

Home Fellowship Group Leaders Ministry Manual

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OUR THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY FOR HOME FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

As a leader or an intern of a Home Fellowship Group, you are part of essential New Testament church life and ministry. This manual is designed first to help you see the high priority of leading a group, and second, to better equip you to lead.

Home Fellowship Groups are not one of many programs within the church. The New Testament clearly models and mandates small groups as the norm and pattern for fellowship, the ministry of spiritual gifts, and the contact points for reaching the world.

As a leader of a Home Fellowship Group, you are a shepherd. You will help see that the group which God gives you experiences fellowship and edification as well as receives spiritual care.

As a minister you are undertaking a powerful ministry in the body of Christ. Be prepared. You will be challenged and stretched as you depend on Christ to fit you to care for His flock.

THE MISSION: WHY HAVE HOME FELLOWSHIP GROUPS?

There are a number of biblical reasons why Home Fellowship Group ministry is a priority.

I. To Achieve A Balanced New Testament Ministry

There are two non-negotiable priorities in the early church.

Preaching and Corporate Worship

- It identifies with a larger corporate unity and universal movement (1 Pet 2:9-10; Eph 5:25-26; portico, temple, synagogue - Acts 5:42).
- It gives corporate purpose and vision (Acts 4; Phil 2:1-2).
- It provides a context for preaching and proclamation (Acts 2:42; 5:42; 2 Tim 4:1-2).

Fellowship and Relationship: Home Groups

The New Testament emphasizes that believers not only met in corporate meetings but they also gathered in small groups in homes.

The Priority

Acts 2:42 says, "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship." The verb translated as "continually devoting themselves" (proskartareo) has the following meanings: "adhere to, persist in, busy oneself with, give constant attention to." It is a word that speaks of priority and commitment. As we shall see, the primary place for fellowship was in the homes.

The Two Non-Negotiable

Whatever else was done, the early church made sure two things characterized the life of the body: a devotion to preaching and teaching and a devotion to fellowship. These were priorities that would not be replaced or de-emphasized. They were continuous expressions of church life that they took quite seriously.

II. To Experience New Testament Church Life

New Testament church life involves fellowship, which includes edification and the exercise of spiritual gifts.

The Component Pillars Are:

Fellowship

The word for fellowship is “koinonia” which means “to have in common”. The root word simply means “common.” Those who are fellowshippers are persons who “hold property in common, partners or shareholders in a common concern.” What is it that we have fellowship in?

- Possession and inheritance, common salvation (Jude 3), common redemption through His blood (1 Cor 10:17), common relationship with the Son (1 John 1:6), common renewal of nature (2 Pet 1:3).
- Presence of Christ (2 Cor 13:14; John 15:1-5).
- Problems, tribulations and deliverance (Rev 1:9; 1 Cor 10:13; 2 Tim 3:12).

Edification

Edification means to build up or, in terms of the spiritual life, to promote growth in wisdom, virtue, holiness and Christ likeness. It is the continual need of all believers and the responsibility of all to provide it.

- It is Christ’s ministry (Matt 16:18; Eph 2:22).
- It is the Word which builds up (Acts 20:32).
- It is essential to growth and love (Eph 4:16).

- All ministry is focused upon it (Eph 4:12).
- All believers are responsible to provide it (1 Cor 14:12, 26).
- Spiritual gifts are the channels for it (Eph 4:16; 1 Cor 12:7; 14:26).

The Context For Fellowship and Edification

Fellowship, edification and the practice of spiritual gifts are non-negotiable. They are not an option. The early church was aware of this so they regularly met in homes. It is only in a small group context that these essentials for growth take place. Note the emphasis on homes in the book of Acts.

The Meaning of House: Oikos

The word for house or household is oikos. An “oikos” is not simply a physical structure, it is a group of people related to each other in an ever growing and personal way. It is people in interrelationship and interdependency with one another.

NOTE: The phrase “breaking of bread” (Acts 2:46) may refer to this interdependency and personal nature of a home. While its first meaning is technical, referring to the Lord’s Supper, there is a second more ordinary meaning. It refers to ordinary table fellowship around a meal. The breaking of bread was the signal, by the father in a household, to begin the meal (Luke 24:30, 35; Acts 27:35). The significance is that the early church fostered close relationships by regularly eating together.

The Pattern of Home Groups

- They met house to house (Acts 2:46; 5:42).
- They taught house to house (Acts 20:20-21).
- They waited for the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:2).
- They prayed in homes (Acts 12:12).
- They encouraged brethren in a home (Acts 16:40).
- They met in homes (Acts 18:7; 1 Cor 16:19).

III. To Encourage ‘Every Member Ministry’

The Priority

Home groups are necessary for the New Testament pattern of every member ministry. In Scripture every believer is given a gift and every member is a minister. Leaders are given to the church for “the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12). Notice that the work of service, or ministry, belongs to every believer. To focus on Sunday morning alone is to restrict what God wants to do through the body. There are limits to what can be accomplished. The corporate gatherings are essential for preaching and corporate worship, and this can never be decentralized or made secondary. However, for every member to be involved in ministry, the operation of the gifts, the development of personal relationships, and accountability, small groups are required.

The Process

Believers are first equipped. As they are equipped they minister, and as they minister, the body is built up. Notice leaders are not only to “do” ministry, they are to train others to do ministry. In verse 16 of Ephesians 4, Paul describes the dynamic of how this building up occurs. It takes place as believers are in close conjunction with each other. Paul says the dynamic is “the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love” (Eph 4:16). Notice the reference to “every” and “each” emphasizing that ministry and edification is every believer’s responsibility.

IV. To Expand the Church in the World

Home Groups as a Tool of Evangelism

The church itself, in relating to one another, is a primary tool of evangelism. This is stated and demonstrated on a number of occasions.

- Demonstrated unity is a means of evangelism (John 17:21).
- Demonstrated love is a means of evangelism (John 13:34, 35).
- Worship is a means of evangelism (1 Cor 14:24, 25).

The Principles of Multiplication

The Mandate: Matthew 28:18-20

We are commanded to multiply and make disciples. A church that does not pursue multiplication, or a home group that does not have it as its objective will not have Christ's blessing. We are to take the life and blessing He has given us and plan how others can enter in. To do this, a group, from the beginning, must see that it is called to birth a new group.

The Ministry of Multiplication

Four things are required to carry out our Christ given mandate to multiply.

- An intern, or apprentice leader, must be part of the original group.
- The group, itself, must know from the beginning that its objective is to birth another group.
- The group must be reminded that its joy and unity come from Christ in people, not people themselves.
- Pray about it continually as a leader or apprentice.

There will be more about this later in the study.

V. The Peril and Pitfalls of an Ingrown Home Fellowship Group

If we do not keep the birthing of a new group a long term goal, and new members a constant matter of prayer, the group will become ingrown. Here are some of the pitfalls that may occur.

Aimlessness

There is no sense of purpose. Interest declines. No new members and no new believers creates a sameness that is unhealthy.

Exclusiveness

When the growth does not occur some will like it. The people with no burden for others will set the tone. They may not even want new people.

Burnout

The group has gone too long and does not know how to quit. These things occur when edification and care are not the primary and immediate goals.

- There will be no sharing. An atmosphere of care will not be established. People with real burdens will leave with them unmet.
- The Holy Spirit will be restricted from prompting believers to exercise gifts. The needs met through mutual giving and receiving will not occur.
- Bible study will be a head knowledge, some will not learn.

VI. The Definition of Home Fellowship Groups

Definition:

A Home Fellowship Group is a group of Christians from 4 to not more than 15-18 people who meet regularly to fellowship around their common life and purpose in Christ. The focus is to build each other up as the needs of the body are lovingly met. Holy Spirit-given gifts are exercised as members mutually care, support and serve one another, and learn God's Word. The goal is that needy believers and non believers alike will be attracted and come to Christ and a new group will be birthed in 12-18 months.

The Components of the Definition

4-18 people:

Small enough to have mutual participation and an environment where needs will be expressed and cared for (1 Cor 12:12-27; Gal 6:1).

Fellowship/Build up:

Our common life and purpose in Christ including His presence, deliverance in trial, faithfulness and the hope of heaven form the basis of it. The objective is to mutually build up, incite and encourage the members through prayer, love and the gifts of each member.

Birth a New Group:

The group should pray for and seek growth through contact with non believers and believers in need of support, so that the group will require the birthing of a new group.

Purpose:

A Home Fellowship Group is the primary place where the Lord Jesus Christ builds up His people as they experience fellowship and the needs of the body are lovingly met.

Summary: Why Home Fellowship Groups Are Essential For Ministry

A Home Fellowship Group Provides a Center and Context to:

- Openly discuss and learn the Scriptures.
- Develop meaningful personal relationships, with accountability.
- Experience true fellowship and “koinonia.” Common partnership in the privileges, possessions and problems of life in Christ.
- Demonstrate love in concrete ways as we pray, bear burdens and care for one another.
- Shepherd and care for personal needs of members of the body. True shepherding can take place (counseling, admonishing, discipling, leading, modeling, etc).
- Exercise of gifts and practical ministry, such as:
 - ▶ Service and helps through hospitality (the host and hostess).
 - ▶ Service and help in areas such as child care, giving rides, calling, and providing meals.
 - ▶ Exhortation and encouragement can be given to the discouraged and depressed.

These are just examples. Many more could be shown such as mercy, teaching, etc.

THE MINISTRY: WHAT IS INVOLVED IN A HOME FELLOWSHIP GROUP?

The ministry of a Home Fellowship Group is more than Bible study. To view yourself simply as a teacher, and to have as the object of your meeting Bible teaching, may hinder the group. Teaching is central to ministry and doctrine must never be de-emphasized. Growth cannot occur apart from truth. (John 17:17) However, a Home Fellowship Group is a place of fellowship and spiritual edification through many gifts, not just teaching. The leader is a shepherd, which, though it includes teaching, is much broader.

