

CELL GROUP LEADER'S GUIDE

Note: This does not have to be an exact "How To" guide for leading cell group but a helpful paper that should provide ideas, structure and a deeper understanding of how to best lead a cell group. Ichthus is at a different place and in a different context than Xenos but we think it would be unwise to not try to draw helpful principles and practical tips from their 40+ years of leading house churches.

I. Description

Xenos leaders usually approach the task of discipleship in the house church through a combination of one-on-one mentoring, and small, same-sexed study groups called "cell groups" or men's or women's study groups. Xenos cell groups are different than cell groups in other churches. In most churches, cell groups are the basic home-based group in the church. But in Xenos, the main house church is the house church, and cell groups are smaller, single-sexed groups. This pattern is similar to that used in the early Wesleyan movement, where they held societies, classes, and bands. The bands were single-gender small groups for discipleship.

Cell groups serve a combined role of friendship building, mutual support and training, or discipleship. For all these roles, the groups need to be small. Three to eight people is best, although some are getting good results with larger groups, especially when practicing team leadership. Student cells are commonly larger than adult cells.

We believe we can maximize the effectiveness of discipleship through cell groups. The members of a cell group usually disciple one another, resulting in group, or community, discipleship. This brings in dynamics not found in traditional one-on-one discipleship. Leaders and older believers can engage in one-on-one discipleship with key members of their cell groups at the same time, resulting in more complete discipleship.

II. Composition

The members should be good walking Christians or new believers who have indicated a desire to commit to the House church. In cases where a new person is not sure what he wants to do, it is usually best to point out that he is welcome to, "check out cell for awhile and see if he likes it." This leaves the question of permanent membership open, in case you need to bring the subject up again.

Some leaders run cell groups for uncommitted members, or even nonChristians. However, the results from these kind of groups have been ambivalent. We only recommend this approach in house churches where outreach or follow up are severe problems, or in some student groups. At Xenos, most of our meetings are open to nonChristians, so we feel cell groups are one time when believers can focus on deeper issues.

If you do initiate an uncommitted group, you should not later change it to a committed group unless all of the members explicitly agree to such a change from the heart. In other words, to change the rules for a group after recruiting people with a different understanding is like changing the rules in the middle of the game. An easy way to avoid this is to announce from the beginning that the low-commitment cell is going to run for 6 weeks (or whatever) and then the leaders will reevaluate. This gives the option of either continuing as before or moving to a new format. Another way to change to a higher commitment group is to announce that the new group is starting, and offering all members an opportunity to join if they accept the new conditions. Allow those who don't want more commitment to continue meeting in the existing group. Considering that committed groups are best for discipleship, while open groups are better for outreach and follow up, what is the priority in your house church?

Membership is usually same-sex because this leads to more freedom to share honestly. Mixed cells have also been tried, with mixed results. Today all Xenos cells are single-sexed. This is usually the only opportunity for men and women to meet, and many believe it leads to better same-sexed relationships in the house church.

Cell groups are usually led by either house church leaders or those who may become house church leaders soon. Today, the most common pattern for cell leadership is team leadership, although we should not view this as a requirement. If practical, team leadership enhances leadership training by giving new leaders experience in front-line leadership. Even in single-leader cell groups we recommend moving toward an assistant leader as soon as possible. People who do well leading a cell group are almost always good house church leaders.

III. Origination

To start a cell group you normally join an existing cell group and work with the existing leadership toward building a "cell within a cell." When you reach the appropriate level of composition you divide the large cell into two cells. This method of cell group replication has worked well in Xenos, leading to well over 300 operating cells. You can also start a cell group by beginning with a one-on-one meeting and adding others.

IV. Tactical Considerations

A. Logistics -- Don't overlook the importance of a good meeting place and good atmosphere for your meetings. These are especially important for new members. When people come to a group they are impacted by the over-all experience, not just by the teaching etc.

