
Fruitful Group Discipleship

Course Objectives:

- To understand the pattern and power of making and multiplying disciples through a small group community.
- Understand a biblical view of group life in the New Testament Church and what looks like within the context of Every Nation Church London
- Be empowered to be fully participating and fruitful group members
- Be equipped with the skills necessary to lead life changing groups

If you have been involved in some form of small group/discipleship group, what difference has it made to you personally?

Why do you want to lead a group?

1

GROUP DISCIPLESHIP

Multiplying disciples through group life

1. WHY GROUP DISCIPLESHIP

1.1. Discipleship at the centre

Matt 4:19

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

Matt 28:19, 20

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded

Discipleship is Jesus' great invitation to a radical life and includes a call to:

- COME
To take a journey of following Christ in the company of other Christ followers.
- GROW
To be made by Jesus, growing in relationship with God and being transformed by his word and his power
- LEAD
To be fishers of men, going out, making other disciples and changing the world

1.2. Discipleship, Multiplication, and Growth

John 15:5-8

He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit....he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful... If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit...⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Jesus said that increasing fruitfulness is an essential characteristic for disciples (John 15). As Jesus prioritized making disciples, and as his disciples went and did the same, many were saved and added to the church and the number of disciples multiplied, producing an unstoppable movement.

Growth and multiplication still happen today whenever we prioritize what Jesus and the early church prioritized – gathering together in disciple-making community.

2. WHAT IS GROUP LIFE: The pattern of the early church

2.1. Two circles of ministry

The early church grew and multiplied as the disciples continued to gather together for Christ-centred ministry **in public** and from **house to house**. The disciples devoted themselves fully to more than just membership of an organization. They became a community of disciples who became increasingly Christlike and lived on a mission for God:

Acts 2:42 - 47

⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 5:42

Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

Acts 20:20-21

You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

The Greek word used for 'House' and 'household' is **Oikos**. This refers to much more than those who live in your home. It refers to people close to you, your family, circle of friends, people who affect you, people you come into contact with regularly and you do elements of life with.

Consider: Write down at least 5 people in your 'oikos' household who are:

- a) Christians who you regularly fellowship with*
- b) Non-Christians who need to know the gospel.*

2.2. Our Group Life Goal: Fruitful Community

There was explosive growth in the early church on the day of Pentecost, but it was as the early disciples devoted themselves to a new way of life we see people being saved and added to the church daily. As this continued, eventually 'the number of disciples multiplied greatly'

Acts 2:42 - 47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Discuss: What are some of the things that the early groups of disciples devoted themselves to that led to the Lord adding to their number daily

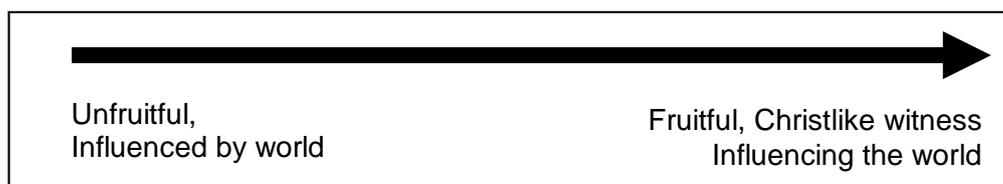
At Every Nation London we call this **Fruitful Community**. This is what we desire to see naturally in our church culture, and what we build deliberately through our group life.

This type of community is not just restricted to the temple courts (worship services) and houses. It should be experienced in church buildings, offices, pubs, coffee shops, and wherever gathering places in our culture exist which make community

Fruitful = "Growing and Changing the world for God"

John 15:8

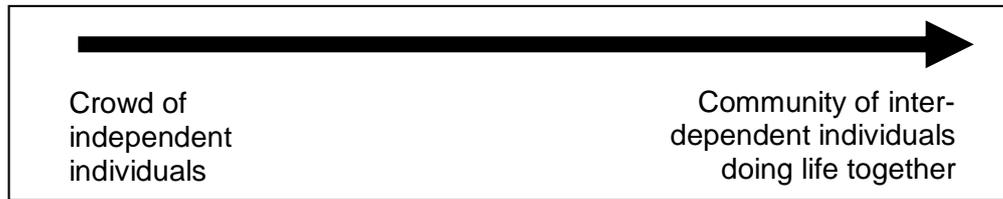
This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.



