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DEVELOPING AND LAUNCHING STRATEGIC OFF-CAMPUS
COMMUNITY GROUPS AT HIGHLAND PARK BAPTIST
CHURCH, MUSCLE SHOALS, ALABAMA

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DEVELOPING AND LAUNCHING STRATEGIC OFF-CAMPUS
COMMUNITY GROUPS AT HIGHLAND PARK BAPTIST
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To Kara,
my lovely wife and friend;
to Hailey and Hannah,
my little sweethearts;
and to Highland Park Baptist Church,
my family of faith.

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PREFACE

The completion of this project would not have been possible without the love, encouragement, and investment of many people. First and foremost, I want to thank the Lord Jesus for allowing me to be a part of this educational experience. I have thoroughly enjoyed my years at Southern Seminary, and the things the Lord has taught me have been life changing. Second, I want to thank my loving and very patient wife, Kara. She has stood by my side and been my cheerleader for over ten years. She is a wonderful wife, a great mother, and a champion for Christ. Third, I want to express deep appreciation to our two daughters, who do not yet realize how much they have had to sacrifice in order for me to pursue this goal of earning a doctoral degree. Fourth, I want to thank the precious church family of Highland Park Baptist Church. They have been so giving and thoughtful throughout this process. I am blessed to serve such an amazing group of people. Fifth, I want to extend my profound gratitude for Sally Anne Gist. She has spent hours serving as my editor. I cannot begin to convey how much she has meant to me during this journey. And lastly, I want to express my deep gratitude for the faculty of Southern Seminary. They have invested immensely in me through their instruction and friendship.

The D.Min. ride has been an enjoyable journey for me, and I pray that my project will be both a blessing and encouragement to small group leaders and small group pastors. Ultimately, I pray that it brings much glory to God and continues to make famous the name of Jesus.

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Muscle Shoals, Alabama
December 2014

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop and launch strategic off-campus community groups at Highland Park Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals, Alabama.

Goals

This project had four goals. The first goal was to provide a biblical framework for off-campus community groups. Young adult off-campus community group leaders expanded their biblical knowledge and discovered principles related to off-campus community group ministry through leadership training. The training took place through the duration of the project in the form of teaching sessions and mentoring conversations. At the beginning of the project, the off-campus community group leaders were asked to complete a pre-project questionnaire, which tested their knowledge of off-campus community group ministry. The same questionnaire was given to the leaders at the end of the project. A t-test for dependent samples was used to determine whether there is a positive statistical difference between the pre-project and post-project questionnaires. This goal was regarded as unsuccessful when the t-test proved there was not a positive statistical difference achieved between the two questionnaires.

The second goal was to develop a curriculum to be used in preparing young adult off-campus community group leaders. The curriculum was developed by adapting Allan Taylor's training manual, *A Passion for Teaching*, to fit the community group

ministry of Highland Park.¹ This goal was measured by a rubric and evaluated by the pastoral staff of the church. This goal needed ninety percent of the indicators on the rubric to be at the “sufficient” or above levels to be deemed successful. Ninety-one percent of the indicators were at the “sufficient” or above levels. Thus, the goal was successfully accomplished.

The third goal was to train and equip the young adult leaders launching the off-campus community groups. This goal was achieved in part by spending four weeks of the project in training with the leaders of the off-campus groups. During the remainder of the project, as the Life Transformation Pastor and mentor, I corresponded weekly with each leader. A questionnaire, examining leadership skills, measured the goal. It was given at both the beginning of the training sessions and again at the end of the project. This goal was successfully accomplished when a t-test proved there was a positive statistical difference gained from a comparison of the two surveys.

The fourth goal was to launch five young adult off-campus community groups. Attendance was recorded and tracked weekly. This goal was not entirely successful because only two community groups were launched.

Context

Highland Park Baptist Church (HPBC) has traditionally been a Sunday school church. Members and attenders are encouraged to join a class that best fits their needs. HPBC offers Sunday school classes according to age, gender, and life situation. Due in part to the variety of classes offered, Sunday school attendance is strong. During the 2011-2012 church year, Sunday school attendance averaged 83% of the worship attendance.² Even though attendance is good now, it is essential that the church continue

¹Allan Taylor, *A Passion for Teaching* (Woodstock, GA: Ember to Blaze Ministries, 2010).

²Highland Park Baptist Church, "2011-2012 Annual Church Profile" (profile compiled by Highland Park Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals, AL, 2012).

to strive to get smaller even as it grows larger.³

Due to increasing numerical growth and a need for more worship space, the church is currently in the process of relocating to a new campus. The relocation will result in HPBC encompassing a dual approach to small group ministry. Traditional Sunday school classes or small groups will continue to be offered for all ages at the new campus. At the same time, new off-campus small groups will be offered on days other than Sunday throughout the week. The transition will be a major change in methodology for the church, and seasons of change can often be difficult.⁴ This process, therefore, began in the young adult classes due to their flexibility and generational desire for meaningful relationships and a sense of community.⁵ Another reason the transition commenced within the young adult ministry is due largely to the fact that much of the growth, which HPBC is currently experiencing, stems from those less than thirty-five years of age. It is easier to launch new small groups with newer members than to transition older and established members and classes to an off-campus venue.

The transition from a pure Sunday school methodology to a hybrid model necessitated a rebranding of what is currently referred to as "Sunday school" at Highland Park Baptist Church. The new branding is "community groups." Therefore, all existing and future Sunday school classes, as well as future off-campus small groups, are referred to as community groups. HPBC will have on-campus community groups that gather

³William R. Hoyt, *Effectiveness by the Numbers: Counting What Counts in the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 71.

⁴Thom S. Rainer and Chuck Lawless, *Eating the Elephant: Leading the Established Church to Growth*, rev. ed (Louisville: Pinnacle Publishers, 2003), 159-60.

⁵Thom S. Rainer and Jess W. Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2011), 104-7. Based on their research of the millennial generation, the Rainers share how important relationships are to this largest demographic of the American population. Respondents were asked the open-ended question, "What is really important in your life?" "Family" was the number one response, noted by 61 percent of the millennials. "Friends" was the second most common answer at 25 percent. The Rainers also share that this generation of young adults is flexible in their attempt to remain connected with others. They are accustomed to using the Internet as a vehicle of connectedness. Based upon this research, it is apparent that the development of meaningful relationships is deeply important to millennials, and they are willing to adapt in order to be in relationship with others.

together on Sunday mornings, as well as off-campus community groups that gather at various times throughout the week in different locations.

The reasoning behind the adoption of the community group branding comes from the biblical concept of togetherness, or community. All throughout Scripture, God's people are called, commanded, and encouraged to live together, to live in community with one another.⁶ Unfortunately, community is not always experienced in the church as God intended. In his book *Community: Taking Your Small Group Off Life Support*, Brad House writes,

Sadly, community within the church today is hemorrhaging. Giving in to the pressures of our culture to do more and fill every gap with entertainment has pushed community to the margins. We do not have time to invest in people and relationships. Our attention spans have dwindled to two-minute sound bites on YouTube. We can only invest 140 characters in our relationships. The answer to such social fragmentation can be found in small groups.⁷

Community is not a new concept at Highland Park. It is a biblical concept that is taken seriously, and it is one of the four core values of the church. Authentic Community, as it is labeled at HPBC, is described as "connecting people to create empowering relationships that culminate in fellowship and service."⁸ The Sunday school ministry is set up in such a way that authentic community should be experienced. Time is allotted for fellowship, evangelism, teaching, and ministry. These four segments work together to create a sense of community.

Since becoming the Life Transformation Pastor, I have consistently taught the Sunday school leaders to implement the three tasks of Sunday school that Allan Taylor introduces in his book *The Six Core Values of Sunday School*. These three tasks are (1)

⁶Gen 1:28; 2:18; 21-25; 12:1-3; Exod 19:6; John 13:35; 15:12; 15:17; Rom 9:25-26; 12:5; 12:12-16; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 13:11-12; Eph 4:25; 1 Thess 4:9; Heb 3:13; 10:24-25; 1 Pet 2:9-10; 4:8-10; 1 John 1:7.

⁷Brad House, *Community: Taking Your Small Group Off Life Support* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 18.

⁸"Core Values," Highland Park Baptist Church, <http://hpbaptist.com/core-values/> (accessed November 14, 2013).

reach people for Christ and church membership, (2) teach people God's Word, and (3) minister to people's needs.⁹ The three tasks, if properly put into operation, produce and maintain balance within the small group. The emphasis is not solely on the exposition of the biblical text. Likewise, the emphasis is not placed only on the ministry needs of those in the small group. Instead, the three tasks allow time for the teaching of God's Word, soul care, and the often-neglected evangelistic responsibility of the group. All community groups will continue to be encouraged to employ the three tasks of Sunday school.

The successful implementation of the off-campus model into the small group ministry of HPBC rests largely upon the recruitment and training process of future leaders. Leadership training has been an area of weakness in recent years. Currently, there is not a solid and proven leadership development process in place. The enlistment of new community group leaders usually consists of existing leaders working with the Life Transformation Pastor to identify potential leaders out of their respective community groups. Once a potential leader has been identified, a lunch appointment or a meeting is scheduled with the person to discuss the Lord's calling on his or her life and the responsibilities of being a community group leader. After the initial meeting, both parties take one to two weeks to pray over the situation, asking for guidance and clarity. Then, a follow up meeting is scheduled to discuss what the Lord has revealed. If the person is a good candidate for leadership, a copy of Allan Taylor's book *The Six Core Values of Sunday School* is given to the prospective leader. This book encompasses the small group philosophy HPBC has adopted. The three tasks that Taylor outlines in the book are shared, allowing time for questions and discussion of the tasks. Next, the logistics of how the community group is set up are covered. If the new leader is birthing a group from an existing group, then a meeting with the leader of the community group and the

⁹Allan Taylor, *The Six Core Values of Sunday School: A Philosophical, Practical, & Passionate Approach to Sunday School* (Woodstock, GA: Allan Taylor, 2003), 16.

new leader is scheduled to discuss the best way to birth the new group out of an existing community group. Finally, a date to launch or birth the new community group is chosen. This particular date is a day of celebration for both the community group birthing the new group and the new community group being launched.

A process for starting new groups is in place, but there needs to be more effective training for new community group leaders. The current training does not adequately prepare a new leader to bear the responsibility of leading and caring for the people in the community group; it forces the leader to rely on effort rather than skill. As Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson point out, "Training helps us do what we cannot accomplish through sheer effort. No matter how hard a well-intentioned person tries, without training he or she will not be successful at any endeavor."¹⁰ Therefore, the lack of quality leader training necessitates an evaluation of the process and corrections made in order that new leaders receive the proper training as part of their preparation to start new community groups.

Rationale

Nearly seventy thousand people live within a fifteen-minute drive of Highland Park Baptist Church,¹¹ and two-thirds of those are outside of a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.¹² The Scriptures declare they are "dead in their trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1).¹³ They are dead to God and the life God would have for them. God created all of

¹⁰Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 135.

¹¹Jeffrey Farmer, "ESRI: Census 2010 Summary Profile," Center for Missional Research. <http://mesabao93.esri.com/BAO93/previousorder.map?id=NTQ4NTczLWFjdGlvbjlwZGY=> (accessed May 16, 2013).

¹²"Mission Site: Top Unreached Locations," Intercultural Institute for Contextual Ministry, <http://downloads.iicm.net/ALSBOM/ALSBOM-ms-ColbertLauderdale-01033020701.pdf> (accessed November 29, 2012).

¹³Unless otherwise noted, all quotations of Scripture are from The New American Standard Bible.

humanity to exist and be in relationship with him and one another (Col 1:16). He never intended for man to live in isolation. As Brad House states, "Isolation is our response to sin."¹⁴ God's response to humanity's sin is to bring men and women back into community with himself and others through the work Christ completed on the cross.

God's design is for humankind to be in community. To be in community with Christ and his church is to be in relationship with Christ. The purpose of this project was to strategically establish off-campus community groups within the neighborhoods housing the thousands of young adults living outside the community for which God created them. Consequently, there was a need for someone to go to them with the gospel and introduce them to the community of faith. One cannot expect the unchurched to come to HPBC to find what their souls desperately need. Instead, the members of HPBC must strategically and intentionally go to the unchurched as ambassadors of Jesus. As Brad House states, "You cannot build a ministry that requires the world to come to it and call it incarnational. We have to go."¹⁵

Establishing strategic off-campus community groups within Muscle Shoals and the surrounding cities enabled HPBC to reach more people with the Word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ than the church was currently reaching. As previously stated, Highland Park has been a traditional Sunday school church, and it has been a successful one. As the culture of Northwest Alabama and the situation of HPBC change, however, it was necessary for the church to change its methodology in order to better position itself to continue making disciples.

As community groups were launched in neighborhoods, "gospel density," as Brad House describes it, was increased throughout the area.¹⁶ The people were no longer

¹⁴House, *Community*, 42.

¹⁵Ibid., 106.

¹⁶Ibid., 107. House describes gospel density as saturating the city with the gospel. It is concentrating the gospel in places where the people are through small groups.

required to come to a building with which they are not familiar and interact with people they do not know in order to be under the teaching of God's Word and among the fellowship offered by God's people. By placing community groups in neighborhoods, those who attended already had some commonalities. Certain barriers that might hinder the unchurched from attending a community group on the church's campus were lessened, if not removed altogether. Thus, off-campus community groups helped to increase Highland Park's market share of northwest Alabama's population.¹⁷ They helped enable the church to better fulfill the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20).

There are four reasons why this project was both important and needed. First, it addressed the need to reach the overwhelming majority of the people in northwest Alabama who are unchurched and outside the community of faith. Second, it provided a tangible way to reach the unchurched where they live. Third, the project assisted in moving HPBC away from a “come and see” mentality to a more biblical “go and tell.” And fourth, it offered a solution to the lack of quality leadership development opportunities for community group leaders. Thus, it prepared leaders for ministry.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

It was important for everyone participating in the project to possess the same understanding of the words that were used. In order to ensure clarity the following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project.

Community. Brad House, in his book *Community: Taking Your Small Group Off Life Support*, uses *community* as a term expressing the oneness that resonates from having been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and to other individuals.¹⁸

Community group. Brad House defines *community group* as "the scattered

¹⁷Hoyt, *Effectiveness by the Numbers*, 27. Hoyt describes market share as a church's breadth of influence. This influence can be calculated by comparing a church's attendance to the population of the church's geographic parish area.

¹⁸House, *Community*, 33.

church grouping that may be known more commonly as *small group*."¹⁹ Therefore, a *community group* is a small group of Christ-followers who "focus on individual and group health and balance"²⁰ by seeking to live out the three tasks of reaching people, teaching people, and ministering to people. *Community group* is also the branding of both the on-campus and off-campus small groups of Highland Park Baptist Church.

Unchurched. This term followed a definition modified from Thom Rainer's use of it in *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*. The *unchurched* was defined as individuals who have not attended church, except sporadically, for several years.²¹

Within this project there were three limitations. The first limitation was the time allotted for the project. The project was limited to fifteen weeks. Therefore, all the teaching, equipping, and implementing of the project took place within the fifteen-week time frame dedicated to the project. Due to the brief time allotted to the project, it was difficult to completely assess and understand how successful the establishment of off-campus community groups was in helping HPBC fulfill the task of making disciples.

The second limitation concerned the effectiveness of the leadership training. The success of the training was limited to the consistency of attendance by the community group leaders. In order to lessen the impact of this limitation, each week's lesson was emailed to the community group leaders, and a follow-up phone call was made to all leaders to ensure they received and read the lesson.

The third limitation involved the locations of the community groups launched. The off-campus community groups met in the homes of their respective leaders. It could have been that the location of one group was inevitably more conducive and productive than the other off-campus group. Perhaps one of the groups met in a neighborhood with

¹⁹House, *Community*, 21.

²⁰Steve Gladen, *Small Groups with Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 27.

²¹Thom S. Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 19.

a higher population of unchurched people than the other. Such a neighborhood might have had more potential of reaching people from within the area and thus growing than a group meeting in a neighborhood with a high concentration of people who attend a church other than HPBC. This factor limited the ability to concretely compare the off-campus groups to one another.

Two delimitations were placed on the project. The first delimitation was the number of community groups involved in the project. The project sought to launch five off-campus community groups.

The second delimitation was the age group of the community groups to be launched. For the purpose of the project, off-campus community groups began with the young adult ministry of HPBC. The project involved those in their twenties and thirties.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this project included one pre-project questionnaire, one pre-series questionnaire, one post-project questionnaire, one post-series questionnaire, an evaluation rubric, and an attendance spreadsheet.²² Four goals determined the effectiveness of the project. The first goal of this project was to provide a biblical framework for off-campus community groups. During the first week of the project, a pre-project questionnaire was distributed to the young adult leaders launching the off-campus community groups.²³ Each leader used a four-digit code of his or her choosing for identification on the questionnaire.

The pre-project questionnaire tested the young adult leaders regarding their knowledge of off-campus community group ministry. It included questions concerning the reasons for off-campus groups, relevant biblical passages, and principles related to

²²All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

²³See appendix 1.

off-campus ministry. It was completed and turned in during the first week. An identical post-project survey was distributed during the final week of the project in order to measure individual growth during the project. A t-test for dependent samples compared the means from each group of scores and focused on the differences of the scores. This project only evaluated one group of subjects and did so twice. Therefore, a t-test for dependent samples was the appropriate statistical evaluation tool.²⁴ This goal was regarded as unsuccessful because the t-test proved there was not a positive statistical difference achieved from a comparison of the two questionnaires.

The second goal was to create a four-part leadership development curriculum during Weeks 1-4.²⁵ It consisted of four forty-five minute sessions covering such topics as the biblical foundation for community groups, the three tasks of community groups, the leadership structure of community groups, and the ministry context of community groups. The curriculum was submitted to the pastoral staff of Highland Park Baptist Church for approval prior to the beginning of the training sessions. This goal was measured by a rubric used by the pastoral staff to evaluate the material.²⁶ The rubric guided in evaluating the curriculum primarily based upon its biblical fidelity as well as its clarity, thoroughness, and applicability. The indicators on the rubric scoring less than “sufficient” were modified using feedback given by the pastoral staff and resubmitted for approval. This process continued until at least ninety percent of the indicators were scored at “sufficient” or above, at which time the second goal was considered achieved.

The third goal was to train and equip the young adult leaders launching the off-campus community groups, using the four-part teaching curriculum. The training sessions took place during Weeks 5-8. They began with prayer, followed by a forty-five

²⁴Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 191.

²⁵See appendix 5.

²⁶See appendix 2.

minute lesson, and ended with discussion. After the four weeks of training were completed, I corresponded weekly with each leader as a mentor and coach.

During the fifth week of the project, a pre-series questionnaire on leadership skills was distributed to the young adult leaders.²⁷ Each leader identified himself or herself on the questionnaire using the same four-digit code as used on the first survey. It measured the leaders' leadership skills and abilities. The questionnaire included questions concerning effectiveness in organization, teaching, and evangelism. An identical post-series survey was distributed during the final week of the project in order to measure individual growth during the project. This goal was regarded as successful after the t-test proved there was a positive statistical difference between the two questionnaires.

The fourth goal was to launch five young adult off-campus community groups. For various reasons, as described in chapter 4, only two groups were launched. The two off-campus groups began in Week 9 of the project, following the four weeks of leadership training. Each leader hosted a community group in his or her home, so the leaders' surrounding neighborhoods served as the primary mission field for each group. The off-campus community groups each started with a core group of 6 to 8 members. During the six weeks they met (Weeks 9-14), the groups strategically engaged the unchurched within their mission field. Attendance was recorded and tracked weekly. At the end of the project (Week 15), the attendance records for each community group was calculated and growth trends were evaluated, using an attendance spreadsheet.²⁸ This goal was not fully accomplished because only two of the five young adult off-campus community groups were launched.

²⁷See appendix 3.

²⁸See appendix 4.

CHAPTER 2

A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR OFF-CAMPUS COMMUNITY GROUPS

Community is an intriguing biblical concept progressively revealed in Scripture. Glimmers of it are seen early in the Old Testament as God creates humanity and the family unit, and calls out a people to himself. Its full expression is disclosed through the epistles of the New Testament as Scripture defines what biblical community had been pointing toward throughout salvation history. The apostle Paul expounds the purpose of community in Ephesians 2:19-22:

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

The Bible declares God's activity as that of bringing lost humanity into community with himself and with other followers of Christ. Christian community then is a unified body of individuals who are one together through Jesus Christ as the Bible depicts in Acts 2:44-47:

And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

In this passage the writer describes the early New Testament church as being “together” and having “all things in common.” They continued in “one mind” in the temple and enjoyed spending time with one another. Without a full understanding of the theology behind biblical community this practice of the early church may seem eccentric.

The reason is that too often Christians approach life as individuals rather than as a body of Christ followers.¹ The reality is that Jesus Christ has made the church one body, one community of faith that is being built together.

This chapter endeavors to establish a biblical and theological basis for off-campus community groups by examining the Bible's depiction of community. Scripture portrays the doctrine of community in several different ways. Community is seen in the unity found within the Godhead. Community is evident in the creation of humankind. Community is observed in the call and establishment of Abram and Israel, and it is witnessed in Christ's redemptive work upon the cross as he reconciles humankind back to God the Father and to one another. And finally, community is evident in the early church as they are of one mind, working together to spread the gospel message.

Community in the Godhead

The foundation of community is God himself. Unfortunately, some dismiss the doctrine of community because they do not understand the significance of it to the Christian life. In response to such a notion, C. N. Kraus, in his book *The Authentic Witness*, wisely states, "The most conspicuous weakness of evangelical Protestant theology has been its lack of understanding and witness to authentic community as the fulfillment of the believer's personal relation to God."²

Community is an important doctrine simply because it traces its origins directly back to God. The essence of community finds its roots deep in biblical and theological soil. Without God there would be no community. It is, as Bill Donahue and

¹Brad House, *Community: Taking Your Small Group Off Life Support* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 18. House argues that community is hemorrhaging in the church because people do not take the time to invest in relationships. They approach life as individuals rather than as a member of a community.

²C. N. Kraus, *The Authentic Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 109.

Russ Robinson say, “an eternal reality that is intrinsic to the being of God.”³

Some people wrongly equate community with small groups and claim that the act of instituting small groups is the biblical model for community. There is, however, a difference between small groups and community. Obviously, small groups are used as a methodological approach to community in Scripture, yet the methodology of grouping a few people together for a purpose does not guarantee community in the biblical sense. This reality can be illustrated by observing a boat. Boats were used in Scripture for various purposes. Both fishermen and sailors used them to carry cargo and passengers. Groups of people would at times spend several hours together confined to a relatively small boat. Relationships would be formed during those moments together in the boat. Regardless, no one would consider boats to be a biblical expression of community. The boat is merely a means to an end. Likewise, small groups may become a means to an end. They can provide a community experience, but it is not guaranteed. Some people spend hundreds, even thousands, of hours in groups during their lifetime. Even so, they may experience glimpses of community in only three or four of those groups, or perhaps not at all. While community is God's intended purpose for when his people get together, it is not automatically present, nor can it be created on demand. Community takes time, commonality of commitment, and openness to the formation of the Spirit. Groups may or may not become wombs that birth community among members.

When groups are viewed simply as a technique or program, they lose their essence. In his book, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry*, G. W. Icenogle asserts, “Most of the current small group activity in the church is not organic but technical and curricular. Churches do groups because they work.”⁴ Within the

³Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 21.

⁴G. W. Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 11.

perspective and purpose of community, small groups can become sirens that beckon believers to return to the nature of what God created them to be. The key then is to approach small groups biblically rather than pragmatically.

God created and calls people to oneness. When people pursue oneness, they move from a collection of players to a winning team; from instruments labeled woodwinds, strings, percussion, and brass to an orchestra that produces the sounds of music; from artist, canvas, and paint to masterpiece. No one would think to claim that the canvass, the instruments, or the positions were the sought-after end. When people are together in community, harmoniously combined in oneness, they reflect their Creator.⁵

The journey of faith is one that is not made in isolation. It is made along with others. Community is the context for spiritual growth, and it is a distinctively Christian concept as it finds its origin in the Triune God. Therefore, in order to properly understand community, it is necessary to begin with the Trinity.

Understanding the Trinity

God has not revealed himself as an isolated being. Instead, he has disclosed himself as a communal being, possessing intrapersonal relationships within the Godhead. In his *Systematic Theology*, Wayne Grudem defines the doctrine of the Trinity by explaining that “God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God.”⁶ This doctrine is not completely articulated in any single passage; instead, images and allusions to it are given progressively throughout the canon of Scripture. It is hinted at in the Old Testament and more fully revealed in the New Testament with the coming of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The word *Trinity* is not found in the Bible, though the idea represented by the

⁵Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry*, 20-21. Icenogle states that small groups are microcosms of God’s creation community. When people come together in community they become an actual reflection of the image and likeness of God.

⁶Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 194), 226.

word is taught in many places. The word *Trinity* means “tri-unity” or “three-in-oneness.” It is used to summarize the teaching of Scripture that God is three persons, yet one God.⁷

In one sense the doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery that man will never be able to fully understand. Even a simple definition of the Trinity proves to be a difficult task because language is a finite means of communication. As James R. White points out, “Finite minds are trying to express in words infinite truths.”⁸ It is, however, possible to understand something of these truths by summarizing the teaching of Scripture with Grudem’s statement: God is three persons, each person is fully God, and there is one God.

God is three persons. The Bible begins with the words, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). The first chapter of Genesis depicts the creation and formation of the world, as well as the ordering of a place suitable for humankind to live. God initially creates a cosmos that is formless, empty, dark, and wet. It is not fit for human habitation. Then, in the subsequent days, he forms and adorns the world as a master architect in preparation for the apex of his creation. His sovereign and variegated ordering of the world is fascinating. In particular, as Robert Letham indicates,

He forms the earth in a threefold manner. First, he issues direct fiats. He says, ‘Let there be light,’ and there is light (Gen 1:3). By seemingly effortless command, he brings into being the expanse (Gen 1:6), the dry ground (Gen 1:9), the stars (Gen 1:14-15), and the birds and fish (Gen 1:20-21). It is enough for him to speak; his edict is fulfilled at once. Second, he works. He separates light from darkness (Gen 1:4). He makes the expanse and separates the waters (Gen 1:7). He makes the two great lights, the sun and the moon (Gen 1:16), setting them in the expanse to give light to the earth (Gen 1:17). He creates the great creatures of the seas and various kinds of bird (Gen 1:21). He makes the beasts of the earth and reptiles (Gen 1:25). Finally, he creates man – male and female – in his own image (Gen 1:26-27). The thought is of focused, purposeful action by God, of divine labor accomplishing his ends. However, there is also a third way of formation, in which God uses the activity of the creatures themselves. God commands the earth to produce vegetation, plants, and trees (Gen 1:11-12). He requests the lights to govern the day and night (Gen 1:14-16). He commands the earth to bring forth land animals (Gen

⁷Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 226.