1. The meeting place

- a. The meeting place should be at a private home in most cases. An institutional setting is not conducive to good fellowship unless it is very comfortable and "homey." Business conference rooms have been used with some success, but we should realize that business people associate conference rooms with doing business, not with building deep relationships. We associate homes, on the other hand, with family and friends. Also, as the next point suggests, homes lend themselves to social time and recreation after the meeting.
- b. If possible, have the meeting at a place that will be suitable for socializing afterward. Some groups move to another location after the meeting, although this is not preferable, because you may lose people in transit and the ones most easily lost are the new members you are trying hardest to win.
- c. Consider holding cell around a table. This setting provides for maximum concentration and direct involvement by all. It may be necessary to obtain or build a large table, or to pull tables together beforehand. If you decide to hold your meeting in couches, make sure they aren't too far apart. People usually need to be facing each other and close together in order to feel engaged during a discussion. Crowding is not a bad thing in a cell group, but disengagement is a clear danger, and could cause the cell group to feel more like a Bible club than a gathering of close friends. Avoid using uncomfortable chairs.
- d. The meeting place should be air conditioned in the summer, and not too warm in the winter. Warm temperatures lead to drowsiness.
- e. Be sure to have coffee ready before the meeting. Cell members who have a coffee will likely be more attentive and less drowsy.
- f. Allow half an hour for talking and warm up before gathering the group together. Most successful groups periodically schedule activities together before the meeting like cookouts, dinner at a restaurant, or a special treat. These activities can be significant in building a sense of community in the group. Leaders should be there early to greet members as they arrive and set a positive, welcoming tone.

2. The meeting time

Cell meetings should be held at a time when members can put together 4-5 hours. For most groups in Xenos today, this means cell groups meet on weekend evenings, especially Friday nights. Weekend mornings have also been tried. If you meet on a work night, try to start your meeting no later than 7:00.

3. During the meeting

a. Go ahead with the meeting at start time, even if some are absent at first. The others will come on time when they hear that a good thing is going on. Starting late teaches members to be late.

b. Cell groups should include both instruction and interaction.

c. During periods of instruction, be sure to keep it interesting. Leadership should be well prepared for the instruction and show their excitement for the subject. To hold your members' attention and build convictions, your teaching will need to be passionate. Just because the group is small doesn't mean you don't have to be fiery, upbeat, funny, and challenging. The cell leader may need to stand periodically and walk around in order to hold attention.

d. During interactive periods, the leader needs to guide discussion while not discouraging creative sharing. Cell groups should not be held to a rigid outline. Invite interruptions. Alternate between short periods of teaching and discussion. This is called leader-guided or moderated group discussion. The usual pattern is that the leader teaches partly by lecture, or at least offers an introduction and conclusion. While you can expect some peer-to-peer interaction, most of the interaction will be from learners to the leader or the group in general. The leader offers a short summary and comment to most, or all, sharing. These summaries should crystallize what was said, and stimulate further thinking. [See an expanded coverage of this material in the class outlines for Leading Guided Discussion]

e. The leader will normally introduce "probes" or questions intended to prod members toward a particular line of thought. However, discussion is not recitation. Recitation is when the instructor gives students an opportunity to clarify content or asks questions requiring specific knowledge of study content, frequently from assigned readings (like the teacher in "The Paper Chase"). We are not suggesting such recitation is wrong or harmful, and in fact, cell group is one venue where a measured amount of recitation may be helpful. For instance, members can review findings from previous weeks which can lead to better retention. However, be aware that recitation can be intimidating to new members. Read the situation. Creative discussion focuses not on specific answers the leader wants to hear, but on questions of interpretation, opinion, and experience. The following are types of probes suggested in this author's class on guided discussion:

- Set up an apparent contradiction in your introduction, and ask the group how it might be resolved

- Ask them how a particular truth might apply either to life in general, or to specific situations you imagine

- Give them a statement from a third party (either imaginary or an authority) and ask them to react to it

- Ask how someone from x, y, or z perspective would answer a particular question (see an example in this postmodern response exercise)

- Set up a real life situation (where principles often don't apply neatly) and ask how the principle might apply in that situation. Ask for exceptions.

- Ask if what you just distilled from a text or narrative is different or the same as something else with which they are already familiar (e.g. Is this teaching about letting each person have their own conviction from Rom. 14 different in any way from relativism?)