Community = “Doing life together”

John 13:35

³⁵ *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*



3. HOW did Jesus do it?

3.1. Jesus the group leader

Mark 3:13-35

¹³ *And he went up on the mountain and **called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him.** ¹⁴ And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) **so that they might be with him** and he might send them out to preach ¹⁵ and have authority to cast out demons. ¹⁶ He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); ¹⁷ James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); ¹⁸ Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot,^[b] ¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.*

“Jesus it must be remembered, restricted 9/10 of His ministry to 12 Jews because it was the only way to reach all Americans.”

--Eugene Peterson

Jesus loved the world so much that he started a connect group. He taught the crowds, ministered to the multitudes, and ministered to individuals, but mostly he concentrated on the few.

There are many models of group discipleship we can learn from. However, Jesus remains our ultimate example of a connect group leader, and the role model we should follow.

The church that exists today more than 2000 years later is a direct result of Jesus focus on calling a group out of the crowd to do 3 things:

- **Progress Spiritually:** To be with him and be trained by him
- **Experience Community:** To become a diverse but loving spiritual family
- **Live Missionally:** To be trained and sent out on his mission

These are the outcomes we desire to see in every group.



Application:

What aspects of Acts 2 fruitful community is your current group strong at? What 1 or 2 things do you need to prioritize?

Which of the three group life outcomes currently needs the most focus and growth personally? What is one thing you could do to address this?

2

CONNECT GROUPS

Disciple-making community

1. CONNECT GROUPS: Our Pattern for Group Discipleship

It is common for churches to have a formal small group ministry, however the objectives for these groups can be varied. Let's now look specifically at the objectives and what "Connect Groups" are and how they function.

1.1. Common misconceptions – What a Connect Group is NOT:

- A meeting.
- Friendship or social group
- A study course to help Christians know the Bible better.
- A need-focussed care or counselling group
- A leader-centred taught Bible Study or a teaching platform
- Mini church service

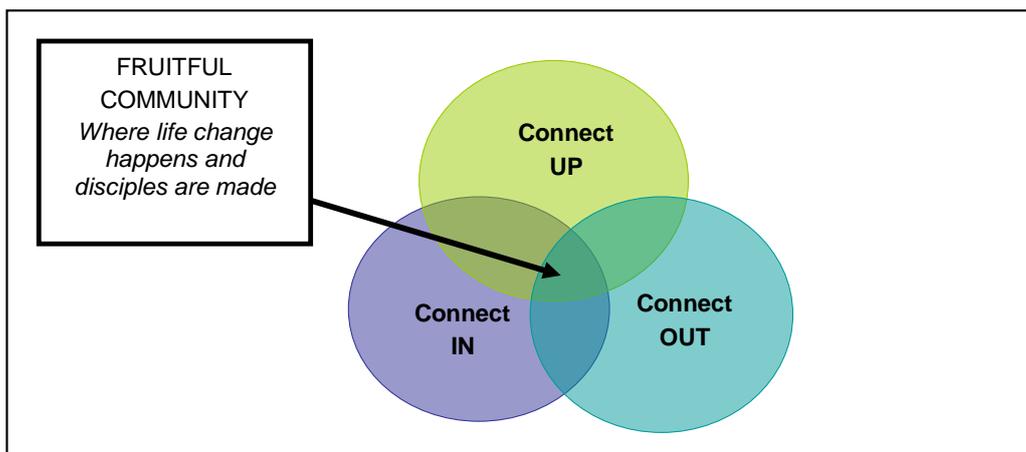
1.2. Connect Groups Defined – What it is

A CONNECT GROUP is a disciple-making community: A CONNECT GROUP is a group of people who gather regularly and make disciples by living out Fruitful Community. They do this by CONNECTING:

- **IN** – so people Experience Community
- **UP** – people Progress Spiritually
- **OUT** – so people Live Missionally



CONNECT	IN PRACTICE
IN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All are invited and included, regardless of background or spiritual maturity. All participate, all are real • A crowd of individuals becomes a community of friends
UP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We invite God the Holy Spirit to be powerfully present as we meet. • We seek to grow in God's word as truth to be wrestled with, believed in, and acted upon. • Our meetings empower people to grow closer to God and live a more Christ-like life
OUT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are burdened for those who are not yet saved. • We actively seek to live lives that demonstrate the gospel • We grow in engaging the world with the gospel



In the life of a group, some gatherings may prioritize one of these aspects more than another but in most cases we should be experiencing something of each of these every time we get together.