Having said that, we want to look at some basics about Home Fellowship Group ministry.

I. The Perspective: The Components of the Group

The three basic components in a fellowship group are: Bible study, edification (which includes worship), and missions and service. These are the essentials for any healthy group. All three must be emphasized or the group suffers in some way.

Bible Study/Content

The study of Scripture must be the hub around which group life revolves. However, if this is all there is, then true fellowship and the building up and care of the members will not occur (Acts 2:42).

Group Edification (Worship, Caring and Prayer)

Becoming a group is a process. Becoming a group involves caring for another and edifying one another through sharing, encouragement and the exercise of spiritual gifts. The leader, and then the group, must be committed to this or the group will either fall apart or stagnate. However, if all the group does is care and build up, it will fail as well. The time of worship, prayer and bearing of burdens must be prayed over and emphasized. The Holy Spirit, in time, will work through His people (Eph 2:21, 22).

Mission and Service

From the beginning the group must become aware of its concern to grow. Prayer for and effort to reach out, to both believers in need of fellowship and non believers, must be a priority. The two specific missions of the group are to bring new people into the group and to multiply into two groups. The biblical mandate is Matthew 28:18-20. The mind set is that the wonderful fellowship and life we have in Christ must be shared. To share it will require that we multiply. This will save the group from becoming ingrown and stagnant. Potlucks, barbecues, outings, as well as group service, such as trips to a rescue mission, work days at the church, etc., must be planned and prioritized.

II. The Phases of Group Life

A group does not become a true group immediately. The objective of true fellowship and edification occurs as personal relationship are developed. This takes time and commitment.

The Initial Phase: Emphasis On Bonding

The first few meetings will require that the group work on getting to know each other.

Using Ice Breakers

There should be more planned ice breakers and structured sharing the first few weeks than later on.

Sharing of Spiritual Pilgrimage

The getting acquainted phase is helped by people giving their personal history in the Lord. It can be shared in three aspects. Your past: roots and milestones. Your present: where you are now. Your future: where you want to be, goals, etc. As a leader you should begin by sharing your own spiritual journey.

The Basic Philosophy and Purpose of the Group Should Be Stated

The objectives and expectations of the group should be expressed. The following can be shared.

The group meets primarily to build up one another by caring, bearing burdens, etc.

We will spend time in praise to God, serving and caring for one another, and others as well, and studying and applying God's Word. We will seek to build relationships outside of our meeting: Having dinner together, recreation together, etc.

Our plan and expectation is to see God bless the group and be able to give birth to a new group in perhaps a year to eighteen months.

Remind the group of these purposes from time to time.

A Dynamic Agenda, Not a Static One

With a static agenda every meeting is broken into equal parts. A specific amount of time of praise and group building, for bible study and for mission and service. It does not change.

The dynamic agenda is flexible. In the beginning, group building often needs to be given more time (and could be necessary later when new people come, or serious needs arise).

The Intermediate Phase: Burden Bearing, Care and Bible Study

The next phase is the creation of an environment where healthy sharing and encouragement become the characteristic of the meetings.

- The challenge now is to grow deeper in the biblical priority of caring for another (1 Cor 12:25; Gal 6:1). The objective is that true fellowship will occur. Mutual discoveries, experiences and joys in Jesus Christ (through the Word and the Holy Spirit) will enrich and unify the group. This is the goal. Pray for it; seek it. The Spirit will produce it.

Bible study becomes a time of questions, clarification and discovery.

- Seek to make the application and discussion of the Bible the central focus. Teaching/question format is best, but study materials and videos with guides can also be used. The elder over Home Fellowship Groups will provide you with suggestions for study material.
- The point is to give priority to group building in the beginning, and to have a somewhat flexible agenda at any time, being sensitive to needs and the direction of the Holy Spirit.

The Final Phase: Birthing

The final phase is to prepare the group to move out and birth a new group. If the group is not ready after a year or so, it should restate, or redefine its goals. During the course of the group's history, expand the apprentice's involvement so that there is an ever increasing responsibility. Begin by having him do ice breakers or lead the sharing, edification time. At the end he should be leading the group. There should be a graduation and celebration meeting, focusing solely upon those who are being sent out. Don't neglect this, it is very important.

BONDING----- BUILDING----- BIRTHING-----

III. The Preparation for a New Group

There are some important things to be done before beginning a new group.

Clarify Your Purpose

The leader and apprentice should be in agreement concerning the new group. The purpose of the group is "to provide a place where the Lord Jesus Christ builds up His people as they experience fellowship and the needs of the body are lovingly met."

The objective is to multiply after one year to eighteen months. The purpose should be stated clearly in announcements in the bulletin and when you recruit others.

Contact and Promote

Contacting people for the group is important. Begin thinking, praying and then contacting people you would like to invite to the group. Perhaps make a list and pray over it with your apprentice, if you have one at that point. The people should include:

- Friends
- People you have noticed in the church that are new and may have similar needs and experiences.
- People you meet through social functions in the church or people you have for dinner, etc.

IV. Preparing an Intern

The most important factor in a Home Fellowship Group, if it is to reach its biblical objective, is the intern. Choosing and developing an intern is central.

The Priority Of The Intern

Working with an intern is the highest level of ministry. It is biblical discipleship and reproduction, mandated by the Lord Jesus Christ. To minister to and reach more people, more leaders are imperative. No new leaders and the ministry stagnates. It is that simple! (Note: 2 Tim 2:1, 2)

As a leader, you are expected to work with an intern. The ideal is to begin the group with an intern. If not, you should have identified and recruited one by the 11th or 12th week. The elder over fellowship groups is available to help you.

The Marks of an Intern

The Right Heart and Attitude

The key is not Bible knowledge, although the person must have a basic knowledge of Scripture. The key is motivation and interest. Does the person have a heart to minister? Do they have a desire to build up the body of Christ (Eph 4:12-13)? Are they already ministering in people's lives? If they want to be a leader but they are not ministering Christ's love to people, then the desire to lead is not enough. Remember, the primary issue is spiritual care.

A Faithfulness in Present Assignments

If someone is faithful, give them more and more advanced assignments. This is what Jesus did. He started small with the disciples and eventually left them the whole enterprise. Is someone faithful in homework, prayer, music,

hospitality, church attendance, helping, phone calls, making meals? Does someone willingly go the extra mile? This may be your intern. Remember Paul told Timothy, “entrust to faithful men” (2 Tim 2:2).

Godly Character

They are a person growing in Christ-likeness. They demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). They are applying the word of God to their own life. They have an exemplary life before the church and community (1 Tim 6:11-16). They have a solid family life (1 Tim 3:4, 12).

Someone Who Appears Gifted and Involves Himself in Lives

Someone who may constantly offer encouragement, stays late to minister, or help with special needs. Someone who may find fault, about the group, for the right reasons. The person may legitimately show concern for lack of care, worship, etc. He may be gifted differently than you. Meet with him and hear him out and encourage him to develop in his gifted areas. Make sure you contact the elder over Home Fellowship Groups, for this person could also be a problem. Someone with the “gift” of criticism.

Cultivating an Intern

The greatest challenge is developing new leaders. This is your highest calling. Your task is to see him grow in his effectiveness and readiness to minister and care for people.

Model

The highest form of teaching is modeling. Jesus appointed twelve to be with Him (Mark 3:14). Modeling requires spending time with someone. The more time you can spend with your intern the better. Socialize together, share things you learn. Explain why you do what you do. Allow him to ask questions. Meet with him to go over and evaluate his ministry. Make sure the intern is in the monthly leaders’ meetings and the training class. Remember, some will grow and be ready quicker than others. Be patient and intercede for them regularly.

Ministry Involvement

As mentioned before, expand the intern's role and responsibility. Begin with leading ice breakers and sharing time, and periodic times when he leads the Bible study. Eventually give him the entire study for an evening. At the end, allow him to lead it as much as you. Take him on visits with you, assign him calls, etc.

NOTE: You should be in constant contact with the elder over Home Fellowship Groups. Take time to talk and pray with him over concerns, victories, and each step you take with your intern.

Commissioning the Intern

When the intern and the group is ready, it is time to birth a new group. This will have been prayed over and shared with the group from the beginning. Remind them often that you all are looking forward to the day you multiply your effectiveness into another group. Remember, you are not splitting or dividing the group, you are birthing and multiplying.

Indications That the Group Is Ready to Multiply

- You have an intern adequately prepared. (See the form "*Evaluation of Your Intern*" in section four.) You have witnessed his proven character and experience to effectively serve as a Home Fellowship Group leader and can recommend him to the elders to serve in this capacity.
- Your intern desires to serve and assume the responsibilities of a Home Fellowship Group leader.
- Your intern has the support from his or her spouse.
- There are others ready to be approached as new interns.
- The group is large enough (12-18), to provide two core groups.
- You have thought out the best strategy.
 - ▶ You keep most of the group and send the new leader with a core to start a new one.

- ▶ You leave the bulk of the group with the intern and go off with a core group and start a new one.

Talk with your elder to help you make the best decision.

- You must plan a birthing celebration where you commission and send the new leader. Have the elder there at the meeting to issue a challenge to both the mother and daughter group.

The Launching of a New Group

The intern will:

- Lead the group every week for the last 4-5 weeks.
- Pray about and select another person to go with him as his intern (working in conjunction with his Home Fellowship Group leader and the elder over Adult Ministries).
- Be sent out with a celebration night, stressing that multiplying does not mean that people are forbidden to contact those in other groups.
- Begin the new group under the direction of the elder over Adult Ministries.
- Remind people that the kinship they feel toward one another is Christ among them. He will be among them in the new Home Fellowship Group as well.