- Devil's advocacy: challenge a position they all seem to accept axiomatically with some problems. This will help them see the weakness in their position and think the issues through more carefully.

- Discovery: What do you think this passage is really saying?

- Personal experience: Who wants to share an experience where this truth has made a difference?

- Comparing and contrasting: Asking members to compare and contrast concepts, theories, and individuals' biographies in the Bible helps to clarify the relationships within a content area. After learning the particulars in a field of knowledge, the next stage in learning is to progressively differentiate and relate the new particulars to existing particulars.

f. To enhance your discussion-leading ability, consider taking the Xenos course in "Teaching Through Guided Discussion."

g. Cell leaders should not fail to get into Scripture or related content. Sometimes cell group discussions may deteriorate into counseling sessions or arguments over peripheral issues. While we wouldn't argue that such discussions are always bad, leaders need to be able to steer the group back to biblical content. Members may report that they enjoy these discussions, but the take-home value is often not sufficient to build members up. Experience shows that groups where leaders fail to focus on Scripture and learning at least for a good part of the evening tend to lose members' interest. If members have counseling needs, they may have to wait until after the time in the Bible. In some cases, they could wait until after the group breaks up.

h. When teaching basic truths for the sake of the new members, remind the older members that they will probably want to be able to repeat the material soon in their own cell groups, and should therefore be interested for different reasons.

i. Avoid going too long on the meeting. Although cell groups can go longer than normal large meetings, set your goal at no more than an hour and a half.

4. Prayer: Corporate prayer is one of the most important opportunities in a cell group. Members often gain important experience in corporate prayer, and learn the importance of prayer from their cell groups. To enhance your prayer time consider the following points.

a. Prayer should be real and edifying. Teach the group the difference between individual prayer and group prayer. In individual prayer, we may belabor points of interest to ourselves (about my aunt's medical condition), but of little interest to others. In group prayer, Paul says "Let everything be done for edification." (That is, for edification of others. I Cor. 14:26). Teach older Christians to view cell group prayer as an opportunity to bring new Christians into the rich experience of corporate prayer.

b. Don't confuse good prayer with long prayer. Some older members may want to pray long prayers that are boring to newer members, and may even be attention-getting. In any event, such long or theological prayers are insensitive to the need of the moment and they intimidate new members. In corporate prayer, we hope to "feed off" one another and develop a dynamic spiritual interaction.

c. Teach your members to affirm one another's prayers verbally as described in I Cor. 14:16. Verbal affirmation leads to a feeling of participation which encourages prayer.

d. Be sure to focus early in your prayer time on thanksgiving and praise. Avoid excessive negativity during prayer times.

e. Many groups pray for outreach opportunities, which gives all members an opportunity to become aware of what God may be doing in the house church, and stresses the importance of outreach. Consider keeping a prayer list for outreach opportunities.

f. Answered prayers should always be pointed out to the group, with reminders that praying makes a difference.

g. Read the situation: if people are interested in praying, let them pray. But if the meeting has gone too long and people are sluggish about prayer, you may want to bring it to a close before creating a negative association in the minds of members.

5. After the meeting

a. Much of the best ministry in a cell group occurs after the meeting. Leaders should strenuously avoid leaving soon after the meeting, as this communicates either disinterest, or at least, low priority on spending time with members of the group. Only on rare occasions should leaders leave immediately, and then only with apologies. Work to build a consensus that the time after the meeting is the best part of the evening. These times serve to transform the group into a community, rather than simply a class.

b. Have drinks and/or food on hand beforehand, or have someone make a run. Know what you plan to do afterward. Avoid sitting around asking, "What shall we do?"

c. Consider adjourning to a fire, a deck, or other conversational setting with low lighting after the meeting. While going out to a movie or playing games is sometimes good, the most ideal activities are those which accommodate conversation. This is your chance to have good talks with your cell members. Youth cells may need more stimulating activities, but continue to look for opportunities for good discussions.

d. Avoid simply ending the meeting and continuing to sit around your table chatting. Unless the group moves to another area, it will seem like the meeting is lasting for 6 hours.

e. The ability to relax and talk in a humorous vein, or to share insightful thoughts about secular matters is essential during this period. Cell leaders have to balance time between making sure that no one is being ignored, and engaging one or more members in a relatively deep conversation. Hopefully others in the group spontaneously join in meeting needs during this period, but if not, they may need some one-on-one training.