Connect Group leaders are empowered to do whatever it takes to build fruitful community, prioritise these three practices, and grow in these three outcomes,

within the context of the local church and in the context of pastoral leadership oversight and support¹

2. LIFE CHANGING MEETINGS

Acts 2:42, 46-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer...⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

The key place that disciple-making community happens, and is deliberately cultivated, is in regular group meetings.

Connect Groups have a regular meeting every 1 or 2 weeks

2.1. PLANNING YOUR GROUP

The WHY, and the WHAT (the mission, outcomes, and practices) in a connect group do NOT change. However to be effective, there are some things about HOW a group achieves this which SHOULD change:

These would include things such as:

- Time, Place, Length, Format
- Meeting Frequency (*although at least 2 meetings/month*)
- Long Term (*year or more*) or seasonal.
- Ages, ethnicities, life stages, demographics
- Maturity of faith (*from seekers to mature Christians*)
- Material or topics being addressed (*general, planned series, specific topic*)
- How material is used (*DVD, books, Bible stories, life situations, led-discussion*)
- Reasons for meeting/forming a group (*e.g. workplace, local community, common interest*)

¹ For more detailed information on how this works at Every Nation London, please refer to the connect group leaders handbook.

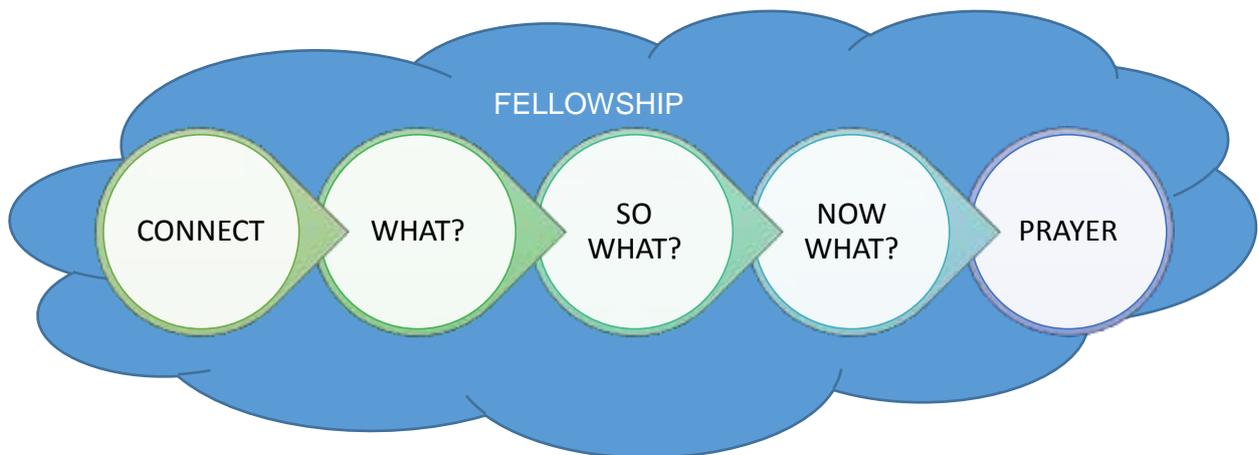
3. GENERAL FORMAT FOR A REGULAR GROUP MEETING

As you meet over time some meetings may be more focussed on one aspect than another (e.g. socials, outreach connect events, prayer or worship nights).

However, what follows is a suggested format which will work well for any connect group to follow as a guide on how to run a regular, effective meeting.

3.1. Regular Meeting Format

Note: Times are not fixed, and should be judged as necessary for the group. Factors such as stage of group development, group size, location, demographic etc. will also be determining factors. One essential, however, to mid-week groups is an agreed finish time. Better to finish early and leave people hungry for more.