⁸James R. White, *The Forgotten Trinity* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1998), 24.

1:24). Here the creatures follow God's instructions and contribute to the eventual outcome. This God who created the universe does not work in a monolithic way. His order is varied – it is threefold, but one. His work shows diversity in its unity, and unity in its diversity. This God loves order and variety together.⁹

The triadic manner of the earth's formation reflects the nature of its Creator. A glimpse is given into the relational aspect of God. The author makes a distinction between the God who in verse 1 creates the heavens and the earth, and the Spirit of God who moves over the surface of the waters in verse 2. There is also a distinction made regarding the word of God issuing the command "Let there be light" (Gen 1:3).¹⁰ Therefore, in the very beginning of God's revelation, he is presented as a relational being.

It is important to keep in mind that even though the doctrine of the Trinity may be easily spotted in the first chapter of Genesis for modern theologians and even everyday readers of the Bible, it was most likely not the case for the author.¹¹ The mindset of the Old Testament believer stressed heavily the monotheistic concept of God, making it difficult to picture God as consisting of three distinct persons within one Godhead. As a result, a question arises as to what the author implied when he quoted God saying in Genesis 1:26, "Let *us* make man in our image, according to *our* likeness."

The use of the plural pronouns has been interpreted in several different ways by commentators. Some understand it to be a remnant of polytheistic myth. Others recognize it as God's address to his creation. Then there are those who identify the plural as indicating divine honor and majesty. Another view is that the use of plural pronouns exhibits God's self-deliberation. Some see it as a divine address to a heavenly court of angels. Finally, there are others who interpret it as a divine dialogue within the Godhead. Kenneth Matthews, in his commentary, dismisses the first five views in favor of the last

⁹Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity in Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2004), 18-19.

¹⁰Letham, *The Holy Trinity in Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*, 18-19

¹¹Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, World Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 27.

viewpoint. He argues, “The interpretation proposed by the Church Fathers and perpetuated by the Reformers was an intra-Trinity dialogue.”¹²

While it is highly probable that the first audience could not have understood Trinitarian theology, the best explanation for the distinction between God and the Spirit of God and the use of the plural pronouns in Genesis 1:26 is that, already in the first chapter of Genesis, there is an indication of a plurality of persons in God himself. Grudem affirms this view. He states, “We are not told how many persons, and we have nothing approaching a complete doctrine of the Trinity, but it is implied that more than one person is involved.”¹³ Further proof is found in Genesis 3:22 where God says, “Behold, the man has become like one of us.” The use of the plural pronoun is again used in Genesis 11:7 and Isaiah 6:8.

These verses help form the biblical understanding of community within the Trinity. God the Father is revealing himself as a relational being in community with both the Son and the Spirit. Letham makes this point with his comments on Genesis 1:26-27:

Man exists as a duality, the one in relation to the other. . . . As for God himself the context points to his own intrinsic relationality. The plural occurs on three occasions in v. 26, yet God is also singular in v. 27. God is placed in parallel with man, made in his image as male and female, who is described both in the singular and plural. Behind it all is the distinction God/Spirit of God/speech of God in vv. 1- 3. . . . [T]his relationality will in the development of biblical revelation eventually be disclosed as taking the form of a triunity.¹⁴

As Scripture progresses and moves toward the New Testament, a more fully formed doctrine of the Trinity is presented.¹⁵ It is evident at the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:16-17:

After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the

¹²Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 162.

¹³Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 227.

¹⁴Letham, *The Holy Trinity in Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*, 21.

¹⁵Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 503.

heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

In this passage, all three persons of the godhead are performing three distinct activities. God the Father is speaking to the Son, God the Son is receiving baptism from John the Baptist, and God the Spirit is descending from heaven to rest upon and empower the Son for ministry. The teaching of the Bible is clear that God consists of three distinct persons (Father, Son, and Spirit). It is unmistakable that the Father is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit. It is also obvious that the Son is not the Holy Spirit. The three persons are three distinct persons making up one Godhead.¹⁶

Each person is fully God. In addition to the fact that all three persons of the Godhead are distinct, the testimony of Scripture is that each person is fully God as well. Genesis 1:1 reveals that God the Father is fully God as he creates the heavens and the earth. Likewise, both the Old and New Testaments portray the Father as sovereign Lord over all. John 1:1-4 affirms that Jesus Christ is fully God. John refers to Jesus as “the Word” who was with God and is God. Many other passages speak of Jesus’ deity.¹⁷ Matthew 28:19 positions the Holy Spirit in the same divine category as the Father and Son. Thus, the Holy Spirit is fully God. This particular passage is not an isolated one. There are other passages throughout the canon of Scripture that equate the Spirit with God. Three particular ones are Psalm 139:7-8; Acts 5:3-4; and 1 Corinthians 2:10-11. In Psalm 139, David attributes the divine characteristic of omnipresence to the Spirit. This characteristic is only true of God. In Acts 5, Peter asked Ananias why he allowed Satan to fill his heart and lie to the Holy Spirit. Then he declares that Ananias did not lie to men but to God. In 1 Corinthians 2, Paul ascribes the divine characteristic of omniscience to the Holy Spirit. He states that the Spirit knows all things, even the

¹⁶Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 231.

¹⁷John 20:28-31; Col 1:15-19; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:1-3; Isa 9:6.

thoughts of God.¹⁸ The logical and biblical conclusion is that God is three persons and each person is fully God.

There is one God. Perhaps the most famous biblical declaration for monotheism is found in Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!” Grudem unpacks the theology of this verse:

Scripture is abundantly clear that there is one and only one God. The three different persons of the Trinity are one not only in purpose and in agreement on what they think, but they are one in essence, one in their essential nature. In other words, God is only one being. There are not three Gods. There is only one God.¹⁹

Both the Old and New Testaments preach the oneness of God. In 1 Kings 8:60, as Solomon dedicates the temple to God, he prays that “all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no one else.” Not only does Solomon speak to the oneness of God, but also God himself repeatedly clarifies that he is one, he is unique, and he is the only true God. He says in Isaiah 45:5-6, “I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known me; that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides me. I am the Lord, and there is no other.” Further down in the same chapter God continues, “And there is no other God besides me, a righteous God and a savior; there is none except me. Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other” (Isa 45:21-22).²⁰

The theme of God’s oneness continues in the writings of Paul and the apostles. First Timothy 2:5 states, “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” James, the half-brother of Jesus, indirectly drove the point home when he avowed, “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also

¹⁸Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 233-38.

¹⁹Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 238.

²⁰Ibid., 238-39.

believe, and shudder” (Jas 2:19). James, Paul, and the early church affirmed that there is only one God. The Trinity, or Godhead, consists of three distinct persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Each person is fully God, and the three persons make up one God.

Observing Community within the Trinity

The case has clearly been made for what Charles Hodge calls “the one divine Being” who “subsists in three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit.”²¹ The distinct persons of the Godhead coexist, forming one God and expressing community. Icenogle gives insight into this community. He asserts, “God is described as existing in divine community, in dialogue with other members of the God-self, an intracommunicating group who also created humanity to exist in group intracommunication.”²² Consequently, if one is seeking to understand community in the human sense, then it is imperative to begin with community as it is expressed within the Godhead. Regarding this community, Wayne Grudem states, “When Scripture discusses the way in which God relates to the world, both in creation and in redemption, the persons of the Trinity are said to have different functions or primary activities.”²³

This theological understanding of the Trinity has come to be described as the “economy of the Trinity,” first espoused by Hippolytus and Tertullian.²⁴ As they sought to describe the godhead, they did not explore the eternal relations among the three. Instead, they focused on the ways in which the three persons making up the Godhead manifested themselves in creation and redemption. In Tertullian’s particular view, the three persons are numerically distinct so that they can be counted. Nevertheless, they are manifestations of a single indivisible power. There is distinction and distribution but no

²¹Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 1:444.

²²Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry*, 21.

²³Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 248.

²⁴Ibid.

division or separation. “The Father, Son, and Spirit are one identical substance; this substance has been extended into three manifestations, but not divided.”²⁵ Later Hippolytus and Tertullian’s position would be further expounded and codified through Athanasius and the Cappadocian theologians – Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa.

The church’s official position resulted from controversy surrounding two views of Trinitarian thought: dynamic monarchiansim and modalistic monarchiansim. The Council of Constantinople in AD 381 was the setting for the making of the definitive statement. It was there that the church stated God is “one οὐσία (*ousia*) in three ὑποστάσεις (*hypostaseis*).” The council expressed the orthodox position on the Trinity by solidifying that the one Godhead exists simultaneously in three modes of being or hypostases.²⁶

There is therefore observable community within the Godhead as the three distinct persons relate to one another and carry out various actions in creation and redemption. For example, in creation the Father spoke the creative words to bring the cosmos into being, but it was the Son, the eternal Word of God, who carried out these creative activities.²⁷ The Holy Spirit likewise participated, but in a different way. He was hovering over the face of the waters sustaining and manifesting God’s immediate presence in his creation (Gen 1:2).²⁸

Community among the godhead is also visible in the act of redemption. The Father planned redemption and sent his Son into the world (John 3:16). The Son obeyed the Father and accomplished redemption for mankind (John 6:38). It was the Son alone who died a penal substitutionary death for humanity’s sin. Then after the Son ascended

²⁵Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 358.

²⁶Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 261.

²⁷John 1:3; Col 1:16

²⁸Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 249.

back to heaven, the Spirit was sent by the Father and Son to apply redemption to humankind (John 14:26; 16:7; Eph 1:13-14). All three persons have differing activities in the redemption of humanity.²⁹

Within the community of the holy Trinity, it is apparent that there is “a subordination of the persons as to the mode of subsistence and operation.”³⁰ The Father in creation and redemption planned, directed, and sent the Son and Holy Spirit. In the context of community, as Grudem points out, this fact should not be surprising:

It shows that the Father and the Son relate to one another as a father and son relate to one another in a human family: the father directs and has authority over the son, and the son obeys and is responsive to the directions of the father. The Holy Spirit is obedient to the directives of both the Father and the Son.³¹

Though the three persons are equal in all their attributes, nevertheless, they are different in their relationships to the creation. Both the Son and Spirit are equal in deity to the Father, yet they are subordinate in their roles.

The intracomunication within the godhead reveals that community is rooted in the very nature of God’s personhood. While each person in the Trinity is unique, they represent interrelationship par excellence. Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel clarifies this truth in her book *Humanity in God*:

The three divine persons are not there simply for themselves. They are there in that they are there for one another. They are persons in social relationship. The Father can be called Father only in relationship with the Son; the Son can be called Son only in relationship with the Father. The Spirit is the breath of the one who speaks. The breath goes out from the Father in the eternal moment in which the Father speaks the Word, which in another relationship is called the Son...Being a person means “being in relationship.”³²

Imaging the Community of the Trinity

God created humankind as a person. Personhood is only known in relation to

²⁹Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 249.

³⁰Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 445.

³¹Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 249.

³²Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *Humanity in God* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1983), 97.

others. Humanity's identity as relational beings is carved out of interpersonal relating. God knows and experiences community; therefore, he has made the apex of his creation capable of the same. Adam was created with the capacity and necessity for relating to God. God made a creature with whom he could interact. Then, like an artist stepping back to admire his work, God surveyed what he had made and declared it was very good (Gen 1:31).

God professed in Genesis 1:26, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness." The root meaning of the Hebrew word *צלם*, translated *image*, means "to carve" or "to cut off." It is a concrete term that is coupled with the Hebrew term *דמות*, translated *likeness*. It refers more to similarity in the abstract or in the ideal.³³ It is evident from the use of *צלם* that man was created in the image of God, but in order to ensure that man does not view himself as an exact representation of God, the word *likeness* is attached.³⁴ Nonetheless, man does to some extent bear the image of God. This verse reveals that to be human is to image the Creator. As a person then, man is created for relationship with God and with others since God is a relational being. Gilbert Bilezikian said it well in his book *Community 101*: "Community as God ordained it was not an incidental concern of his. . . . Community is deeply grounded in the nature of God. It flows from who God is. Because he is community, he creates community. It is his gift of himself to humans."³⁵

Community is an eternal reality that exists within the Godhead; therefore, man, being made in the image and likeness of God, was created for community. It is something that humankind longs after. It is part of humanity's genetic makeup. He desires to be in relationship with God and with other human beings. Therefore, as the

³³H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Columbus, OH: The Wartburg Press, 1942), 88.

³⁴Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 135.

³⁵Gilbert Bilezikian, *Community 101* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 27.

story of Scripture moves forward from Genesis 1, the need and desire for community become more and more apparent.

Community in the Creation of Humanity

The creation account of Genesis 2 reveals Adam's need for community with God, as well as his need for community with someone who could be his counterpart. In Genesis 2:18, God looks over his creation and utters a phrase that it is not found in the creation account of Genesis 1. For the first time he declares that there is something missing. There is an incompleteness to an aspect of God's creation. As Gordon Wenham points out, this statement is a startling analysis when laid against the backdrop of the first chapter's sevenfold refrain of "and God saw that it was (very) good."³⁶ It alerts the reader to the importance of companionship, because as Leupold asserts, "God did not create man an unsocial being."³⁷

Adam was created in the image and likeness of God, but as God observed man at this point in the story, a single deficiency existed. In verse 18, Adam was not capable of reflecting the community that is found within the Godhead because he was lacking a companion. While the rest of chapter 2 describes how God created a woman from man as a perfect communal match for Adam, that is not the case in verse 18. Here Adam is without a suitable mate, as he would soon realize (Gen 2:20). He learned that he was alone. Kenneth Matthew points out this was God's intent in order to reveal to man that he was made for more than what he currently experienced:

God has made the man and provided a beautiful environment with honorable work, a setting men may sometimes consider idyllic, but God announces that more is to be done to achieve the ideal for the man. God's concern is that man is "alone." Whether the man felt his aloneness at first is not stated; only the divine viewpoint is given. God has created human life to have fellowship with him but also to be a social entity, building relationships with other human beings. "[Man] will not live until he loves, giving himself away to another on his own level." Isolation is not the

³⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 68.

³⁷Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, 129.

divine norm for human beings; community is the creation of God.³⁸

It should be noted that it was not Adam who pointed out to God his aloneness and need of a companion. Instead, it was God who stated Adam's condition (Gen 2:18), and it was God who used the naming of the animals to reveal to the man his lack of a suitable mate (Gen 2:20). Commenting on this, Victor Hamilton says, "Man is not consulted for his thoughts on the matter. At no point does the man offer to God any grievance about his current circumstances."³⁹ The man was simply made aware that he by himself was incomplete.⁴⁰

Every facet of God's creation with the exception of Adam has its corresponding companion at this point in the story. The heavens possess the luminaries and birds. The seas teem with fish. The land is filled with animals, and each animal has its mate. There is a sense of community within this companionship, for without it those aspects would be incomplete. Genesis 1-2 reveals that every part of creation is in need of something else to complete it and to enable it to function as God intended.⁴¹

Adam's incompleteness led to God rectifying his situation. He says, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him" (Gen 2:18). According to Hamilton, the last part of verse 18 literally reads, "I will make him for him a helper as in front of him (or according to what is in front of him)."⁴² Thus, the helper that God is going to create for Adam will perfectly correspond to him and complete him. Hamilton states further, "The new creation will be neither a superior nor an inferior, but an equal. The creation of this helper will form one-half of a polarity, and will be to man

³⁸Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 213.

³⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 175.

⁴⁰Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 127.

⁴¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 175.

⁴²Ibid.

as the south pole is to the north pole.”⁴³

The term *helper* (עֲזָרָה), which God uses to describe Adam’s future companion, is not a demeaning term. Rather it is used in a positive manner. עֲזָרָה is often used in the Old Testament to describe God as the helper of Israel.⁴⁴ As stated above, the one to be created would be an equal to Adam. Ross says, “The word essentially describes one who provides what is lacking in the man, who can do what the man alone cannot do.”⁴⁵ God created Adam in such a way that he needed the help of a partner. He was created to be in community with one who was like him, which is the reason for the use of the term *suitable* (כְּנִגְדּוֹ) in the latter part of verse 18. It means, “like what is in front of him.”⁴⁶ God was to create a woman who would share the man’s nature, meaning that everything the man received at creation, she too would receive. The two humans perfectly corresponded physically, socially, and spiritually. What he lacked she supplied, and what she lacked he supplied. They helped each other.⁴⁷

God sedated Adam and performed the first surgical procedure in history (Gen 2:21). He took one of Adam’s ribs and used it to fashion the woman (Gen 2:22). When he woke up, God brought the woman to Adam. Upon seeing the woman, Adam made a profound declaration regarding the community the two of them shared. He said, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man” (Gen 2:23).

Adam’s response centers on the sameness the two humans shared that was not shared with the creatures in verse 20. The parallel elements of bones and flesh possess the preposition *min* (מִן), indicating source. He states that she is “bone of my bones and

⁴³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 175.

⁴⁴Exod 18:4; Deut 33:7; 1 Sam 7:12; Pss 20:2; 46:1.

⁴⁵Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 126.

⁴⁶Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 213.

⁴⁷Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 126.

flesh of my flesh.” Matthews explains that it is possible Adam is expressing covenant loyalty to the woman. This idea is heightened further by the title the man gives to the woman. He calls her אִשָּׁה (woman), a sound play on אָדָם (man). In naming the woman, the man names himself. The man embeds his own name in the woman’s.⁴⁸ The language Adam uses “expresses the complete personal community of one man and one woman as a spiritual unity.”⁴⁹ The author of Genesis solidifies this unity by stating, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). They are to be in community with one another.

God is a communal being, expressing community within the Godhead of Father, Son, and Spirit. He has created communal beings in his image and likeness, as seen in the first chapter of Genesis. Man in the image of God was created to be in community with both God and with other human beings. Adam needed Eve; he was incomplete without her. Together they became one flesh. The Bible declares that the two “were both naked and were not ashamed” (Gen 2:25). At this point in the biblical story, man was sinless. He was innocent and experienced the blissfulness of life as God intended it. Unfortunately, man’s innocence quickly changed as Adam and Eve rebelled against God by eating from the tree that was off limits to them (Gen 3:6-7). Following their rebellious act, sin entered the story of humankind. Humanity was cursed with spiritual and physical death, but God did not abandon them.⁵⁰ Despite their sinful condition and spiritual death, God still desired to be in relationship with humankind. He spoke of one day redeeming them. This concept of community continues to be further revealed in salvation history as God calls out Abram and creates a people for himself through which his redemption will eventually arise.

⁴⁸Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 219.

⁴⁹Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 126.

⁵⁰Gen 3:15, 19-20; Rom 6:23; Eph 2:1-7.

Community in the Call and Establishment of Abram and Israel

The effects of sin, following the rebellion of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, are instantly evident in Scripture. The community that the man and woman enjoyed between one another is broken. From this point till the end of time, a tension will be present in every relationship, even in marriage (Gen 3:16). The perfect relationship man had with the creation is also broken. Pain and suffering are introduced into history. The woman will bring forth her offspring through pain (Gen 3:16). Likewise, the man will provide for his family through sweat and toil (Gen 3:17-18), and they both will experience the pain of physical death.

The breakdown in community is further illustrated in Genesis 4-11 as sin spreads and alienates humankind from both God and one another. In Genesis 4, the first murder takes place when Cain kills his brother Abel. Cain is portrayed as one who has rejected God. The vast majority of humanity followed in the ways of Cain, living and growing in a perpetual state of rebellion against God.⁵¹ Still, God retained a remnant of people who loved and feared him. A third son named Seth was born to Adam (Gen 4:25; 5:3). He was a godly man who bore godly offspring. It was through Seth's lineage that Noah was born (Gen 5:28-31). In Noah and his immediate family, God preserved a remnant of community through the flood that destroyed the rest of humanity. Following the flood, though, sin still reigned in the hearts of humankind. Their community remained broken even though they continued to come together. In Genesis 11, humanity makes a great attempt to develop a sense of community. They desired to make a great name for themselves (Gen 11:4) by building a city and a tower that would reach up into the heavens. Humankind sought to establish community without God in the equation. Their coming together at Babel was to declare their independence from God. In response

⁵¹Gen 4:17-24 provides a genealogy of Cain's descendants. They are depicted as godless and arrogant. Gen 6:1-7 describes the despicable spiritual and moral condition of man prior to the flood. Man's sinfulness was so great v. 6 indicates God regretted he had made man.

to their rebellious actions, God scattered humanity and confused the languages so that sinful humankind would be unable to come together without him (Gen 11:7-9).

God's actions in Babel did not mitigate his desire to be in community with humanity as evidenced in Genesis 12. It is here that God calls to Abram. This call by God is a vivid step toward communal restoration. It is possible, but not proven, that Abram was an idolater like other men; yet it is clear that he was sinful. James Montgomery Boice asserts, "There was nothing in Abram himself that commended him to God."⁵² God did not look down from heaven and find saving faith in Abram. Instead, as he looked down from heaven, God found in Abram what he found in every other person: a heart that was filled with evil all the time (Gen 6:5). Nevertheless, God in his sovereignty and wisdom chose to call to Abram and make a covenant with him.⁵³ God told Abram to leave his country and go to a land that he would show him. He promised to make Abram a great nation, give him a great name, and make him a blessing to all nations (Gen 12:1-3). It is here that the restoration first mentioned in Genesis 3:15 takes a huge step toward fulfillment.

Later in the story, God changed Abram's name to Abraham (Gen 17:5). The change is significant. His former name meant "exalted father" or "father of many," but his new name meant "father of many peoples."⁵⁴ God also promised to give Abraham a son through whom he would become the father of many nations (Gen 17:16). As revelation unfolds, the son promised and born to Abraham was named Isaac (Gen 21:3-4). Isaac had a son named Jacob (Gen 25:26). God changed Jacob's name to Israel (Gen 32:28). Israel had twelve sons, and those sons became the twelve tribes making up the

⁵²James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis 12-36: A New Beginning*, vol. 2 of *Genesis: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 437.

⁵³Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 204.

⁵⁴Kenneth O. Gangel and Stephen J. Bramer, *Genesis*, Holman Old Testament Commentary, vol.1 (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2002), 150.

nation of Israel. The nation of Israel is the nation God promised to make of Abraham. It is also the nation through whom the nations of the earth were to be blessed. Abraham's greatest descendent, as both Matthew and Luke indicate in their respective gospels, is the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-38). It is through Jesus Christ that the promised blessing has come to every nation for those who call upon his name.⁵⁵ The restoration of the community God desired and intended for humanity began through the calling and blessing of Abraham and the establishment of Israel as God's called out people. As the revelation continues, community will ultimately be restored in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Community in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ

Israel's soteriology emphasized the need for redemption. The entire Levitical sacrificial system was constructed around and for redemption. Jews were commanded to offer sacrifices for the forgiveness of both their personal and corporate sins.⁵⁶ The Jewish mind did not understand redemption solely on an individualistic level. Salvation came as a result of being a part of the people whom God had chosen. There is a clear stressing of community in the salvation of the Old Testament. Those who sinned against God by breaking his commandments were either put to death by the men of Israel or cut off from the people of Israel (Deut 15:30-36). The sentence was carried out by the community.

The sacrifices of the old covenant foreshadowed what was to be fulfilled in the new covenant through Christ, including the concept of community. The prophet Jeremiah wrote, "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the Lord, 'I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people'" (Jer 31:33). The

⁵⁵ Boice, *Genesis*, 2:447.

⁵⁶ Lev 4:1-6:7; 16:1-34.

author of Hebrews connects Jeremiah's prophecy to the work Christ accomplished on the cross. He says, "But now he has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises" (Heb 8:6). The author portrays Jesus Christ as the true high priest who is ordaining a new and better covenant. Jesus, through his penal substitutionary death on the cross and resurrection from the dead, has satisfied the justice of God and purchased redemption for humanity.⁵⁷ His redemption brings humankind back into community with God and with one another.

Upon trusting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, the believer becomes a member of the community of faith. The New Testament uses the images of a house, a building, a temple, and a body to describe the community experienced in Christ.⁵⁸ Apart from Christ, people are dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1). They are spiritually cut off from community with God. Paul describes such a one as being "far off" but "brought near by the blood of Christ" (Eph 2:13). A. T. Robertson points out that Paul's use of "but now" ($\nu\nu\nu\iota\ \delta\epsilon$) in verse 13 is strongly contrasted with the phrase "at that time" ($\tau\omega\ \kappa\alpha\iota\rho\omega\ \epsilon\kappa\epsilon\iota\nu\omega$) of verse 12.⁵⁹ Paul stresses the drastic change that has taken place in the lives of the Gentile believers. The language he uses to express the community that believers now enjoy with God is similar to the language used in Hebrews 10:19-22, where believers are encouraged to "have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus" and thus "draw near" to God. In Ephesians 2, Paul's audience was Gentile believers, while Hebrews was written to address a Jewish audience. In both epistles, the ground of approach for the two groups is the same.⁶⁰ They come into community with God through

⁵⁷Rom 3:22-25; 4:23-25; 5:17-21; 8:4; Heb 1:3; 2:17; 9:11-28.

⁵⁸Heb 3:6; Eph 2:21; 1 Cor 3:16; Eph 4:12.

⁵⁹Archibald Thomas Robertson, *The Epistles of Paul*, vol. 4 of *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931), 526.

⁶⁰F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1984), 295.

the blood of Christ.