THE MEETING: HOW IS A HOME FELLOWSHIP GROUP STRUCTURED?

The biblical purpose of Home Fellowship Groups must be kept in mind when the flow and structure of the meeting is considered. Remember, the fellowship groups are the primary place where fellowship, edification, and the exercise of spiritual gifts takes place. Its purpose is that it is the place where “fellowship is experienced, and the needs of the body are lovingly met.”

I. The Structure of the Meeting

The Variables

Another thing to keep in mind is the fact that no two groups will be exactly the same. The personality and giftedness of the leader, the maturity of the members, and stage of the group in its life are all factors which affect the group meeting.

The Format and Agenda

The Extremes to Avoid

There are two extremes to watch out for. One is the tight agenda where every item and time frame is dictated and rigidly maintained. The other is the “go with flow” agenda, where there is no basic schedule, a loose starting and ending time, and no control over sharing, problem people, etc.

The Flexible Agenda

The best approach is probably the flexible agenda. A basic time frame is set for each of the three components of Bible study, worship and caring, and service. In a normal meeting all three will be part of the agenda. The leader and the legitimate needs of the group will determine how much time is devoted to each. For example, new believers with urgent needs, or someone who has a special praise for answered prayer, may take more time. In special cases the Bible study portion may have to be foregone. This type of meeting should not be the pattern, but there must be sensitivity to the Holy Spirit to allow this to occur when necessary.

II. The Segments of the Meeting

The Greeting Time/Opening (15-20 Minutes)

Have Food and Refreshments Ready

At the beginning people can visit and fellowship around the food. People standing and visiting creates a more natural environment than sitting facing each other. This is especially true if people do not know each other well.

People Getting Settled

Guests Introduced

If someone is new, even if you know them, others do not; so make sure that they are introduced. If they came with someone, they can be introduced by that person. Ask them where they are from and let them know that they are welcome. Help to make them feel at home.

Welcome Back Regulars Who Have Been Gone for Whatever Reason

If people have been sick, on vacation, away for work, or for whatever reason, let them know they have been missed and welcome them back. Ask them how they are, how their work or vacation went, etc.

The Ice Breaker

The ice breaker is especially important the first few meetings. Later on it may not be necessary if the group begins to naturally visit and has knitted together.

Worship, Caring, And Group Prayer (35 Minutes)

This segment can be varied and done after Bible study. Settle in to what works best.

Open With Prayer

Worship and Praise (15 minutes)

Have a person who is faithful be assigned the task of bringing in song sheets weekly. The person can take them from the hymnal or a praise book. These should be ready at each meeting. Ideally, this person can also lead with a guitar or some other musical instrument. Model true worship for the group.

Sing to the Lord in a spirit of true adoration and praise. Pray before the meeting for a spirit and attitude of true worship in the group.

Sharing of Needs and Praise Items (20 minutes)

Specifically ask for praise, where God has shown Himself faithful, and where sharing will build up the group. Remind the group this is one of the main reasons you meet. Answer the more urgent requests immediately by asking someone who may know the person to pray. For the more normal requests, perhaps pray for them together at the end. Show genuine concern when prayers are requested and make sure to remember them. Ask the group if you have forgotten any requests.

Bible Study And Discussion (30 Minutes)

Teach on a Book in the Bible or a Subject.

The object is group involvement and personal discovery, not simply lecture.

NOTE: Bible study is still the hub of the meeting. Over a number of weeks and months, if the bulk of discussions and sharing is not out of the Bible study discussion, the fellowship may become superficial. Our fellowship is our common partnership in Christ. The basis for our holding things in common is the common values, beliefs, actions and attitudes found in the Word of God. Meaningful fellowship is rooted in Scripture.

Teach and Guide the Group

Leading a Bible study is a fine balance between teaching and guiding. There are times when the teacher should clarify and instruct, especially when misunderstanding could lead to false views of Christ, sin, Scripture, etc. However, it is best to see if you can ask questions or elicit comments that clarify, using Scripture passages that pertain. Having said that, it is important to seek an environment where participation occurs and yet real learning occurs as well. (See appendix two: Teaching Tips.)

Facilitate Discussion and Learning

Ask for feedback. Ask the group, “what did you gain from this experience?” or “what new insight do you have?” or “what conclusions have you come to?” or “what principles can you learn from this?” Summarize what you think they are saying. Tell them what you think you heard them say. Make sure you affirm any response or feedback. If the answer is obviously wrong, or not related, perhaps you can say, “does anyone have something to add to this?”

Break Up into Groups of 3 or 4

It is helpful, at times, to break the larger group into smaller groups of 3 or 4. Assign verses to these groups and have them report back with their findings. Maximum sharing can be accomplished in minimum time. Have one member of each group report. You may have to designate each of the groups, since people sometimes find it awkward when divided into groups.

Mission And Ministry (10 Minutes)

This is for planning of social and outreach events, discussion of service projects in and out of the church, or planning for the birthing of a new group. This should be a regular part of the group’s life.

Closing Prayer

The order of these things can be changed. For example, the Bible study can occur before praise and caring, or the mission phase can be put elsewhere. Vary it, or stay with the order with which you and the group are most comfortable.

NOTE: Be sure the meeting does not go longer than 1½ hours. It is okay once in awhile, but if you do this consistently, you will lose people. Many have busy schedules and early starts to their days. If someone wants to stay later, then close the formal meeting in 90 minutes and let the others know they are free to stay as late as they wish.

III. The Setting and Surroundings of the Meeting

Expand The Ministry: The Home

Ideally, it is best if the meeting is not in the home of the leader or apprentice. Expand the ministry by having it in someone else's home. Make sure it is a couple who will be a good host and hostess. They must not mind if people stay late (relatively) to fellowship, or to minister to needs, etc. They must be hospitable and view it as a ministry. They must not always be running late or having problems as a couple. They will be responsible for refreshments (this could be shared) and the atmosphere of the meeting. If hospitality is not important, think of what it would be like having a meeting in a garage.

The Effective Use Of Surroundings

Be careful, for things such as the following can impede the group:

- Too much distance between the fellowship group members when seated.
- People sitting like ducks in a row, unable to see each other.
- People sitting behind other people, rather than in one circle.
- A telephone ringing every 10 minutes.
- A dog or cat that makes the rounds of the fellowship group.
- A child that does the same, or who whines for attention.
- A huge vase of flowers on a table in the center of the room.
- A super-noisy air conditioning system or a radio blaring.

Guidelines For Leaders

(The Following Is Taken From Roberta Hastenes)

Before the Meeting

Pray for the group

Pray for every member of the group by name - be specific; be personal.

Prepare

Here are four areas to focus on as you think about the meeting:

- **Arrangement:** what needs to be done - seating, temperature, Bible study, child care, music, materials. Who will do it? Are you sure?
- **Relationships:** How will you help people feel cared for? What will you do to break the ice? How to help them relax, feel comfortable, open up?
- **Study/task:** What is your agenda? What questions are you going to use in the Bible study? What about those who feel uncomfortable praying aloud?
- **How much time is available?** How are you going to use it? Specifically? What is the real “starting time”? Closing time? Are you attempting too much? Too little? Who could take some of the segments?

During the Meeting

Use of time

Keep the group within limits. There are situations where the time use will change according to the need of the moment, but there needs to be an agreed upon beginning and end to the meeting, as well as approximate time limits for each segment.

Flow of discussion

One of the tasks of the small group leader is to keep the teaching and the flow of the discussion moving. This is an art picked up by practice, but here are some ground rules for leading good discussions.

The role of the leader needs to shift as the need arises:

- Motivator:** stimulate thinking
- Enabler:** keep discussion on track
- Clarifier:** explain what is being said
- Affirmer:** encourage/thank group members for contributing
- Challenger:** ask people to justify ideas from the Scripture
- Redirector:** draw others into the discussion

- When you ask a question, give time for people to think. You are the discussion leader, not the answer person, or the final authority on all matters.

- Assist people to participate, but avoid forcing anyone to answer.
- Look for ways to affirm people for their participation/contribution.
- Refrain from monopolizing.
- Pace yourself. Getting through all your questions isn't nearly as important as permitting everyone to participate.

Interpersonal communication

During the discussion process there may be interactions that require you to do some follow-up later. For example, one person dominates the group, and they do not respond to your re-directing. Make a mental note of this and follow up later on.

After the Meeting

Care for the members

There are four types of people that especially need to be followed-up on:

- Those who were absent.
- Those who were ignored, or "were silent" during the meeting.
- Anyone who was "attacked" during the meeting.
- Anyone who is hurting in a special way.

Obviously, this model for group meetings is best if you have highly trained small group leaders. But, if you do not have this luxury, this model is probably less effective because it is totally dependent upon the skills of the leader. And, if the leader is not skilled, or is not in tune with the *VISION* for the total small group ministry of the church, the leader may well take the group in another direction or no place at all.

NOTE: This needs to be qualified. We do not want to give the impression the leader does not ever teach, or speak with authority on doctrinal issues. This may be required at times to correct error, or give understanding when someone especially requests or needs it. Doctrinal and biblical accuracy is not to be sacrificed for the sake of sharing.

THE MINISTER: WHO CAN LEAD A HOME FELLOWSHIP GROUP?

I. The Leader's Description

A Home Fellowship Group leader is someone committed to ministry and the care of others' spiritual needs. He does not have to be a scholar or great Bible teacher, although he should be growing in his knowledge of God. A Home Fellowship Group leader can be described as:

A person with a heart for ministry, and a commitment to seeing that the biblical goals of edification, fellowship and multiplication take place in the life of the people in the group.

From this we see that there are three things that describe a fellowship group leader:

A Heart to Minister

A leader is not a popular person, a psychologist, an extrovert, a wise sage or a biblical scholar. He is someone who has a heart for ministry. God has given the leader a drive to be useful in His kingdom.