3.2. FELLOWSHIP

Discussion:

Consider people coming in to attend your group – both regulars and new people. What are some essential ingredients you need to be deliberate about as a leader to create a welcoming environment where fellowship happens?

3.3. CONNECT (10-20min)

Emphasis: Connecting people together and preparing the “soil”

Guiding Question: “What are the questions and situations we all face”

Purpose:

- Get to know one another, grow relationships
- Stimulate discussion, everyone gets used to talking
- Stir up life-related questions concerning today’s truth

Tips:

This is part ice-breaker, part preparing people to discuss the topic for discussion. A simple, good, and relevant question is often all it takes.

Good warm-up questions:

- Have no right or wrong answers
- Ask for opinion or experience
- Require no Bible Knowledge
- Are not controversial
- Are connected to the Bible Study topic in some way

Examples:

- “What is your favourite movie and why?”
- “What’s the most daring thing you’ve ever done? What made it daring?”
- “What’s the best news you’ve heard this week? The worst news?”
- What’s been your highest high and your lowest low since we last all got together?

3.4. WHAT (10-20min)

Emphasis: Knowing and Understanding Truth

Guiding Question: “What does the Bible say and what does it mean?”

Purpose:

- Put God’s truth at the centre
- Help us understand and wrestle with the meaning
- Get every person to meditate on it and let it work.

Tips:

- Get people involved in reading scripture
- Don’t use too much – help focus your conversations
- Only cross-reference where necessary and helpful – focus on meaning.
- Ensure everybody understands and can convey in their own words before moving on.

3.5. SO WHAT (10-20min)

Emphasis: Making truth personal and practical

Guiding Question: *“What is God saying to us and what does it mean?”*

Purpose:

- Understand what the truth means to our daily lives
- Explore the truth together and establish what God is saying to us

Tips:

- A connect group meeting is not just a Bible-study and it's not a mini-preach. It requires a good leader not an expert teacher.
- Don't preach but don't get lost either – learn how to guide conversation
- Use personal illustrations and stories to bring understanding and encourage others to open up.
- Draw out thoughts and perspectives from other group members
- Don't just talk. Ask questions and turn them into conversations.
- Be led by the Spirit

Examples:

- *How would you have felt if you were Blind Bartimaeus?*
- *Why do so many people keep quiet and shrink back when they most need help? What causes you to shrink back?*

NOW WHAT (10-20 min)

Emphasis: Stirring up action and accountability

Guiding Question: *“What is God saying to me, and what am I going to do in response?”*

Purpose:

- Understand what this truth means to me personally
- Challenge me to respond to it and do something to apply it to my life

Tips:

Ensure the focus stays on **personal** application and not how this applies to others or descends into vague and impersonal issues. Don't allow people to hide between theorizing or generalizing. Get real, get personal, and challenge to respond.

- Remind everyone to apply the lesson to their own lives, not someone else's.
- Try to encourage a deliberate **“what am I going to do this week”** response.

Examples:

- *What will you do to remind yourself of God's promises every day this week?*
- *What has spoken to you today and what will you do about it this week?*

3.6. PRAYER (10-15min)

Emphasis: Connecting with God

Purpose:

- Understand that God is real and trust him to move
- Allow God to minister into situations discussed
- Pray for specific needs and expect testimonies
- Minister through spiritual gifts

Tips:

Encourage people not to use long or religious prayers. Be “naturally supernatural”, believing that God is real and expecting him to do awesome things.

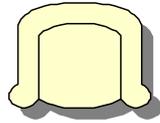
Be creative in how you lead prayer in the group:

- Don't let just yourself and a few bold people pray.
- Ask for prayer needs and delegate these to specific people to pray over in the group.
- Pair people into 2's or 3's to pray for each other or for specific needs

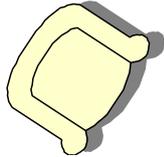
RECORD prayer requests and follow up for answers to prayer in subsequent weeks. This creates an expectation for God to answer prayer, makes room for testimonies, and should be normal behaviour for a community that cares.

