



CODE BLUE

TRAINING FOR LOCAL LEADERS

MODULE SIX

SMALL GROUPS

Session 1 - Discipleship Basics
Session 2 - Small Group Essentials
Session 3 - Small Group Experience



LEADER'S MANUAL

The Salvation Army

Australia Territory



SMALL GROUPS

SESSION 2: SMALL GROUP ESSENTIALS

AIM:

The aim of this module is take a microscope to a small group and discover some of the practical – and more difficult - elements of growing healthy groups

Topics to be covered include: setting up new groups, dividing groups, managing group dynamics and choosing group material.

Parts of this material have been adapted from Backpack: Small Group Discipleship, produced by the Territorial Corps Programme Department.

TIME NEEDED:

One and a half hours

MATERIALS NEEDED:


Bibles, pens, multi-media projector, whiteboard and markers.

NAVIGATING THE SESSION:

Text in **blue** is for your information. It is also directing you to do something.

Text in **red** is for you to “read out” or “answers” for participants to fill in.

Text in **black** also appears in the participants’ notes and can be followed as you read aloud.

This symbol  indicates a slide is available to display via multimedia.

During this session there will be times when you may need to divide into smaller groups for discussion.

INTRODUCTION (5 MINUTES)

We have spent time last session discovering the ‘whys’ of small groups. Now we are looking to the ‘hows’.

Ask the group to share some of the problems, struggles they have had in small groups – either as leader or participant.

Summarise some of these on a whiteboard.

PART ONE: NEW GROUPS (20 MINUTES)

SETTING UP A NEW GROUP

Discuss in groups of 3 or 4 the following areas. Use your own experience to reflect upon some of the issues raised. You may have been part of a group where time limits were not adhered to, where people were at different levels of faith development or where there was lots of bible study but not much personal discussion.

Come back and summarise the discussions in ten minutes.



Things to consider when beginning a small group

- Is it important to others to start and finish on time?
- Is the room big enough?
- What is the setting? (Informal – formal)
- Do we jump straight into the study or do we relax and chat first?
- How can different personalities and levels of spiritual development be catered to?
- How many people should the group have?
- How many days/weeks is the group intended to continue?
- What is the 'policy' on new members?

Aims for the small group leader

- To develop your personal relationship with each group member.
- To see growth in each member.
- To identify potential leaders and to coach those people.
- To pastorally care for and reach out to each member.
- To set a shared vision for the group that include elements of WORSHIP, DISCIPLESHIP, FELLOWSHIP, MISSION & MINISTRY

The small group agreement

As a leader of a group, there is a sure-fire way of making sure the group stays on track. Basically, it involves the group making the group 'rules' and committing to them. This is sometimes called the group 'covenant'. Take into consideration the following when making your small group agreement:

TIME: We agree to start at _____ and finish at _____

LOCATION: We will meet at _____ house (or maybe rotate locations)

FOOD: We will leave all our eating and drinking until after the study
OR
When everyone arrives, they can make their own drink and we will share food together as we study
OR
Food will be provided by the host/everyone/on a roster system

CONFIDENTIALITY: We agree to honour what we share in confidence, knowing that building trust together can only strengthen our small group community.

CHILDREN: We want our group to be an environment where we can bring our children
OR
We agree to find alternative arrangements for our children
OR
We will rotate the care of our children each week to another group member, who will watch the children in another room/part of the house/at the corps.