- The love of Christ constrains him (2 Cor 5:14).
- He is aware of his own inadequacies and limitations (2 Cor 2:16).
- He is willing to grow and be stretched and developed (1 Tim 4:14-16).
- He is dependent on Christ to teach him and enable him (2 Cor 12:3-8).
- He is teachable and a learner.

Godly Character

They are a person growing in Christ-likeness. They demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). They are applying the word of God to their own life. They have an exemplary life before the church and community (1 Tim 6:11-16). They have a solid family life (1 Tim 3:4, 12).

A Commitment To Ministry

The leader recognizes that a group does not just happen. It is the result of someone who is intentional about leading the group. As a leader, he is ready to overcome obstacles and fears to see God work. He remembers Paul's words to Timothy (2 Tim 1:6-7; 2:1-3). He is willing and ready to work at the ministry (1 Tim 4:16).

Seeing The Biblical Goals

The fellowship group leader knows where he is headed and how he intends to get there. He can keep the group on course. The most important question is not, "Am I doing the leading, caring, or ministry," but, is someone doing the leading, caring and ministry? The leader is an enabler, a facilitator. In other words, he prays for and directs the group so that edification and fellowship are occurring (Eph 4:11-12, 16). A good leader delegates to others, and leads by calling on the gifts of others. The leader also keeps before him the biblical objectives of multiplication and birthing of another group.

II. The Leader Cares for the Group

Caring has been described as *love with work clothes on*. No matter how much we tell people that we care, ultimately it is how we follow through that counts.

The Priority of Care

- Remember: people do not care how much you know until they know how much you care (1 Cor 13:1-3).
- Purpose of fellowship groups: "to provide a place where the Lord Jesus Christ builds up His people as they experience fellowship, and the needs of the body are met."

The Perspective

You are the shepherds and ministers of the church. Much of what you would expect a "pastor" to do to care for people, you will do. This is quite a task, but this is why the groups are small and why leaders involve the whole group in the ministry.

Such things will include: counseling, encouragement, visiting, making phone calls, writing notes, helping when there are special needs, providing meals, watching children, etc.

Given the available time, your temperament, natural talents, and spiritual gifts, how the Home Fellowship Group shepherd-leader fulfills his caring ministry will vary. God gives us the freedom of being ourselves and showing His love as He directs.

The Pattern in Scripture

John 21:15-17 says, "So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Tend My lambs.' He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Shepherd My sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend My sheep.'"

Notice Christ's concern that His people are "*tended*" and "*shepherded*." He is concerned that His people are cared for (1 Cor 12:25), prayed for, encouraged, comforted, admonished (Rom 15:14), serving (Gal 5:13), and bearing burdens for another (Gal 6:1). In short, shepherded. There is a chain of caring that comes from Christ, the Chief Shepherd, and extends through the leader and into and among the flock (1 Pet 5:1-4).

The Shepherd Guides and Directs

- Leads gently: Isa 40:11
- Leads personally: John 10:3- 4
- Directs them as best for their safety: Num 27:15-17

The Shepherd Cares and Supports

- Has a genuine concern: Psalm 78:70-72
- Strengthens and binds up: Eze 34:16
- Comforts: Psalm 23:4
- Renews and restores: Psalm 23:2
- Cares and supports: Isa 40:11
- Seeks and searches out: Eze 34:11

The Shepherd Protects

- Watches for dangers: John 10:12-13; Acts 20:28
- Sacrifices: John 10:15

The Shepherd Feeds and Nurtures

- Supplies needed food: John 21:15
- Feeds abundantly: Eze 34:13-15

III. The Leader Prays for and Models Prayer for the Group

Ministry is Christ ministering in and through us. He is the vine, we are the branches (John 15:1). Christ and the Holy Spirit must be working in and through His people. There must be a continual dependence on Christ to work in the group. This means that faithful, specific prayer for the group must be made the priority.

Personal Prayer For The Group

For the Group as a Whole

- For the presence of Christ and the exercise of spiritual gifts.
- For edification (John 15:5, 7).
- For wisdom in leading the group (a right spirit, responding to people, affirming people, etc.). (James 1:5)

For Individual Needs

- For dealing with problem people (get counsel).
- For salvation, marital needs, financial needs, children, sickness, etc.
- The ultimate demonstration of care "I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you" (1 Sam 12:23).

The Practice of Prayer in the Group

Guided prayer

One way to help people in prayer is to ask the group to pray in turn as you go around the group. The following will help people be comfortable in learning to pray conversational prayer.

- Encourage them to pray short, one sentence prayers and lead by modeling it.
- Have the prayer center on one aspect of prayer.
- Adoration: praise to God for Who He is in some aspect of His character.
- Thanksgiving: thanking God for some specific thing He has done:

Example: *Lord, thank you for watching out for and protecting me this week.*

Specific prayer requests

- Go around the group (skip by silent or reluctant people).
- Assign prayer requests to people (stop and pray immediately if critical).

TEACHER MENTORING

One of our goals with our Home Fellowship Groups is to develop new teachers and help them grow into mature teachers who effectively impact spiritual truth to others. This is part of the disciple-making process, which our Lord commanded us to do (Matt 28:18-20). This was modeled by the apostle Paul, who told Timothy, “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2). Paul disciplined Timothy so effectively he could teach others what he learned. We have been called to reproduce our life in others: to take the things we have learned and teach it to faithful men, who will in turn pass it on to others.

It is both a tremendous privilege and a sobering responsibility to teach the word of God to others. We want to be mindful not to stumble young believers who have trusted in Jesus (Matt 18:6). Therefore, it is our goal to give the best training and mentoring for future teachers we are able to provide. Our aim is to help teachers develop their gifts, grow in their character, and to make sure they are doctrinally sound, so they know how to accurately handle the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15).

The goals of the Teacher Mentoring program are:

- to encourage new teachers to teach spiritual truth in a God-honoring, Christ-exalting, life-changing way
- to offer specific, measurable suggestions for the growth of new teachers
- to mentor intern teachers in that growth
- to ensure that Community Bible Church maintains sound doctrine, philosophical unity, and teaching excellence in the church

Each new teacher (intern) will be paired with an experienced seasoned teacher (mentor) who will provide instruction, feedback, and encouragement. In addition, we will provide the intern teacher specific training and opportunities for observation of effective teachers. The interns should see these training requirements as an opportunity for growth.

Each intern teacher will have an *Intern Teacher Training Form* outlining the steps they need to complete. In addition, each intern’s mentor (Home Fellowship Group

Leader) will have a *Training Check-Off Form* for each intern. When intern teachers have fulfilled a training requirement, it is their responsibility to inform their Home Fellowship Group Leader. Most of these requirements should be fulfilled within the first year of teaching.

PREPARING TO BE AN INTERN TEACHER

There are at least three characteristics that we are looking for in intern teachers. The first is faithfulness. Paul told Timothy to entrust what he had learned to “faithful men” (2 Tim 2:2). To be faithful implies they have true faith. They love God and live for Christ who is their Lord. Faithfulness also describes someone who is trustworthy and reliable. For example, Jesus describes a faithful slave as one who is sensible and does what his master tells him to do even when his master is not there (Matt 24:45). They are self-motivated because they love Christ.

Before a person becomes an intern teacher, they should have proven themselves faithful in doing small tasks that their team leader has given them to do. As they learn to be faithful in little things, they will be faithful in much (Luke 16:10).

A second mark of an intern teacher is being teachable. Do they do what their leader asks them to do? Do they readily submit to leadership? Teachability and humility are possibly most clearly seen in how one responds to rebuke or admonishment. How do they receive criticism?

A third characteristic that we are looking for is spiritual appetite: do they have a desire to learn the word of God? Are they motivated to learn what God says and practice it? Paul told Timothy to take the things that he had heard and entrust them to faithful men (2 Tim 2:2). Timothy had heard, and thus learned things that he could then teach others. Interns should have a healthy appetite for the word of God. They should be self-disciplined in reading the word and motivated to learn the word by sitting under godly preaching and teaching. They are eager to be in Sunday school and the worship services so they can be fed and grow spiritually.

These are the kind of men and women we want to invest in: those who are faithful, teachable, and have a hunger to grow.

THE PATTERN OF MENTORING INTERN TEACHERS

Our Lord Jesus was the master disciple-maker. He gives us a pattern to follow in developing interns. There are at least three things Jesus emphasized in His training of the twelve. First, He lived out what He wanted them to do; He was an example to them. Second, He employed them in ministry; He gave them work to do. Third, He exhorted them; He instructed and corrected them.

Let's briefly note these three things from John 4. Jesus was with His disciples traveling through Samaria. Jesus employed the disciples in ministry by sending them into town to buy food while He was resting by a well (John 4:8). This was a small task. Jesus was teaching them to be faithful in little things. Later He would send them off to preach. Later still, He would hand them the keys to the kingdom!

While they were gone, Jesus started talking to a Samaritan woman. He initiated the conversation (John 4:7), which astounded the woman (John 4:9). Jesus did this because He was concerned for her soul. When the disciples arrived, they were stunned to see Jesus talking with a woman (John 4:27). He was being an example to them of how to do ministry. The gospel is open to everyone.

After the woman left, Jesus began to exhort and instruct His disciples as to what He was doing (John 4:34). He had come to do the Father's will which was to seek and save the lost. This is the pattern of mentoring interns: be an example; employ them in ministry; and exhort and instruct them.

THE PARTICULARS: HOW TO MENTOR INTERN TEACHERS

The Model

Be an example: have him watch you.

Employ him in ministry: give him things to do. Start small, then as he proves himself faithful, give him more things to do.