The Gentiles in Ephesians 2 are depicted as aliens and strangers of the heritage and promises of Israel. In his commentary, Harold Hoehner lists five privileges that the Gentiles lacked. First, they were separated from Christ. It is noteworthy that Paul indicated that the unbelieving Jews were also separated from Christ (Eph 2:17). Second, they were excluded from the citizenship of Israel. Third, they were unaware of the covenant promises given to Israel. Fourth, the Gentiles lacked the messianic hope possessed by Jews, who anticipated a deliverance from their current national situation brought about by a messiah. Fifth, the Gentiles may have worshiped many gods, but they did not know the one true God revealed in the Scriptures.⁶¹ They were, as Paul stated, separated and far off from Christ, but Jesus brought them near through the shedding of his blood. Those, therefore, who had no hope because they were without God were given hope in the Son of God.⁶²

Paul specified that when individuals come into community with God through Jesus Christ, they also become a part of the community of believers (Eph 2:19). Those who place their faith in Jesus are no longer estranged from God, and they also are no longer alienated from other believers. Instead, they become fellow citizens with the saints and are members of God's household. Vertical redemption creates a horizontal restoration of relationships. The two groups (Jews and Gentiles) become one. John Polhill proposes that Christ creates an entirely new person:

When Paul spoke of Christ's redemptive work as creating one new person out of the two (Eph 2:15), it was an advance over the salvation-historical perspective of Romans 11. In Romans Paul spoke of the Gentiles being grafted into the root stock of Israel. Israel remained the original people of God, now redefined in light of Christ and open to the inclusion of the Gentiles. In Ephesians 2, however, Paul seems to have developed his view. Now it became a matter of a new people, a new

⁶¹Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, in vol. 16 of *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, ed. Philip W. Comfort (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2008), 54.

⁶²Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1990), 125.

creation formed out of the two formerly separate peoples.⁶³

The new people created by Christ become the community of faith. The members of this new community individually make up “God’s household” (Eph 2:19). Paul expounds on this teaching in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. There he uses the image of a body that is made up of many members, and he focuses on the organic unity of the Christian community. Verse 12 reads, “For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.” Commenting on this verse, Charles Talbert gives some insight:

Christ here is not the name of an individual, Jesus, but of the community that derives its existence and identity from the individual. Just as in the Old Testament Israel could serve as the name of an individual (Gen 32:28) and of a people, so in Paul the name of Christ is used both for an individual (1 Cor 2:2; Rom 5:17) and for the Christian community (1 Cor 15:22). The Christian community, Paul is saying, is like the human body. It is an organic unity with a multiplicity of parts.⁶⁴

Paul stresses community in 1 Corinthians 12:14-20. He focuses attention on the diversity of the body, emphasizing the need for each of the different members. Using language of anatomy, he explains that each individual body part could not function without being connected to the body. His point is that believers can only express community when they are connected to the body of Christ. Paul further emphasizes this point by using the phrase “one another” (1 Cor 12:25). Thirty-five times in the New Testament “one another” follows an imperative verb.⁶⁵ God calls believers to “love one another” (John 13:34-35), “accept one another” (Rom 15:7), “submit to one another” (Eph 5:21), and “pray for one another” (Jas 5:16). These references to community reveal that the Bible knows nothing of a believer in relationship with Christ who is not also in community with the body of Christ. Jerry Bridges, in his book *True Community*, asserts, “God does not save groups; he saves individual people. But although God saves us as

⁶³John B. Polhill, *Paul and His Letters* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 366.

⁶⁴Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, rev. ed. (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2002), 106.

⁶⁵Don McMinn, *The 11th Commandment: Experiencing the One Anothers of Scripture* (Irving, TX: 6Acts Press, 2000), 2.

individuals, he immediately incorporates us into the body of Christ.”⁶⁶ It is clear that the individual Christian experiences an intimate relationship with God; however, the “one another” language indicates an intimacy between believers as well. They are, after all, one body (1 Cor 12:12). Paul magnifies this point by saying, “So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Rom 12:5).

Today community is distorted as a result of the fall, yet Jesus is restoring community through his redemption. The people who repent of sin and place their faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ are brought into the household of God. They become part of the community of faith called the church, sharing a common life in Christ. It is together as the church that believers both express and experience what the New Testament calls *koinonia* (κοινωνία). The term is often translated as *fellowship*.⁶⁷ It can also be understood simply as *community*. The believers who make up the church are a unified body of individuals who are one together through Jesus Christ. Throughout the history of Christendom, the early church has best exemplified what New Testament community ought to look like in the local church and how God uses it to further his kingdom.

Community and Kingdom Advancement in the Early Church

Jesus Christ created “one new man” (Eph 2:15) from the two groups that, from a salvific perspective, comprise lost humanity. It is out of the Jews and Gentiles that the Lord has called and created a new people for himself. He has brought each believer into a community of faith whereby the members make up one body, the church. Thus, as mentioned above, the Christian faith, outside of personal salvation, knows nothing of individualism. Instead, faith in Christ should be understood in the context of community,

⁶⁶Jerry Bridges, *True Community* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 49.

⁶⁷Acts 2:42; 2 Cor 6:14; 13:13; Gal 2:9; Phil 3:10; 1 John 1:3.

as Brad House suggests:

Christianity is not an individual sport. We are part of a team. . . . We have to be more than a collection of individuals who occasionally gather together. We need a corporate sense of our identity. A gospel-centered community will find their identity in Jesus individually and corporately.⁶⁸

The church of the Lord Jesus is the new Israel. Jews understood salvation in the context of the promised blessing of Israel as a nation. The community created through the gospel completes what was foreshadowed in the calling and establishment of Abraham and Israel, and it finds its expression in the small group. Commenting on this biblical concept, House quotes Sinclair Ferguson:

The church lies at the very center of the eternal purpose of God. It is not a divine afterthought. It is not an accident of history. On the contrary, the church is God's new community. For His purpose, conceived in a past eternity, being worked out in history, and to be perfected in a future eternity, is not just to save isolated individuals and so perpetuate our loneliness but rather to build His church, that is, to call out of the world a people for His own glory.⁶⁹

The early New Testament church understood and embraced community. They recognized that it was Christ alone who had brought them near to God. Their belief in the gospel message ushered them into eternal community with the Godhead and with other believers. Icenogle points out that the first mention of *koinonia* came immediately after the event of Pentecost. It was at that time that the disciples became self-conscious about their communal identity. Thus, emerged their understanding that they were the new eschatological community of Israel. Icenogle states, "The experiences and lessons learned by the Twelve (and the one hundred twenty) as a small group became the key lessons in community for a whole network of ecclesia, and the prime model of ecclesia who have gathered throughout the ages."⁷⁰ Jesus's disciples and those who were closely connected to him became the genesis of a multiplicity of small groups who met in the temple courts and homes throughout the city of Jerusalem. The early church became a

⁶⁸House, *Community*, 40.

⁶⁹Ibid., 45.

⁷⁰Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry*, 354.

community of communities who were interconnected and interdependent following Pentecost.⁷¹

In response to the community they now enjoyed, the members of the early church devoted themselves to the Lord, to certain spiritual disciplines, and to one another. A. C. Hervey makes the statement in his commentary that “common indebtedness to Christ, and devotion to him, bring men together into a gracious sense of brotherhood and fellowship.”⁷² Perhaps this understanding explains why Acts portrays the early church in such a communal way.

The historical account of the early church, which Luke gives in Acts, reveals that the early church’s embracing of biblical community positioned them to be a strong gospel influence in their culture. He emphasizes that the Lord daily added to their numbers (Acts 2:47). The final statement in verse 47 raises a serious question. Why did the Lord add to their numbers daily those who were being saved? Perhaps the reason for God’s blessing is found in the five verses that precede verse 47. Acts 2:42-47 presents the early church as living out what Israel failed to do. Their lives were committed to the teaching of God’s Word, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, to prayer (Acts 2:42), and to expressing the community they enjoyed through Christ. Those commitments helped them become what the Lord intended for his church to be; they became a gospel light to the nations.

The early church was fervently dedicated to the apostle’s teaching. During Jesus’ earthly ministry, he taught with an authority unlike any of the teachers of law (Mark 1:22). Just before his ascension, Jesus delegated that authority to the apostles, who spoke in his name. Thus, they carried on the teaching of Jesus. Simon Kistemaker explains that the word *teaching* has a double meaning: “Extensively, the word refers to

⁷¹Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry*, 355.

⁷²A. C. Hervey, *Acts & Romans*, in vol. 18 of *The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 91.

the good news of all that Jesus said and did. And intensively, the apostles were involved in the work of teaching an oral gospel to the converts, whom Luke calls disciples (learners) in Acts.⁷³ Their teaching would have taken place in two major venues: public worship services and private home groups. The early church's commitment to the teaching of God's Word resulted in the blessing of God upon their lives and ministries in fulfillment of God's promise to Israel (Deut 6). It set them up for personal blessings from God, but it also put them in a position for God to rain down blessings on the early church corporately.

The early church was also committed to fellowship. The word translated as *fellowship* in verse 42 is the Greek word *κοινωνία*. According to Robertson, it speaks of partnership and a sharing of common interest.⁷⁴ Consequently, the partnership of those of the early church involved participation in the blood of Christ, cooperation in the work of the gospel, and contribution to those in need. He states that there is a wide range of opinions concerning the precise use of the term in verse 42. "It may refer to the distribution of funds in verse 44 or to the oneness of spirit in the community of believers or to the Lord's Supper (as in 1 Cor 10:16) in the sense of communion or to the fellowship in the common meals or *agapae* [*sic*] (love-feasts)."⁷⁵ In any sense it speaks of the unity that the early church enjoyed. Fellowship describes the enthusiasm that was demonstrated in a common bond at worship, at meals, and in the sharing of their material possessions.⁷⁶ It expresses their understanding of community. Their vertical union with Christ resulted in a horizontal union with other believers in Christ.

Likewise, the early church was committed to the breaking of bread and prayer.

⁷³Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 110.

⁷⁴ Archibald Thomas Robertson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 3 of *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), 38.

⁷⁵Robertson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 38.

⁷⁶Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, 110-11.

These two spiritual disciplines flow out of fellowship. John Polhill states that the key to correctly defining the fellowship found in verse 42 is to see “breaking of bread” and “prayer” in apposition to “fellowship.” In other words, the fellowship that those in the early church devoted themselves to was expressed in their mutual meals and prayers together.⁷⁷ There is speculation as to the exact meaning of “breaking of bread.” Is it a reference to a meal in a private home or to a communion service? The grammar of the verse as well as the context suggests it could easily refer to the Lord’s Supper. In the Greek, the definite article τῆ precedes ἄρτου (bread), specifying that the believers partook of the bread set aside for communion.⁷⁸ Kistemaker asserts that another reason to understand “breaking of bread” as a reference to the Lord’s Supper is that it appears within the sequence of teaching, fellowship, and prayers in worship services.⁷⁹ A definite article also used before “prayer” has led some interpreters to understand this phrase as a reference to the keeping of formal prayer hours in the temple. Early in Acts, believers are seen as going to the temple for prayer (Acts 3:1); as Polhill points out, however, the reference is most likely much broader, including both temple prayers and prayer meetings in their homes.⁸⁰ Both references, then, can be understood to include formal and informal functions as the early church lived out their new community in Christ. They enjoyed sharing meals together in remembrance of Christ’s sacrifice and praying with and for one another.

The early church’s commitment to the apostle’s teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer fostered an environment whereby Jesus was free to work mightily in and through their lives. Miracles being worked by the apostles caused those outside the

⁷⁷John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 119.

⁷⁸Compare the grammatical use of the definite article in Acts 2:42 with the grammar of Acts 20:11 and 1 Cor 10:16.

⁷⁹Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, 111.

⁸⁰Polhill, *Acts*, 120.

community of faith to stand in awe (Acts 2:43).⁸¹ Moreover, those inside the church shared such a kindred spirit that they “had all things in common” (Acts 2:44). Their *κοινωνία* led them to sell property in order to meet the physical needs of those in the church (Acts 2:45). The result of the early church’s understanding and embracing of community was a fulfillment of God’s commission to Israel. God called Abraham and created from him a nation that would be a blessing to the nations. It was through Israel that the Messiah was born into the world. The Messiah was believed on by both Jews and Gentiles. He created a new Israel from those who repented of sin and placed their faith in him (Rom 9:6-33). The early church became the light to the nations God spoke of to Abraham. Luke’s portrayal of the church in Acts is one of fulfilling the commission Jesus laid before the church as he ascended to the Father. He said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). After the Spirit came at Pentecost in Acts 2, the church immediately begins to boldly spread the gospel message around Jerusalem and throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria (Acts 8). The church is depicted as making disciples largely through the ministry of small groups. The preachers would proclaim the gospel and win converts to Christ, establishing a church that would then meet together in small groups. Those small groups followed the pattern set forth by the first small group of the Twelve. The book closes with Paul sitting in a Roman cell in Rome awaiting trial. He completed at least three missionary journeys during his ministry and planted countless churches, winning many to faith in Christ. The early church obediently followed Christ’s mandate to be a light to the nations. They preached the message of the gospel and allowed their community to validate the message before a watching world. Likewise, the modern church should emulate their example and commitment to biblical community.

⁸¹Polhill, *Acts*, 120.

Conclusion

The theme of community is evident as one examines the progressive revelation of God revealed in the canon of Scripture. Community is found in the Godhead before matter even existed (Gen 1). Community is again expressed in the creation of man and the declaration, “It is not good for the man to be alone” (Gen 2:18). Following the Fall and curse of humanity, community is again expressed as God calls Abraham and promises to make him a great nation (Gen 12:1-3). Authentic community finally becomes an eternal reality in Christ and the redemption he purchased for humankind (Eph 2:13-22). And it is expressed in the power of the Spirit through the early church as they worshiped, fellowshiped, ministered, prayed, and met together in small groups as a community of faith (Acts 2:42-47). The promise from Scripture is that community will find its full and final expression at the eschaton when Christ returns. At that time, “the tabernacle of God is among men, and he will dwell among them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be among them” (Rev 21:3). Until that day comes, the church ought to pursue the community that the Lord Jesus purchased with his own blood. Consequently, a proper understanding of off-campus community groups will include and strive to incorporate the theology of community as its revealed in Scripture.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES OF DISCOVERING,
DEVELOPING, AND DEPLOYING OFF-CAMPUS
COMMUNITY GROUP LEADERS

Leadership is one of the most crucial aspects of any organization. In his book *Developing the Leaders around You*, John Maxwell states, “An organization’s growth potential is directly related to its personnel potential.”¹ It is, then, imperative that the leaders be properly equipped because the quality of the leadership may determine whether the organization is a success or a failure.² This principle is true for corporate America, and it is equally true for the church. Larry Osborne explains in his book *Sticky Church* that the quality of a church’s leaders determines the quality of the church’s ministry.³

Off-campus community group leaders are an essential component in the discipleship process of the church. They are an extension of the pastoral staff’s ministry, and as such, community group leaders work on the front lines of discipleship. The critical role they play in the church means they must be disciplined, focused, and committed to the ministry to which the Lord has entrusted them. Consequently, the way community group leaders are discovered, developed, and deployed is central to the overall health and success of the small group.

The apostle Paul informed the Ephesian church that God had gifted them with leaders (prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) for “the equipping of the saints for

¹John C. Maxwell, *Developing the Leaders around You* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 4.

²Ibid., 6. Maxwell states that within organizational structures everything rises and falls on leadership.

³Larry Osborne, *Sticky Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 123.

the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph 4:11-12). Paul’s instruction revealed that one of the major responsibilities of church leaders is leadership development. According to Allan Taylor, the most important lay leadership position in the local church is that of a teacher or community group leader, so it is necessary that church leaders devise and implement a process for equipping new leaders.⁴ The purpose of this chapter is to provide a framework for properly discovering, developing, and deploying off-campus community group leaders.

Discovering New Leaders

One of the great struggles facing churches today is that of discovering new leaders, yet the testimony of Scripture promises the opposite of what many churches experience. God promises he will supply all that his church needs to complete the mission he gave them.⁵ The New Testament reveals that many leaders emerged in the early church and were used by God to do incredible things. If the early church had an ample supply of leaders, then why does there seem to be a deficit of leaders in today’s church? There are many different opinions on the matter, ranging from a call to raise the bar so high that only those who are *spiritually mature* are qualified to lead, to a call for lowering the bar to allow practically anyone into a leadership position. The answer to this most pressing question is found in the biblical concept of discipleship. There must be a process whereby believers are spiritually equipped and potential leaders are discovered.

Despite the debate over qualifications for leadership, the consensus of many church leaders is that the best way to discover new leaders is from within the small group organization itself. Allan Taylor uses this approach for enlistment at First Baptist

⁴Allan Taylor, *The Six Core Values of Sunday School: A Philosophical, Practical, & Passionate Approach to Sunday School* (Woodstock, GA: Allan Taylor, 2003), 59. Taylor stresses that the teacher is to the class or community group what the pastor is to the church. He identifies the teacher as a miniature pastor and the group as a miniature congregation.

⁵Matt 16:18; Rom 12:4-8; Phil 4:19.

Church of Woodstock. When he is recruiting new leaders for his Sunday school ministry, he gathers recommendations from current Sunday school teachers.⁶ Jim Putman and the leadership of Real Life Ministries also use their small group ministry as the avenue by which they discover new leaders. At Real Life, no one can serve in a leadership capacity without first being actively involved in a small group.⁷ Likewise, Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson share in their book, *Building a Church of Small Groups*, how church leaders should not look for leaders. Instead they should look for people to develop, and the best place to develop people is in the context of a community group.⁸

The problem with discovering new community group leaders is that too often churches fill slots rather than enlist new leaders. Commenting on this issue, Taylor says, “We are guilty of enlisting about ninety-five percent of our problems because we do not enlist; we fill slots.”⁹ The proper process of discovering new leaders for both on-campus and off-campus community groups should not involve the blanket appeal by the pastor from the pulpit during a Sunday morning worship service. This approach usually yields little, and it is risky. It puts the church leadership in an awkward position of having to say “no thank you” to people who step forward with good intentions but bad qualifications for leading a community group.¹⁰ Instead, church leaders should personally recruit new community group leaders by following up on the recommendations they have been given by existing community group leaders. This approach is better than the alternative because the leadership is listening to the leaders who know the candidates best and are currently discipling them.

⁶Taylor, *The Six Core Values of Sunday School*, 60.

⁷Jim Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship: Building Churches that Make Disciples* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2010), 144, 169.

⁸Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 126-28.

⁹Allan Taylor, *Sunday School in HD* (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2009), 137.

¹⁰Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 131.

In order for this approach to function properly, churches need to provide a process that gives growing believers incremental opportunities to lead. In his book, *Small Groups with Purpose*, Steve Gladen shares how at Saddleback Church they discovered that asking people to become a leader intimidated and overwhelmed many of the candidates they were recruiting. He equated their discovery to how Jesus recruited his own disciples.¹¹ In Matthew 4, Jesus simply asked his would-be disciples to follow him. Over the course of the three years Jesus spent with his disciples, his requirements for them incrementally changed. His request morphed from “follow me” to “die for me” (Matt 16:24-25). Jesus did not immediately thrust his disciples into the deep end of the ministry pool. Rather, he allowed them to grow and develop into the type of men he could trust with the gospel ministry after his ascension. This same approach should be applied to off-campus community groups. The leaders of those groups should always be on the lookout for new leaders from within their community group. When potential new leaders are discovered, they should be encouraged and given responsibilities within their community group. At Highland Park Baptist Church (HPBC), up-and-coming leaders are given opportunities to lead within their community group by serving as an outreach leader, care group leader, or an assistant community group leader. These roles provide a process for incremental growth, preparing the up-and-coming leader for the day when he or she takes on the responsibility of leading his or her own community group.

Along with the need for a process of growth to be in place within the community group ministry, there is also a need for understanding what qualities church leaders ought to seek when recruiting new community group leaders. Saddleback Church looks for people who are faithful, available, inspired, teachable, and have a heart for God.¹² Those who are faithful are the ones sold out and committed to the church and her mission. Candidates who are available are ones who have the time during this season of

¹¹Steve Gladen, *Small Groups with Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 159-60.

¹²Gladen, *Small Groups with Purpose*, 157-58.

their lives to lead a community group. Unfortunately, not everyone who has the desire to serve has the time to serve, so it is important to identify the ones who are available to serve as an off-campus community group leader. It is equally important that those leading be inspired or called by God. Ministry can be arduous, so the one who feels called is much more likely to stick it out when things get tough. Being teachable is another vital characteristic. One never “arrives” in community group ministry; there is always room for growth. Leaders who are teachable are open to the painful but necessary sanding off of their rough edges. Finally, there is the quality of possessing a heart for God. A leader’s heart must be in tune with the Lord’s heart to be effective.

Donahue and Robinson advocate looking at the candidates’ affections, reputations, and expectations. A person’s affections speak of those things he or she loves the most. When it comes to community group ministry, a leader must have a basic love and affection for people because ministry’s commodity is people. The leader’s reputation also is key because it offers clues to that person’s preparation for leadership. The recruiter is wise to talk with people close to the potential leader, asking questions regarding the person’s character, trustworthiness, relational skills, and leadership ability. Likewise, possessing the proper expectations is essential. Those fit to lead a community group will share and adhere to the church’s expectations for service. They will humbly submit themselves under the authority of the church’s leadership.¹³

Brad House and the leadership of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, Washington, look for three things in a potential community group leader. First, they look for a sense of calling by the Holy Spirit, leading the potential leader to take on the particular task. Second, they look for competence in the candidate. They examine the person’s ability to lead at any given level of leadership. Finally, they consider the individual’s character. Mars Hill Church is looking for candidates who exemplify the same sort of character

¹³Donahue and Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups*, 124-26.

espoused in Acts 6:1-7 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 for deacons. House stresses, “When it comes to leadership, never take a risk on character.”¹⁴

Allan Taylor and First Baptist Church of Woodstock look for candidates who are faithful. Like Gladen and Saddleback Church, Taylor is looking for candidates who are committed to their Sunday school class because it is a good indicator of the candidate’s love for the Word of God. It aids in clarifying what sort of leader he or she might be. If the person is not a good follower, there is a very good chance that he or she will not be a very good leader, either. Taylor also looks for potential leaders who will follow the leadership and guidelines of the church. He meets with the candidates and walks them through the expectations of being a Sunday school teacher. He informs them that in order to lead a class, they will have to sign and adhere to a Sunday school covenant. The final two things Taylor looks for in a new leader are God’s calling and a sense of passion. He wants to make sure that there is a clear sense of God’s calling into the teaching/leading ministry. Likewise, he wants to know if the individual is passionate about this type of ministry, as well as the particular age group the candidate feels led to serve. If a leader does not possess a passion for the ministry he or she is leading, then that leader may not stick with it for very long.¹⁵

Larry Osborne and the leadership of North Coast Church in San Diego look for only two major qualities in potential leaders. First, they look for what Osborne calls *spiritual warmth*. They look for candidates who possess a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. This characteristic is the most important of all because everything else hinges upon it. Spiritual warmth is not spiritual maturity. As Osborne states, “Spiritual warmth is characterized by obedience to the light we have,” whereas spiritual maturity is

¹⁴Brad House, *Community: Taking Your Small Group Off Life Support* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 183-85.

¹⁵Taylor, *The Six Core Values of Sunday School*, 60-71.

“godliness with a track record.”¹⁶ Osborne advocates that churches should not raise the bar so high for leaders that most candidates are left out. Instead, those who are growing in Christ are qualified to lead a community group. Second, they look for *relational warmth*. They look for candidates who possess high social skills and high emotional intelligence. They look for likeable and fun people. The reason they emphasize this characteristic is because in their experience those who lack relational warmth kill small groups.¹⁷

At Highland Park Baptist Church, the leadership seeks out four particular qualities in potential community group leaders. First, candidates must possess godly character. Like Mars Hill Church, HPBC uses the qualifications listed for deacons in Acts 6:1-7 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 as a foundation for the qualifications required to be a community group leader. The only exception in the qualifications is that HPBC men and women who have been divorced and remarried are allowed to lead community groups. Second, candidates must be committed to the Lord and his church. In order for a person to be considered for a leadership position within the community group ministry, there must be ample evidence that he or she is committed to a community group. Commitment is shown through regular attendance and participation in the ministry activities within the candidate’s particular community group. HPBC believes that for someone to become a strong community group leader, he or she must first be a good follower. Participating in a community group prior to moving into a leadership role helps ensure that the new leader understands the philosophical values and methodology the church is striving to achieve through the community group ministry.¹⁸ Third, candidates must be coachable. There is always room for growth and more to be learned. Community group leaders are asked to attend three of the four leadership-training meetings held annually. They are

¹⁶Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 124.

¹⁷Ibid., 125.

¹⁸Ibid., 129.

also encouraged to attend at least one small groups conference and read one book on small group ministry or leadership each year. Finally, candidates must possess a calling on their lives. The Holy Spirit's direction must be the driving force behind a person's desire to become a community group leader because his leading assures his provision. As mentioned earlier, ministry can be grueling; God's calling and his provision are what help keep a leader passionate and focused. Without it, a leader will become disillusioned when faced with difficulties and lean times.

Knowing what qualities are essential in a new leader is a fundamental aspect of building a strong, biblical, and engaging small group ministry. Equally important is being aware of what to avoid in a new leader. Osborne mentions four types of people to avoid. The individual who lacks a growing relationship with Christ is the first type of person to avoid because spiritual warmth is absolutely essential for a healthy community group. The second type of person to stay away from is the one who is socially challenged. It does not matter how biblically knowledgeable a candidate is, if he or she is socially awkward, most likely the community group will never be highly successful at making disciples of all kinds of people. At best, the socially challenged community group will reach other socially awkward people rather than being a group that reaches all types of people. Hyperspiritual God-talkers is the third type of person to avoid. Osborne defines this person as one who constantly peppers his or her speech with God-talk. They show signs of spirituality. They are committed, a little fanatical, somewhat condescending, and have a verse or cliché for every situation. Some God-talkers are basically nothing more than a modern-day version of the Pharisees. Others are authentic but simply unaware of how arrogant or intimidating they seem to be. Regardless of which version of a God-talker a candidate may be, both repel people. The Pharisaical kind will kill the group with hypocrisy, while the real-deals will kill it through intimidation. The fourth type of person to avoid is the single-issue crusader. This person views the world through only one lens, which means that in a group setting, he or she will

strive to get everyone else to view the world through his or her lens, too. Under this sort of leadership, people will respond in one of three ways. Some will completely buy-in and take up the crusade. Others will cower in the corner even though they want to leave the group, but most people will leave. Osborne argues that community groups who are led by these four types of people will struggle to reach and retain new people.¹⁹

Based on the research that led Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger to author *Transformational Groups*, there are five other types of people to avoid when looking for new community group leaders. Stetzer and Geiger warn against the person who is ready. They advocate waiting for a period of time before deploying a teaching veteran who has recently joined the church. The reason for this caution is to give the new member time to learn the DNA of his or her new church. Without ample time to learn the church's philosophy and methodology, the veteran will replicate the strategy of his or her previous church. The authors also warn against the person who is willing. Being willing to lead a community group is not a good enough reason for the leadership to entrust something so precious and strategic. Likewise, Stetzer and Geiger warn against the person who is able. A person having a big home, lots of money, and plenty of time does not mean that he or she is capable of taking spiritual responsibility for others. Similarly, they warn against the person with a résumé. The former pastor, seminary student, para-church leader, or denominational leader may have the theological pedigree, but may not be able to commit for the long-term. Finally, Stetzer and Geiger warn against the person who is reluctant. Many times people are reluctant to commit to leading a community group because they feel inadequate for the task. While humility is a great trait to possess in ministry, if a person continues to be reluctant to commit, it might be wise to simply walk away and recruit someone else. There could be a good reason he or she is hesitant.²⁰

¹⁹Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 124-28.