DIVIDING GROUPS

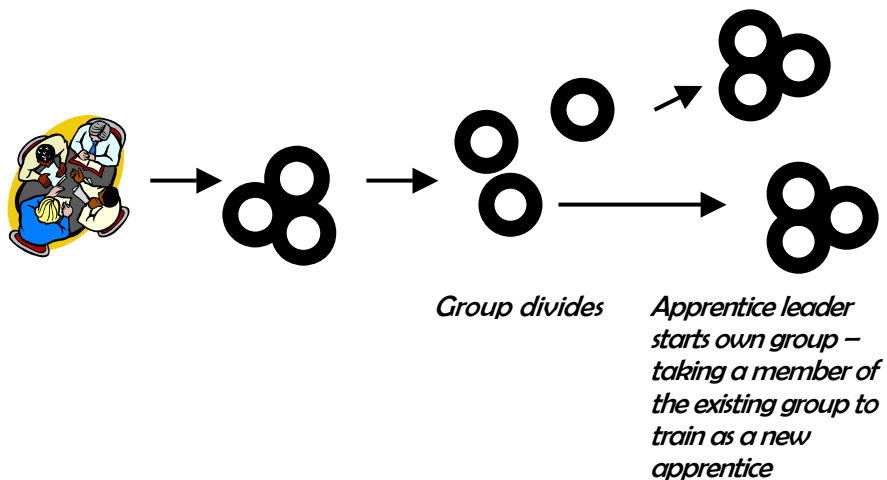


A small group should not stay together forever. It works like a cell (see picture); it grows and divides. Here are some suggestions on how to do this.

- Evaluate the progress of the group at the end of each 6 months or year.
- Discuss as a group your plans for the following year.
- If the group divides assign the apprentice to the 'new' group. Let the apprentice take someone with him to the new group who will be trained as a new apprentice
- Add new people to existing groups; don't put them all in the same group together (unless you are starting a brand new group).
- A downfall of many small groups is that they stay together for too long, eventually becoming a clique.

Leader's Note:

This is only ONE way of dividing a group. There are other ways where every member starts their own group...now there is a CHALLENGE!



PART TWO: PRICKLY ISSUES (30 MINUTES)



PEOPLE PROBLEMS

People, not programmes are the greatest challenge in ministry. In a small group, issues you have with people (as a leader) and amongst others in the group can be greatly magnified.

For example, people who are very quiet can often be almost impossible to get talking in a small group. And people who are outspoken can become a threat to others in a small group. In short, what is rewarding in a group can also be the greatest challenge.

So how do we deal with it?

Talkers

You may have a room full of talkers – or one or two who dominate the conversation. What to do?

- Have the leader sit beside talkative members as it makes it more difficult to attract the leaders attention or to 'bounce off' their comments.
- If one person continues to dominate the conversation, relate back to something they have said (to still include them) and invite others to share their opinion
- If this is still a problem, ask quieter people specific questions by name



Silent people

The best way to deal with silent people is to sit opposite, not next to them. That way, you can encourage them to speak via your eye contact. Also, if you see them about to speak, but are too slow off the mark you can pick up on it. When there is a break in conversation you can say, 'Jane, you were about to make a comment? Would you like to share it now?' or something similar.

Conflict

Healthy discussion – even debate – is good in a group. It is when that debate turns to personal attack, gossip or put down that the group can fall into trouble.

If the conflict is happening right there and then in the group, it's better to deal with it there. Here are a few suggestions to deal with a conversation that may get a little 'hot under the collar':

- Use empathetic statements: "I understand that it's pretty difficult to agree sometimes, but..."
- Use fogging statements. Fogging is when you agree with the truth in a statement. It diffuses the anger: Someone says, "This group is just turning into a gossip session!" You say, "You could be right". Then you proceed to discuss the problem. Try to encourage group members to learn to use these statements with one another too.
- Use direct expression of feeling. That is, when something needs to be addressed or confronted, state how you are feeling. E.g. "The way we are speaking to each other here is making me sad – this is not how we agreed to operate". This is a good time to review your group agreement.

Important point:

The dynamics of the group will be set within the first two meetings of the group unless you work to change them. That means, if some people remain silent on the first two meetings, it will continue that way until you challenge it.

LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS

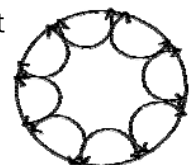
To demonstrate how the leader operates the group, have the group now leave their desks and stand or sit in a circle.

There are basically three ways the group can operate. The diagrams will also help:

LAISSEZ-FAIRE:

Firstly, the leader just lets the group 'run itself'. In the end, people just start talking amongst themselves. What starts out as the leader not wanting to be too authoritarian, turns into an uncontrolled situation.