4. FRUITFUL GROUP

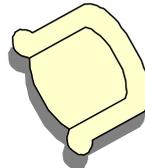
A fruitful group will deliberately consider and fill the following chairs:



2 L _____

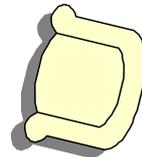


3 A _____



1 H _____

S _____



4 O _____



7 S _____ C _____

5 P _____ D _____



Connect Group Launch(/Re-launch) Planner

Vision

What sort of group will this be? Who's it for (Men/Women/Mixed, Students, Seekers, Leaders, Football lovers, Local Community)?

Who

Who do I know who might come?

When and how will I invite them?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Would any of these make a good apprentice leader to get on board before we start?

Who will support/coach me in my leadership?

Schedule

When, Where, How often will we meet? When will we start?

Launch Plans

What social/connection event will I invite these people to so I can cast the vision and invite them to attend?

3

THE PEOPLE FACTOR

1. CALLING PEOPLE

Mark 3:13-35

¹³ And he went up on the mountain and **called to him those whom he desired**, and **they came to him**. ¹⁴ And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) **so that they might be with him** and he might send them out to preach ¹⁵ and have authority to cast out demons. ¹⁶ He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); ¹⁷ James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); ¹⁸ Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot,^[a] ¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

An essential skill in anyone all group leaders (and core members) is the ability to call people into the group. This includes:

- **Identifying** - *Looking at the crowd and identifying people who are disconnected but would be interested in connecting with others who will help them discover and follow Jesus.*²
- **Interceding** – *Praying for people who will be added and opportunities to invite them*
- **Investing** – *In personal conversations, phone calls, followup, and meetings with people.*
- **Inviting** – *Personally inviting people to come to group*

² Note that Jesus group was a group of very diverse people but who discovered true community and unity because he was at the centre. Fruitful connect groups consist of diverse people with different personalities, demographics, life stages, levels of maturity and struggles, but who become community as they follow Jesus and live for him.

1.1. Where do people come from?



Consider:

Who are 3 people that you know of already who you could call into your group?

Who is 1 person that needs follow up?

What is one thing you can do personally to become more effective at inviting.

2. CREATING COMMUNITY

In our modern, independent culture community doesn't just happen. We need to intentionally create it.

2.1. Shared stories

2.2. Shared Experiences

2.3. Shared Purpose

As groups develop and members mature, differences can pull the group apart unless the reasons that the group exists remain shared and central

to all. For groups to become fruitful and multiply it is essential to remember why there are there. It is the job of the leader to keep this at the centre

Key questions for any group:

- What are our expectations of this group and each other?
- What are the leaders' expectations?
- What are our shared ambitions?
- What does this look like in practice?

2.4. Shared Ownership

True community is owned by all its members. Often groups can experience attendance problems, not develop to fruitfulness, and frustrate leaders because the only person that really owns the group is the leader.

What elements of group meetings and group life can be delegated to others?

2.5. Shared Lives

Groups need to intentionally develop community outside of group time. It's amazing how many group members don't even have each other's contact details, never mind do things together outside of the meeting

Practical:

- Maintain and share a contact list,
- Communicate outside of group time
- Model it with your group members

2.6. Resolving Conflict

Any time real people gather together in a group, real life challenges are sure to follow. Even among the early disciples we see that conflicts arose for a variety of reasons.

Luke 9:46 *An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest.*

We should not be discouraged when we face relational challenges. **Experiencing them is proof of authentic community.**

Conflict is a reality in any group, but how we handle it determines whether we grow together or are separated. Effective groups don't avoid conflict in a way that is unhealthy, and they follow Biblical principles for resolving conflict so that relationships are preserved and restored where necessary.

The following are some biblical essentials for handling conflict in group life:

- **Act first (Matt 5:23-24, Matt 18:15-17)**
- **Speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15)**
- **Talk to people, not about people (Prov 11:12-13)**
- **Listen, then speak without anger (James 1:19)**
- **Forgive without reservation (Col 3:13)**

3. Launching (or relaunching) Your Group

Many groups struggle because they are not deliberate enough about how they start. A great launch will help get a group off to a great start, and a strong relaunch can be essential to breathing life into an existing group.