- Give him an area of service (see *HFG Ministry Opportunities Form*)
- Give him an opportunity to do a devotional
- Give him an opportunity to teach a short lesson (15-20 minutes)
- Give him an opportunity to teach a whole lesson
- Give him an opportunity to run the whole meeting
- Give him his own group where he develops his own interns

Exhort him through this whole process: instruct and teach.

The Mentoring Process

Instruction and Training

Intern teachers not only need to learn how to teach from skilled teachers, they also need a correct understanding of doctrine, and have a grasp of our vision and goal for this ministry. Thus the following training is needed before they can become teachers and Home Fellowship Group Leaders:

- Read: *Home Fellowship Group Ministry Manual* and discuss this with your HFG leader
- Listen to: “The Priority and Ministry of Home Fellowship Groups” by Phillip Foley, September 28, 2008 (available www.cbcvallejo.org/sermons-by-various-preachers/)
 - Read: *Preparing a Devotional* (see appendix one)
- Read: *The Trellis and the Vine* by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne and turn in a book report to your HFG leader (two to four typed pages, outlining what you have learned)
 - Read: *Teaching Tips* and discuss this with your HFG leader (see appendix two)
- Study through: *Basic Bible Doctrine* (formerly known as *Discipleship Two*) with your HFG leader
 - Take and pass a Doctrinal Test
- Attend: “How to Study and Teach the Bible” class during Sunday School
 - Attend: Biblical Counseling Course during Sunday School
 - Attend: Leadership Training and Development
- Attend: Home Fellowship Group Leaders meetings and any intern training classes.
- Attend: Worship Services regularly (Sunday morning and evenings and Adult Sunday school)
 - Membership: become a member of CBC
- Agree with the doctrinal statement of the church (If there is substantial agreement, but some misgivings, they must be noted.)

Observation

If an intern is going to learn how to teach, he must have it modeled for him how to do it from good, experienced teachers.

- Observe the teaching of your Home Fellowship Group leader twice and discuss observations with him
- Observe other Home Fellowship Group leaders and discuss observations with your leader

Observation 1: Name: _____ Date: _____

Observation 2: Name: _____ Date: _____

Observation 3: Name: _____ Date: _____

- Do a devotional with feedback from your leader
- Do a second devotional with feedback from your leader

- Teach a short lesson (15-20 minutes) with feedback from your leader
- Teach three complete lessons with feedback and evaluation from your leader

First Lesson: _____

Second Lesson: _____

Third Lesson: _____

The Responsibilities of the Mentor Teacher

The main responsibility of the mentor teacher (Home Fellowship Group Leader) is to offer positive feedback and suggestions for growth. This will take place primarily through formal observations as the intern observes your teaching, and you in turn, observe his.

The Process of Discipling Your Intern

The intern teacher will observe the mentor teacher twice and discuss their observations with the mentor teacher.

Have your intern do a devotional and then meet with him and give feedback.

Have your intern read *Preparing a Devotional* and review it with him. Then give him another opportunity to do a devotional. Evaluate the teaching.

Discuss with your intern how to teach a passage. Have him teach a short lesson (15-20 minutes). Evaluate the teaching.

Have the intern teacher teach three lessons that you will formally evaluate.

Continue mentoring the intern teacher through instruction and feedback. Encourage the intern to observe you and give you feedback, and encourage them to complete the instruction and training requirements.

Observations

When observing your intern, have a copy of the lesson he is teaching that day. Pray that the Holy Spirit will give you discernment so you can benefit your intern. Your goal is to help your intern grow in his ability to present the truths of Scripture in faithfulness.

Immediately following your observation (or as soon as possible), sit down with your intern and present him a summary of your observations. Begin with positive observations and comments! End by discussing one or two things they could improve upon, giving examples to help them understand your observations and how they can grow.

Only suggest one or two areas where they need to improve and give specific instruction as to how they can improve. Be sure to give your feedback in an encouraging tone. This should not be an intimidating experience. We want to help them grow as teachers and be more useful in their service to others.

The following list is designed to help you think through the types of things you are looking for as you observe your intern.

Observation Areas

Preparation for Teaching

- Teacher has studied the Scripture passages carefully and prayerfully
- Teacher has incorporated the lesson into his spiritual life
- Teacher has prayed for audience ahead of time
- Teacher has prepared for proper use of illustrations
- Teacher has prepared for smooth teaching of the entire lesson

The Teaching Time: Stylistic Issues

- Teacher was comfortable with audience
- Teacher was comfortable in his delivery
- Teacher was loud enough, clear enough, and slow enough for audience to hear and follow
- Teacher used appropriate non-verbal communication
- Teacher was appropriately energetic (passionate) in his delivery
- Teacher was creative in his delivery
- Teacher was able to keep the attention of his audience
- Teacher clearly and effectively presented main teaching points
- Teacher made appropriate emphasis of the main point
- Teacher avoided unnecessary “rabbit trails” from the lesson
- Teacher effectively involved audience in the learning process
- Teacher used questions effectively

- Teacher wisely handled incorrect responses
- Teacher was attentive to the group dynamics
- Teacher encouraged audience to respond to the truth taught

The Teaching Time: Structural Issues

- Teacher was organized in his delivery
- Teacher used the Scripture in his teaching
- Teacher encouraged audience to look in their Bibles
- Teacher made clear connections between the illustrations and the biblical truth
- Teacher used illustrations effectively and efficiently
- Teacher was able to relate the lesson to real life situations
- Teacher faithfully represented the biblical text

QUALIFICATIONS FOR INTERNS AND HOME FELLOWSHIP GROUP LEADERS

QUALIFICATIONS FOR INTERNS

As a candidate to become an intern, you will be expected to meet the following qualifications:

- Faithfully participate and serve in a Home Fellowship Group for at least six months.
- Meet regularly with your Home Fellowship Group leader for discipleship, prayer, and accountability.
- Begin the teacher mentoring process as outlined in the previous section.
- Begin to disciple at least one person, preferably from your Home Fellowship Group.
- Be recommended by your Home Fellowship Group leader and have the approval of the elder over Adult Ministries.
- Receive support from your wife or husband.

FROM INTERN TO HOME FELLOWSHIP GROUP LEADER

The amount of time a person serves as an intern will vary, depending upon the following:

- Meeting the additional qualifications of a Home Fellowship Group leader listed below.

- The readiness of your Home Fellowship Group to give birth and multiply, as determined by your Home Fellowship Group leader and elders.
- Your proven character and experience to effectively serve as a Home Fellowship Group leader as determined by your Home Fellowship Group leader and elders.
- Your desire to serve and assume the responsibilities of a Home Fellowship Group leader. (See *Intern Evaluation Form* in next section.)

QUALIFICATIONS FOR HOME FELLOWSHIP GROUP LEADERS

- A demonstrated heart for God, loyal to the body, its leadership and ministry (Eph 4:11-16).
- A demonstrated ability to practically apply the word of God to his own life and the lives of others (2 Tim 2:15).
- A heart for ministry, desiring to build the body in love (Eph 4:12-13).
- Evangelistic: a concern for the souls of men and spreading of the glory of Christ (Acts 1:8; 1 Pet 3:15).
- A shepherd's heart: showing true concern for the well-being of the flock (Rom 12:9-15; Gal 6:2).
- Exhibits the fruit of the Spirit; a growing Christian life and Christ-likeness is evident (Gal 5:22-23).
- Exemplary life before the church and community (1 Tim 6:11-16).
- Solid family life (1 Tim 3:4, 12).
- Approved by the elders.
- Faithfully completed the mentoring process for becoming a teacher (see previous section—especially pages 31-34).

Section

4

REPORTS AND FORMS

Teaching Feedback Summary Form

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|----------------|--|
| Intern Teacher: | | | Date: | |
| Observer: (Mentor teacher) | | | Lesson: | |

KEY THEMES:

| Category | Feedback |
|------------------------------|----------|
| STRENGTHS | |
| AREA for Improvement | |
| STEPS for Improvement | |

HFG Intern Teacher Training Form

Name: _____ HFG Leader: _____

Instruction and Training:

- Read: *Home Fellowship Group Ministry Manual* and discuss this with your HFG leader
- Read: *Preparing a Devotional*
- Read: *Teaching Tips* and discuss this with your HFG leader
- Read: *The Trellis and the Vine* by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne and turn in a book report to your HFG leader (two to four typed pages, outlining what you have learned)
- Listen to: "The Priority and Ministry of Home Fellowship Groups" by Phillip Foley, 9/28/08 (available www.cbcvallejo.org/sermons-by-various-preachers/)
- Study through: *Basic Bible Doctrine* (formerly known as *Discipleship Two*) with your HFG leader
- Take and pass a Doctrinal Test
- Attend: "How to Study and Teach the Bible" class during Sunday School
- Attend: Biblical Counseling Course during Sunday School
- Attend: Leadership Training and Development
- Attend: Home Fellowship Group Leaders meetings and intern training class
- Attend: Worship Services regularly (Sunday morning and evenings and Adult Sunday school)
- Membership: become a member of CBC
- Agree with doctrinal statement of church

Observation

- Observe the teaching of your Home Fellowship Group leader twice and discuss observations with him
 - Observe other Home Fellowship Group leaders and discuss observations with your leader
- Observation 1: Name: _____ Date: _____
- Observation 2: Name: _____ Date: _____
- Observation 3: Name: _____ Date: _____
- Do a devotional with feedback from your leader
 - Do a second devotional with feedback from your leader
 - Teach a short lesson (15-20 minutes) with feedback from your leader
 - Teach three complete lessons with feedback and evaluation from your leader

First Lesson: _____

Second Lesson: _____

Third Lesson: _____

HFG Training Check-Off Form

Name of Intern Teacher: _____

Home Fellowship Group Leader: _____

Instruction and Training:

- Read: *Home Fellowship Group Ministry Manual* and discuss this with your HFG leader
- Read: *Preparing a Devotional*
- Read: *Teaching Tips* and discuss this with your HFG leader
- Read: *The Trellis and the Vine* by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne and turn in a book report to your HFG leader (two to four typed pages, outlining what you have learned)
- Listen to: "The Priority and Ministry of Home Fellowship Groups" by Phillip Foley, 9/28/08 (available www.cbcvallejo.org/sermons-by-various-preachers/)
- Study through: *Basic Bible Doctrine* (formerly known as *Discipleship Two*) with your HFG leader
- Take and pass a Doctrinal Test
- Attend: "How to Study and Teach the Bible" class during Sunday School
- Attend: Biblical Counseling Course during Sunday School
- Attend: Leadership Training and Development
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Observation

- Observe the teaching of your Home Fellowship Group leader twice and discuss observations with him
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Observation 1: Name: _____ Date: _____

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Observation 3: Name: _____ Date: _____

- Do a devotional with feedback from your leader
- Do a second devotional with feedback from your leader
- Teach a short lesson (15-20 minutes) with feedback from your leader
- Teach three complete lessons with feedback and evaluation from your leader

First Lesson: _____

Second Lesson: _____

Third Lesson: _____

Intern Evaluation Form

HFG Leader: _____ Intern: _____ Date: _____

| TASK | EXCELLENT | SATISFACTORY | NEEDS TO IMPROVE |
|---|-----------|--------------|------------------|
| Has initiated/built relationships with every group member | | | |
| Relates well to visitors and is hospitable | | | |
| Participates in discussions when not leading | | | |
| Shares and presents Home Fellowship Group vision | | | |
| Involved in outreach to non-members | | | |
| Coordinates follow-up of contacts | | | |
| Well prepared to facilitate topics | | | |
| Sensitive to needs | | | |
| Lovingly cares for people | | | |
| Conducts group meetings effectively | | | |
| Leads prayer effectively | | | |
| Effectively leads Bible study | | | |
| Effectively leads sharing time | | | |
| Prays consistently for members | | | |
| Keeps efficient records | | | |
| Involved in one on one discipling | | | |
| Takes constructive criticism well | | | |
| Faithful in meeting with mentor | | | |

“Know Well the Condition of Your Flock”
Proverbs 27:23

Personal Information & Prayer Needs

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Phone # & Cell #</u> | <u>Email</u> | <u>Birthday</u> | <u>Anniversary</u> | <u>Prayer Needs</u> |
|-------------|---------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------|
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Home Fellowship Group Ministry Report

Leader: _____ Date: _____

List those who attend your group and how often they attend each month:

* Place a R, H, O, or V in the box following each person's name

(R= regular attender; H = attends about half the time; O = attends occasionally; V = recent visitor)

| <u>Name:</u> | * | <u>Name:</u> | * |
|--------------|---|--------------|---|
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What are you currently teaching through?

Who is your intern(s)? _____

How are you preparing your intern:

If you do not have an intern, how are you developing men to become one?

How are people getting involved in serving in your group? Who:

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Oversees Communication | |
| Oversees Refreshments | |
| Shows Hospitality | |
| Leads Worship | |
| Leads Prayer | |
| Teaches | |
| Does Devotionals | |
| Contacts Missionary | |
| Oversees Outreach | |
| Oversees Socials | |
| Oversees Showers & Special Needs | |

Who is involved in discipleship in your group?

| <u>Name:</u> | <u>Discipled By:</u> | <u>Discipling Others:</u> |
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What have you done for outreach recently?

Home Fellowship Group Ministry Opportunities Form

Name: _____ Check the appropriate box of areas you would like to serve

| <u>Area of Service</u> | <u>Description & Responsibilities</u> | ✓ |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Communications | Keep accurate list of e-mails, phone numbers, birthdays, and anniversaries. Train and develop backup person. | |
| Refreshments | Coordinate refreshments for weekly meetings. Call to remind those who are providing refreshments for that week. Call and inform host of who is bringing refreshments. Once a month celebrate everyone's birthday and/or anniversary for that month. Serve as backup when need arises. Train and develop backup person. | |
| Hospitality | Open your home to host the study (for a month or longer). Provide drinks. | |
| Worship | Prepare and lead worship for weekly meetings and special events (four to five songs). Incorporate new songs we sing at church. Play a musical instrument. Pray that God would receive our worship, that He would indwell our praises, and that the worship would help us focus on God and Christ. Train and develop backup person. | |
| Prayer | Coordinate and lead group prayer and seek ways to promote bearing one another's burdens in prayer. Keep a prayer list and remind group of answered prayer. Develop leaders to lead small prayer groups. Break up into groups regularly; also break up into men and women. Exhort us from the Scripture about prayer. | |
| Teaching/ Devotionals | Teach on a regular basis. Share a devotional from Scripture about something God has been teaching you. | |

| <u>Area of Service</u> | <u>Description & Responsibilities</u> | ✓ |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Men's Discipleship | Coordinate discipleship pairs within our group. Encourage older men to disciple younger men. Interested in being disciplined or discipling someone else. | |
| Women's Discipleship | Coordinate discipleship pairs within our group. Encourage older women to disciple younger women. Interested in being disciplined or discipling someone else. | |
| Missions | Serve as the point person for corresponding with our group's missionary and communicate their needs to the rest of the group (monthly). Coordinate any gifts or care packages they might need. | |
| Outreach | Plan and prepare outreach events to reach new people in our church and/or the community (at least one a quarter). Occasionally challenge and remind the group to pair up with another couple and/or single(s) in the group and invite someone new over. Organize kindness evangelism. Train/develop backup person. | |
| Socials | Coordinate planning socials for the group. (This includes a Thanksgiving social, summer social(s), as well as a couple throughout the year.) Train/develop backup person. | |
| Showers & Special Needs | Serve as point person for coordinating and planning showers, meals and other needs for the group. Train/develop backup person. | |
| Group Service | Let the group know of opportunities to serve together: nursery, Generations To Come, Kindness Evangelism, and other opportunities. | |
| Exhortation | Come prepared to share a psalm, hymn, spiritual song, or a teaching, so as to encourage one another and stimulate one another to love and good deeds. | |

APPENDIXES

Appendix One PREPARING A DEVOTIONAL

Have you been asked to prepare a devotional for a class, at a Home Fellowship Group, or some other occasion? Perhaps you do not know what is expected, or perhaps you do not know how to go about it. These opportunities should not be allowed to slip away but, rather, utilized for the glory of the Lord and the benefit of your brothers and sisters. But first let us get our definition clear: What do we mean by the term *devotional*?

The term *devotional* is sometimes used to describe a short message. It may take five minutes in contrast to a sermon that lasts for fifty. Because of its brevity, it will differ in structure. *But if it is going to be effective, it must be structured and well planned.*

Think of some of the devotionals you have heard. If you were asked to evaluate them, what would be your criticisms? “He didn’t really have anything to say...just the same old cliches and platitudes.” “He rambled without any apparent aim.” “He got off on a tangent that seemed unrelated to his theme.” “He didn’t know when to quit.” “I can’t exactly see how what he said was intended to relate to me.” Do these comments strike a familiar chord?

The Controlling Principle

If there is one controlling principle to keep in mind when preparing a devotional it is this: *have one main thought*. This is essential. Otherwise, you will not know how to get started, you will not have a basis for organizing your thoughts, and you will not know when to quit. Remember, you have a limited amount of time. You cannot cover very much. Your intention is not have a “garage sale” of good ideas, lest people browse around and go home with nothing.

A common pitfall when preparing a devotional is the selection of a topic that is too big. “The discipline of God” is too big of a subject to cover in a devotional. It has many aspects: the reasons for discipline, the motivation in discipline, the results of

discipline. Here is a manageable devotional topic: "God disciplines Christians because He loves them." (By the way, if you cannot say what you have to say in one good sentence, you have probably yet to adequately limit your subject matter).

Three Basic Steps

In any kind of communication, you should be driven by one essential aim: to transport your cargo of thought to your listener (or reader, as the case may be). If he does not take it home with him, you have fallen short of your purpose. One suggestion is for the body of your devotional to be shaped by three basic steps:

State Your Main Point Clearly

You may understand what you are talking about, but remember that you have been studying and meditating upon it while your listener has not. So state your main point as clearly as possible. It should be based upon a verse or short passage of Scripture. Read your text and state your point (not necessarily in this order). For example, you might say: "God disciplines Christians because He loves them" And then you could read Revelation 3:19, "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline..."

Explain Your Main Point

Your main point should be able to stand alone, but you can reinforce its emphasis by explaining it. The Hebrew writers of the Psalms used a method that is helpful. After making a statement, they would sometimes restate the same idea in a different way. For example, "Show me your ways, O Lord," followed by the next phrase which restates the same idea, "teach me your paths" (Ps 25:4). At other times in the second line they gave additional details: "Then I will teach transgressors your ways," and the second statement, "and sinners will turn back to you" (Ps 51:13). Making a statement and then contrasting it with an appropriate statement is another method used in the Psalms. (Compare the positive and negative statements in Psalm 1).

Another way of explaining your main point is to use an illustration. This can be a short story, anecdote, or personal experience, *but it must illustrate the main point*. Beware of the pitfall of having such an interesting illustration that your listeners miss the main point. It is supposed to explain the main point, not attract attention to itself or you!

You could illustrate how a human parent disciplines his child so that he does not play in the street and get injured. Extra details could be supplied, such as the meaning of the word "discipline." An opposite or contrasting statement could be made, explaining that by "discipline" we do not mean penal judgment. The exact

method and extent that you explain and illustrate will depend on the subject matter. Often it is good to repeat the text of Scripture upon which you are basing your devotional after this explanatory step.