(Open the group with a question, and then 'let' the conversation degenerate until you have lost virtual control of the group)

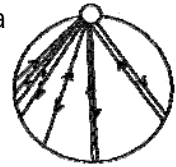




AUTHORITARIAN:

The leader asks questions to members and they answer. It's more like a classroom situation. Often, a situation arises where the leader is having one-on-one personal conversations in front of the group. The problem is the group members aren't communicating with each other; they are doing all their communicating through the leader.

(Ask members of the group direct questions, allowing no interjection from others)



ENABLING:

We are aiming for this type of group. Here, the leader opens the discussion, but it then flows freely between the members. Members of the group can question, agree with or challenge one another in a safe, productive environment.

(Open the discussion and allow others to join in, encouraging them until there is a healthy conversation flowing)




CONTENT PROBLEMS

When the content of what the group is studying becomes tiresome or heavy going, it is usually one of two problems:

1. The leader is not prepared OR
2. The material is not appropriate (more on this in a moment)

It is VITAL that the leader has read over, sifted through and prepared some of their own ideas regarding a particular lesson.

Even though this may seem obvious, keep in mind the following things when you are preparing material: 

- Try and work out how much material/content will fit into the time you have agreed to spend together
- Take opening discussion, prayer and worship and tea/coffee time into consideration
- Don't be afraid to tell the group you don't know the answer to a question. If in doubt, do some research. The Internet is particularly good to find differing 'takes' on a particular issue.
- If material is from a prepared source (like a bible study book) don't feel obliged to use all the material – pick and choose what will work for you.
- Use a variety of media to engage the group – movies, music, books and magazines.

PART THREE: CHOOSING MATERIAL (20 MINUTES)

Sometimes when a group is functioning healthily, the content is not as important. But for the most part, the key role in your leadership – especially when starting a new group is to answer the question “what shall we study?”

Leader's Note:

You might like to have some materials on display in the back of the room.

Your divisional headquarters may carry a variety of materials in their resource library. Alternatively, you could organize a bookstall from a local Christian bookshop (e.g. Koorong). If you opt to do this, allow some 'browsing time' now or at the end of the day.



Material is available for

- Teenagers
- Young adults
- Adults
- Couples
- Singles
- Seniors

It takes a little research and time to find material. Don't think 'there is nothing available'. Realistically, there is more material on the market now that you would ever need to cover in a group.

Some points to consider when selecting material

Ask yourself

- Is what we are teaching the same as what needs to be learnt?
- What method will be most appropriate for this age group?
- (Books, video, CD-Rom, interactive learning, games, Bible study etc.)
- Is the material taking the group on a learning 'journey'?

A Model for Curriculum

There is more to choosing material than simply going into the bookstore and picking out what looks good. You need to be aware of what your outcome should be.

In planning curriculum with your Corps Officer or other leaders, ask:

- At the end of our learning together, what do I expect the participants to UNDERSTAND?

This is called KNOWLEDGE.

Have participants write some examples of this in their manuals.

- At the end of our learning together, what do I expect the participants to BE?

This is called CHARACTER.

Have participants write some examples of this in their manuals.

- At the end of our learning together, what do I expect the participants to DO?

This is called WORKS.

Have participants write some examples of this in their manuals.



PART FOUR: MY SMALL GROUP ACTION PLAN (15 MINUTES)

As a closing activity, ask the participants to begin to devise an action plan for their existing or proposed small group. They can work with other group members, or alone.

LOGISTICS

Small group leader	_____	
Small group day/time	_____	
Small group location	_____	
Small group members	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

VISION

The purpose of our small group is to...

Key elements of our small group (go back to Acts 2 exercise)...

Name of someone I can raise as an apprentice leader ...

Names of people I can invite to the group...

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



RESOURCES

The Bookstall or resource display previously suggested could be useful in assisting at this point. Alternatively, some discussion of helpful resources could suffice.

Topics we can study...

Titles of books/courses I need to look into...

Further training I need to attend/people I need to talk to....