Connect Group First Night Planner

Fellowship

Who's coming? How can they find the place easily? What do I need to do to create a welcoming environment? What food or refreshments will be available (and how can this be shared out?)

Connect

What connection/personal story questions and activities will we do to break the ice and bond the group?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Group Expectations and Desires

What are the shared expectations, desires, values, and behaviours that will focus our group and hold our community together? (Write down during meeting)

Leader Expectations and Desires

What is my inspiring vision for why we're going to meet, who we want to become, and what we're going to do (including suitable bible passage if possible)? Why is it important and what difference will it make?

Group Values/Ground Rules

What values and ground rules do we need to establish that haven't already been mentioned for this to succeed and be the fruitful community we desire? (e.g. confidentiality, welcoming all, committed attendance)

Prayer

Something we'll do every week is pray for one another and other people/situations that come to mind, and we'll followup to find out how God is answering.

Are there any prayer requests tonight? (Write down in the space below so you can followup next time)

Connect Group Term Planner

This should be prayerfully considered before you launch/relaunch your group.

Where appropriate this is something to include your group in thinking through.

Connect IN

What goal do we have for our group this term in this area:

What one (or more) specific things will we do this term to build friendships in the group and become community.

Connect UP

What areas do we desire to grow in God this term and what goals do we have?

What resources will we use? Who will lead the sessions?

Connect OUT

What goals do we have in this area for us all to grow in. How will we do this?

What one specific thing will we do this term to join together to make a difference for God's mission? When will we do this? Who will lead this?

4

THE TRUTH FACTOR

Effective Group leaders know how to:

- Lead people into truth-centred life change
- Create Conversations
- Lead deeper

4. LEADING INTO TRUTH-CENTRED LIFE CHANGE

4.1. CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH TRUTH

John 8:31

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³²Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

James 1:22

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

In the Bible we see lives were changed as disciples came together to devote to themselves to **learning** and **applying** Jesus teaching. It is as we obediently apply God's word, that we discover life-changing truth.

To make and multiply disciples in connect groups it is essential that every member grows in understanding of Biblical truth as it applies to their life and makes a decision to walk in obedience to it.

A good group meeting will have Biblical truth at the centre, and will include a verse for people to take away and meditate on during the week.

4.2. TRUTH AND LIFE BALANCE



- TRUTH EXTREME

Groups that focus on knowledge without life-related application leaves disciples unchanged and powerless in the world. It also usually leads to pride, criticism, and separation from the world we're called to reach.

Tips: Be deliberate about asking people how life is going (work, family, studies). When learning truth, never go too long without asking "what does that mean to us and what are we going to do about it)

- **LIFE EXTREME**

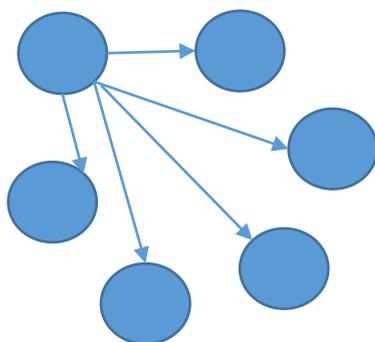
Groups that are not anchored and growing in biblical truth also leave disciples unchanged and powerless in the world. Without God's word at the centre, people will never grow in faith, never be transformed by having their mind renewed, never be able to encourage one another, and never be able to present an answer to the world.

Tips: Make sure you open your Bibles, and never come to any conclusions of 'truth' which can't be supported by scripture. When talking about realities of life, always expect God to have some truth to reveal which is relevant and powerful to change the situation.

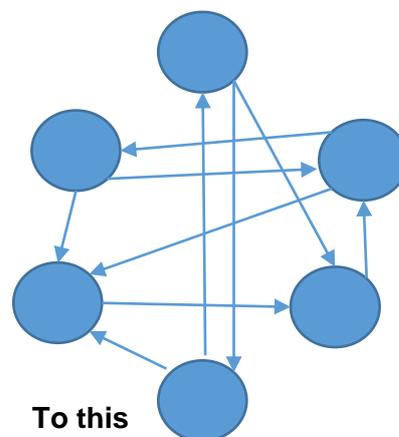
5. CREATING CONVERSATIONS

Group preparation as not preparing a teaching or preaching session. Good group leaders do not do all the talking or need to have all the answers. A good group leaders is a **facilitator**:

- steering conversation
- drawing out contributions from every member
- guiding people into a correct biblical understanding of God's word
- encouraging "one-another accountable application" from every member.