Apply Your Main Point

If the truth of the devotional is not related to life, it becomes just an intellectual exercise. A common pitfall is to assume that your listeners will automatically relate the devotional to their life experiences. But you need to apply it for them. "If it is because of God's love that He disciplines us, we shouldn't resent or rebel at that discipline. The next time we are aware of God's discipline, we should ask ourselves, 'What is God trying to teach me? How can I profit spiritually from this experience?'" When you have made your application, repeat your main thought: "God disciplines us because He loves us," and then quit.

The first letters in each of the basic steps used in preparing the body of your devotional collectively spell "SEA". If you are going to transport your cargo into the minds and hearts of your listeners, you must take them across this SEA:

State your main point clearly.

Explain your point (restate, give extra details, use contrasting thoughts, illustrate).

Apply your main point to the life experiences of your listeners.

Appendix Two

TEACHING TIPS: HOW TO TEACH A BIBLE STUDY

One of our tasks as a teacher and leader of a small group is to help those in our group understand the Scriptures. To do this we must learn to keep things simple. Charles Spurgeon said the following about 1 John 3:16 where it says, "He laid down His life for us."

There is not one long word in that sentence; it is all as simple as it can be; and it is simple because it is sublime. Sublimity in thought always needs simplicity in words to express itself. Little thoughts require great words to explain them; little preachers need Latin words to convey their feeble ideas, but great thoughts and great expressers of those thoughts are content with little words.

John's Greek is very simple: "He laid down His life for us," yet it is very profound; it is deep!

Think about how people learn most concretely. How do they grasp or get the truth? Most people learn concretely when they can see or discover the truth for themselves and when it applies to them. For example when my son was younger and I was trying to teach him math for some reason he was having trouble with his two's. When I would ask him what was $7 + 2$, he had a hard time figuring it out. So we got some blocks and when I asked him what was $7 + 2$, he would get his 7 block and his 2 block and put them together and see that they make a 9 block. Then I made it applicable: you are now seven, how old will you be in two years? (Kids always want to be older). Or we put it in money value: $5 + 3 = ?$ If you had \$5 and you made \$3, how much would you have? For people to learn concretely they must learn to see it for themselves and know how it applies to them.

Teaching Is an Art

It is something you need to learn how to do. What is the goal of our teaching time? We want people or children in our group to discover truth and we want them to apply this truth. The goal is to teach them to *observe* all of Christ's commands.

The Method of Teaching

How do we go about reaching our goal? There are basically two ways:

Lecture

Most of us have a tendency to do this. We study many hours. We pour over a passage. We pray over the passage. God shows us some nuggets that we cannot wait to share with others. It becomes a lecture instead of a *discussion*. Another reason we lecture is because it is more comfortable to teach than discuss. Someone might ask a tough question that we do not have the answer to. Also, another reason we lecture is that this is what is modeled from the pulpit. When someone preaches he does not ask questions; he simply preaches and we sit and listen. And when you study the New Testament, this is the method that God has chosen to get the gospel out. What is wrong with this thinking in regard to teaching a small group? In our small group Bible studies (discipleship, Home Fellowship Groups, Sunday School, and Children's Ministry) we are not preaching per se, we are teaching and teaching is different than preaching. (This is not to say there will be no preaching in your teaching!)

Discussion

The ideal then is to have a discussion but it must be a directed discussion not a free for all. You do not want a discussion where everyone expresses their views about what they think the passage means. Guard against this. Learn to direct the discussion. You need to teach and discuss what is true and expose what is not true. So it needs to be a directed discussion. You should have definite goals in mind. There should be truths that you have discovered that you want to help the group discover. The objective is to lead the discussion down a path. You should confirm the insightful comments and gently turn the focus of the group away from the ones which are not insightful.

In summary, we want our Bible study to be in 3-D: It should involve a *discussion*. You want interaction and not lecture. There needs to be *direction*. It cannot be a free for all where everyone is giving their opinion. It is a discussion that is led by a leader. It should also involve *discovery*. The goal is for the group to discover the truth of the passage and apply it.

Let's talk about how to do this.

The Key to Successful Teaching

The key to pull off a good discussion is the skillful use of questions. Good questions stimulate discussion; poor questions stall it. Now I must warn you that in leading a Bible study like this there is a certain amount of unpredictability. You have no idea how people will respond. Sometimes you will get good answers and other times you will off-the-wall answers. How do you handle these? You need to learn to think on your feet. You must learn to react properly to the bizarre comments. You must learn to know when to interrupt someone who is dominating. You must also learn how to tie the threads of discussion together into a meaningful whole. It takes time to learn how to do this, sometimes years. So do not get discouraged; keep working at it. But you need to learn how to do this because it is the key to helping people discovery truth for themselves.

It is interesting; we have guest speakers come and teach for our Sunday school class. Usually they are missionaries. I will tell them to feel free to ask questions as they teach. The people are used to it. So I will encourage them to get people involved. I have noticed something. One of two things usually happens. The person will not ask any questions and lecture the whole time. Or, they will attempt to ask some questions at the beginning, but because they are not good questions no one responds, so they give up and end up lecturing. Asking good questions is something you need to learn how to do.

A Suggested Approach

There are three parts that make up a successful Bible study. A profitable study will blend each of these: it will include *observation*: what does the passage say, or say what; it will include *interpretation*: what does it mean, or now what; and it will include *application*: how does it relate to me, or so what. There should be a blend of each of these components every time you teach.

Observation

What does the passage say? You want the group to gain familiarity with the text. Let's look at an example of how to do this from Ephesians 6:18-20. Paul writes:

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

After reading this, you could ask, "What are some of the things that stand out to you in this passage?" Paul is talking about prayer and how to pray and what to pray for. After discussing what the passage is about, you could ask, "Does anyone know how this relates to the context?" The apostle is in the midst of talking about spiritual warfare.

Some passages that you teach you can plunge right into (like this one). Others, like narratives, may need some explanation. After reading through a narrative it might be helpful to have someone re-tell the story and then have others fill in as he goes (pick someone who would feel comfortable doing this). Occasionally with some passages you might have to fill in some historical information that has bearing on the passage. For example if you are teaching through Ruth, it might be helpful to know that it took place in the time of Judges, when everyone did what was right in their own eyes. Or if you are teaching through Nehemiah it would be helpful to know when in history that story takes place.

During the observation stage you want your group to get familiar with the text. You want to ask general observation questions like I mentioned above: What stands out to you in this passage? What strikes you in this passage? What comments or questions do you have regarding this text? Is there anything you want to comment on about this passage? You do not want to ask restrictive questions like: what *one* thing is Paul emphasizing here? People will not respond, because they are fearful of giving the wrong answer. Make the questions more open ended, more general.

You are not seeking to elicit a particular response at this stage. You want them to make some general observations of the text. Now if a particular observation is shared that you want to focus on, then that leads to the next stage. When is it time to move on? When is the right time? Pray for wisdom. Usually it will be when someone shares something you want to discuss further. Sometimes the first person may mention the exact thing I want to talk about, but I still elicit other responses. I want to get people into the text and familiar with the text.

Another thing: you will want to acknowledge every comment that is made even though it may be wrong! In the observation stage you are not primarily concerned to establish truth but to generate involvement. We will get to how to handle wrong answers later. If they have not hit on that nugget of truth that is starring them in the face you can respond to their comments with: "Good, what other things do you see?" This keeps them looking in the text and hopefully they will discover the truth that is right before them. What if you ask a question and get no response? What should you do then? You wait them out! You do not panic. Repeat the question if necessary or reword the question. Also, remember who said what. This is important because when discussing later you should give them credit for what they said. This will encourage them and increase their desire to contribute to the discussion.

Interpretation

You probably will not spend much time in the observation stage because usually you will want to get moving in the passage. In the interpretation stage you want to find out what the passage means. You are looking for specific insight. Right or wrong answers may be given. You need to establish the right answers and gently distinguish these from the wrong ones. Ask good questions. What makes a question good? A good question gets them into the text and it may require some thought. In other words it is not something that is blatantly obvious.

Look again at Eph 6:18-20. Do you see any words or ideas repeated in verse 18? *Prayer* and *all* are repeated. What do you think Paul is emphasizing about prayer by the use of the word *all*? Think about the context (spiritual warfare). Prayer is for every occasion especially in the midst of spiritual warfare, which is on going all the time. We should keep up constant times of prayer and be consistent in them. We are to be devoted to prayer. It needs to be a priority. But we cannot restrict ourselves to just regular times of prayer. Paul says to pray at all times. There will be times of sudden prayer, like Nehemiah before the king (cf. Neh 2:4).

Does Paul give us any specifics of how we are to pray and if so, what are they? *We are to pray at all times*. How do we do this? Can you think of any other verses that may relate to this? Pray without ceasing (1 The 5:17); be devoted to prayer (Col 4:2).

We are to pray in the Spirit. What does this mean? What will this type of prayer look like? The Spirit's main ministry on the earth today is to glorify Christ, so praying in the Spirit means we will have Christ-centered prayers, Christ-glorifying prayers.

We are to pray for others. Why do you think Paul tells us to be on the alert and persevere in our prayer for others? We are to pray for others because they are in the midst of the battle as well. What does perseverance suggest about prayer? We will have to work to pray.

What is the difference between prayer and petition? *Prayer* has to do with prayer in general. He is talking about the general aspect and attitude of devotion to God, which might include adoration, confession, and thanksgiving. *Petition* could be translated entreaty or supplication. It is a more direct term than *prayer*. It is a special branch of prayer which involves earnest petition. It has the idea of earnestness and fervency as you cry out to God.

In summary, start with general observation questions. As the discussion gets rolling, it will not be long before someone says something that pertains to a specific question that you had in mind. When that person says that you might want to say something like "I think you have brought up a good point. Let's discuss that a bit

further. What do you think Paul means by this statement?" You have a question that you have planned all along but it was brought up when someone else drew attention to it. They are beginning to discover truth for themselves.

