

Weekend message Small group study

- complementing the sermon given at St. Paul on **11/15/14 – 11/16/14**
- a meeting agenda organized per St. Paul core values
- estimated for a 90-minute meeting

Equipping “the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ”—Eph. 4:12

Below is a tool to help delegate the leading/facilitating of meeting components between different small group members.

	Prayer (p.4)	Outreach (p.3)	Word of God (p.2)	Equipping (p. 4)	Worship - Our Redemption Response - (p.2)
Study component leader					

Prayer leader – Leads group prayer time

Outreach leader – Leads the charge of outreach (serving, inviting, filling the empty chair, etc.)

Word of God leader – Leads the Bible study time, encourages application of God’s Word to life

Equipping Leader – Coordinates and reminds who will lead the different meeting components.

Worship (Our Redemption Response) Leader – Leads worship time during meeting.

Introduction

¹⁴⁻¹⁸ “It’s also like a man going off on an extended trip. He called his servants together and delegated responsibilities. To one he gave five thousand dollars, to another two thousand, to a third one thousand, depending on their abilities. Then he left. Right off, the first servant went to work and doubled his master’s investment. The second did the same. But the man with the single thousand dug a hole and carefully buried his master’s money.

¹⁹⁻²¹ “After a long absence, the master of those three servants came back and settled up with them. The one given five thousand dollars showed him how he had doubled his investment. His master commended him: ‘Good work! You did your job well. From now on be my partner.’

²²⁻²³ “The servant with the two thousand showed how he also had doubled his master’s investment. His master commended him: ‘Good work! You did your job well. From now on be my partner.’

²⁴⁻²⁵ “The servant given one thousand said, ‘Master, I know you have high standards and hate careless ways, that you demand the best and make no allowances for error. I was afraid I might disappoint you, so I found a good hiding place and secured your money. Here it is, safe and sound down to the last cent.’

²⁶⁻²⁷ “The master was furious. ‘That’s a terrible way to live! It’s criminal to live cautiously like that! If you knew I was after the best, why did you do less than the least? The least you could have done would have been to invest the sum with the bankers, where at least I would have gotten a little interest.

²⁸⁻³⁰ “Take the thousand and give it to the one who risked the most. And get rid of this “play-it-safe” who won’t go out on a limb. Throw him out into utter darkness.”

(Matthew 25:14-30 MSG)

Worship – Our Redemption Response

5 minutes

All: Our Lord and Master, we want to please You by using the talents and gifts You have given us for Your glory and for Your pleasure. Let us not take them lightly or bury them under rationalization or procrastination. Help us to make the most of what we have been given and to faithfully discharge our duties as Your humble servants. Amen.

adapted from Maranatha's *The NIV Worship Bible*, © 2000, p. 1331.

Word of God

45 minutes

1. How did you see God at work in the lives of *others* this week?
2. **Look at Matthew 25:14-30 again** (the introduction verses). How would you explain the third servant's actions and reasons for hiding the master's money? How would you then translate this example into a follower of Jesus who hid the spiritual gifts given to him or her and did not use them for God's purposes, for His mission to save those who do not yet know Him?
3. In the NIV translation the master exclaims to the first and second servant, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" How would you explain their faithfulness? How would you then translate this into a follower of Jesus who uses the gifts God has given him or her and invests them into God's mission purposes?
4. How have you seen God use the gifts He has given you for His purposes?
5. How have you hid these gifts from God and not used them?
6. The third servant explained that he was afraid. 1 Timothy 2:17 (ESV) states, "for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." That is the truth! That is who you are as a follower and child of God!

How does this better understanding of your identity in Christ, how He designed and transformed you to be, help you move past the fear and equip you to openly share and utilize the gifts God has given you? How can we as a group support one another in better understanding our identity and encourage each other to live out these gifts in our daily, 24/7/365 lives?

Take turns reading... **9 Habits of Highly Loving Relationships**

In today's world relationships that are loving are in short supply. Everyone needs an authentic, safe place. Social scientists tell us isolation and loneliness have reached epidemic levels. Somewhere in your neighborhood, in your workplace, or in your sphere of acquaintances is someone who would love to experience real friendship that your group can offer. See how you and your group are doing on these habits.