²⁰Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger, *Transformational Groups* (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2014), 134-37.

When it comes to discovering new community group leaders, it is critical that the leaders of the church determine what their recruiting practices will be and what attributes they are seeking in new leaders. They need to be intentional and recruit people who possess godly character, a commitment to the church's authority, a coachable spirit, and the calling of God on their lives. Candidates need to be acutely aware of the church's philosophical and methodological approach to community groups. Potential leaders, therefore, are best discovered from within existing community groups where they already have an understanding of how a community group is to be structured and operated. Church leaders should avoid people who lack a growing relationship with Christ due to the simple fact that he or she will not be able to spiritually develop others. Likewise, single-issue crusaders should be voided because they are divisive. The leadership, however, should exercise grace and wisdom in recruiting leaders because not every person the Lord used in the Bible was a social butterfly.²¹ God can and often does choose to use people whom others pass over. The testimony of Scripture is that the Lord delights in using all types of people. It could be that the Lord wants to use a socially awkward leader or even a person others consider a hyper-spiritual God-talker. It is likely that some of the community group leaders at HPBC could fit into one of those two categories, and God is using them mightily. Thus, church leaders should make certain that they listen to God's Spirit and follow his leading in this process. Once the leadership has determined whom and how to recruit new community group leaders, it is time to begin developing those leaders.

Developing New Leaders

Marathon runners are incredible athletes. The thought of a person running 26.2 miles or the distance of 385 football fields is astounding. One wonders how

²¹Joseph and Elijah are two examples of biblical characters that were not always socially adept. Joseph is an example of a hyper-spiritual God-talker as he shared his heavenly visions with others. Elijah is an example of someone who is socially challenged. He appears at times to be mean, rude, and uncaring.

someone can have the endurance to run for that long of a distance. The reality is that marathon runners did not start out running 26.2 miles. Instead, they started out running shorter distances and worked their way up to a marathon. Prior to training for a marathon, most marathon runners could not have completed it because they were neither in the type of physical shape necessary, nor mentally ready for the grueling stress that comes with such a run. Training and the work they put in to development as runners is what makes the difference. The same is true of community group leaders. Leadership training is what enables community group leaders to develop into the type of leaders who are making disciples and leading their groups to be on mission for Christ. Quoting John Ortberg, Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson state, “Training helps us do what we cannot accomplish through sheer effort.”²² Training allows leaders to accomplish things and go places they once could not. Consequently, leadership training for community group leaders is essential in order to establish and perpetuate a healthy small group ministry.

There is debate over how much training a church should offer and/or require of its leaders. As would be expected, there are some church leaders who advocate heightening the number of training opportunities offered. Allan Taylor falls into this leadership camp. At First Baptist Church of Woodstock he offers monthly training for his Sunday school teachers, requiring them to attend seventy-five percent of the sessions during the year. He also provides two training events and asks his leaders to conduct a personal annual evaluation. Taylor views strenuous training as the way for leaders to reach their God-given potential.²³

Larry Osborne and North Coast Church take a much different approach to development than that of Taylor. Osborne describes, in his book *Sticky Church*, that in the past, North Coast Church had asked their small group leaders to be present at monthly training sessions, to listen to a weekly coaching recording on the upcoming lesson, and to

²²Donahue and Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups*, 135.

²³Taylor, *The Six Core Values of Sunday School*, 63.

attend the church's annual all-day training event. As a result of a thorough evaluation of their development process, Osborne and his staff realized that their small group leaders did not view themselves as the most-equipped small group leaders in America. Rather, the leaders "saw themselves as overscheduled and burnt out on unnecessary meetings."²⁴ As a result, the church instituted a different approach to leadership development. They began asking less of their leaders. They reduced their meetings and made them bite-sized. They also began offering their training at times when the leaders were already going to be at the church, rather than having it on an evening during the week. They also reformatted the weekly audio training, offering it in a downloadable version to better accommodate people's preferences.²⁵ North Coast Church came to the conclusion that for them, *less is more*. First Baptist Church of Woodstock, however, has found that for them, *more is more*. Both churches have been successful using their particular approach for developing leaders. The key for any church is not to clone what another church is doing; it is to discover what works in that church's culture.

After much study and evaluation, Highland Park Baptist Church discovered that the *less is more* approach works better within the culture of the church than the alternative. HPBC offers quarterly training sessions on Sunday afternoons, leading up to the evening service. Both on-campus and off-campus community group leaders are asked to attend seventy-five percent (three out of four) of the sessions. Also, one training event is offered each year, and the leaders are asked to read at least one book in the area of small group ministry or leadership.

There is another aspect to the discussion regarding leadership development, and it pertains to the type of training that should be offered. Leadership development comes in two phases: initial training and on-going training. Initial training takes place upon discovery of new leaders. In actuality it began long before the new leader was

²⁴Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 134.

²⁵Ibid., 136.

discovered because he or she was learning the philosophical and methodological approach to community groups by simply being active and serving in a community group. Many times new community group leaders are raised up from positions of service within existing community groups. By serving in such a role, the new leaders learned from the leader of the group how to head up a community group. Official training, however, is still needed, and churches should take candidates through a series of training sessions for the purpose of equipping the new leader with the knowledge and skills necessary to be a successful community group leader.

Gladen argues that when it comes to leadership development, training ought to be an expectation.²⁶ Initially, there needs to be a time of what Brad House refers to as “basic training.”²⁷ HPBC takes all new community group leaders through a four-week series whereby they are taught the fundamental aspects of community group ministry along with what is expected of leaders. Much time is devoted to teaching through the structure of community groups. The philosophy is articulated through the teaching of three tasks of community group ministry. Correspondingly, the methodology of how the three tasks are accomplished are shared and discussed throughout the sessions. Included in the methodology is the conversation about developing new leaders from their groups. HPBC’s leadership development process leans heavily on apprentice training. Community group leaders are asked to recruit individuals from within their group to lead the outreach and care group ministries. They are also asked to recruit an assistant teacher/leader and a class secretary. These various positions of leadership within the community group create an environment of incremental leadership development as discussed earlier.

On-going training is offered in two ways: designated, regular training sessions

²⁶Gladen, *Small Groups with Purpose*, 167.

²⁷House, *Community*, 187.

and informal, personal conversations. As mentioned earlier, HPBC conducts quarterly leadership development meetings. The training given at these meetings often addresses issues that have been brought to the attention of the community group pastor by some of the leaders, or it deals with something the pastoral staff has noticed that needs to be addressed and corrected. The training sessions are designed to be relational and positive. It is important to help leaders build relationships with other leaders. Doing so will ensure they always have someone to whom to go when problems arise.²⁸ As beneficial as regular training is, the personal, one-on-one training yields the greatest results because it is highly relational, timely, precise, and not overbearing.²⁹ This sort of training is provided by way of a simple phone call, email, or text.

It is important that newly discovered leaders go through a process of development before being deployed. As mentioned earlier, training enables leaders to accomplish more than they could simply through sheer effort. One might view it as sharpening the leaders' axes. A lumberjack can cut a tree down with a dull axe, but he can do it quicker and more efficiently with a sharp axe. G. W. Icenogle offers some insight on developmental process. Using the model of Jesus with his twelve disciples, Icenogle contends that small group leaders receive the best training by being in good model groups with a strong leader prior to taking on their own group. He also highlights the importance of learning the technical and practical sides of small group ministry, yet those two aspects should never circumvent the authority and direction of God's Spirit and his Word. He says, "The pragmatics of small group games, skills, curricula, and education must be submissive to the living presence of Christ in the group."³⁰ New leaders need to have developed the disciplines of personal prayer, relational prayer, Bible

²⁸Gladden, *Small Groups with Purpose*, 167.

²⁹Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 137-38.

³⁰G. W. Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 215.

study, and interpersonal sharing. These things the disciples learned from Jesus, and they prepared them for the ministry Jesus entrusted to them. New community group leaders should also learn these same things from the veteran leaders they are under.³¹

When new leaders have been discovered and complete the initial developmental process, having learned the philosophical and methodological approach to community ministry, they are ready for deployment. They are like the marathon runner who began his or her journey simply striving to finish a five-mile run. All of his or her training, however, began to payoff over time, preparing the runner for the day when the gun is fired and the marathon begins. Community group leaders must be discovered before they can be developed, and then they must be developed in order to be ready for deployment. The act of deploying a new community group leader, though, does not mean the development process has ceased. Leaders are always learning, growing, and developing.³²

Deploying New Leaders

New leaders should continue to receive weekly coaching from a veteran community group leader. The coaching will help them think through and carry out the strategy the church has adopted, as well as contextualize the strategy so that it fits their particular “scene.”³³ A veteran coach (the community groups pastor or a community groups director) will keep them from becoming overwhelmed or sidetracked when the process becomes difficult, so the accountability ensures that each element of the strategy is implemented.

The strategy used for off-campus community groups has many facets.

³¹Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry*, 213-15.

³²John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 24.

³³House, *Community*, 154. Brad House defines *scene* as the location and atmosphere of where a community group gathers as a community.

Initially, a new off-campus community group leader needs to develop a core team. If the leader is birthing a group out of an existing group, then his or her core team will be those coming out of the existing group. If the leader is launching a group independent from any other existing group, then the leader will need to recruit a team of people to join the endeavor. In either case the core team should consist of six to ten individuals. Those team members will need to be assigned certain responsibilities in order to ensure that the three tasks of community groups are fulfilled. The leader will need to appoint an outreach leader who will own and oversee the task of reaching people. He or she will also need to appoint a care group leader to oversee the task of ministering to people. In addition, the leader will need to appoint an assistant teacher/leader, secretary, a hospitality coordinator, and greeters. The secretary records attendance. The hospitality coordinator plans fellowships and makes sure there are refreshments available at group gatherings. The greeters aid in making people feel welcome as they arrive for group time. The core team also helps to create a positive atmosphere for the community group. The fact that there should be at least six to ten people present each week helps when guests attend. An empty living room can give the impression to a guest that not much is happening in the group. The impression then could lead the guest to decide that the community group is not worth his or her time. Subsequently, the value of a core team cannot be overly stressed. It can literally be the difference between success and failure because it enables the off-campus group to be birthed out of a position of strength rather than weakness.

Next, the new off-campus community group leader needs to become a missiologist who understands the culture of the area in which he or she is being deployed. Starting a group in a neighborhood should be approached much like a missionary would approach ministry in a foreign country. As House explains, the leader should strive to discover “where people find their identity, what wakes them up in the morning, where

they spend their time, and where they hope to experience community.”³⁴ A full understanding of these perspectives will greatly assist the development of a plan that engages the community.

When the leader has a solid grasp on the culture, then he or she is ready to pick the proper location for the off-campus community group to meet. Perhaps the best location for the group is the leader’s home, or it might be that the best location is a coffee shop or a meeting room at a local hotel or business. Location is an important decision because it will determine whether people attend. If the location chosen is difficult to find, then most likely very few people will make the effort to find it. On the flip side, if the location is easily accessible, then more people are apt to at least try it out.

After a core team has been developed, the culture of the community has been studied, and a location decided upon, it is time to plan and host a hospitality event. The idea behind such an event is simply to develop relationships with those living in the surrounding community. The event is a non-threatening opportunity to engage people and introduce them to the location where the community group will meet. Brad House shares an example of such a gathering in his book. He calls it “Waffles for Jesus.”³⁵ He tells the story of a man named Bill. His community group was committed to God’s Word and to one another, but Bill did not see any evidence of it making an impact in his neighborhood. He longed for a way to engage his neighbors, so he came up with the idea of making waffles and offering them to those in the neighborhood free of charge. Bill and his wife decided to provide the waffles on Sunday mornings. At first few people came for the waffles, but when those who did come started to tell others about how good they were, more and more people began coming for his free waffles. It was not long till Bill and his wife had more than one hundred neighbors passing through their home each Sunday morning. The waffles gave them a tangible way to engage their neighbors and

³⁴House, *Community*, 130.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 161.

develop relationships. Without the hospitality event, they would not have been able to connect with their community like they did.³⁶ Providing free waffles to people may not be the key to engaging everyone's neighborhood, but there is some sort of hospitality event that will help a new community group engage their ministry context.

Another way of connecting and making people aware of a community group's presence is through a service project. Outreach is one of the three tasks of community groups, so a service project is a good way of doing some initial outreach ministry. A service project might be as simple as adopting a local public school and planting flowers, or it could be refurbishing a portion of a public park. The idea is to raise awareness to the existence of the community group and earn the right to share the gospel at some point in the future. Questions about why such work is happening will provide opportunities to develop deeper conversations.³⁷

Prior to launching the new group, the leadership team ought to canvass the neighborhood, passing out flyers describing when and where the community group will meet. Expressing the purpose of the group on the flyer would also be beneficial. By providing the purpose on the flyer, the question of why the group is meeting is answered.

Likewise, the leadership will need to decide upon a curriculum to be used for the Bible study. Curriculum is important because it is one of the tools used to make disciples through the community group ministry. Teaching the Word of God is a major component of community groups, so the curriculum must be biblical and gospel-centric. Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger discovered eight areas of discipleship as they studied what created transformation in the lives of people who attend a small group. The eight areas of discipleship are (1) Bible engagement, (2) obeying God and denying self, (3) serving God and others, (4) sharing Christ, (5) exercising faith, (6) seeking God, (7) building

³⁶House, *Community*, 161-62.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 156.

relationships, and (8) unashamed transparency.³⁸ Their research revealed that God uses gospel-centered curriculum to speak to each of these eight areas and to transform the lives of those in the group.

The deployment of new leaders necessitates the continuation of training. Thus, new off-campus community group leaders will weekly receive coaching and mentoring from veteran leaders who will help them work through and implement the off-campus strategy. Veteran leaders will coach them on how to develop their core team and assign team members responsibilities. Their coaching will also aid in choosing a location and engaging the community. Even after the group has been successfully launched, the veteran coaches will remain a well of wisdom from which the new leaders can draw as needed.

Conclusion

Possessing a framework or process for properly discovering, developing, and deploying off-campus community group leaders is critical for success. Without a process in place, the ministry is left with neither a charted purpose nor a plan of action. With a process, however, a sense of purpose is not only recognizable; it is achievable. The process is crucial because it provides a structure for leadership development. Today many churches are struggling to enlist quality leaders. It is simply difficult for them to discover leaders who can not only teach the Bible but also develop other leaders. It seems that there is a deficit of leaders who can produce other leaders. The reason for this deficit is often because many churches do not possess an intentional and reproducible system of discipleship. As Jim Putman says, “A reproducible process enables the next generation of leaders to understand what to do and how to do it. Great coaches do not leave the process to chance.”³⁹ For that reason, the church needs a process for

³⁸Stetzer and Geiger, *Transformational Groups*, 39.

³⁹Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship*, 61.

discovering new community group leaders.

It is imperative that the leaders within the church be properly equipped because ministerial success does in fact seem to rise and fall on leadership. Without quality leaders, the church suffers, and its suffering is not momentary. The suffering can last for generations because each consecutive generation fails to effectively train the next one. Consequently, every church needs a process for discovering, developing, and deploying its most important leaders, those leading the discipling arm of the church (community groups).

CHAPTER 4
DEVELOPING AND LAUNCHING STRATEGIC
OFF-CAMPUS COMMUNITY GROUPS

There are thousands upon thousands of people living in Northwest Alabama who are outside of a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. They are not in community with the God who created them for himself (Col 1:16), or his church. For that reason, there is a great need to make every effort to reach the lost and unchurched where they live rather than requiring them to come to a church campus. The establishment of off-campus community groups at Highland Park Baptist Church was an attempt to position the church for greater gospel effectiveness. It increased the church's gospel density as described in chapter 1. It gave the church another avenue by which to engage people with the gospel and the truth of Scripture. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the process used to develop and launch off-campus community groups during the ministry project.

The Project

The ministry project lasted fifteen weeks. The research tools used included a pre-project questionnaire, a pre-series questionnaire, a post-project questionnaire, a post-series questionnaire, an evaluation rubric, and an attendance sheet. A leadership development curriculum was created during the first four weeks of the project by adapting a resource written by Allan Taylor.¹ Four leadership-training sessions (Weeks 5-8) followed the development of the curriculum. The off-campus community groups were launched in Week 9, and they met for six weeks (Weeks 9-14). The final stage of

¹Allan Taylor, *A Passion for Teaching* (Woodstock, GA: Ember to Blaze Ministries, 2010).

the project involved an evaluation of the project (Week 15).

Development of Leadership Curriculum

Prior to the project the leaders who launched the off-campus community groups were recruited. Next, the leaders and I worked together to enlist four to six people to form a core group for each off-campus community group. During the recruiting process, I met with the leaders and the core group members individually to explain the purpose of the project and to give a brief overview of what each week of the project would entail.

In Week 1 a pre-project questionnaire was distributed to the leaders and core-group members via email. They were asked to print it, place a four-digit identification code at the top of the page, answer the questions, and then return it to the church's office. The pre-project questionnaire tested the young adult leaders regarding their knowledge of a biblical framework for off-campus community group ministry. It worked in conjunction with the first goal of the project.

Along with distribution of the questionnaire, lessons one and two of the leadership development curriculum were written during Week 1. As previously mentioned, they were adapted from a resource entitled *A Passion for Teaching* written by Allan Taylor. Each lesson was customized to fit a forty-five minute teaching time slot. The first lesson covered the standards expected of community group leaders.² It clarified the three tasks of community group ministry and described how the groups should be structured. The second lesson discussed developmental practices of community group leaders.³ It stressed that a leader's personal walk with Jesus is the most significant aspect to his or her leadership and shared four areas in which leaders should continually strive to grow.

²See appendix 5.

³Ibid.

The third and fourth lessons of the curriculum were written during Week 2. The focus of the third lesson centered on teaching for application.⁴ Leaders were taught that the goal of teaching should be life change, not merely knowledge. As ones who teach the Bible, they should desire to see their group members not only gain a better understanding of God's Word, but also begin to apply what the Bible says in their daily living. The fourth lesson examined the importance of building a strong leadership team that works together to create an atmosphere of connection.⁵ Good leadership is crucial for success within community groups. Not only does it foster an environment that is inviting to others, but it also enables the community group to procreate by developing new leaders who can start new groups.

In Week 3 the four lessons were submitted to the pastoral staff of Highland Park Baptist Church for review. The pastors evaluated the lessons, looking at such aspects as biblical fidelity, clarity, thoroughness, and applicability. They used a rubric to critique the lessons.⁶ They also submitted suggestions for improvement on the rubric. Needed changes were made to the four lessons in Week 4 in conjunction with the suggestions from the pastoral staff. Then the lessons were resubmitted to the staff for final approval.

Development of Leadership Teams

The leadership training sessions began in Week 5. The leaders of the off-campus community groups were required to attend all of the sessions. The core-group members of each group were also encouraged to attend the sessions, but attendance was not mandatory. A pre-series questionnaire was distributed to the leaders and core-group members at the beginning of the first session. They were asked to place a four-digit

⁴See appendix 5.

⁵Ibid.

⁶See appendix 2.

identification code at the top of the page and given five minutes to answer the questions. The questionnaire measured the leaders' leadership skills and abilities. The questionnaire was emailed to the core-group members who missed the first session.

After everyone had filled out the pre-series questionnaire and returned it, the first lesson was taught. The teaching was followed with a time of discussion, which included a checklist of items that the off-campus community group leaders needed to complete that week in preparation to launch their group. The tasks for session 1 consisted of praying for their neighborhood, building relationships with people within the neighborhood, recruiting more core-group members, and reading Brad House's book, *Community*.

During the week after the first session, three of the leaders poised to launch off-campus groups indicated they needed to step down. One leader stated that the content of the first lesson caused him to question the reason he and his wife agreed to participate in the project. He said he believes the launching of the off-campus groups is a good thing and a very strategic step for Highland Park Baptist Church. The problem was that he did not specifically sense God calling him to start the group. He had merely agreed to do it, thinking it was a good thing. A second leader indicated that he and his wife needed to step down from launching a group because there was a strong chance their house would sell during the project. They, however, still wanted to participate in the project by helping one of the other groups as a core-group member. The third leader found out that he would have to miss two or three of the six weeks that the off-campus groups met. Thus, he and his wife stepped down as leaders, but they still wanted to participate as core-group members for another group. Both the second and third sets of leaders that stepped down continued to attend the training sessions.

Lesson 2 was taught during Week 6. It was followed with a discussion about preparation for the launch. The importance of continuing to pray for the neighborhood, building relationships by going out and meeting people in the neighborhood, and

recruiting core-group members was emphasized. The leaders were also encouraged to meet with their respective core-groups for the purpose of planning a strategy for advertisement, childcare, and the discovery of prospects. They also were encouraged to begin preparing the Bible lessons that would be taught during the community group time.

The third lesson was covered in Week 7. Much like the previous two lessons, it was followed with a discussion about how the leaders should be preparing for the launch of their groups. They were asked to continue doing the same things as in prior weeks, with the addition of reading through *The Six Core Values of Sunday School* by Allan Taylor.

The final lesson was taught in Week 8. Like previous sessions, it was followed with a time of discussion. After that, the plan for publicizing each of the community groups was carefully detailed. Promotional door hangers were distributed to the leaders, and they were asked to saturate the neighborhoods surrounding the area where their community groups would meet the following week with the door hangers. Each leader also received attendance sheets so they could track the attendance weekly.

Deployment of Leadership Teams

Two off-campus community groups were launched in Week 9. A young woman led one of the groups (CG-1), which targeted young women ranging from twenty to thirty years of age. This group met in the leader's home. A young married couple led the other group (CG-2), which naturally focused on young married adults, ranging from twenty-five to thirty-five years of age. This group also met in the leaders' home. Both groups used LifeWay's *Bible Studies for Life: Young Adults* for their teaching curriculum.⁷ Likewise, both groups prayer-walked and passed out the door hangers in the neighborhood in which their group met prior to launching.

Four people attended CG-1's first meeting. All in attendance were part of the

⁷Ronnie Floyd, ed., *Bible Studies for Life: Young Adults*, vol. 1, no. 4 (Nashville: LifeWay, 2014).

core team. During Week 9's coaching call, I asked the leader three primary questions. The first question was, "How did this week's group meeting go?" The leader indicated she was a little discouraged that no one but the core-group came to the first meeting. Outside of that, she thought everything else went well. The group was prepared with finger foods, drinks, and greeters at the door. The hospitality aspect was great. The second question asked was, "What are some things you wish you would have done differently?" The leader responded immediately by saying she wished they would have diversified their advertisement. She pointed out that they had passed out the door hangers and prayer-walked only her neighborhood. She indicated that her neighborhood consisted mostly of married families with children. Therefore, the demographic her off-campus community group was targeting was not the demographic making up the neighborhood. The third question asked was, "What do you plan to do to make your group experience better?" She said that she would have her core-group members pass out the door-hangers in their own neighborhoods and workplaces that week since they interact with ladies in the demographic the group was targeting on a daily basis. They would also intentionally look for opportunities to invite ladies they know or would meet that week to the community group.

Five couples attended CG-2's first meeting, not counting the children. Of the 10 people present at the first meeting, 6 of them were new to the group. The other 4 consisted of the leaders and core-group members. During Week 9's coaching call, the leader of CG-2 was asked the same three questions posed to the leader of CG-1. In response to the first question, "How did this week's group meeting go?," the leader said he was shocked by how well it went. He stated that he did not expect to have 10 people for the first meeting because they did not have many conversations with people while prayer-walking and passing out the door hangers. He said that his particular neighborhood seemed to be a very *churched* area. Therefore, he was extremely pleased to have three new couples in attendance for the first meeting. Since the first meeting

went so well, it was difficult for the leader to answer the second question. Moreover, he did indicate they could have done more prayer-walking and invited more people. In response to the third question, the leader said he needed to prepare more for the teaching aspect. He said that if that many people wanted to hear from God's Word and experience community with others, then he needed to be better prepared to teach and lead the group to experience authentic community.

In Week 10, CG-1 had 4 people in attendance for their second meeting. The group had the same number the second week as it did for the first week, but it was not the same 4 people. A first-time visitor came at the invitation of one of the core-group members. The leader and the 3 core-group members had been intentional to invite women to their community group between their first and second meeting. Their commitment to invite others resulted in the new guest that attended.

During Week 10's coaching call, the leader of CG-1 was asked how the presence of a guest made her feel as the one leading the group. She responded by saying, "It was a small victory. The women and I have put so much work and prayer into this community group over the last few weeks, so it was really good to see it pay off." She indicated that she would contact and follow up with the woman who visited that week. The leader also stated the group meetings were good, and she was really pleased with how well everything went. She was proud of her core-team and how welcoming they were to their guest, making her feel like part of the group.