C. Meeting Format

There are a number of successful formats for a cell group. Don't follow a format rigidly. Let the meeting be based on your own assessment of the need of the moment. Typically, a cell might include the following sections:

Section 1--1/2 hour general talk

Section 2--1 to 1 1/2 hours content-study-discussion

Section 3--1/4-1/2 hour sharing and prayer

Section 4--2 to 4 hours recreation

= Approximately 3-6 hours

Section 1 --

During the time people are arriving we should be trying to establish an atmosphere of warmth and getting members used to talking. Practice warm greetings that express your happiness to see members.

Section 2 --

The leader should carefully sense the endurance and interest of the group, and respond accordingly. The meeting proper should be terminated while people are still interested, not after they have been worn out. It is a mistake to go too long on the teaching and prayer, and thus leave a bad taste in the members' mouth. Never prolong a meeting when you see that the members have lost concentration. You can always finish your outline the next week.

Be patient with your members. It may take time to see them put into practice what you taught. Remember how long it took you to become consistent in these areas. On the other hand, members who seem to be putting forth no effort are candidates for admonition.

When teaching topically using lists of scripture, always demonstrate with each passage that the context justifies the use you are making of the passage. Study of the context helps to teach interpretive skills while it also aids memory. This also teaches that proof-texting is not the right way to use the Bible.

If members are advanced enough and/or motivated enough, you can suggest memory work or books to read. However, it would be a great mistake to insist on memory or reading work from people who are not yet to the place where they want to do such work. Instead, offer appropriate work for those who want it, or ask whether anyone wants to do memory work or reading.

In any case, be prepared for any suggested "assignment" to go undone. If this happens, realize that your members are not yet motivated to work in this area, and let it lie. Don't patronize your members by rebuking them for not doing homework.

We don't recommend tests or quizzes for cells unless the members of the cell directly state that they want to be tested. Tests suggest an atmosphere of competition, which works against the community feeling you want in cell.

Section 3 --

Consider praying specifically for needs in the House church and in each others' lives--carrying out an intercessory ministry (Eph. 6:18). Also, uninhibited prayer is best, verbally affirming the things said, as the Scripture suggests (I Cor.14:16), so that the members come to appreciate the prayer experience.

Try to guide the group into sharing that is personal and spiritual, but not overly self-centered. Cultivate the expectation that the prayer time will be ministered to by God directly through the Holy Spirit.

Section 4 -- Don't scrimp on time during the social period. If some of the members want to leave early, fine. It should also be possible for the others to stay. Avoid having the leader be the one calling for an early end to the social time (unless you have seen them through to 2:00 AM!).

Remember that there is a limit to the amount of "heavy" thinking and relating that most people can tolerate at one time, without becoming restless and overburdened. The thrust of the recreation period should be relaxation and enjoying each other. Any further "heaviness" should only be at the request of the members.

You, as leader should show the way into good recreation and relaxation, including all of the things normally associated with those states (humor, reminiscence, talk of the opposite sex, sports, etc.). This amounts to a demonstration of Christian liberty in the context of Christian love. As such, it carries an important message to the others.

Your basis for effective ministry is your ability to develop love relationships with your cell group. Memorable shared experiences and good conversations help build good relationships. Routine TV watching or card playing are much less suitable to this task.

As time goes on, cell group weekends are a good idea. Again, we are trying to provide for the development of unity and identity within the cell group. Be affectionate and loyal to your people. Anyone who can lead an effective cell group has most of the basic skills needed to lead a House church.