From this



To this

A group leader needs to ensure that they develop the specific skills required to facilitate good group discussions. These skills include stimulating and steering conversation in the right direction, as well as being confident to outline and explain Biblical truth where appropriate.

5.1. Use the right QUESTIONS

We don't ask questions in a group simply to find all the answers, to see who knows the most, or to prove that the leader knows best. Questions are used to create conversations that connect truth with people's real lives and build an authentic community that makes and multiplies disciples. Steering conversation is mostly about using the right initial and follow-up questions

Questions are intended to be a launching point for discussion and will typically be designed to answer one of the following generic questions:

- **What are the facts?**
- **What does it mean?**
- **What do I think (or know)?**
- **What do I feel?**
- **What does that mean to us?**
- **What does that mean to me?**
- **How should I respond?**
- **What will I do?**

Truth – Theoretical – General

Life – Applicable – Personal

Questions range from CLOSED ↔ OPEN, and GENERAL ↔ PERSONAL

Question	Definition	Purpose	Example
<i>Closed</i>	<i>Has a definite yes/no or right/wrong answer</i>	<i>Used to establish facts or agreement</i>	<i>Is it a good thing to read the Bible?</i>
<i>Open</i>	<i>No definite answer</i>	<i>Used to stimulate conversation, share ideas, stories and feelings.</i>	<i>What are the benefits of reading the Bible?</i>
<i>General</i>	<i>Involves theory, imagination, or other people's situations.</i>	<i>Used to stimulate conversation and establish truth</i>	<i>What can cause us to lose hope?</i>
<i>Personal</i>	<i>Involves our own individual lives and personal response</i>	<i>Either to: Bring personal connection to truth and build trust in the group, Or To connect truth to current situation and challenge for a personal response</i>	<i>Tell us about a time when you've lost hope? What current situation are you facing where you're finding hard to have hope?</i>

5.2. Giving the right RESPONSES

Questions are not the only thing which is used to stimulate discussion and life-related application. How the leader and other group members respond to questions or comments is also key.

Practically here are four responses which will help you create dynamic discussions. (*taken from 'leading life-changing small groups' by Bill Donahue*).

Acknowledge and affirm what is said.

Clarifies what is being said and felt

Turn it back to the group as a means of generating discussion

Summarizing what has been said

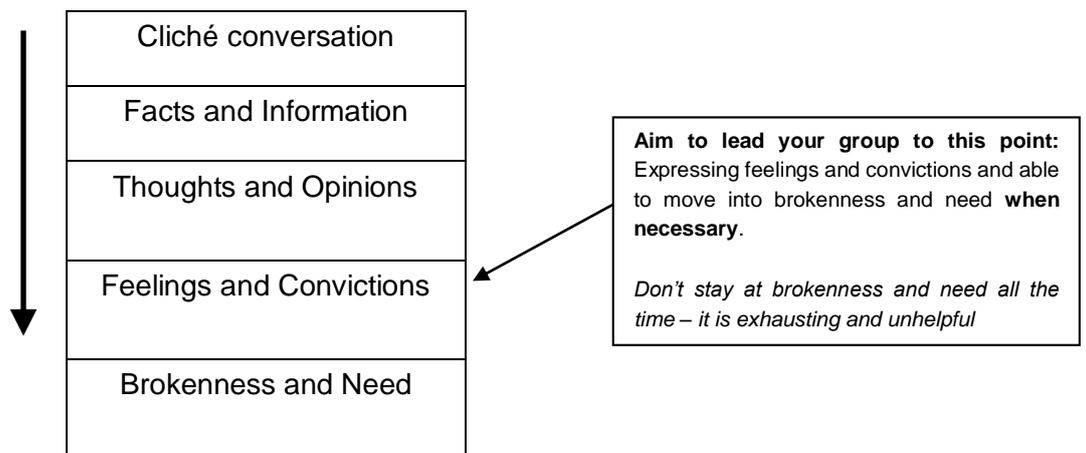
It is also important to realize that the group leader does not have to provide – or even know – all the answers. It is often much more powerful to deflect questions back to the group in general, or to other specific group members.