The two questions you should use most frequently are: what things strike you in this passage; and what else do you see?

Application

The third component that makes for a successful Bible study is application. How does this relate to me? In other words, so what? We have looked at what did Paul say, and what did he mean. Now we want to look at what does it mean to me? I am giving you a logical order for how to teach but not necessarily a chronological order. In other words, you do not have to save all application to the end. You should address application as it comes up.

There are two types of application questions. There are *general application* questions that are open-ended. You leave it up to the people in your group to determine how this might apply to them. You might ask, "What are some of the implications of this passage (Eph 6:18-20) for your life?" There are also *specific application* questions. How does it apply to specific situations? You might ask, "How does this passage relate to how we are to pray for those who proclaim the gospel? In view of your own prayer life, are there some things that you need to change?"

Concluding

How do you conclude? You summarize the main points of application. We have looked briefly at four things about prayer. We have seen the *character* of prayer; we are to be praying at our prayers. We are to have *continual* prayer; we are to pray at all times for all areas of life. We are to have *Christ-centered* prayers; we are to pray in the Spirit for His will. We are to have *concerning* prayers; we are to pray for others. Another way to summarize this passage is: we are to pray for souls, saints and sermons.

To summarize: the ideal to having a good Bible study is to have a *directed discussion* that allows people to *discover* truth for themselves. So Bible study should be in 3D. It should be a discussion. It should be a directed discussion. It cannot be a free for all. You must lead it and give it direction. It should also involve discovery, where people are discovering truth for themselves and how to apply it.

How to Handle Problems

What happens when someone gives you a wrong answer? Or what do you do when people get off the point of the passage and start down some rabbit trail? Or what if you have some person who dominates and answers every single question? Again, what I would like to do is take you through a passage that may have some problems in it and show you how to handle those.

Now remember Bible study should have three components: observation, interpretation and application.

Observation

The objective of this stage is that you want to answer the question: what does the passage say? The goal at this point is to gain familiarity with the passage.

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. (2 Cor 5:14-15)

You start by asking observation questions: "What stands out to you in these verses? Is there anything in this passage that grabs your attention? What else do you see?" Remember to acknowledge each response. Wait for people to respond. Do not panic. Ask the question in a different way. And remember who said what.

Interpretation

This answers the question: what does the passage mean? Paul says that the love of Christ was controlling him. What does this mean when he says 'the love of Christ'? How could you take this? Does this mean Paul's love for Christ controlled him or does this mean Christ's love for Paul controlled him?

In the verse Paul says that he has come to a conclusion about some things. This word *conclusion* means to make a decision, to render a judgment. In other words, he has weighed out some things that he knows to be true. What are some of those things?

Paul talks about the things Christ has done for him. He is talking about how Christ demonstrated His love for Paul. He died for me. And because He died for me, I am to live for Him. So when he says that the love of Christ controls us, I take that to mean that it is Christ's love for us that controls us. He died for me. The love starts

with Him. The reason we love Him is because He first loved us. Paul is saying: look at what Christ did for me. He is concluding this. He has thought through these things. So because Christ loves us, His love controls us.

The word *control* means constrain. It means to hold together or press together. It is the pressure that confines as well as controls. My children used to have a little wooden puzzle made of a number of different pieces. If you held it together tightly, you could pick it up and it would not fall apart. The pressure you put on the pieces constrained it from falling apart. That is the idea of the word *control*. His love constrains us to live a certain way. Understanding who Christ is and what He has done for us will restrict us to want to live for Him. His love holds us in its grip. So powerful is its influence that we have no choice but to live a life of loving service to Him and to others.

How does the love of Christ constrain Paul? His desire is to live for Christ and not for himself. Meditating on the love of Christ and reminding yourself of His love promotes the desire in the Christian to want to live for Christ.

In verse 14, Paul says, "One died for all." Who is he speaking about?

How to Handle Wrong Answers

What do you do if someone suggests an interpretation which is clearly or at least probably wrong? There are two ways to respond depending on how wrong it is.

The first response could go something like this: "Bob has suggested that Paul is talking about Adam here, what do the rest of you think? Could he be speaking about someone else?" Or you could simply acknowledge the contribution and say, "Thanks Bob, what do the rest of you think?" This allows the group to continue to suggest options until you land on the one that is correct. Then you affirm the correct response. What this does is quietly dismiss the earlier responses but does so indirectly. You are not being offensive to people and you are not discouraging them from participating in the discussion. This also establishes the best interpretation by your direct confirmation. You are directing the teaching and interpretation but your group is discovering the truth for themselves. Whatever you do, do not torpedo each successive wrong response.

A second response is to an answer that is definitely wrong. You could say something like, "Now, that is a good suggestion, but I'm not sure that is what Paul had in mind here." You have acknowledged the contribution but have done it softly. You have commended it by calling it good (only call it good if it is!). If it is defensible, acknowledge that. By saying, "I'm not sure," is softened and better than saying, "No, that is wrong!" Or "What kind of bozo answer is that?" You want to

gently reflect the wrong answers otherwise you will have a group that never responds and never asks questions. Eventually they will leave. They want to go to a place where they can ask questions and where they can respond. Remember people learn the most concretely when they discover truth for themselves.

The goal is to establish the best interpretation but do it in a way that gently disposes of less accurate ones but that also does not reflect rejection of the person who offered it.

What do you do when you get an off-the-wall comment? There is one of two ways to handle this depending on the person and what was said. You should repeat the comment to make sure you heard it correctly and then ask the person how his comment relates to the passage. Or if it is someone who normally has off-the-wall questions, you could say something like, "That is interesting, what other things do you see?"

What Do You Do About Tough Questions?

If you are like me, I am not quick on my feet. Sometimes what I do is throw the question back out to the group: "That is an interesting question. What do the rest of you think?" This gives you time to formulate a response of your own. I was teaching a Sunday School class one time and a brother sitting in the front row said that he disagreed with what I was teaching and believed that a person could lose his salvation. How do you respond to that in front of thirty people? I threw the question back out to the group and asked what they thought. We had some great responses. This gave an opportunity for those in the class to think of verses that taught on eternal security. This also gave me opportunity to think of some passages that I could share. I do not think we convinced this man but it was one of the most blessed Sunday school classes we ever had, because the class was given an opportunity to defend what they believed.

Rabbit Trails

In the passage above Paul tells us that Christ died for all (2 Cor 5;14-15). Who do you think He means by this? Who are the *all*? This question leads down the rabbit trail of limited atonement. The question is, do you want to take it? When coming to a rabbit trail learn to use discernment. Be careful not to stray too far from the passage you are studying.

When people raise questions that lead to rabbit trails, be considerate and do not cut them off. Obviously this is probably a question that is important to them. Give a brief response and offer to talk to them later. "I see what you are saying there, and I think it is an important subject, however I think it takes us a little away from the

passage right here. Would you mind if we talked a bit further about it after study?" In this way you have affirmed that it is important and you have communicated interest in it by saying that you will follow up on it later. But you have also not allowed the group to be led away from the passage and the central thought of the passage. I had a brother who constantly asked questions like this in Sunday School. Sometimes I would answer his questions. At other times I would tell him I would talk to him later. Pray for discernment on which trails to take.

In this passage you would probably want to deal with limited atonement because it is of great significance to the text. Christ died for all. Think about that statement. Christ is God, Lord, King; He is glorious, majestic, sovereign. This is the one who died for us. Think about the love of such a one for sinners that He would lay aside His glory and majesty to become a man to die in our place. This is why the love of Christ constrained Paul.

Now, Paul says that Christ died for all. Who are the all? We know that Paul can not be talking about the whole world. He is talking about how the love of Christ controls *us*. Who are the us? They are Paul, his associates and possibly the Corinthians. Also, when Paul says that "one died for all," the result is that all died. If the "one" refers to Christ, then the "all" cannot possibly be the whole world because he is talking about being identified in Christ's death. Because Christ died, we died with Him. This can only mean the ones that He died for. Also, in verse 15, the "all" that Christ died for are the ones who live for Him. They live for Him because He died and rose again on their behalf. Obviously the "all" is not the whole world but for those for whom He has died. This is why Paul says that the love of Christ constrains him. Christ died for His people. He had particular people in mind. And when Christ died for us, we died with Him. He died for our sin. We died to sin too. And He died for us so that we might live for Him. Incredible truth here, isn't it? It should motivate us, captivate us to want to live for Him.

Before we finish, let's talk about one more problem that we may encounter.

What Do You Do About the Person Who Dominates?

This is the person who answers every question. Two things you can do. First, you could say something like, "Thanks Steve, what do the rest of you see?" You direct the question away from them. And depending upon the person you could say something like, "Okay, everybody but Chris can answer this question." This is very direct and should be used for only people you know well.

If the person persists in being dominant then you should talk to him privately after the study. Acknowledge their eagerness and zeal and remind them that you want all to participate. Ask them to help you to let others get involved by keeping quiet.

Related to this is the person who rambles on and on and on. I have had people who would tell a story and ramble on for ten minutes. I only have 30-40 minutes to teach. One third of the time spent for teaching is taken up by one person rambling on. What do you do? This is probably the hardest thing to do but you need to get in there and cut them off. If you do not do this and allow it to go on week after week, it will kill your group.

Application

The last step is application. How does this apply to me? What happens to the person that Christ has died for? They should no longer be living *just* for themselves. Paul does not say that does he? We like to add the word 'just,' but it is not in the text. We should no longer be living for ourselves. We should be living for Christ. Our lives should be spent in His service. What are some of the implications of this passage for our own lives? What are some concrete ways you can let the love of Christ control you?