V. Members' Spiritual Condition

Good cell leaders are constantly watching and praying for their members. Leaders need to assess:

1. Whether the membership is mostly young in the Lord, equally mixed, or mostly established believers.
2. The level of commitment and the prevailing attitude. Is the group eager to meet, and excited about the things of God?
3. Signs of boredom, low level of participation (including both discussion and prayer). Notice members who don't speak and pray for insight on how to stimulate them without pressure.
4. Evidence of closeness in relationships. Are the members associating at times other than regular meetings? Do they enjoy each other? Are they concerned about each others' lives? Or are they disengaged?
5. Notice how long people tend to stay afterward. If your cell group clears out soon after the meeting this suggests low interest level in social involvement.
6. Always be ready to upgrade the composition of the group. If you have problem members, try to keep their behavior within the tolerable limits for the group. Antisocial or self-centered behavior has more impact in a smaller group than it would in a large group. Cell leaders have the authority to maintain discipline in a group, including removing members, but use it judiciously. The house church leadership team should agree with discipline of this kind.
7. Be aware of the differences between people. Use questions like those found in the paper "Ministry Evaluation" to determine what is realistic progress from each member of the group.
8. In most groups, there are one or two who stand out as likely to become leaders. These should receive additional leadership training outside of the cell. We should also ask them to help with the younger members of the group. Normally, the older members help disciple the younger members of the cell. Upcoming leaders can be asked to guest teach periodically in order to gain experience. However, I believe we should not establish a "teaching rotation" in cell groups that includes non-leaders. This seems advisable for two reasons: 1) For motivational reasons, people need to understand that they can teach regularly when they have their own cell groups. 2) Since Cell group is the main locus of discipleship in house churches, we need our best and deepest teaching at cell group.
9. Other members should learn to become effective backup workers, or service ministers. The ultimate goal of the cell leader should be to multiply balanced ministry environments that will contain all types of workers, trained and equipped to do the "work of service."

VI. Strategy

The first thing a cell group leader needs is a strategic framework or vision within which to plan. Obtaining this vision is made more difficult because for most of us, the cell group is meeting more than one need. We not only need to identify what we are trying to do, but to prioritize our goals in terms of sequence, or order of operations.

A. Things Cell groups accomplish include:

1. Winning new Christians into their membership
2. Caring for the weak members of the group
3. Teaching its members basic Christian living and worldview (grounding in the Word)
4. Providing members help and opportunity to build relationships with each other
5. Providing rudimentary counseling and guidance in Christian living as needed
6. Providing motivation and creating vision in the minds of the members for serving Christ
7. Helping each member to develop their own ministry, including, for most, winning their own disciples
8. Providing a venue where young Christians can get supervised experience serving others, as well as coaching on sharing the gospel, and responding to challenges to their faith, and other ministry opportunities
9. Training new leaders for the house church

Can you think of any other significant tasks cell groups should accomplish?

Can you see any unnecessary or expendable tasks on this list?

B. Life Cycles of Cells

As we do the types of work described above, the cell will hopefully move through a life-cycle resulting in cell multiplication. The following are imaginary levels people could be at relative to ministry, discipleship, and duplication.

As cell members move through these imaginary levels of growth, our discipleship challenge changes. Usually, we have members at various stages of growth, so our teaching has to be flexible. Hopefully, we have at least one person reaching the higher levels of growth, enabling us to plant a new cell group.

Point "X" is the moment of birth, the dividing point between assisting and training others, and actually releasing them as fully duplicated leaders in their own right. This point is the ultimate challenge for Christian workers in cell group ministry. Even after planting the new cell, time must pass to see if it succeeds. More than one attempt may be needed before it becomes clear that duplication has occurred.

Crossing Point "X" may take years of dedicated ministry.

After reaching Point X, a leader or leadership team is ready to begin again.

VII. Content

A. The following are essential areas of teaching that must be learned and practiced before a member could be considered well-grounded and ready to lead his or her own cell group. Remember, for each area, we need to see that they are actually practicing the truth, not just learning to think about it.

1. Law and Grace—the basic principles involved in drawing on the power of God for daily living.

2. Sanctification—understanding how to live in our identity in Christ and how to overcome key barriers to growth in the areas of our negative habits. A key sticking point here is learning how to initiate and develop relationships based on mature Christian love.

3. Bibliology, Hermeneutics and Bible Study Methods—Unless our disciples have a high view of Scripture, know why they hold that view, and know how to handle the Bible on their own, they cannot be trusted on their own.