6. Lead DEEPER

6.1. Understand GROUP DEVELOPMENT

As a healthy group develops it will grow in trust and this will produce greater authenticity as you discuss truth and life. Be aware of this journey and be intentional about leading into it and deepening relationships. However, don't be unrealistic or pushy. Focus on creating the right environment so that intimacy and openness will deepen.

Levels of Intimacy:



6.2. Tell STORIES

Stories are powerful. Much of Jesus' teaching used stories to convey truth, so make good use of the stories of the Bible, stories you've heard, and your own personal stories. Practice telling stories that clearly and concisely convey the right information as well as painting the picture.

Sharing your own personal stories of experiences and struggles also creates an environment where people feel safe (and sometimes even compelled) to share their own stories. Story-telling is both an effective learning tool and an essential component to authentic community

7. DECIDING FOCUS / CURRICULUM

Acts 20:20-21

²⁰ You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. ²¹ I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

Our focus is not just on knowing the truth, but on people being disciples who progress spiritually by growing in their relationship with God and their knowledge

and application of his truth. To be effective we therefore need to determine what is most helpful to our group.

It is therefore good practice at regular intervals (e.g. when starting a new season) to think prayerfully about our group and its members and determine what areas would be good to grow in.

7.1. Group Orientation

1) Prayerfully considering your group members, where are they currently in their spiritual journey, and what are some areas they need/desire to grow in.

Member					Observations or Leadings
	Exploring	Growing	Close	Centred	
1.					
2.					
3.					
..					
..					
GROUP					

2) Overall, what are some areas of “helpful truth” that I want to prioritize in our group

3) Thinking of our priorities (IN: experiencing community, UP: Progressing spiritually, OUT: Living Missionally), which is the current priority for our group to grow in in the next few months

4) What curriculum will help us with this?

8. APPLICATION EXERCISE

Read **Matthew 14:22-36**. (*This is the story of when Jesus walks on the water*). Looking at this passage, highlight a few key truth points that stand out to you. These are some of the areas of truth that you'd be seeking to lead the group into thinking about and applying.

Note: In a real-life group you will be looking to discover more truth points along the way, however the leader and mature members of the group will also always be looking to provide 'truth-point discernment'

1. What are two **CONNECT** icebreaker questions
2. What are two **WHAT** questions which will lead into a discussion of **facts and meaning** (*'what does it say' or 'what does it mean'*).
3. What are two **SO WHAT** questions which unlock real-life related **thoughts and feelings**.
4. What are two **"NOW WHAT"** questions which encourage people to think about *'what does it mean to me and what should I do'*

9. APPENDIX 1: Tips for studying the Bible:

Observation Questions:

1. *Who is writing/speaking and to whom? Why does he say what he does (what problems were the recipients facing)?*
2. *What is the overall context? What is happening or being discussed? Where does this take place?*
3. *What are the key characters thinking and feeling? What are the responses?*
4. *What are the commands to obey?*
5. *What are the promises I can trust God to keep?*
6. *Are there any cause/effect relationship or consequences outlined?*
7. *What do I learn about God? Jesus? The Holy Spirit? The church? Fellow believers?*

Interpretation Questions:

1. *What does this mean?*
2. *What is the main truth point?*
3. *What do I think? What do I feel?*
4. *Why is it important to understand this?*
5. *What is the opposite of this truth?*
6. *How should it be applied? When should it be applied?*

Application Questions:

1. *How will this truth change my life, my workplace, my community, my family, my church, this group?*
2. *Where do I fall short? Why do I fall short? How are we doing as a group?*
3. *What will I do about it? What will I change? What will I start/stop doing this week?*
4. *What help do I need from other friends? What do I need God to do in me?*
5. *What habits, relationships, experiences, priorities do I need to establish so I can become more Christlike?*