CG-2 had 10 people in attendance for its meeting during Week 10. Like the other group, the same number of people attended CG-2's second meeting as the first. Four of the core-group members unable to attend the first meeting were present for the second one, but 2 core-group members and 2 guests present at the first meeting did not make it for the second one. The coaching call with the leader of CG-2 during Week 10 centered on the small group concept of guest follow-up. The leader was concerned about how best to reach out to guests. He was somewhat discouraged that one of the couples

that visited the first session did not return for the second, so he had some questions about what he should do. The leader did not want to pressure the guests, but he did want them to know they were missed. I reminded the leader of what they had discussed in the first training session regarding outreach.⁸ I also shared some insights from Gary McIntosh's book, *Beyond the First Visit*. In his book, McIntosh shares that someone from the group should call the guest within twenty-four to forty-eight hours after he or she visits. A simple call lets guests know that they are important, and it helps to develop a relationship between the guest and the community group.⁹

In Week 11, 5 people attended CG-1's third session. All 5 people who had attended at least one of the first two sessions were present for the third. The third session showed a 25 percent increase in attendance over the first two weeks. During that week's coaching call, the leader was asked about what she was doing to develop disciples and leaders. The leader responded that she had not put into practice all that was discussed during the training because she found it easier to take care of things herself. I challenged her rationale by pointing her to the gospels and asked, "Do you think Jesus could have taken care of the ministry better himself, or with his disciples?" The leader agreed that Jesus could have easily handled every ministry need himself. He is after all God. Jesus, however, chose to include the disciples in his ministry. Then I asked, "Why do you think Jesus sent his disciples out in pairs to do ministry in Mark 6:7?" Her response was, "He sent them out in order to learn. Sometimes the best way to learn is to actually do the task." I then pointed out that the best way to develop leaders is to give them responsibility and allow them to lead. The discussion also included how she could use her community group to fulfill the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20). As she leads the women in her group to pray, study God's Word, trust the Lord, and reach the lost, she is

⁸See appendix 5.

⁹Gary L. McIntosh, *Beyond the First Visit: The Complete Guide to Connecting Guests to Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 122.

engaging in the Great Commission. She is using her community group to make disciples.

CG-2 had an increase of 20 percent in attendance during Week 11 over the previous weeks. Twelve came to the third meeting, including one first-time guest. During that week's coaching call, the same question asked of CG-1 was posed to the leader of CG-2. The leader responded in a similar manner as the other leader. He wanted to empower the members of the core-group, but in many ways he found it easier to do most of the ministry work himself. Basically, the core-group members took care of the greeting and brought refreshments. I pointed the leader to the leadership model of Jesus, which was shared with CG-1's leader. The way Jesus mentored and involved his disciples in ministry reveals how vital empowering others for ministry is. I pointed out again how allotting time for outreach assignments and care groups gives others an opportunity to learn and develop as leaders.

Attendance struggled in Week 12 for CG-1's fourth meeting. Three attended. Attendance was down 40 percent from Week 11's high number of 5. The community group was only down 2 people, but when a group is dealing with such low numbers, missing 2 people is significant. During the coaching call, the community group leader was asked about some possible reasons for that week's drop in attendance. The leader said she believed the primary reason for the low number was due largely to the Fourth of July holiday weekend. She knew that at least one of the two people who missed the fourth meeting was on vacation. The question posed to the leader led to a discussion about the importance of tracking attendance. I pointed out that roll calling is not arbitrary, but a critical tool in the hands of the leader. Tracking attendance gives the leader the ability to notice trends in the lives of group members. If a member has missed several weeks in a row, it ought to tip off the leader that something may not be right in the person's life. It does not mean something is wrong, but it should raise the leader's awareness enough to do some investigating. The leader can make a phone call or ask to meet with the community group member as a simple gesture of love and concern. During

the meeting, the leader ought to let the person know he or she has been missed.

Community group ministry is messy at times. People will miss from time to time, and they will make some life choices that remove them from group attendance. In such situations, the leader must put on the hat of a shepherd and seek to rescue the wandering member.

CG-2's attendance was also down during Week 12. It dropped nearly 42 percent from Week 11 to Week 12, with only 7 present for its fourth session. During the week's coaching call, the community group leader was asked about possible reasons for the decline. Much like CG-1, the leader of CG-2 stated he knew that a few of the couples were on vacation for the holiday. I stressed the importance of paying attention to the attendance record. The leader was encouraged to contact the people who miss each week. A simple call or visit after someone misses a meeting tells the member that he or she is important. It conveys that they really matter and are loved by the other members of the group. Contacting absentees helps combat the notion that a person's absence does not matter.

Attendance was up in Week 13 for CG-1. It increased 100 percent over Week 12. The group had a five-week high of 6 people present. During Week 13's coaching call, the leader was asked about the record attendance. She indicated that following Week 12's low attendance, she and the core-group members made phone calls and sent out messages via text and social media to everyone who had attended the past four weeks. They also intentionally invited several different women to attend that week. Their invitations resulted in one new guest. The leader was also asked how intentional she had been to share the gospel during the five sessions. The leader shared that the Bible study lessons had led them to some really good spiritual discussions, but she had not yet fully explained the gospel to the women in her group. I encouraged her to make sure she explains the gospel during the sixth session and even call for a response. One of the purposes of community group ministry is to introduce lost people to the Savior.

Therefore, it is imperative that community group leaders never become satisfied with just spiritual discussions. They must seek to engage those in their group with the gospel message.

CG-2 was up 43 percent in Week 13 over Week 12. The group had 10 people present for its fifth meeting. During that week's coaching call, the leader was asked about the progress the group is making. The leader shared that he believed that the group dynamic was very healthy. The group members seemed to enjoy meeting together. The fellowship time at the beginning was meaningful each week. The people were always engaged in conversation while eating the refreshments. They listened and participated during the teaching time, and they seemed to like the care-group aspect. The leader said that it was really neat to watch people pray for one another each week. The leader was also asked about what he and the core-group members were doing to continue reaching out to the surrounding neighborhood. He stated that they had not done anything since going door-to-door prior to launching the group. He also stated that they did need to make that a priority, and he would begin working that priority into the outreach component of the group. The leader was challenged not to allow complacency in the group. A community group's members can become so comfortable with one another that they begin seeing themselves as family. The only problem with seeing a group as family is that new people who visit can be viewed as outsiders. Off-campus community groups must remain as *open* groups. They are open to newcomers each time they meet because they exist to reach people, teach people, and minister to people.

In Week 14, 5 people attended CG-1's final meeting. There were no first-time guests, but all 3 of the young women who had connected with the community group following its launch were present. The group increased 25 percent in attendance from session 1 to session 6. During the week's coaching call, the leader explained that the final meeting was incredible. Many strong relationships had developed throughout the weeks they had been meeting. She stated that it was amazing to observe all that the Lord

was doing in her community group. The women loved praying for and ministering to one another. Their teaching and discussion time had become a rich and enjoyable experience. The lesson for the final meeting centered on God's faithfulness. The leader used the subject as an opportunity to fully explain the gospel. She then asked for the women to share a little of their testimonies with the group. Each one shared and explained how they personally had experienced God's faithfulness in their lives. The leader also shared that her community group planned to continue meeting each week.

CG-2 had 10 people present in Week 14 for its final meeting. Like the other group, there were no first-time guests. The leader explained during the coaching call that the project had been a fantastic experience. He had learned a great deal about leadership, teaching, outreach, and ministry in general. The leader shared how he had doubted his ability to lead effectively. He had been concerned because he had not led a small group before, and he definitely had not started one from scratch. He also shared that his group wanted to continue meeting. He said, "I have become convinced that we can use our community group to reach our neighborhood, so I do not want to quit now."

Evaluation of the Project

Two questionnaires and a rubric were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the project. The first questionnaire tested participants' knowledge of off-campus community group ministry. It was distributed to the leaders and core-group members in Week 1 and again in Week 15. The second questionnaire examined the leaders' and core-group members' leadership skills. It was distributed in Week 5 at the beginning of the leadership training and again in Week 15. The rubric measured the quality of the leadership development curriculum adapted in Weeks 1-4. The results of the questionnaires and the rubric are evaluated in the next chapter.

Conclusion

This project inaugurated a new and stronger process for developing and

launching community groups. Much was learned during the fifteen weeks. For instance, I learned a great deal about my personal development as a leader through my response to the news of the couples dropping out. There were some positive aspects like engaging new people through the project and equipping leaders. As to be expected, though, there were some negatives such as not launching three of the five groups and not accomplishing all of the goals. A description of the project's strengths and weaknesses together with an evaluation of its purpose and goals will be discussed in the next chapter. HPBC continues to strive to reach people with the gospel within the community, and this project was a giant step in that endeavor.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Jesus Christ gave a gospel mandate to his followers prior to ascending back to the Father (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). He commanded them to go both locally and globally with the gospel and to make disciples. Ever since then, local churches have been striving to follow that directive. The people of Highland Park Baptist Church take seriously the Great Commission and are continually looking for ways to better engage the lost and unchurched at home and abroad. This project was a strategic first-step to be more effective in the local community.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop and launch strategic off-campus community groups at Highland Park Baptist Church. In many ways the project fulfilled its purpose. First, two off-campus community groups were launched. The entire project was centered on the implementation of an off-campus strategy. Second, by starting two groups in neighborhoods rather than on the church's campus, the project helped address the gospel's call for the church "to go" (Matt 28:18-20). It was an initial attempt at increasing the church's gospel density. The project enabled the people of HPBC to go, rather than asking the people within the community to come to the church. Third, a process for leadership development was implemented as a by-product of the project. New leaders have to be developed in order for new groups to be launched effectively.

Taken alone, the three reasons given above show that the purpose of the project was fulfilled. The one issue, however, is the word *strategic*. The project set out to launch strategic off-campus community groups. This statement requires one to ask the

question, “What is a strategic off-campus community group?” My desire was to start the groups in areas where there was not a strong evangelical presence. Two issues hindered that desire. First, there was no way of determining which areas of Northwest Alabama were more evangelical than others. The demographics of the area were examined from various sources. The location of local churches was noted, looking for areas that did not have a high concentration of churches. I even plotted out the homes of every HPBC member on a large map, looking for neighborhoods without a large population of church members. All of these attempts did give me a better understanding of the situation, but they did not reveal if there were areas with higher numbers of lost and unchurched people than other areas. There simply was not enough data available.

The second issue hindering the desire to start the groups in areas without a strong evangelical presence involved the leaders who started the groups. The off-campus community groups met in the homes of their leaders. One of the limitations of the project involved this issue. Because groups met in the homes of the leaders, there was no way to launch the groups in areas that were thought to house a large number of lost and unchurched people. In the future, locations will be secured in areas of presumed greater lostness for the launching of particular off-campus community groups. Then leaders will be recruited to lead the off-campus groups to reach those areas. Specifying certain locations for off-campus community groups will make them more strategic in reaching the perceived areas of greater of lostness within Northwest Alabama.

Evaluation of the Project’s Goals

The first goal of the project was to provide a biblical framework for off-campus community groups. The leaders expanded their biblical knowledge and discovered principles related to off-campus community group ministry through four weeks of leadership training and personal coaching during the six weeks their groups met. A questionnaire examining the leaders’ knowledge of off-campus community group

ministry was given in Week 1 to both the leaders and the core-group members. The same questionnaire was given to them again in Week 15. A comparison of the means from the two surveys revealed a slight increase. The mean increased from 56.833 to 57.333.¹ This result, however, was not successful. The teaching on community group ministry did not make a statistically significant difference in the leaders' knowledge as the t-test for dependent samples revealed ($t_{(5)} = .81, p > .05$).²

Three of the participants had a perfect score of 60 on the first survey (participants 2, 3, and 4). Two of those same participants (participants 3 and 4) scored 60 on the second survey, and participant 2's score decreased from 60 to 58.³ The combination of the high scores and the lack of much change in the scoring between the two surveys made it highly unlikely that any change in the comparison of the two means would be statistically significant.

After talking with the leaders following the project, it seemed that all of the participants perceived themselves as possessing a keen biblical understanding of off-campus community group ministry. The surveys supported their personal perceptions. All the participants responded with either "agree" or "strongly agree" to the five statements that were more doctrinal concerning community. The struggle for a few of the participants involved seeing the effectiveness of off-campus community groups to reach the lost and unchurched. Three of the participants marked "agree somewhat" or "disagree somewhat" on at least one of the five statements that present off-campus community groups as a tool to effectively reach the unchurched. After talking with the leaders, some of them struggled with seeing community groups as an evangelistic tool because they did not see it work in their community group. Both groups engaged new people, but they were not people who were lost or unchurched. In each situation, the

¹See appendix 7.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

guests were people who had a history with a local church and were followers of Christ.

In the future, if these two community groups continue to strive to engage their neighbors, they should experience the fruit of their labors. They should witness lost people coming to know Christ and the unchurched being reached. This project was limited to only six weeks of meetings for the community groups. Many times fruit takes longer than six weeks to grow and become ready for harvest, so it seems logical that it will take longer than six weeks to see the kind of results that are desired.

The project's second goal was to develop a curriculum for preparing the young adult off-campus community group leaders.⁴ The leadership curriculum developed was adapted from Allan Taylor's training manual entitled *A Passion for Teaching*.⁵ The curriculum was submitted to the pastoral staff of HPBC for review. A rubric was used to evaluate the material.⁶ The goal needed 90 percent of the indicators on the rubric to be at "sufficient" or above levels to be deemed successful. Ninety-one percent of the indicators were at the "sufficient" or above levels, so the goal was successfully accomplished.

The third goal of the project was to train and equip the young adult leaders launching the off-campus community groups. This goal was partly achieved through four weeks of leadership development training, using the curriculum adapted in the second goal. I also mentored the leaders during the six weeks of community group meetings through weekly coaching calls. A pre-series questionnaire, assessing leadership skills, was given to the leaders and core-group members at the first training session (Week 5).⁷ The same survey was given to them again at the end of the project (Week 15). A comparison of the two surveys indicated an increase in the mean from 43.5 to 49.5. A t-

⁴See appendix 5.

⁵Allan Taylor, *A Passion for Teaching* (Woodstock, GA: Ember to Blaze Ministries, 2010).

⁶See appendix 2.

⁷See appendix 3.

test for dependent samples further revealed that the teaching from the leadership training sessions made a statistically significant difference resulting in an increase in their leadership capabilities ($t_{(5)} = 3.99, p < .05$).⁸

The total scores on this questionnaire were much lower than the community group ministry questionnaire. The highest score on the pre-series survey was 49, and the lowest was 38. There was one perfect score of 60 on the post-series survey, and the lowest score on the post-series was 43. Still, the scores for the other four participants were in the high 40s to low 50s. Each participant's score, however, did increase from the pre-series to post-series.

The surveys revealed that 4 of the participants made some noteworthy developments in their leadership skills. First, on the pre-series survey participant 2 answered "disagree" to statement 10, which reads, "I know how to revive a failing community group."⁹ On the post-series survey the same participant's answer moved up the scale two points to "agree somewhat." The movement suggests that the participant's leadership ability grew to the point that he or she felt somewhat comfortable taking over a failing community group.

The second notable development involves statement 9, which reads, "I am good at creatively thinking of ways to better reach my neighbors through my community group."¹⁰ Participant 3 answered "agree somewhat" to that statement on the pre-series questionnaire then answered "strongly agree" on the post-series survey. The answer given on the post-series questionnaire moved up two points. The change implies the leader was not sure how to reach out to a neighborhood via the community group. After the training and the experience of launching the group, however, the participant developed the skills and confidence needed to use the community group to reach others.

⁸See appendix 7.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

The third development stems from participant 4's answers to statements 9 and 10. The leader answered "disagree somewhat" to both statements on the pre-series questionnaire but moved up two points on the post-series survey. The leader agreed with both of those statements by the end of the project. The movement reveals considerable growth in those areas, much like participants 2 and 3.

The fourth notable development revealed by the leadership assessment surveys involves participant 6. The leader initially answered "disagree somewhat" to statement 2, which reads, "I can effectively teach a Bible lesson." On the post-series questionnaire, participant 6 marked "agree." The move was a two point increase from pre-series to post-series. One of the three tasks of off-campus community groups is that of teaching. The fact that this leader indicated that he or she was beginning to feel confident to teach is substantial. It is the type of growth desired in all community group leaders.

The fourth goal was to launch five off-campus community groups. Only two groups, though, were launched during the project. The reasons that prevented the other three groups from starting were discussed in chapter 4. Since only two out of the intended five community groups were launched, the goal was technically unsuccessful. Nevertheless, this particular aspect of the project was not a failure for three reasons. First, two off-campus groups did successfully launch. During the six weeks that the community groups met, the members made great strides in reaching, teaching, and ministering to people.

Second, the stepping-down of the leaders who had committed to launch a group was educational for me as the community groups pastor of HPBC. It was a reminder that I was working with people, which can get messy. People are often complicated, and this reality means that ministry is tricky. Unexpected things often happen in people's lives, and when they do, it changes everything. The detour forced me to adapt and work within the altered parameters of the project. It helped me see the leadership growth that has taken place in my life over the last several years. If this

situation had happened in my ministry ten years ago, I probably would have had a meltdown and might have said something that hurt those who were stepping down. Instead, I thanked them for being honest and coming to me at the beginning rather than serving out of obligation or even quitting in the middle of the project. I also told the leaders, who did not sense the Lord calling them to participate in the project, that I appreciated their willingness to follow the Lord's direction. These events could not have been anticipated; therefore, there was no reason to be angry or to feel disappointed.

Third, the two community groups that launched grew in attendance and reached new people.¹¹ Six ladies attended CG-1 during the six meetings. Likewise, there were eighteen individuals who attended CG-2 over the six weeks. The groups accomplished what they were established to do. There was not a tremendous increase in attendance from week to week for either group, but overall the groups grew and new people were connected to the groups. For that reason, the launching of the two off-campus groups was a success.

Strengths of the Project

The project was successful in taking the first step toward the development of a dual approach to small group ministry. Highland Park Baptist Church will continue to offer both on-campus and off-campus community groups. During the project the off-campus groups met on days other than Sunday, and the on-campus groups met exclusively on Sunday mornings. In the future that course of action might change as we learn more and the process evolves.

As I look back and assess the project, three strengths surface. The first strength is the revamping of the community group leader development process. In chapter one I outlined the historical process the church has used to recruit and train new small group leaders. It was inadequate and did not properly prepare community group

¹¹See appendix 8.

leaders for the responsibility of leading and caring for the people in their groups. The four weeks of training and intentional weekly coaching calls offered a solution to the previous scanty equipping process. It clarified the role and responsibilities of the community group leaders. It also explained the purpose for the community group and what is expected of it. Community groups exist to reach, teach, and minister to people. Subsequently, the leaders are to lead their respective groups to reach, teach, and minister to people.

The second strength is it moved the church's ministry focus outside of its own four walls. HPBC is a Great Commission church. It has been and continues to be very much involved in taking the gospel to its neighbors and the nations. Consequently, this second strength is not meant to imply that HPBC was weak in their outreach to the local community; it is simply meant to highlight the fact that there are thousands of lost and unchurched people living in Northwest Alabama, and the vast majority of them are not getting up on Sunday mornings to go to church. The launching of off-campus community groups enabled the membership of HPBC to "go and tell" others about the love of Jesus rather than sitting back hoping the lost will "come and see."

The third strength is closely related to the second. The project was a tangible way for HPBC to reach people where they live. It is easy to talk about reaching the lost and unchurched within the community. The difficulty comes when a church attempts to go out and reach the lost and unchurched within the community. The launching of off-campus community groups provided the church a way and a process to engage the people living in their own neighborhoods with the Word of God and with a community experience. God created each person for community, yet many people live in isolation. They are isolated from God and from one another. The off-campus groups took community to people where they live and engaged them in their own neighborhoods and subdivisions.

Weaknesses of the Project

This project exhibited two distinct weaknesses. The first weakness involved the amount of time needed to change old ways of thinking. The project was only fifteen weeks long, which is not enough time to completely transform perceptions, attitudes, and behavior. During both the training sessions and the weekly coaching calls, I stressed the three tasks of community group ministry over and over with the leaders. I did everything I could to emphasize that the leaders were not just teachers who teach the Bible. Instead, they were leaders of people and leaders of an organization. Still, both group leaders struggled to keep the three tasks balanced from week to week. My conversations with them during the coaching calls revealed that they often defaulted back to the old habit of handling most aspects of the meetings themselves, which usually resulted in the teaching task getting the spotlight. It will take time for the old mindset to morph into the new understanding of community group ministry that is being taught.

The second weakness concerned the lack of training for the other leaders of the off-campus community groups. The four weeks of training centered on the community group leaders. It mentioned the different leadership roles within the community group and gave some job descriptions. The curriculum, however, did not specifically teach the outreach leader, care group leader, and the other positions how to fulfill their responsibilities. The lack of training for those other areas of service put the leaders in a peculiar position. I had asked them to recruit people to serve in those capacities but failed to provide adequate training for them. Therefore, they expressed to me that they did not possess the knowledge or ability to properly equip the people they wanted to recruit to those positions. As a result, neither group completely implemented all the different leadership positions. In future training sessions, the training will be categorized to fit the assorted roles of community group leaders. Outreach leaders will be trained specifically as outreach leaders. Care group leaders will also have their own particular training sessions tailored to equip them to minister to the needs of those within their

community groups.

What I Would Do Differently

The first thing I would do differently is secure locations in areas of supposed greater lostness for the off-campus community groups. As mentioned earlier, I initially intended for that idea to be a reality. I was hoping to be able to see the transforming effect this strategy can have in a neighborhood. Recruiting leaders and host homes was more difficult than I anticipated, so I was forced to work with the locations of the homes of leaders who joined the project.

The second thing that I would change is the preparation for the project. I started recruiting a few months prior to launching the project. I should have spent a few more months looking for host homes in the areas that seem to be more lost. If I had spent more time looking for homes in those areas, then the project's outcome would most likely have been much different.

The third thing I would change is the amount of time I spent with the leaders prior to beginning the project. When I recruited each leader, I explained the purpose and goals of the project. I asked each person being recruited to prayerfully consider participating in the project, and I am convinced that each one of them did as asked. Still, I believe that I should have gone deeper in my explanation and discussion about the project and what it would require of the leaders. Perhaps if I had followed that procedure, I would not have had one of the couples drop out at the beginning of the project.

Theological Reflection

At the outset of the project I thought I possessed a firm understanding of the concept of community in Scripture. Once I began to research and study for the project, though, the curtain was pulled back unveiling a depth to the idea of community I had never known existed. I began to understand that community is a pervasive theme all

throughout the Word of God. The Bible opens with God expressing himself as a communal being. The three persons of the Trinity are all present, active, and perfectly relating with each other in the creation of the universe. The theme is continued as Adam and Eve are created in the image of God. They were created, as Paul explains in Colossians 1:16, “through him and for him.” God’s desire to be in community with humanity is what led him to create and reveal himself to Adam and Eve. The perfect harmony and community enjoyed between the Lord and humanity was severed, though, when the man and woman ate from the forbidden tree. God’s desire to be in relationship with his creation, however, did not change even after the fall of Adam. Sin brought both physical and spiritual death to God’s creation, yet Satan’s victory did not alter God the Father’s desire for community. In Genesis 3, he promises that one of Eve’s descendants will defeat the serpent, and he kills an animal to provide a covering for their shame. His action foreshadows the redemption that will ultimately come through Jesus Christ as he offers his own blood to cover the sin and shame of humankind. Community continues its theme through the calling of Abram and the establishment of Israel as God’s called out people in Genesis 12.

The community that God desires with humanity still was not complete with Israel. He gave them a law outlining how they were to atone for their sins through the sacrificing of animals. The blood of bulls, goats, and lambs, nonetheless, was not sufficient to atone for sin. Therefore, it was necessary for a holy man to die as a substitute for humanity. God the Son came to offer once and for all the sacrifice for sin. The blood he shed on the cross of Calvary provided the redemption humankind needed. His act brought redeemed humanity back into community with the Father. The overarching plot of Scripture is that God longs to be in relationship with his creation. He created humanity in his own image (Gen 1:26). God placed within Adam and Eve his likeness in order that they would be able to relate to him. Even then, after sin tarnished humanity, God paid the ultimate price to bring the apex of his creation back into

community with himself.

God's desire to seek his creation continues through the establishment of the church. God did not create humanity to be isolated from one another. Adam and Eve were given to each other. God intended for them to be in relationship. Through Christ, humanity can again experience the community God intended. The early New Testament church displays the people of God expressing community. They live out the "one another" clauses found in the epistles. They pray for one another, love one another, serve one another, etc.

This study has given me an incredible appreciation and a deeper understanding of the biblical concept of community. I am astounded by the activity of God and the great lengths he went to in order to bring rebellious humankind back into relationship with himself. His grace is truly amazing. I have also gained a more complete understanding of small groups. Prior to the project, I believed they were important and even a strategic ministry of the church. I viewed them as a good way to teach the Bible and connect people to the church. Now, I have come to understand that small groups are so much more than that. They truly find their genesis in the heart of God, as he from the very beginning created humanity to be in relationship with himself and one another. Community is a major player in the meta-narrative of Scripture.

Personal Reflection

Looking back over the experience of this project, two things distinctly stand out. First, as mentioned above, I have come to appreciate the role of the small group in the church. Prior to the project, my view of it was mechanical in nature. Small groups were tools to be used to accomplish a task. The Lord has used this project to align my views closer to his intention. He desires for men, women, boys, and girls to be in relationship with himself and one another. One way this new appreciation has changed me involves the way I recruit new leaders. Previously, I worked to fill positions. I must

admit, there was not enough passion for the role small groups play in our church. Now, in recruiting I stress how the potential leaders are getting to join in what the Lord is doing as he works in people's lives through the community group.

Second, the training sessions and coaching calls have reiterated the importance of leadership development. For a long time, I have known that training was vital and a great need in this ministry. There was not a good preparation process in place to equip new leaders, which sometimes resulted in frustration and disillusionment on both ends. The training curriculum developed works to prepare new leaders for the challenges and responsibilities that come with the position. It will help me launch new leaders who are ready and fully understand what is expected of them. The coaching calls I had each week with the community group leaders reminded me of the importance of on-going training. I heard it said somewhere that you cannot expect what you do not inspect. This fall I will begin to do what I have known was needed for a couple of years. I will audit each one of HPBC's community groups and take note of how the leader carries out his or her duties. Then I will type up my observations and personally go over them with the leader. I know that several of my leaders are not practicing the three tasks like I have taught them. These talks will be an opportunity to discuss the issues they are having and how they can better implement the three tasks. It will be a way for me to inspect their ministry and offer some constructive criticism that will hopefully result in a healthier community group ministry. A healthier community group ministry means there will be more lost and unchurched people being engaged with the gospel and biblical community.