4. Theology Proper—Understanding the character of God and how that applies to daily living and our attitudes is the basis for stability in Christian living.

5. Satanology—ability to wage spiritual warfare is key to survival for ones' self, as well as doing effective ministry.

6. Apologetics and Witnessing—A duplicated cell group must be able to replicate, which implies that they are good communicators, and are outward focused. Missions should be included here.

7. Ecclesiology and Ministry Theory, including Body life and discipleship—This becomes the nuts and bolts of ministry, and includes establishing a clear vision for where it's all heading. Church finance and personal financial stewardship are important pieces in this area of training. Our training should include actual formation of a successful ministry by our young members.

8. Relationships, dating, marriage, family life etc.—Our members must build successful relationships, including families if they are to serve God without hindrance over the long haul.

9. Basic Pneumatology and Christology—Understanding the ministries and gifts of the Spirit, and the person and work of Christ.

B. Ideas and Tools for teaching these areas. Xenos elders have developed a Discipleship Outline with hyperlinked resources expanding on the goals for each of these areas and ways to teach each. A shortened list appears here.

1. "Basic Christianity" and "Christian Principles I, II, III, and IV," and "Servanthood I and II" have been developed to give leaders the content and tools to teach everything on this list. If you have taken these classes and retained good notes, you should be ready to serve up interesting teachings. Likewise, a wise leader will make every effort to interest cell members in taking these classes, but the classes are never enough. Learners must also work with the concepts in the context of discussion, and must learn to use and defend biblical truth on their own. They must learn to practice principles of Christian living in real life. The cell group is perfect for this part of their training. Repetition is also key to final retention and practice of deep theological truth.

2. Consider using an expository approach to the same material. As the subjects come up in the course of book studies, you can offer short topical coverage. Seeing how systematic and practical theology comes up in the course of Bible reading helps learners retain the information, as well as learning how to integrate their Bible reading. Since the Principles classes use a topical approach to the subject matter, cell group is a good opportunity to use exposition.

C. Resources available through the Xenos web site – These papers and many others are available on the web site for free.

The Logic of Salvation: Defending Grace Biblically – a good paper on the principles of grace for new and/or possible nonbelievers.

Sanctification – The author's book Walking In Victory and an accompanying group study guide can provide months of fruitful and practical study on sanctification. The study guide is available on the web site, and the books can be purchased through the site or at the office. Man's and the Law's Part in Sanctification is a good

paper to go over in cell group as is Spiritual Growth: The Indicative and Imperative Moods, which comes from Walking in Victory. It can lead to good discussion and application. See also the books, True Spirituality by Francis Schaeffer, Principles of Spiritual Growth, by Miles Stanford, and The Normal Christian Life, and Sit Walk Stand, by Watchman Nee.

The Means of Growth: Ministry – These each come up in Walking in Victory, but there are also good freestanding outlines on the web site. Have your members look up the scriptures cited in these papers, and study the context to see how they apply. Work to build excitement about the potential for prayer, Scripture, Body life, ministry, and growth through adversity.

The Means of Growth: Prayer--Teach worship and thanksgiving, intercession, group prayer and warring with the devil. A good goal during this section would be for some of the members to pray in House church. If your group has a prayer meeting, try to get your members involved there as well.

The Means of Growth: Suffering - Prepare the people for letdowns. Teach them how to interpret their experiences. Disciples have to learn how to suffer victoriously if they are to grow and become effective servants of God.

The Means of Growth: Body Life Fellowship as a Means of Growth. Teach major passages on the body of Christ. Explain spiritual gifts, ministries and Christian love. Be sure to include

The Means of Growth: Scripture – This study focuses on the Bible's role in spiritual growth. Convincing members that they need to begin their own regular habits of Bible reading.

The Church's Mission. Establish evangelism as one of the key purposes of Christianity. Create excitement about church growth and salvation. Discussing witnessing will motivate people to do it. It is not necessary to get heavy--ordering your people to witness. Just give them the tools they will need if they try to witness. They will do the rest.

