:19-20 / II Corinthians 4:7-12)

Rev. 3:20 – “...I will come in and eat with him...”

II Cor. 4:7-12 – “But we have this treasure in jars of clay...”

D. HIS PRESENCE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- He brings peace (John 14:27)
- He makes us productive (Mark 1:17)
- He empowers us to overcome Satan (Mark 6:6-14)
- He challenges our faith (Mark 6:45-50)
- His presence brings awe, supernatural acts, generosity, koinonia - spiritual fellowship (Acts 2:42-47)

E. SOME SCRIPTURES

I Corinthians 1:9 *God who has called you into fellowship with his son Jesus Christ our Lord...*

I John 1:3 *“...you have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ.”*

Mark 3:35 *“Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”*

LISTENING TEST

Give yourself this little listening test (circle all the numbers you can affirm):

1. I make a great effort to enter other people's experience of life.
2. I do not presume to know what the other person is trying to communicate.
3. My close friends would say I listen more than I speak.
4. When people are angry with me, I am able to listen to their side without getting upset.
5. People share freely with me because they know I listen well.
6. I listen not only to what people say but also to their nonverbal cues, body language, tone of voice, and the like.
7. I give people my undivided attention when they are talking to me.
8. I am able to reflect back and validate another person's feelings with empathy.
9. I am aware of my primary defensive mechanisms when I am under stress, such as placating, blaming, problem-solving prematurely, or becoming distracted.
10. I am aware of how the family in which I was raised has influenced my present listening style.
11. I ask for clarification when I am not clear on something another person is saying rather than attempt to fill in the blanks.
12. I never assume something, especially negative, unless it is clearly stated by the person speaking.
13. I ask questions when listening rather than mind-read or make assumptions.
14. I don't interrupt or listen for openings to get my point across when another is speaking.
15. I am aware when I am listening of my own personal "hot buttons" that cause me to get angry, upset, fearful, or nervous.

If you have checked 12 or more, you are an outstanding listener; 8-11, very good; 5-7, good; 4 or fewer, poor – "you are in trouble."

If you want to be really brave, after you score yourself, ask your spouse or closest friend to rate you as a listener. You may be surprised.

David Augsburger has summed this up well: "Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable."

NOTES