Conclusion

This project has been a great help to me personally by bringing clarity to this unbelievable concept of community. I have learned that community is not simply a cute and clever church growth idea. It has been the plan of God from the very beginning. I have also learned that a leadership development process is crucial to the success of a

church's small group ministry. Since community is God's plan for redeemed humanity, it is imperative that church leaders take seriously their development and equipping of small group leaders. I also believe this project will help pastors and church leaders implement a biblical approach to off-campus community group ministry as they seek to engage with the gospel the lost and unchurched living within their cities and neighborhoods.

APPENDIX 1

PRE-PROJECT AND POST-PROJECT OFF-CAMPUS COMMUNITY GROUP MINISTRY SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your perceptions and knowledge of off-campus community group ministry. This research is being conducted by James Taylor in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Doctor of Ministry degree at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. For the purpose of this research, you will be asked to answer the following questions both before and after the completion of the project. You will respond to each question by indicating how much you do or do not agree with the statement. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

Survey Directions

Please write a four-digit code of your choice at the top of the survey. You will use the same code for both the pre-project and post-project surveys. Respond to the statements by indicating how much you do or do not agree with the statements according to the scale below.

Strongly Disagree SD	Disagree D	Disagree Somewhat DS	Agree Somewhat AS	Agree A	Strongly Agree SA
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1. _____ Off-campus community groups are a strategic way to reach the unchurched with the gospel.
2. _____ Off-campus community group ministry is a tool that enables the church to go to the world rather than hoping the world comes to the church.
3. _____ The idea of community was first expressed within the Godhead of Father, Son, and Spirit.
4. _____ The community man was created for has been broken by sin.
5. _____ Generally speaking, people long for relationships.
6. _____ Off-campus community groups were modeled in the early New Testament church.

7. _____ Generally speaking, people desire to be in community with those whom they share common interests.
8. _____ An off-campus community group can be very effective in reaching the unchurched due to the fact that there are often innate commonalities among those living around where the group meets.
9. _____ Through the redemptive work of Christ on the cross, man has been given the opportunity and ability to be in community with God and with others.
10. _____ Off-campus community groups seek to accomplish the same three tasks as on-campus community groups at HPBC.

APPENDIX 2

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM RUBRIC

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to evaluate the leadership development curriculum. This research is being conducted by James Taylor in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Doctor of Ministry degree at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. For the purpose of this research, you will be asked to answer the following questions after completion of the writing of the curriculum. You will respond to each statement by indicating how well the material meets the criteria. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

Rubric Directions

The rubric will evaluate the community group leadership development curriculum. Please designate how well the material sufficiently meets the criteria by marking the corresponding box.

Leadership Development Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Lesson One Evaluation					
1=insufficient 2=requires attention 3=sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The thesis of the curriculum is clearly stated.					
The points of the lesson support the thesis.					
The lesson contains practical application points.					
The lesson's goals are clearly articulated.					
The lesson supports the philosophical framework of community groups at HPBC.					
The lesson is thorough in its coverage of the material.					
The lesson is relevant to leadership development.					
The lesson is biblical.					
The material is theologically consistent.					
The material is applicable for both the inexperienced and experienced leader.					

Leadership Development Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Lesson Two Evaluation					
1=insufficient 2=requires attention 3=sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The thesis of the curriculum is clearly stated.					
The points of the lesson support the thesis.					
The lesson contains practical application points.					
The lesson's goals are clearly articulated.					
The lesson supports the philosophical framework of community groups at HPBC.					
The lesson is thorough in its coverage of the material.					
The lesson is relevant to leadership development.					
The lesson is biblical.					
The material is theologically consistent.					
The material is applicable for both the inexperienced and experienced leader.					

Leadership Development Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Lesson Three Evaluation					
1=insufficient 2=requires attention 3=sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The thesis of the curriculum is clearly stated.					
The points of the lesson support the thesis.					
The lesson contains practical application points.					
The lesson's goals are clearly articulated.					
The lesson supports the philosophical framework of community groups at HPBC.					
The lesson is thorough in its coverage of the material.					
The lesson is relevant to leadership development.					
The lesson is biblical.					
The material is theologically consistent.					
The material is applicable for both the inexperienced and experienced leader.					

Leadership Development Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Lesson Four Evaluation					
1=insufficient 2=requires attention 3=sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The thesis of the curriculum is clearly stated.					
The points of the lesson support the thesis.					
The lesson contains practical application points.					
The lesson's goals are clearly articulated.					
The lesson supports the philosophical framework of community groups at HPBC.					
The lesson is thorough in its coverage of the material.					
The lesson is relevant to leadership development.					
The lesson is biblical.					
The material is theologically consistent.					
The material is applicable for both the inexperienced and experienced leader.					

APPENDIX 3

PRE-SERIES AND POST-SERIES PERSONAL LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your perceptions regarding your ability to effectively lead a community group. This research is being conducted by James Taylor in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Doctor of Ministry degree at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. For the purpose of this research, you will be asked to answer the following questions both before and after the completion of the project. You will respond to each question by indicating how much you do or do not agree with the statement. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

Survey Directions

Please write a four-digit code of your choice at the top of the survey. You will use the same code for both the pre-series and post-series surveys. Respond to the leadership assessment issues by indicating how much you do or do not agree with the statements according to the scale below.

Strongly Disagree SD	Disagree D	Disagree Somewhat DS	Agree Somewhat AS	Agree A	Strongly Agree SA
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1. _____ I am capable of effectively leading a community group.
2. _____ I can effectively teach a Bible lesson.
3. _____ I understand how to illustrate points for better clarity and comprehension.
4. _____ I can organize a community group.
5. _____ I know how to start a community group in my home for the purpose of reaching my neighborhood with the gospel.
6. _____ I can effectively share the gospel with others.
7. _____ I know how to create an environment whereby community group members feel comfortable to engage in the discussion.

8. _____ I know how to maintain a balance between the teaching, ministering, and evangelizing aspects of a community group.
9. _____ I am good at creatively thinking of ways to better reach my neighbors through my community group.
10. _____ I know how to revive a failing community group.

APPENDIX 5

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM

Session 1: High Standards for Leaders

Preparation for meeting

- Provide pens and copies of the following and have them ready to distribute to every person attending.
 - Lesson Handout: Session 1: High Standards for Leaders
 - The Community Group Agreement
 - The Truths We Hold Dear
 - My Personal Testimony
 - Community Group Leader Description
 - Off-campus Community Group Preparation Sheet
- Provide copies of Brad House's book, *Community*, and Allan Taylor's book, *The Six Core Values of Sunday School* to distribute to each person attending.
- Have media needs ready to show the lesson presentation.
- Room set-up: Have chairs arranged so they can see you and the media presentation.
- Provide nametags and sharpie pens. Everyone should wear a name tag. This will be reinforced in the last session.
- Display the statement: "Leaders must be committed to high standards!"
- As the teacher, you need to arrive at least fifteen minutes early. Be prepared to greet attendees at the door as they arrive. You want to model for them how they are to act when they start teaching. Therefore, when they arrive you need to speak and/or smile and/or touch every person in attendance. You will reinforce this in the last lesson.

Lesson Theme

Leaders must be committed to high standards.

Lesson Goals

- Discover the level of commitment required to be a community group leader.
- Discover the three tasks of community groups.
- Develop an understanding of the community group structure.

Motivation

- Present to the class a dozen eggs and a pound of bacon.

State: These two things make a good breakfast, and they both require two different animals. One requires a chicken and the other a pig.

Ask: But there is a different level of commitment asked of these two animals. What is the difference? (Obviously, the chicken contributed, but the pig sacrificed his life.)

Application Questions:

- Is there a different level of commitment between a community group leader and a community group member? What kind of difference? What does that difference look like?
- Is there a difference between a community group leader and a regular church member? What is that difference? What does it look like?
- Break the group up into teams of 2-3 people. Have half the teams to read and discuss James 3:1 and the other half to read and discuss Matthew 5:19. Give them a couple of minutes then have them answer this question: What does the Bible say about the standard (qualifications) to be a teacher?
- Discuss #1: What kind of requirement and commitments does the Word of God place on teachers/leaders?

Discuss #2: What do group members expect of their leaders?

Discuss #3: What should a teacher/leader expect of himself?

Ask: Based on these scriptures and our discussion, do we agree that more is expected of a teacher/leader than a regular group member?

- Story or Role Play:
Scenerio #1: Mr. Jones is the principal of the local elementary school. He interviews Mrs. Smith who wants to teach the 3rd grade class. “Mrs. Smith, the school system’s requirements for you to be a 3rd grade teacher is: you will need a college degree in elementary education; you will have needed to serve under a qualified teacher as a student teacher for a year; and we will need a background check and five references.”

Scenerio #2: Mr. Jones is the small groups pastor at the local church. He is meeting with Mrs. Smith to see if she will lead the 3rd grade community group. Mrs. Smith is not sure she is capable of doing this. Mr. Jones tells her, “Mrs. Smith, we don’t require much. We just need someone who will occupy the kids and keep them from disrupting other groups. You know, don’t let them make a bunch of noise and run up and down the hallways. And, if you can, you can try to read a Bible verse to them and maybe have a prayer. But its not that hard.”

Ask: What’s wrong with this story? Certainly school teachers ought to meet certain criteria, but what about those teaching the eternal truths of Almighty God? Should not God get our best and not our leftovers? Didn’t God give us His best? Are we to do less?

- Do a brief Bible study on the cost of discipleship.

Read: Matthew 6:33. We are to seek first the kingdom of God; not second, not third, but first! As community group leaders this must be true of us. If the leaders do not personify biblical discipleship, then how can we produce other disciples? We must not allow our leadership to “water down” the call of Christ upon believers.

Read: Luke 9:23-24. We are called by Jesus Himself to deny ourselves. What a hard thing to do, yet it is the standard set by Christ. To deny ourself is the spirit

that the pig must have in order to supply the bacon for breakfast. Making a contribution, like the chicken supplying the egg, is not “denying yourself.”

Read: Luke 9:57-62. Jesus tells about three “Would-Be Disciples.”

The first would-be disciple was unwilling to count the cost.

Apply: Teaching/leading a community group, shepherding people, and leading them to follow and serve God will be personally costly.

The second and third would-be disciples said, “Let me *first*” go do something else. They wanted to be disciples if certain conditions were met. But we have already read Matthew 6:33, “Seek *first*...” Both the second and third would-be disciples made requests that were noble; however, Jesus calls for unconditional discipleship, not conditional discipleship.

Apply: Teaching/leading a community group will require a “Seek *first* His kingdom and His righteousness” commitment.

Read Luke 14:24-33. Notice three times Jesus said, “he cannot be my disciple.” The call to become a disciple of Christ is one requiring great commitment and sacrifice. Too often we have presented a “cheap grace” and a “cheap discipleship.” But Jesus didn’t.

Read: John 2:13-17. Jesus was consumed and passionate about the house of God and the things of God. We, too, should be absolutely consumed with the things of God.

Read: Haggai 1:1-5. Those who had returned from Babylonian captivity were delaying the rebuilding of the Temple that was destroyed in 586 B.C. They said it was not time to rebuild the Temple. Yet, God saw that they took the time to build fine homes for themselves. “paneled houses” refers to those built with costly cedar (see 2 Samuel 7:2; 1 Kings 7:1-7; Jeremiah 22:14).

Apply: This resembles American Christianity. We have little time for the house of God and her ministry, but we take the time to build our homes, our bank accounts, our pet projects. Now there is nothing intrinsically wrong with many of these things, but it is wrong when they take precedence over the things of God.

- Point out the lesson’s theme: “Leaders must be committed to high standards!”

Examination

- Pass out the handout for the lesson.
- Use the media presentation to show the answers for the blanks on the lesson handout.

A Philosophical Commitment

“From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.” – Luke 12:48

1. A commitment to our church’s core values.
 - God Dependence - A culture where complete reliance on and total abandonment to God is normal and expected.
 - Kingdom Advancement - Discovering and joining in God’s activity of bringing people into relationship with Himself in the Shoals and throughout the world.
 - Authentic Community – Connecting people to create empowering

- relationships that culminate in fellowship and service.
- Life Transformation – Producing mature Christ-followers with an intimate knowledge of Jesus, who desire to lead others to experience life transformation.

2. A commitment to the three tasks of community groups.

Read Matthew 4:23; 9:35

Community groups should do what Jesus did. As believers we are co-laborers with Christ. Therefore, our labor should be exerted on the same things, as was Jesus' labor. These two verses give us a clear picture of what Jesus did – He was reaching people (“proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom”), teaching people (“teaching in their synagogues”), and ministering to people (“and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people”).

If you search through the four gospels, you find Jesus doing these three things more than anything else. Jesus' earthly ministry was consumed with these three practices.

- Reach People
- Teach People
- Minister to People

Let's do what Jesus did. Let's reach, teach, and minister to people! All three tasks have the word “people” because our community group ministry, like Jesus, is in the people business.

3. A commitment to our community group structure.

The purpose of the community group structure (time allotment) is to make sure we have a time of emphasis for all three tasks of the community group.

- 10 minutes: Fellowship
- 5 minutes: Announcements
- 10 minutes: Outreach Emphasis
 - 1st & 3rd Sundays: Assign prospects to group members for follow-up either by a mail/email, phone call, or a visit.
 - 2nd Sunday: Have a class member share their testimony.
 - 4th Sunday: Discuss the group's mission/evangelism projects.
- 15 minutes: Care Group Time
 - Take the roll
 - Assign each member present an absentee to contact
 - Discuss ministry needs
 - Share prayer requests
- 30 minutes: Bible Study

4. A commitment to our community group strategy.

- Develop new leaders
 - Have an apprentice teacher that you allow to teach once a month.

The more leaders you develop the more people you have doing the work of reaching people, teaching people, and ministering to people. And the more

laborers you have working on the three tasks of our community groups the more fruit you can produce.

- Start new groups
 - Birth a new group out of your group every two years.

The more groups you have the more workers you have. Community groups provide people opportunity to serve. Therefore, the more groups you have the more opportunities you provide.

A Practical Commitment

1. A commitment to outreach.
 - How can we accomplish the number one task of community groups if the number one leader of the group is not personally involved? How can you lead your group to do what you are not doing?

It is simple but profound: Evangelistic groups are led by evangelistic teachers/leaders. You cannot teach your way to an evangelistic group, you must model evangelism to your community group.

2. A commitment to teach the Word of God.
 - We fully expect your group to have a 30 minute lesson every week.
 - We fully expect you to teach the curriculum provided by the church unless other arrangements have been made in advance with the staff.
 - We fully expect you to be well prepared.
 - We fully expect you to believe in the inerrancy of Scripture.
3. A commitment to lead the group to apply/obey the Scripture.
Read James 4:17.
State: Could it be that our Bible studies are making greater sinners out of people? If they learn more but do no more, are they not greater sinners according to this passage?
 - The end result of Bible study is obedience, not knowledge!
4. A commitment to fill the three roles of the teacher.
 - Teacher
 - Shepherd
 - Leader
5. A commitment to follow the pastoral leadership of the church.
A community group is not the place to air your dissatisfaction with a decision the pastor (or staff, or deacons) made. As a teacher, you become an extension of the pastor's teaching ministry; you become a part of his team. All teachers must be supportative of the pastor and staff. If there is an issue that bothers you, then set an appointment and talk with your pastor about it. Handle all differences biblically and with Christian love for your brother.

A Personal Commitment

*Commitment is not possible unless your personal comfort is jeopardized.

Application

1. A personal commitment: Will you make the personal commitment to the all important ministry of teaching the Word of God and leading God's people?

State: Competency is important, but it is not as important as commitment. The church is full of competent, but yet, uncommitted people. Additionally, most committed people will eventually become competent.

2. We have a procedure to try to determine the commitment level of those who are potential community group leaders.

- Review the form *The Community Group Agreement*
- Review the form *The Truths We Hold Dear*
- Review the form *My Personal Testimony*
- Review *Community Group Leader Description*
- Give each potential leader a copy of both *Community* and *The Six Core Values of Sunday School*.

State: We expect every potential leader to read the book, *The Six Core Values of Sunday School* before they start leading a community group. We want you to know our philosophy and understand the vision and purpose of our community groups.

Explain that the above mentioned forms must be checked off and returned before anyone can become a teacher. Also, the book must be read.

3. Let's finish where we started. The chicken or the pig, which are you?
State: We are looking for pigs! This lesson will be your hardest because we are looking for commitment. If you can make it through this lesson, the other three are easy.

Off-Campus Community Group Preparation

Four Weeks Out

- Begin praying for the neighborhood where your community group will be launched.
 - Prayer walk each street in the area.
 - Pray specifically for each home.
 - Pray for God's Spirit to open people's hearts to your invitation.
 - Pray for God's Spirit to draw people to Christ.
- Begin building relationships with people within the neighborhood.
 - As you prayer walk, talk to those who are out in their yards or walking on the streets.
 - Introduce yourself and show interest in their lives.
 - Make a note of those who mention information related to spiritual things.
 - Inquire about people's interest for a Bible study in your neighborhood.
- Continue recruiting a few couples to assist you in launching your community group.
 - Recruit an assistant teacher.
 - Recruit an outreach leader.
 - Recruit a secretary.
 - Recruit a hospitality leader.
- Begin reading Brad House's book, *Community*.

Session 2: Strive to Be the Best

Preparation for meeting

- Provide pens and copies of the following and have them ready to distribute to every person attending.
 - Lesson Handout: Session 2: Strive to Be the Best
 - True/False Worksheet
 - Leader Evaluation Worksheet
 - The Incarnational Principle
- Have media needs ready to show the lesson presentation.
- Room set-up: Have chairs arranged so they can see you and the media presentation.
- Provide nametags and sharpie pens. Everyone should wear a nametag. This will be reinforced in the last session.
- Display the statement: “Community group leaders should strive to be the best they can be.”
- As the teacher, you need to arrive at least fifteen minutes early. Be prepared to greet attendees at the door as they arrive. You want to model for them how they are to act when they start teaching. Therefore, when they arrive you need to speak and/or smile and/or touch every person in attendance. You will reinforce this in the last lesson.

Lesson Theme

Be the best community group leader you can be.

Lesson Goals

- Discover that effective leadership begins with your personal walk with the Lord.
- Discover the biblical importance of teaching as a community group leader.
- Discover the four developmental areas of the leader.

Motivation

- Have the True/False worksheets in the seats prior to the beginning of the class. As leaders arrive have them go ahead and fill in their answers.

True or False

- ___ T ___ 1. The most basic, core function of every New Testament church is teaching.
- ___ T ___ 2. Teaching the Word of God affects everything we do.
- ___ T ___ 3. Teaching affects the way we do evangelism, discipleship, ministry, fellowship, prayer, service, relationships, etc.

Lost people cannot be saved until they are *taught* a few basic truths of the Scripture. They must learn that they are a sinner and separated from God, but God loves them and sent Jesus to die for their sins and to be raised for their justification.

Saved people cannot be discipled apart from their growth in the Word. Ministry, fellowship, prayer, service, relationships are all guided by what the Scripture teaches us.

- ___ T ___ 4. Teaching is the one irreplaceable, indispensable, unchanging function of the church.

But a function is left undone unless it has a someone to act upon it. Enter teachers!

- T 5. The church is fundamentally a teaching-learning organization.
- T 6. Teaching the Bible is more important than vision, strategic planning, and effective organization.
- T 7. Teachers carry out the vital function of teaching God's Word.
- T 8. Teachers communicate knowledge, bestow wisdom, add value, give potential, build futures, and impart life.
- T 9. Teachers handle the two most precious things to God: His Word and His people!
- T 10. Teaching is a work of transformation.
- T 11. Teachers influence group members cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally.
- T 12. Teachers increase the depth of biblical knowledge in the church.
- T 13. Teachers heighten the level of commitment to Christ and the church.
- T 14. Teachers generate new leaders and workers for the church's ministries.
- T 15. The most powerful way to lead believers is by teaching them the Bible.
- T 16. Teachers have the greatest influence in the church for achieving her mission.
- T 17. The greatest leaders of the church are her teachers.

After they have finished filling in their "True" or "False" answers...

Read each statement and ask them how they answered and why they answered that way.

Ask: What does these "True/False" statements say to us? Let them respond.

State: "The importance of teaching cannot be overstated. Therefore, the value of the teacher cannot be overstated."

State: "God sent Jesus to be a teacher so it must be of great importance. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have a total of 3,776 verses. 1,660 verses record Jesus teaching – that is 44% of all verses in the Gospels. Teaching must be important!"

Review last week's lesson by stating the theme: Leaders must be committed to high standards. Then call attention to this week's theme: *Be the best community group leader you can be.*

Examination

- Pass out the lesson handout for session 2.
- Write one of the eight major points listed on the lesson handout on eight separate tear sheets and hang them on the walls around the room. Divide the class up

equally into eight groups (if you do not have enough for eight groups then you may have to give some groups more than one assignment). Have each group to go to one of the eight tear sheets, read the statement on the tear sheet, and brainstorm answers to:

- What does this statement mean to you as a teacher?
 - How can adherence to this truth impact your community group?
(You might want to have these two questions written on a dry erase board so they can reference back to them.)
- Have each group to decide on their answers to the two questions and write their answers on the tear sheet. Have each group select someone to present the group's findings. As each group shares, cover the corresponding bullet points and then move to the next group.

1. The effective teacher always teaches from the overflow.
“The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil *man* out of the evil *treasure* brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.” – Luke 6:45

Each week your heart should be full. This fullness of heart occurs as you spend time in the Word and in prayer each week. The preparation of the mind is important but the preparation of the heart is just as important. It really is true that “whatesoever moveth the heart, wageth the tongue!”

If you have enough time to get in everything you want to say then you did not study enough. You ought to have more to say and more to teach than you have time to fill. This forces you to teach from the overflow.

- If you are not excited about teaching your community group, then don't be surprised if your members are not happy about being in your group.
 - Blessed is the group whose teacher thinks this week's lesson is the best one he/she will ever teach!
 - If you want to know the temperature of the group then stick the thermometer in the teacher's mouth.
2. If you stop growing today, you stop teaching tomorrow.
“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.” – Hebrews 5:12-14

If a teacher rates 6 on a scale of 1 – 10 (with one being low and ten being high) then he can only lead 1's, 2's, 3's, 4's, and 5's. He cannot lead 7's, 8's, 9's, and 10's. Therefore, the teacher must grow in order to keep leading. If your people are growing (and their supposed to), then they will pass you up. If they pass you up, then they no longer need you as their teacher/leader. Teacher, you must always remain in a growth posture! (Also see 2 Timothy 2:15 and 2 Peter 3:18)

- Everything that God created with life He intended to grow.
- If the tree dies, it can bear no fruit.

See John 15:1-8

3. Teaching is not the expression of mere words; it is the expression of life.
“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” – John 1:14

- You communicate with life more than words!
- Life is the vehicle of effective teaching.

Neither personality nor methodology can substitute for this principle. You cannot communicate out of a vacuum.

Real teaching takes place by modeling and personifying truth in your life. The tongue in the teacher’s shoe should be going in the same direction as the tongue in the teacher’s mouth!

- You cannot impart what you do not possess. (Acts 3:6)

If you do not know it, you cannot give it. The book is no better than the author; the painting is no better than the painter; the plumbing is no better than the plumber, the sermon is no better than the preacher; and the lesson is no better than the teacher.

In Acts 3 Peter was asked by a lame man to give him some money. Peter responded by saying, “I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene-walk” (Acts 3:6). Peter could not give the lame man what he did not have – silver and gold. However, he could give the lame man what he had – the power of God to heal. Peter could impart the power of God because he possessed it. You can only give away that which you have.

- Most of us teach above our living.

This is not all bad. (1) None of us can live up to our profession. (2) I would hate to teach down to my living! But the point is, let’s do all we can to live the truths we teach.

4. As long as you live, you learn; and as long as you learn, you live.
“So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” – John 8:31-32
Growth is life’s greatest adventure - just think how boring life would be if you stopped learning. If you could no longer learn and had to live the rest of your life with your current knowledge, life would eventually become stale. Learning propels life on an adventurous journey.

- Your community group should drink from a flowing river, not a stagnant pond. (John 7:37-38)

Illustration – Howard Hendricks tells the story of one of his professors who studied/prepared all the time even though he had taught for years and was drawing close to retirement. When Dr. Hendricks asked him one day why he spent so much time in study and preparation, the wise old professor answered, “I would rather my students drink from a running stream as a stagnant pool.”

- We don’t want to put live eggs under dead hens!

Will you be a live or dead hen when you community group meets next?

5. God can't work through you until He first works in you.
"For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure." – Philippians 2:13

The greatest thing you bring to your ministry is your own personal walk with Christ. Don't just go through the motions, for it will eventually catch up to you. Motion should be replaced by devotion! People don't follow motion, but they will follow devotion!

- God works from the inside-out; not the outside-in.

God cannot work out until He first works in. Satan works from outside in; God works from inside out.

- You are no better publicly than you have been privately.

Your private times in devotion with God and in personal preparation are paramount to a good teaching ministry that produces discipleship and Christlikeness in others.

6. If you want to strengthen your teaching, then strengthen the teacher.
"Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."
– Philippians 3:13-14

If Paul had not arrived and was still trying to apprehend that for which God apprehended him, how much more should we be constantly pressing toward the mark?

- The growing process never stops.

Paul, the great New Testament teacher, was properly related to the past, present, and future.

Past – Paul did not depend on yesterday's victories to win today's battles.
"...forgetting what *lies* behind."

Future – Paul looked forward to the challenge of tomorrow. "...reaching forward to what *lies* ahead."

Present – He knew that he must continue on growing today. "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

7. If you want to become a change agent, then you must also change.
"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." – 2 Corinthians 5:17-18

Our salvation means that we were changed and we are changing. At the moment of salvation we were changed because we were justified. Our salvation is still

changing us because we are being sanctified. The Christian life is one of constant growth and change.

- Effective teaching comes only through an instrument of change.

How can you disciple others if you are not a growing disciple? How can an instrument that has grown cold and stale produce that which is growing and vibrant? I would rather sit under a teacher whose knowledge has not yet matured but is growing as to sit under a teacher whose knowledge is mature but who has grown stale.