Witnessing Content. Teach the best salvation verses and suggest that the members memorize some. Go over how to invite people to a meeting. What should you say? Suggest that members prepare their own testimony and learn to give it. Teach them how to stress the personal as well as the intellectual. Be sure they can clearly and concisely explain the cross. You may want to refer to Leading House church Evangelism for material on these issues.

Evangelism Communication. Consider using Apologetics and Worldview Critiques: Communication Points or Objections to Religious Pluralism This is a study of how we should come off emotionally and subjectively when witnessing. How to show warmth. How to avoid arguments. How adapt our communication to the person's progress on the decision continuum. How to "season your words with grace", etc.

As you study witnessing, pray weekly for people who you or they have witnessed to. As they run into problems, they will be receptive to the next section.

Apologetics. Give the major areas of common objection to Christianity and the basic answers they can give. Place major stress on how to communicate those answers. In other words, don't stop with the technical answer - go on to how that technical answer can be translated into effective street-level communication. Our most important work for today's groups is The Death of Truth, which has a free group study guide. I suggest reading chapters 1-5 and 13,14 in cell group, reading around the table, and discussing as you go.

Handouts available:

Comparing Modernism, Theism and Postmodernism

A Comparison of Five Worldviews

Theistic Apologetics

Verbal Plenary Inspiration

The Canonicity Question
Principles Involved in Harmonizing the Synoptic Gospels
Ethical Problems in the Pentateuch
Secular Humanism
Identifying and Defining Sects
Responding to Islam
Authenticating Jesus Christ: The Anonymous Servant Passages
Responding to the Problem of Evil

Follow-Up. Follow up refers to the process of helping new people in house church continue their thought process as they consider the claims of Christ and whether to become committed to the house church. Practical instruction on how to welcome people and initiate friendships helps them in this area.

Discipleship. Have the group read Coleman's Master Plan of Evangelism or, better still, Waylon Moore, *Multiplying Disciples* (available from the office and study center). Create a vision in them of their own future discipleship ministry if appropriate. In the case of those who are not suited to a formal leadership role, suggest membership in a discipling team in a future cell group. Try to create hunger for the opportunity to be used by God in discipling someone.

Satanology. The emphasis of this study should be spiritual warfare in their personal lives, and in the Body. Binding in prayer, understanding satanic tactics, learning to expect attack, etc. are studied in detail. Major passages are covered. A central goal in this section is to develop a militant, alert attitude in your people (I Pet. 5:8).

Ecclesiology. Teach the NT concept of the church. The Understanding Ministry workbook was designed for group study. Show how the concepts are applied in our fellowship. Explain church polity, structure, finance, and ministry. Show application at each point.

Counseling. Simple pastoral counseling is in view here. It is not only an opportunity to teach members how to minister to others, but also how to deal with their own problems. Consider using the paper, *Love Therapy*.

Theology Proper. Study the attributes of God and discuss how each applies to Christian living.

Christology. The nature, work, and states of Christ. The members need to know the basic issues regarding Christology. Ask them how they would apply the various truths to life.

Bibliology and hermeneutics. Teach inspiration and canonicity in shortened form. Remember that there is very little practice given in Principles Classes on interpretation. To help your people learn bibliology use the following materials.

Verbal Plenary Inspiration

The Canonicity Question

Principles Involved in Harmonizing the Synoptic Gospels

Grammatical Historical Hermeneutics

Hermeneutical Systems

Inductive Bible Study

Application Restrictions

Problem Passage Interpretation Plan

Double Reference in Biblical Prophecy

Ethical Problems in the Pentateuch

Ministries of the Holy Spirit. Baptism, sealing, filling, convicting, teaching, gifting, and "grieving" should be covered.

Relationships. For building friendships, dating relationships, and marriages, our best material is found in Gary DeLashmutt and Dennis McCallum, *Spiritual Relationships that Last* which can be ordered from the web site. The free group study guide has been used with good results in cell groups.

The order of teachings given here is unimportant. A young believer could enter the cell at almost any point and benefit. Basic truths like salvation by grace are usually well taught in the other meetings, so there is no need to constantly review the same material every 3 months.