Habit #1 Authenticity - Authenticity means that you can be yourself. You don't have to pretend that everything is okay when it's not. You know that you can trust the people in the room with what you share about yourself. People are looking for a place to be able to talk openly and honestly about what's going on at home, at work, and in their relationships. How real are you with the folks in your group? You set the tone for the level of vulnerability and "realness" in the group. Strive to make your group a safe place where people can share without fear or reservation.

Habit #2 Interest - Most of us ask the question, "How interested are these people in getting to know me?" In a group setting, people want to know that they will be listened to and drawn out. Visitors want to know if this is a place where they can be known and cared for. This is characterized by conversations that show you really are interested in who a person is and how life is going for them. Being curious and asking questions is a wonderful way to show someone that you are interested in their world.

Habit #3 Sacrifice - The Bible tells us to lay our lives down for one another. Loving relationships need to be based on a conviction that sometimes we need to take action. What are some practical and tangible ways for you to show love toward someone in your group? Where is a need that can be met? Is there a hardship or trial that someone is going through? How can you go out of your way to help shoulder a burden that is present in your group? It won't necessarily be easy but it will go a long way toward communicating love.

Habit #4 Interdependency - The New Testament is filled with imagery about the Church being like a body. He wants us to need each other; He wants us to be dependent on one another. None of us is meant to go through life on our own, to shoulder the burdens of life by ourselves. A healthy group reinforces our need for others by being a place where we are replenished. This is the place we go when the well goes dry and we allow others to restore us and rejuvenate a weary heart, mind, or soul. Visitors find interdependency a refreshing tune in a world that sings the tune "I did it my way!"

Habit #5 Cultivation - Meaningful relationships are like a garden...they take time to grow. Are the people in your group committed to the art of friendship cultivation? Being together for group meetings is great but are folks in your group hanging out together outside of group meetings? Are people sharing meals together, sitting together at church, or calling one another during the week to check in with one another? Visitors to your group are waiting for the opportunity to do something fun! One of the sure fire ways to supercharge the love in your group is by taking more time to be with each other.

Habit #6 Hospitality - The original meaning of the word hospitality is grounded in a "love of strangers." Hospitality starts at the front door when folks walk into your home or meeting. Everything that happens after that is critical to how welcomed people feel and whether or not their needs are being looked after. Folks love to walk into a friendly and warm environment where they are greeted right from the beginning...it's a place where a warm cup of coffee is put in their hands and where they get the sense that they are going to be looked after...that your group is a place where they are going to be served.

Habit #7 Stimulation - In Hebrews we are told to be a stimulating force in one another's lives. A part of loving relationships is being able to say truthful and honest things. As your group looks in the Bible together, people are looking for relationships that are going to sharpen them. Look for opportunities to challenge each other and to ask hard questions. Don't be afraid to spur one another on.

Habit #8 Intercession - We are admonished on a number of occasions in the New Testament to pray for one another. Prayer for needs that are shared during a small group meeting is a powerful way of extending care and concern. It is doubly powerful if group members embrace the practice of praying for one another during the week. Prayer is a tangible way of "shouldering" the burdens of other group members but it is also a way of releasing God's power into the situation. Visitors are genuinely touched by a sincere desire to pray for a need that they bring into a group meeting with them.

Habit #9 Mission - A group that purposefully seeks to enfold newcomers and seekers must learn to cooperate and work together. Growing a healthy group together is a fantastic way to ensure that relationships grow in love and depth. What can be more exhilarating than to extend God's kingdom together? What can be more loving than working together, shoulder to shoulder, in reaching out and loving newcomers to your group?

After reading this article, what is **one** personal highlight or challenge for you?

article from Missions International's 2005 *Groups Ablaze (SG)2 Certified Trainer's Guide*.

Prayer

20 minutes

Share a prayer request based on what was discussed during this meeting's *Word of God* and/or *Outreach* time. What is that next step in your faith life God is calling you to make? What convicted you from God's Word and/or our discussion of His Word? Please also share a way in which the group may support/encourage you regarding what you've shared. Of course other important matters can be prayed about as well. After all have shared, pray for the person on your left (whether aloud or silently). Pray together in popcorn style (as opposed to going in order around a circle.)

Equipping *for coordinating next week's meeting...*

5 minutes

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