- The more you change, the more you become an instrument of change in the life of others.

8. You cannot fully develop spiritually unless you develop in life's other areas as well.

“And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” – Luke 2:52

Like Jesus, we need to be well rounded if we are to lead others and be effective in impacting their lives.

Four areas of development are:

- Intellectually – “in wisdom”

Jesus developed His mind. In Matthew 22:37 Jesus gave us the greatest commandment of all, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” Notice that we are to love God with our mind. That is, our minds are to be devoted to God and His teaching. We are not to throw our minds into neutral because we have our fire insurance from hell. We are to learn and develop our thinking like unto God's. This is a command. Therefore, when we do not obey this command we sin.

Maintain a consistent study and reading program. Leaders are readers, and readers are leaders. The two things that will influence you the most in the years to come are (1) the books you read and (2) the people you are with.

Expose yourself to pertinent seminars and mentors. Select courses that will improve not only your content but your skill as well. Mentors are much more available than we think. You will become like the things you study and the people to whom you are exposed.

Keep Bible study your priority. Above everything else study the Word. The basis for all teaching is knowledge of subject content. So don't just get “under” the Word, get “in” the Word; don't just go through the Word, allow the Word to go through you.

Avoid financial difficulty. It is hard to serve God or do anything else when you are financially strapped. On the other side of the coin, don't become so entangled with making money that you are ineffective in God's service. The advice to make all you can as long as you make it honestly is bad advice. It will leave you with no time for serving God. Exercise intellectual wisdom with your finances.

- Physically – “in stature.”

Jesus developed the body. Remember your body is the temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19) and your learners need to see that you believe that.

Get proper exercise. We often deny our humanity. Sometimes because of time constraints and sometimes because we are trying to be spiritual to the point of neglecting the physical.

Eat balanced meals. We should avoid “porking out” and we should avoid being enslaved by a health food craze. It is wrong to “eat your way to the grave” and it is all right to have a piece of cake occasionally. Be balanced and be sensible.

Get proper rest. You do no one any good when you are constantly fatigued and tired. You need to be able to operate at your best. Certainly, there will be times that you are tired, but learn how to properly pace yourself. It is very important for you to get to bed on time Saturday night if you wish to be at your best on Sunday morning for worship.

- Spiritually – “in favor with God.”

Jesus developed His relationship between Himself and the Father. How often do you get alone with God? Not just so you can study your lesson, but to just experience Him; to build your relationship with Him; to just talk to Him and He with you. An occasional spiritual retreat, a periodic time to get away for prayer, fasting, and study can renew your spiritual batteries. This was a practice that Jesus often used. He would come apart for a season. As it has been often said, “If you don’t occasionally ‘come apart’ you will come apart.”

- Socially – “in favor with man.”

Jesus developed relationships with those around Him. How about the social dimension of your life? Do you have any friends? People with whom you can just be yourself. You need people in your life to socialize with. It is both nice and needed to have friends with whom you can be a person, not a position.

Do you have any lost friends? The longer you are a Christian the harder this becomes. Yet we would win more people to Jesus if we established meaningful relationships with lost people.

- A well-balanced lifestyle is what keeps your fizz from going flat!

Application

- Pass out the evaluation sheet. Allow attendees time to answer.
State: “We will not share our responses so please be honest with yourself.”

Evaluation Sheet

Evaluate yourself by circling 1 – 5. 1 is weak, 5 is strong.

1. I have a good attitude.

1 2 3 4 5

2. I have a daily devotional time.

1 2 3 4 5

3. I have a willingness to grow.

1 2 3 4 5

4. I am open to change.

1 2 3 4 5

5. The people who know me best would say that I am walking with God.

1 2 3 4 5

6. I will be faithful to prepare my Bible study lesson each week.

1 2 3 4 5

7. I will be faithful to outreach/evangelism/visitation.

1 2 3 4 5

8. I will do my best to personally exemplify the truths that I teach.

1 2 3 4 5

9. I love people.

1 2 3 4 5

- Handout and go over *The Incarnation Principle*.
- If time permits have them to pair up and share one area from the *Evaluation Sheet* they want to improve in the coming weeks.

Off-Campus Community Group Preparation

Three Weeks Out

- Continue praying for the neighborhood where your community group will be launched.
 - Prayer walk each street in the area.
 - Pray specifically for each home.
 - Pray for God's Spirit to open people's hearts to your invitation.
 - Pray for God's Spirit to draw people to Christ.
- Continue building relationships with people within the neighborhood.
 - As you prayer walk, talk to those who are out in their yards or walking on the streets.
 - Introduce yourself and show interest in their lives.
 - Make a note of those who mention information related to spiritual things.
 - Inquire about people's interest for a Bible study in your neighborhood.
- Continue recruiting a few couples to assist you in launching your community group.
 - Recruit an assistant teacher.
 - Recruit an outreach leader.
 - Recruit a secretary.
 - Recruit a hospitality leader.
- Meet with your community group leadership team.
 - Discuss and decide on advertisement process for your community group.
 - Discuss how you're going to handle the childcare issue for your community group.
 - Develop a list of prospects for your community group.
- Begin working in your six lessons from the *Bible Studies for Life* curriculum.
- Continue reading Brad House's book, *Community*.

Session 3: Focus on Your Members

Preparation for meeting

- Provide pens and copies of the following and have them ready to distribute to every person attending.
 - Lesson Handout: Session 3: Focus on Your Members
 - The Philosophy in Teaching Application Sheet
 - Doer of the Word
- Have media needs ready to show the lesson presentation.
- Room set-up: Have chairs arranged so that they are in pairs facing each other. This will be essential in performing the “Motivation” part of the lesson.
- Have index cards available and lying on the seat of their chairs as they arrive. This will be necessary for the “Motivation” part of the lesson.
- Prepare two tear sheets for the “Motivation” part of the lesson. Tear sheet #1 should have this question written on it: “Can we say we have really taught if they haven’t learned?” Tear sheet #2 should have this question written on it: “Can we say they have really learned if they haven’t changed?”
- Provide nametags and sharpie pens. Everyone should wear a nametag. This will be reinforced in the last session.
- Display the statement: “Focus on your members.”
- As the teacher, you need to arrive at least fifteen minutes early. Be prepared to greet attendees at the door as they arrive. You want to model for them how they are to act when they start teaching. Therefore, when they arrive you need to speak and/or smile and/or touch every person in attendance. You will reinforce this in the last lesson.

Lesson Theme

Leaders must focus on their members.

Lesson Goals

- Discover the goal of the learning process.
- Discover the importance of teaching for the purpose of application.
- Discover the importance of using variety within your teaching methodology.

Motivation

- As attendees arrive have each person write in one sentence their definition for “learning” on the index card you have provided. After they have had time to finish the assignment let them share with the person they are facing. Then allow volunteers to share their answer with the whole group. Affirm their responses as most all answers will convey some definition of learning.

Then ask them to write their answer for “*learning*” using only one word and share with their partner. Again, allow volunteers to share their word with the whole group.

After they have had opportunity to share and discuss their answers SUGGEST this one word answer by stating: “The one word definition for learning is *changing*, in fact, the words are synonymous.”

Unveil Tear Sheet #1: “Can we say we have really taught if they haven’t learned?”

Keep this question veiled until this time so you don’t give them the answer to *learning* in advance. After you have unveiled the question let the class discuss it.

Unveil Tear Sheet #2: “Can we say they have really learned if they haven’t changed?”

Again, keep this question veiled until this time so you don’t give them the answer to *learning* in advance. After you have unveiled the question let the class discuss it.

- Listening Exercise: Say, “I’m going to read the Great Commission and leave out two words. See if you can catch the two omitted words.” Read Matthew 28:19-20 leaving out “to observe” (in verse 20).

Ask: If the Great Commission had omitted these two words, how would it have changed the meaning?

- “teaching them all that I have commanded you” – We would be teaching for knowledge’s sake. We would teach with the end being that our class members would have biblical facts, data, and information.
- “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” – Our teaching would be with a higher purpose than just conveying biblical information; it would be teaching for the sake of biblical obedience!

Read: James 1:22-25 and John 14:15, 21, 23 below and make the suggested emphasis.

“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.” – James 1:22-25

Emphasis #1: The Bible is not just to be heard, it is to be obeyed.

Emphasis #2: A “hearer only” is self-deceived and self deception is the worst of all deceptions. You can eventually catch on to others who might deceive you, but when you are self-deceived you have a much harder time overcoming yourself. This was the problem with the scribes and Pharisees. They were self-deceived.

Emphasis #3: Read John 14: 15, 21, 23 and replace the word “keep” with the word “know.” Jesus didn’t say “If you love me you will *know* my commandments.” He said, “If you love me you will *keep* my commandments.” There is a world of difference between the two.

“If you love Me, you will keep (know) My commandments.” – John 14:15

“He who has My commandments and keeps (knows) them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” – John 14:21

“If anyone loves Me, he will keep (know) My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.” – John 14:23

- Review the previous lessons by stating their themes.
 - “Leaders must be committed to high standards.”
 - “Be the best community group leader you can be.”

The theme for this week’s session is “Leaders must focus on their members.” We are going to examine the philosophy that drives our teaching as community group leaders.

State: “In the first two sessions our focus was on us, the *teacher* – improving, growing, and committing ourselves so we could be the absolute best. Today, we will focus on the *learner* - helping them to be their best.”

- In Matthew 23 we find Jesus condemning a bad group of teachers. The ministry of the scribes and Pharisees did not exist for the good of others; it existed for their own promotion.

Jesus said...

“For they say *things* and do not do them.” (vs. 3)

“They do all their deeds to be noticed by men” (vs. 5)

“So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.” (vs. 28)

In this chapter Jesus called the scribes and Pharisees “hypocrites” seven times (vs. 13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29); “blind” five times (vs. 16, 17, 19, 24, 26); “fools” twice (vs. 17, 19); and pronounced eight “woes” on them (vs. 13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29).

State: The scribes and Pharisees were not serving for the sake of their students and others. They were consumed with their own status. Their self-centeredness was repulsive to Jesus.

Examination

- Pass out the lesson handout for session 3.
 - Divide the class into groups and have each group discuss one or two of the eight major points as listed on the handout. Have each group answer/discuss the three questions listed below in relationship to their major point of the Lesson Handout. After a few minutes have each group report back to the class on their thoughts.
 - How will this philosophy affect your teaching?
 - How will this philosophy affect your class?
 - How is this philosophy seen in the Scripture passage?
1. As an effective teacher, you must not only know that which you would teach—that is, your content—but you must also know those whom you wish to teach. (1 Corinthians 3:1-2)

Paul had to teach the Corinthian church on the level of their spiritual maturity.

- You don’t teach a 50 year old like a 5 year old.
Ask:
 - Would you teach a five year old like you would a fifty year old?
 - Would you teach a second grader like a fourth grader?
 - Would you teach an eight year old with good family support as you would with the eight year old whose parents just went through a vicious divorce?
 - Would you teach a twenty-six year old single like a forty-six year old single?
 - Would you teach a thirty-five year old single like a thirty-five year old single with two children?
 - Would you teach differently to a twenty-five year old and a thirty-eight year old and a fifty-two year old?Therefore, it is important to understand the culture and perception that each individual brings into the classroom.
- You are not teaching the Bible; you are teaching people.

People often say, “I teach the Bible.” Certainly, everyone understands what he or she is saying, but the truth is they are teaching people. Now, the Bible is their content, but people are the learners and the ones being taught. Come to think of it, I have never taught the Bible anything.

- Communication is a contact sport.

We have the notion that we are teaching just because we are talking. Teaching is not taking place unless learning is taking place and learning is not taking place unless the learner is connecting to the truth.

Example: After legendary coach Bill Walsh had retired from coaching the San Francisco 49ers to three Super Bowls championships, he was hired as a color commentator to help announce NFL games on TV. Although a brilliant football mind, his ratings were not good. On the other hand, John Madden’s rating as a color commentator was high. Certainly John Madden knew football but nobody claimed the genius of Bill Walsh and his “West Coast Offense.” The difference between Walsh and Madden on TV was that Madden made “contact” with the general public in a way that Walsh could not.

Remember that communication is a contact sport and the teacher is responsible to make contact with the learner, not vice versa.

2. You are not interested simply in instilling facts; you want to infect people. (Luke 24:25-27, 31-32)

There is no doubt that Jesus’ teaching was infectious.

“They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and *began* to teach. They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes.” – Mark 1:21-22
“When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as their scribes.” – Matthew 7:28-29

- The more you cram the less they learn.
We get so caught up in, “I’ve got to hurry if I’m going to cover these other four points.”

We try to “cram” all we can into a lesson. The more you cram the less they learn. It is better to cover two items well and learning take place, as to cover six items, which they are not able to absorb. As a teacher, your job is to infect, not just instill.

- Facts are for the purpose of changing lives. They are a means to an end, not the end itself.
The scribes and Pharisees did not change anyone’s life for the better but for the worse.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.” – Matthew 23:15

Teaching is ultimately about people’s lives being changed.

- Sometimes community group leaders are more interested in how much a learner can cram into his head and then regurgitate it onto a piece of paper. The true gauge of your teaching is not how much knowledge your class has acquired but how obedient they have become.

3. The way people learn determines how you teach. (Mark 1:16-18)

Jesus called Andrew and Simon in terms they understood (Mark 1:16-18).

How do people learn?

Every good children's teacher knows the following three keys for effective learning, but it seems we forget this when we teach students or adults.

- The three keys for effective learning are:

1) Repetition

Do it over & over again. Musicians learn notes by singing/playing them over and over as they practice them. Athletes learn certain techniques by performing them every day at practice. Various job skills are learned and perfected by the daily routine of doing them.

Illustration: I have two young girls. I have learned that the only way for them to learn what I am trying to teach them is repetition. I am constantly correcting their responses to others and me by saying, "Yes/no sir."

Our greatest years of learning are between birth and 5 years of age. And how do we learn during that time? Repetition. So, why have we stopped employing repetition as a vital teaching method?

Illustration: Jesus often used repetition. In the Gospel of John, forty-two times, Jesus said that He was "sent" from Heaven; "sent" from above. He knew that repetition was a great way to teach.

2) Object Lessons

Jesus used a little child as an object lesson in Matthew 18:1-6. He used a fig tree in Matthew 21:19-22.

Illustration: I heard a lady teach a "children's sermon" by squirting toothpaste out of a tube and onto a plate. She then asked the kids to put the toothpaste back in the tube. When they admitted that they could not she said, "So it is with our words, once spoken they can never be retracted." James 3:5-6 says, "So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and *yet* it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the *very* world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of *our* life, and is set on fire by hell."

The truth she meant to convey, stuck with me. This truth had a much better chance of being learned using this object lesson than if she had said; "Now all you children watch what you say."

Teaching Truth: Warren Weirsbe said, "The human mind is an art gallery not a dictionary. So, paint pictures on the minds of your students."

3) Variety

- What is the worst teaching method? The same one.

Most teachers fall into the trap of using the same teaching method all the time. Usually this method is the way the teacher learns or is easy to use. However, when you use the same teaching method over and over you connect with the students who learn with that method but you continue to miss those who are not given to that learning style. In an effort to make contact with all your students it will be necessary to use a variety of teaching methods.

Many people think that lecture is the worst teaching method. I do not necessarily believe that. If lecture is wrong preaching is wrong for preaching is a lecture. Lecture is wrong when it is the same method that is always employed. Plus, everyone is getting a sermon from the pastor; this behooves us to implement other methods as much as possible so we do not have a lesson that duplicates the sermon style.

4. There is no learning without tension. Tension is absolutely indispensable to the learning process. (Matthew 16:21-23)

Scripture records some tense moments in Jesus' teaching. (Matthew 16:21-23; John 6:59-67; 21:15-22)

- Tense moments challenge our thinking and engage people in the learning process.

There is a certain amount of tension that will be and must be present for learning to take place. If you are a parent or a public school teacher you know this very well.

Illustration: – Ask any of the following questions and let them respond. You will notice that some tension will arise in the room. You will also notice that people will perk up and be on edge a little. They are now paying attention and their minds are engaged like never before.

#1 - Was Christ peccable or impeccable? Was Jesus capable of sinning but choose not to, or was He incapable of sinning period? (Hebrews 4:15 as compared to James 1:13)

#2 – Will babies be raptured with the church?

#3 – Does the creation narrative in Genesis chapter one reflect seven days that were literal 24 hours each or do they represent seven “ages” (extended periods of time)?

#4 – Did Satan fall from Heaven between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2?

#5 – Is it biblically permissible for women to teach co-ed classes?

All of these questions create tension and anxiety within the class. But we learn from these moments because our thinking is challenged.

- Don't give people the product, give them the process; because learning is a process that requires patience, not a product that requires purchasing.

Learning is a process, so engage people in a process. Help people to think for themselves. Do not always produce the right thinking for them. Lead them so they can come to the right way to think.

- People usually do not “buy in” to foreign ideas on the first presentation.

Do not become angry and upset when people do not “buy in” to your teaching, especially if it is new to them. They may just be starting in the process and what you taught might be their initial step in the process. Peter did not “buy in” to Jesus’ teaching of His death, burial, and resurrection (Matthew 16:21-23).

- People need time to “chew the cud.”

Like a cow, they may have to bring this new thought up time and again and e-chew it. You will be teaching people from all walks of life and some will need more “chewing time” than others.

“I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your doings; I muse on the work of Your hands. (Ps. 143:5)

To muse means “to consider, reflect, and meditate.”

- God moves in our lives by divine design, to periodically disturb our equilibrium.

Biblical Example: This is what God did in Peter’s life when He gave Peter the vision of the sheet tied together at the corners with all kinds of animals, and told him to eat of them (Acts 10:9f.). This was foreign to Peter’s theology. God moved in Peter’s live by divine design to disturb his theological equilibrium.

Biblical Example: God also moved by divine design in Joseph’s life when he found that Mary was pregnant and they had not consummated their relationship as husband and wife.

5. Good teachers cannot be focused on what they do, but on what the learners are doing. (Luke 10:25-37)

Notice that Jesus asked questions and elicited participation from the lawyer in Luke 10:25-37.

Jesus did this with Philip in John 6:5-7.

Illustration: My daughter, Hailey, takes dance lessons. Each spring the dance studio has the annual recital. None of the parents go to the recital to see how well the instructor can dance. In fact, her instructor has the good sense to not dance at the recital. She understands that the parents are only interested in what their children (her students) can do – not what the teacher can do.

- We must not be product-driven but people-driven.

We are in the people business, not the product business. This may be the biggest difference between Jesus and the Pharisees. They had a product – a system – to uphold. Jesus came to make a difference in people’s lives.

- Spend more time questioning answers than answering questions.

Good teachers do not always answer questions; they question answers. Jesus was a master at this (see Matthew 22:15-22; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 11:14-19; 13:10-16; 14:1-6).

6. What is important is not what you do as a teacher, but what the learner does as a result of what you do. (Romans 12:1-2)

Jesus focused on those whom He was teaching. In Matthew 14:23-33, he focused on his disciples and especially Peter. In Mark 9:14-24, he focused on the father of the possessed son. In Luke 10:25-37, he focused on the lawyer.

- Two important questions to ask yourself:
 - 1) Does the group exist for me?
Attitude Exposed: It is my place to perform for Christ.

This was the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees.

- 2) Do I exist for the group?
Attitude Exposed: It is their place to conform to Christ. (Romans 8:29)

Important Questions: Does the group exist for you? Or, do you exist for the group? Do your very actions and attitudes suggest that the only reason the group exists is so that you will have a place to expound your great knowledge? Is the group a platform for you to spiritually show off?

Possible Scenario: It is possible for leaders/teachers to have such a spiritual pride about them that they need a place to exhibit their great knowledge. Teachers should strive to have a wealth of knowledge, but that knowledge is for the purpose of magnifying the Word of God and serving other people. When our knowledge and giftedness becomes self-serving then we have defeated the very purpose of God-given talent and gifts.

7. The teacher is primarily a stimulator and motivator...not a player, but the coach who excites and directs the player. (John 8:1-11)

In John 8:1-11 we see Jesus coaching, directing, stimulating, and teaching. What do we see Jesus coaching and motivating the scribes and Pharisees to do? He was trying to motivate them to not condemn others. What did he try to motivate and stimulate the adulterous woman to do? He encouraged her to sin no more. You see, Jesus *coached* both of these entities even though they were directly opposed to each other. The main thing was to direct them and their thoughts into doing the right thing. The right thing for the scribes and Pharisees was to not stone the lady, but to be forgiving. The right thing for the woman to do was to repent and not continue in her sin. Jesus directed both to do the right thing. He coached them and then allowed them to go out and play the game.

- Your task as a communicator is not to impress people, but to impact them; not just to convince them, but to change them.
- Maximum learning is always the result of maximum involvement.

The more involved the learner is the more he will learn. Do not let your students sit on the sidelines while you play the game and they watch. You are

the coach, so put them in the game and then observe how they play the game. When you lecture all the time then you are playing the game while your students sit in the stands as spectators. As the teacher/coach you need to get them out of the stands and into the game!

Football coaches love to have an experienced team. Why is that? They have played before and therefore know more about how to play the game and win. The same is true about life and discipleship.

- The best learners are the participators.

Community groups are supposed to be participatory and interactive. They are not meant to be a lecture hall where one speaks and everyone else listens. Do not turn your community group into an age-graded worship service.

8. The learner is primarily an investigator, a discoverer, and a doer. (Acts 17:10-11)

Real education is when the learner involves himself in the learning process. We have now gotten to the point where we are not giving them the product; we are engaging them in the process.

- Failure is a necessary part of the learning process.

Do you know how you learn to hit home runs? You learn by striking out a few times. Learning is not about being perfect; learning is about being engaged. In fact, failure is a great teacher. Give some grace and allow those in your group to fail some. Failure is not the tragedy, inactivity is the tragedy.

- Education must come from the individual learner. You are not to always pour it in; you are to draw it out.

Many people have brilliant minds that need to be kicked out of neutral (Matthew 22:37). Many people who have never sat inside a college classroom are extremely intelligent and educated. They are receiving an education daily because they continue to read, learn, and engage in the process. Vance Havner once said, “You don’t have to be a member of “Who’s Who to know What’s What.”

Maximum involvement produces maximum learning. If teaching were only telling, then my children would be incredibly intelligent; I have told them everything I know, and usually I have told them several hundred times. You see the teaching/learning process is much more than telling. Maximum learning is always the result of maximum involvement. Activity is not an end in itself; instead, it is a means to an end. It is the conductor upon which learning travels.

- The name of the game in Christian education is not knowledge – it is obedience. In the spiritual realm, the opposite of ignorance is not knowledge, it is obedience.

We started the lesson by saying that the definition for *learning* is *changing*. As we obey the Word of God it changes us.

Application

- Use “*The Philosophy of Teaching Application Sheet.*”
 - #1 – Teach people how to think.
This allows them to dig for the truth.
This is the planting of the seed.
 - #2 – Teach people how to learn.
This allows them to discover the truth.
This is the cultivating of the tree.
 - #3 – Teach people how to work.
This allows them to do the truth.
This is the bearing of the fruit.
- Fill out the Self Evaluation at the bottom of “*The Philosophy of Teaching Application Sheet.*”
- State: The teacher is to lead the group to be obedient to the truth learned and to apply these truths to their lives personally and individually. Go over the “Doer of the Word” Handout with the class.

Doer of the Word

“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.” – James 1:22

Teachers are greatly helped by following the pattern of Peter as he responded to the two questions posed him in Acts 2.

- “And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’” – Acts 2:12

This question initiated Peter’s great sermon on the day of Pentecost.

- “Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren, what shall we do?’” – Acts 2:37

This question is their response to Peter’s sermon and 3,000 people were saved.

As teachers, we should move people from *what* the Scripture means to *how* to apply them.

From What
(Acts 2:12)
Apathy
Curiosity
Interest
Mediocrity
Unbeliever

To How
(Acts 2:37)
Acknowledgement
Commitment
Involvement
Missional
Believer

The teacher should help people understand “*what does this mean?*” so that they would want to know “*what shall we do?*” Here are some defining words that will help teachers understand actions they need to undertake to help people move from hearing to doing.

“What Does This Mean?”

Articulating
Conceptualizing
Describing
Exhorting
Explaining
Proclaiming

“What Shall We Do?”

Applying
Coaching
Doing
Emulating
Expecting
Practicing

Off-Campus Community Group Preparation

Two Weeks Out

- Continue praying for the neighborhood where your community group will be launched.
 - Prayer walk each street in the area.
 - Pray specifically for each home.
 - Pray for God’s Spirit to open people’s hearts to your invitation.
 - Pray for God’s Spirit to draw people to Christ.
- Continue building relationships with people within the neighborhood.
 - As you prayer walk, talk to those who are out in their yards or walking on the streets.
 - Introduce yourself and show interest in their lives.
 - Make a note of those who mention information related to spiritual things.
 - Inquire about people’s interest for a Bible study in your neighborhood.
- Continue recruiting a few couples to assist you in launching your community group.
 - Recruit an assistant teacher.
 - Recruit an outreach leader.
 - Recruit a secretary.
 - Recruit a hospitality leader.
- Meet with your community group leadership team.
 - Finalize advertisement process for your community group.
 - Discuss and plan a meet-and-greet event.
 - Discuss when and where to pass out door hanger cards.
 - Finalize how you’re going to handle the childcare issue for your community group.
 - Continue compiling a list of prospects for your community group.
- Continue working in your six lessons from the *Bible Studies for Life* curriculum.
- Continue reading Brad House’s book, *Community*.
- Begin reading Allan Taylor’s book, *The Six Core Values of Sunday School*.

Session 4: Building a Ministry Team

Preparation for meeting

- Provide pens and copies of the following and have them ready to distribute to every person attending.
 - Lesson Handout: Session 4: Building a Ministry Team
- Have media needs ready to show the lesson presentation.
- Room set-up: Have chairs stacked at the back of the room so they can be retrieved later. Keep the room open so attendees are forced to stand and interact with one another as they enter.
- Provide nametags and sharpie pens. Everyone should wear a nametag. This will be reinforced in this session.
- Display the statement: “Build a ministry team.”
- As the teacher, you need to arrive at least fifteen minutes early. Be prepared to greet attendees at the door as they arrive. You want to model for them how they are to act when they start teaching. Therefore, when they arrive you need to speak and/or smile and/or touch every person in attendance. You will reinforce this in this lesson.