Avoid only using your cell group for early follow up. If you fail to dig into heavier content because you don't want to intimidate new people, you may end up ignoring the needs of the older Christians, and perpetuating shallowness. By covering this list in some order, you guarantee a healthy diet for all.

D. Higher levels of ministry.

By the time some members of the cell have been in the group for a year and a half to three years, they should be relatively informed on all of the subject areas mentioned above, especially if they have taken Christian Principles and Servanthood classes.

Another goal during this period is to involve the more advanced disciples in ministry efforts calculated to issue in a fruitful ministry of their own. Frequently, a good place to start is within the cell group. Let the older believers help out with the ministry needed for the young members. They should ideally focus on new members that they have personally brought into the house church. It may be necessary to spend considerable time outside of cell group coaching your disciples on how to succeed in their new ministries. This coaching would include what and how to teach, how best to motivate their people, what goals they should have, and how to handle problems that come up in the other's life.

In the context of this sort of life, (involved in basic personal Christian work done under the supervision of the cell leaders) the teaching process is ready to continue to the final level. This situation is called Point "X" in Fig. 1.

VIII. Reaching "Point X"

Consider what we hope to see in a believer who has reached Point X. Such a believer should be one who could be called "mature" (1 Cor. 2:6) or "complete in Him" (Col. 1:28). The Discipleship Outline covers these areas in much more detail. These are some of the things we would hope to see in such a one.

1. Knowledge of the Word. This area must include not only doctrine and text location knowledge, but also interpretation, handling problem passages, Bible history, Bible survey, and relevant opposing schools of interpretation.

2. Application of the Word. This includes application of the Word to others as well as one's self.

- a) Self: they have been counseled through sin areas, relational problems, temperamental weaknesses, and have developed a comprehensive Christian world view.

b) Others: They must have learned to think Biblically about other's lives. They must have learned judgment in applying the Word to others (i.e. they must be able to prioritize goals, knowing what to confront, and what to ignore).

c) Methods: They have learned sound ministry methods along with the reasons for using those methods.

d) Discernment: They must learn discernment and tact-- the ability to "read" the response of another.

3. Relational life. Mature disciples must successfully build relational lives that will be a basis for stable service for years to come. In many cases, this involves building a solid marriage, and it always means stable and deep peer relationships.

Attaining the above goals will probably involve two to five years or more of healthy growth. As a cell group leader, you must agonize over how you can help impart these qualities to your members. Review the areas, and ask God how you can supply them the tools needed to facilitate God instilling each quality. Obviously, we can only do our part. God has to move people to feed themselves in addition to what we offer as leaders. But we should do the best we can. Draw up a chart or extended outline, listing each quality, and your idea for transmission strategy in each case.

IX. Planting the New Cell Group

Be sure to work well ahead of time with your fellow leaders in the house church when planning the new cell group plant. Your other house church leaders must agree on who the leaders of the new group will be, and on the membership of both groups. How you plant your cell bears directly on how the house church will later be planted. These are legitimate concerns for the entire house church, and group discernment should bear out any impressions you already have. Read the paper, Leading House church Growth for ideas on how to work with your fellow leaders in this area of planning. Consider the following when planting:

1. If you are planting with a leadership team, rather than individual leadership, try to combine two leaders whose gifts and weakness tend to offset each other.
2. Each new cell group should have possible future leaders, as well as those with outreach potential. In other words, the cell should have both high end and low end potential.
3. Try to have a range of personality types and gifting in the new cell as well as the old. Each cell group should be a balanced ministry environment.
4. Normally, there should be lines of influence or discipleship that make the new cell plant more or less automatic for all but one or two.
5. Student groups that have ministry houses should align their ministry houses with their cell groups.
6. A group of fewer than five members risks having weeks when one or two fail to show up, and the group feels depressed about having only two or three present. Five or more members is best for creating a good critical mass for the group, although this is not always necessary.

Building and planting a cell group is one of the most difficult and rewarding ministries a person can have. When we do this work well, we have built a solid foundation for a new house church. We have also built quality into the house church for years to come. Our best leaders can build and plant cell groups every two to three years, but even four, five, or six years would not be out of the question for accomplishing a ministry of this scope and difficulty.