Lesson Theme

Leaders understand the importance of building a ministry team.

Lesson Goals

- Discover the importance of strong leadership in community groups.
- Discover the importance of atmosphere and connection within community groups.
- Discover the importance of building a leadership team.

Motivation

- Have chairs stacked up against the wall so no one can sit down when they come in. This forces people to mingle and interact with one another.
- As people arrive greet them at the door, give them a nametag, and place a *Lego* in their hand. Have their assignment displayed on the screen or whiteboard: “Discuss with at least two other people: How are the members of your class like a *Lego*?”
Possible answers are...
 - They come in different colors, sizes, and shapes.
 - They are made for the purpose of “snapping on” to others.
 - They are useless by themselves.
 - Some pieces have more connection points than others.
 - We were designed by our Creator to be connected.

After they have shared their ideas. State: “As the leader, you need to take the individuals in your community group and “snap them together” so that they form a *Lego Cathedral*. Build your group team so that they are interconnected and formed into a holy unit.”

Read: Ephesians 2:19-22 and 1 Peter 2:5. Then state: “Like *Lego*’s God has designed us to be fitted together and growing into a holy temple in the Lord.”

- Have them to get a chair and be seated.
- Briefly review the four lesson titles themes.

Examination

- Pass out the lesson handout for session 4.

- In this lesson we will discuss what it means to lead your community group by examining four principles.

Leadership

Your community group must have strong leadership.

Weak leadership is an oxymoron. If leadership is weak, it really is not leadership. Thus, weak leadership is a contradiction of terms. Do not confuse position with leadership. A so-called weak leader may have a position but that does not make him a leader. Every community group needs strong leadership.

1. The teacher/leader must know his purpose.

I have used the term teacher/leader a few times over the past few weeks on purpose. We must understand the principle that the teacher/proclaimer of the Word of God becomes the leader of the people by osmosis. Therefore, a community group teacher just naturally absorbs the leadership role in the class just like the pastor absorbs the leadership responsibility of the church. This concept is seen many times in Scripture. The teacher/proclaimer of the Word of God always became the leader of the people. We see this with Moses, the Old Testament prophets, Jesus, Peter, Paul, and many others.

- Our purpose is to Reach People, Teach People, and Minister to People.

Be repetitious and review Matthew 4:23 and 9:35.

- If the teacher/leader is not sure, no one is sure.

In any organization it is the leader's job to bring clarity to the purpose of the organization. A community group is no different. The teacher is the leader, so it is the teacher's job to clarify the purpose of the class. If a class does not understand its purpose then it is a sign of poor leadership on the teacher's part. If the purpose is not clarified then every person will have to do what is right in his own eyes. This lack of clarification creates confusion as everyone goes in different directions.

2. The teacher/leader must fill three roles to align himself with the three tasks of our community groups.

The teacher/leader must be involved with all three tasks, which will help others...

- See the three tasks exemplified/modeled.
- Understand the importance of all three being a vital part of the community group.
- Buy into the teacher's leadership.

- Task #1: Reach People – the teacher/leader must fill the role of leader.

Leading the group to “reach people” requires more leadership than even teaching. Group members need to see outreach, evangelism, and witnessing modeled. All the teaching on the subject will fall on deaf ears if the practice of witnessing and being evangelistic is not lived out by the teacher.

- Task #2: Teach People – the teacher/leader must fill the role of teacher.

- Task #3: Minister to People – the teacher/leader must fill the role of shepherd.
3. The teacher/leader must empower others with the three tasks of community groups.
 - Task #1: Reach People – the teacher/leader must enlist an outreach leader.
 - Task #2: Teach People – the teacher/leader must enlist an assistant teacher.
 - Task #3: Minister to People – the teacher/leader must enlist care group leaders.

It has been stated that a train engine can reach its destination faster if it doesn't have to pull any other cars. However, it would have missed its purpose in going to its destination. As it is with the train engine so it is with leading a community group. The teacher/leader must take people on the journey of reaching people, teaching people, and ministering to people. Therefore, the teacher/leader must enlist and empower others to help with the three tasks of community groups.

- Each ministry objective must be “owned” by a ministry leader!

Objectives must be owned by someone or they will be ignored and undone.

4. The teacher/leader must know his strategy.
 - Our strategy is to develop new leaders and birth new groups.

This is yet another way to help people get on the journey of reaching, teaching, and ministering to people. The more groups we have, the more teacher/leaders we have; the more groups we have, the more outreach leaders we have; the more groups we have, the more care group leaders we have; the more groups we have, the more people we have laboring in the ministry fields; and the more people laboring in the ministry fields, the more fruit we produce.

Starting new groups is a great way to grow our community group ministry. In fact, if we do not increase the number of groups we have, we will not grow as a church. We need to start new groups, but we cannot start new groups if we do not develop new leaders. Therefore, give as many people a job in your group as possible.

- A strategy puts intentionality to your “good intentions.”

Good intentions alone will not get the job done. If good intentions would have gotten the job done then we would have already won the world to Christ because we have always had good intentions. At some point we must get intentional about our good intentions

5. The teacher/leader must know how to maximize the group time.
 - Each ministry objective must be “owned” but each ministry objective must also be “aired.”

Each of the three ministry objectives should be given *air* time each week. If not, they will be *out of sight and out of mind* and will die for lack of support.

This was covered in Session 1: *High Standards for Leaders* but is repeated here for effect.

The 70-Minute Community Group Schedule

- 1st: Fellowship for 10 minutes
 - 2nd: Announcements/Promotions for 5 minutes
 - 3rd: Outreach Emphasis for 10 minutes (Task #1 is aired)
 - 4th: Care Group time for 15 minutes (Task #3 is aired)
 - 5th: Bible Study for 30 minutes (Task #2 is aired)
6. The teacher/leader must walk with God.
- You cannot lead by proxy.

There are many things you can and should delegate, but your relationship with God is not one of them.

Evangelism

Your community group must have a passion for souls.

Jesus gave the command to every born again believer, “Go, therefore...” (Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus didn’t say, “Go y’all;” he said “Go you.” This command is issued to each believer individually. Our community groups give people an opportunity to get involved in the Great Commission.

1. What is the most important priority of community groups? Outreach/Evangelism

Ask: Why is outreach/evangelism the most important priority of community groups?

It was the most important priority of Jesus.

Read: Luke 19:10; John 10:10; 2 Peter 3:9

State: “It seems clear that this is the number one priority of God.”

State: “People can study the Bible and be ministered to, but if they are not saved they will still spend eternity in hell.”

State: “You do not teach people until you first reach them. You are limited in ministering to them until you reach them.”

2. We must be intentional about this “good intention.”

Both on-campus and off-campus community groups should seek to reach the guests who visit one of our Sunday worship services. Each week community group leaders receive by email a report of the previous Sunday’s prospects.

Both on-campus and off-campus community groups should also connect with anyone who visited their group that week. You should intentionally seek to make contact by way of a visit, phone call, email, or through social network. We do not want to let anyone slip through the ministry cracks of our church.

Both on-campus and off-campus community groups should encourage and expect its members to invite lost and unchurched people to attend their community group with them. Leaders ought to strive to create a culture of acceptance and evangelism whereby members want to introduce their friends to their community group. Likewise, they should also lead their groups to adopt a mission project. This project can be within the local community or throughout the nations.

Off-campus community groups should view themselves as a gospel outpost, taking a neighborhood approach and filling every nook and cranny of the Shoals. By taking the greater mission of the church and breaking it down into smaller missions for each neighborhood, we make the mission accessible to anyone. Members of the community group can more easily see how they can participate in advancing the kingdom of God.

3. Your group will be no more evangelistic than you are.

If you are not interested nor involved in outreach and evangelism then neither will those in your group. This is not a “teaching” issue or a “shepherding” issue, this is a leadership issue and as leader, you must lead the way.
“Everything rises and falls on leadership.” – John Maxwell

Ask: “What is the best, most effective way to lead?”

State: “By your personal example.” This is especially true in evangelism.

Amosphere

Your community group must accept others.

1. The 3rd Place Principle:
 - The “1st Place” is your home.
Home is the “first place” in people’s lives. At home you are...
For Men - Bread-Winner, Mr. Fix-It Man, Disciplinarian, etc.
For Women – Cook, Nurse, Taxi Driver, etc.
You have your role to fill in the home.
 - The “2nd Place” is your work.
The workplace is usually a person’s “second place” since you spend so much of your time there. Here you are known for your skills, talents, competency, and the asset you are to the company.
You have your role to fill at work.
 - The “3rd Place” is where you hang out and just be you.
Here, you have no role to fill. This place is where you can just go hang out and be you.
For many people, their 3rd Place is a bar or country club, when it ought to be a community group.

Illustration: The show *Cheers*. It was a place to go where everyone knew your name. It was a place to just hang out, talk with friends, and enjoy interaction with others. Our community groups should be places where everyone knows your name (wear nametags), to hang out with friends, and to be accepted and loved.

2. Three key actions by the teacher and group leaders to set the right atmosphere.
 - Speak

Leaders need to be friendly. Leaders set the “atmosphere” for their organization. If you want a friendly group then you must be friendly. If I visit your group in a few months and your group is not friendly then this speaks volumes to me of your poor leadership and example. Your group will take on your personality – so be friendly and you will have a friendly community group.

It is a poor leader who walks the halls of the church and does not speak to people. This gives people the impression that you are stuck-up. This impression is one that you cannot afford to leave with people, and even if you could, it is not in the best interest of the people, your group, or the church.

- Smile

Isn't it amazing how a smile makes people feel comfortable and helps them to let down their guard. It helps them to open up and feel they are loved and welcomed.

- Touch

Oftentimes, Jesus healed people by touching them. Of course, he could have healed them without the touch – all he had to do was speak the word. It appears that Jesus touched them so that they could not only be healed but so they could feel the love and compassion he had for them.

When you *speak, smile, and/or touch* you give a person attention. When you give a person attention you communicate “I like you;” “You are significant;” “I value you.” When you do not *speak, smile, and/or touch* you communicate “I do not like you;” “You are not significant;” “I do not value you.” When you give people attention you endear yourself to them. Of course, the opposite is true as well.

It should be the goal of all teachers to speak and/or smile and/or touch every class member every week.

3. Lego Principle: People must “snap-on” to others or they will not return.

- Of those who join the church and attend worship only, 15% are active after 5 years. Of those who join the church and attend a small group and worship, 87% are active after 5 years.

Why the great difference? Those who attend small groups have been “snapped on” to others. Worship only attendees are lonely *Lego's*.

- Our community group ministry is the church's strategy and method for assimilating new members.

To “assimilate” means to “take in, to absorb.” The church “absorbs” new members through community groups because the community group is the place where you build relationships, are ministered to, and supported.

- People's “snap-on points” are relationships. Relationships start with knowing people's names. So wear nametags.

You only develop relationships with people that you know their name – no name, no snap-on, no snap-on, no relationship, no community group attendee.

Development

Your community group must develop new leaders.

1. Groups come packaged with “some assembly required.”

Illustration: Every father has experienced the “Christmas Eve Workshop.” You put the kids to bed and then start placing their presents under the Christmas tree. Then you realize that some of the presents come with “some assembly required.” So good ole dad gets to stay up half the night putting parts together (and there is always a screw missing). Like children’s Christmas presents, community groups come with “some assembly required.”

2. Remember: Each group’s objective must be owned by someone.
 - When it’s everyone’s job, it’s no one’s job.

We must put people to work doing ministry. When we allow people to sit idly by and do nothing we abort the giftedness that God has placed within them by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4-24).

Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody
Author unknown

This is a story of four church members named *Everybody*, *Somebody*, *Anybody*, and *Nobody*. There was an important job to be done and *Everybody* was sure that *Somebody* would do it. *Anybody* could have done it, but *Nobody* did it. *Somebody* got angry about that, because it was *Everybody’s* job. *Everybody* thought *Anybody* could do it, but *Nobody* realized that *Everybody* wouldn’t do it. It ended up that *Everybody* blamed *Somebody* when *Nobody* did what *Anybody* could have done.

3. The community group leader should have another member teach once a month so new teachers will be developed.

You cannot grow the community group ministry with the same number of leaders and the same number of groups. Every time a new group is birthed you put more people to work reaching people, teaching people, and ministering to people. But new groups cannot be started if we do not have more teachers. And new teachers cannot be developed if they never get a chance to teach. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers raise up new teachers by allowing others to teach. Remember teacher, you are the coach and it is your job to get people out of the stands and into the game.

4. Your group should “birth” a new group a minimum of every two years.

We don’t develop new leaders to sit on the bench, we want to put them into the game. Starting new groups gives opportunity for new leaders to emerge and to serve.

Some teachers will be able to start a new group every year.

5. The secret to success is the involvement of people!

Don’t just let one person do everything. Your community group is not a one-man band.

Obituary
Author Unknown

Our church was saddened to learn this week of the death of one of our most valued members, *Someone Else*.

Someone's passing creates a vacancy that will be difficult to fill. *Mr. Else* has been with us for many years and for every one of those years, *Someone* did far more than a normal person's share of the work. Whenever there was a job to do, a class to teach, a visit to make, or a need to meet one name was on everyone's list, "Let *Someone Else* do it." Whenever leadership was mentioned, this wonderful person was looked to for inspiration as well as results; "*Someone Else* can work with that group."

It was common knowledge that *Someone Else* was among the most liberal givers in our church. Whenever there was a financial need, everyone just assumed *Someone Else* would make up the difference. *Someone Else* was a wonderful person; sometimes appearing super-human.

Were the truth known, everybody expected too much of *Someone Else*. Now *Someone Else* is gone! We wonder what we are going to do. *Someone Else* left a wonderful example, but who is going to follow it? Who is going to do the things *Someone Else* did? When you are asked to help, remember-- we can't depend on *Someone Else* anymore.

Application

- When it comes to building a great community group, it begins with building a great leadership team.
- Remember: *We* can do more than *me*.

Off-Campus Community Group Preparation One Week Out

- Continue praying for the neighborhood where your community group will be launched.
 - Prayer walk each street in the area.
 - Pray specifically for each home.
 - Pray for God's Spirit to open people's hearts to your invitation.
 - Pray for God's Spirit to draw people to Christ.
- Continue building relationships with people within the neighborhood.
 - As you prayer walk, talk to those who are out in their yards or walking on the streets.
 - Introduce yourself and show interest in their lives.
 - Make a note of those who mention information related to spiritual things.
 - Inquire about people's interest for a Bible study in your neighborhood.
- Continue recruiting a few couples to assist you in launching your community group.
 - Recruit an assistant teacher.
 - Recruit an outreach leader.
 - Recruit a secretary.
 - Recruit a hospitality leader.
- Meet with your community group leadership team.
 - Spread the word regarding when and where your community group is meeting.
 - Invite people to your meet-and-greet event.
 - Pass out door hanger cards.
 - Continue compiling a list of prospects for your community group.
 - Assign responsibilities for when the community group meets.
- Finalize your first week's lesson from the *Bible Studies for Life* curriculum.
- Continue reading Brad House's book, *Community* and Allan Taylor's book, *The Six Core Values of Sunday School*.

APPENDIX 6

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM HANDOUTS

Session 1: High Standards for Leaders

Lesson Handout

Session 1 Goals:

- Discover the level of commitment required to be a community group leader.
- Discover the three tasks of community groups.
- Develop an understanding of the community group structure.

A Philosophical Commitment

“From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.” – Luke 12:48

1. A commitment to our church’s core values.
 - _____ – A culture where complete reliance on and total abandonment to God is normal and expected.
 - _____ – Discovering and joining in God’s activity of bringing people into relationship with Himself in the Shoals and throughout the world.
 - _____ – Connecting people to create empowering relationships that culminate in fellowship and service.
 - _____ – Producing mature Christ-followers with an intimate knowledge of Jesus, who desire to lead others to experience life transformation.
2. A commitment to the three tasks of community groups.
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
3. A commitment to our community group structure.

The purpose of the community group structure (time allotment) is to make sure we have a time of emphasis for all three tasks of the community group.

 - 10 minutes: _____
 - 5 minutes: _____
 - 10 minutes: _____
 - 1st & 3rd Sundays: Assign prospects to group members for follow-up either by a mail/email, phone call, or a visit.
 - 2nd Sunday: Have a class member share their testimony.
 - 4th Sunday: Discuss the group’s mission/evangelism projects.

- 15 minutes: _____
 - Take the roll
 - Assign each member present an absentee to contact
 - Discuss ministry needs
 - Share prayer requests
 - 30 minutes: _____
4. A commitment to our community group strategy.
- Develop new _____
 - Have an apprentice teacher that you allow to teach once a month.
 - Start new _____
 - Birth a new group out of your group every two years.

A Practical Commitment

1. A commitment to _____:
 - How can we accomplish the number one task of community groups if the number one leader of the group is not personally involved? How can you lead your group to do what you are not doing?
2. A commitment to teach the _____:
 - We fully expect your group to have a 30 minute lesson every week.
 - We fully expect you to teach the curriculum provided by the church unless other arrangements have been made in advance with the staff.
 - We fully expect you to be well prepared.
 - We fully expect you to believe in the inerrancy of Scripture.
3. A commitment to lead the group to _____ the Scripture.
(James 4:17)
 - The end result of Bible study is obedience, not knowledge!
4. A commitment to fill the three roles of the teacher.
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
5. A commitment to follow the _____ of the church.

A Personal Commitment

*Commitment is not possible unless your personal comfort is jeopardized.

Community Group Agreement

Leader

Read carefully the following agreement, check the appropriate box for each statement. Please sign and date at the bottom if you wish to join yourself to a team of leaders committed to ministry.

	Yes	No
1. I have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I feel called of God to serve Him through the community group ministry.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I will strive to follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I will *actively participate in training and growing opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I will *actively participate in regular, on-going outreach/visitation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I will *actively participate in community group leadership meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I will do all I can to make my community group a positive, uplifting experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I will be faithful in my financial giving.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I will attend Sunday AM and PM worship services unless providentially hindered.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I will be supportive of the pastor and staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I have read the <i>Six Core Values of Sunday School</i> and agree with the church's community group philosophy and will lead my group accordingly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I will strive to birth a new group a minimum of every two years.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I commit to teaching with excellence both in preparation and presentation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Before my Lord Jesus Christ, I commit to serve Him and His church by faithfully ministering through the community group.

Sign: _____ Date: _____

* "actively participate" means that you will regularly participate unless providentially hindered.

Truths We Hold Dear

“Let not many *of you* become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.” – James 3:1 NASB

Name _____

Position _____

It is our desire to have those presenting the Word of God to be in agreement with the church's position on our essential beliefs. The following represents those beliefs. Please circle the number that best represents your conviction for each doctrinal statement.

1. – Strongly Agree 2. – Mostly Agree 3. – Somewhat Agree
4. – Somewhat Disagree 5. – Mostly Disagree 6. – Strongly Disagree

About God—God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He has eternally existed in three persons: the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal and are one God.

1 2 3 4 5 6

About the Father—He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. He reigns with providential care over the universe and the flow of human history goes according to His purposes and plan.

1 2 3 4 5 6

About Jesus—Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is co-equal with the Father. Jesus has eternally existed and became man at His incarnation. He lived a sinless human life and offered himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people by dying on a cross. He bodily arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to Heaven's glory and will return again someday to earth to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

1 2 3 4 5 6

About the Holy Spirit—He is the third person of the Trinity. He guides men into all truth, exalts Christ, convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment, cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, bestows spiritual gifts by which believers serve God and seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the lives of believers is the assurance of God to bring us into the fullness of the stature of Christ.

1 2 3 4 5 6

About Scriptures—The Bible is God's Word to us. It was written by human authors, under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. Because it is inspired by God, it has salvation for its end and is truth without any mixture of error.

1 2 3 4 5 6

About Human Beings—People are made in the image of God and are the supreme object of God’s creation. All of us are marred by an attitude of disobedience toward God called sin. Sin separates people from God and causes many problems in life.

1 2 3 4 5 6

About Salvation—Salvation is God’s free gift to us, but we must accept it. We can never make up for our sin by self-improvement or good works. Only by trusting Jesus Christ as God’s offer of forgiveness can anyone be saved from sin’s penalty. When we turn from our self-ruled life and turn to Jesus in faith we are saved. Eternal life begins the moment one received Jesus Christ into his life by faith.

1 2 3 4 5 6

About Eternal Security—Because God gives us eternal life through Jesus Christ, the true believer is secure in that salvation for eternity. If you have been genuinely saved, you cannot “lose ” your salvation. Salvation is maintained by the grace and power of God, not by the self-effort of the Christian. It is the grace and keeping power of God that gives us this security.

1 2 3 4 5 6

About Eternity—People were created to exist forever. We will either exist eternally separated from God by sin or eternally with God through forgiveness and salvation. To be eternally separate from God is Hell. To be eternally in union with Him is eternal life. Heaven and Hell are real places of eternal existence.

1 2 3 4 5 6

About Baptism by Immersion—We believe that scriptural baptism must be: (1) by being completely immersed under the water and (2) after salvation. Jesus was immersed and all baptisms in the New Testament were by immersion. These two facts sets the standard for baptism today. Baptism has no saving power but is the first act of obedience symbolizing (1) the believer’s faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, (2) the believer’s death to sin and resurrection to walk anew in Christ, and (3) the Christian’s belief that he will die, be buried, and that Jesus will resurrect him from the dead.

1 2 3 4 5 6

About the Lord’s Supper—The Lord’s Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby believers remember the death of the Lord Jesus and anticipate His second coming. The bread is symbolic of His body and the juice represents His blood.

1 2 3 4 5 6

About Tithing—We believe in giving the tith—ten percent of our gross income (not net income)—as the biblical standard of giving. The tithe is to be given as an undesignated offering to the “storehouse” ministry of a local church. According to the Scriptures, we are to give cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer’s cause on earth.

1 2 3 4 5 6

About Evangelism—It is the duty of every born again follower of Jesus Christ and of every church to endeavor to make disciples of all men everywhere. It is the command of Christ for every believer to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by personal effort and by all other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

1 2 3 4 5 6

About the Church—A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a local body of baptized believers who are associated by their common faith and fellowship with Jesus. A local church is to observe the two ordinances: (1) baptism and (2) the Lord's Supper. The church should exercise their God-given gifts and extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. The church is an autonomous body serving under the Lordship of Christ. All members are equally responsible as they serve with the scriptural officers of the church, the pastors and deacons.

1 2 3 4 5 6

About Christian Unity—To live in harmony with other believers is clearly the teaching of the New Testament. It is the responsibility of each believer to endeavor to live in fellowship with each member of the congregation. It is further the responsibility of each member to bring all gossiping and backbiting to an end.

1 2 3 4 5 6

My Personal Testimony

Please use the following questions as a guide to share your testimony. You can use the back of the page or attach another paper to this one if you need more space.

Name _____ Date _____

Date of Salvation _____ Date of Baptism _____

Were you baptized after you were saved? Yes _____ No _____

Were you baptized by immersion? Yes _____ No _____

1. What my life was like before I received Christ.

2. How I knew that I needed Christ.

3. What took place when I received Christ.

4. How my life has been different since Jesus saved me.

Community Group Leader Description

Responsibilities

1. Be responsible to lead the group to effectively reach, teach, and minister to people.
2. Actively participate in the church's outreach efforts.
3. Prepare and present the weekly Bible study lesson.
4. Enlist group outreach leaders, care group leaders, and secretary.
5. Enlist an associate leader and allow him/her to teach at least once a month for the purpose of developing a new teacher.
6. Conduct monthly group planning meeting with the group leadership team.
7. Conduct the community group time so that the three purposes of community groups are promoted by having a platform and proper emphasis.

A. Group Time Structure

<u>Sequence</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Minutes Allotted</u>
1 st	Fellowship	10
2 nd	Announcements	5
3 rd	Outreach Emphasis	10
4 th	Care Group Time	15
5 th	Bible Study	30

8. Be responsible to meet at the quarterly community group leadership training meetings.
9. Lead the group to birth a new group a minimum of every two years.

Off-Campus Community Group Preparation

Four Weeks Out

- Begin praying for the neighborhood where your community group will be launched.
 - Prayer walk each street in the area.
 - Pray specifically for each home.
 - Pray for God's Spirit to open people's hearts to your invitation.
 - Pray for God's Spirit to draw people to Christ.
- Begin building relationships with people within the neighborhood.
 - As you prayer walk, talk to those who are out in their yards or walking on the streets.
 - Introduce yourself and show interest in their lives.
 - Make a note of those who mention information related to spiritual things.
 - Inquire about people's interest for a Bible study in your neighborhood.
- Continue recruiting a few couples to assist you in launching your community group.
 - Recruit an assistant teacher.
 - Recruit an outreach leader.
 - Recruit a secretary.
 - Recruit a hospitality leader.
- Begin reading Brad House's book, *Community*.

Session 2: Strive to Be the Best

Lesson Handout

Session 2 Goals:

- Discover that effective leadership begins with your personal walk with the Lord.
 - Discover the biblical importance of teaching as a community group leader.
 - Discover the four developmental areas of the leader.
1. The effective teacher always teaches from the overflow.
“The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil *man* out of the evil *treasure* brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.” – Luke 6:45
 - If you are not _____ about teaching your community group, then don’t be surprised if your _____ are not happy about being in your group.
 - Blessed is the group whose teacher thinks this week’s lesson is the _____ he/she will ever teach!
 - If you want to know the _____ of the group then stick the _____ in the teacher’s mouth.
 2. If you stop growing today, you stop teaching tomorrow.
“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.” – Hebrews 5:12-14
 - Everything that God created with life He intended to _____.
 - If the tree dies, it can bear no _____.
 3. Teaching is not the expression of mere words; it is the expression of life.
“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” – John 1:14
 - You communicate with _____ more than words!
 - Life is the _____ of effective teaching.
 - You cannot _____ what you do not _____.
 - Most of us teach _____ our living.
 4. As long as you live, you learn; and as long as you learn, you live.
“So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” – John 8:31-32
 - Your community group should drink from a _____, not a _____ . (John 7:37-38)
 - We don’t want to put _____ under _____ !
 5. God can’t work through you until He first works in you.
“For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.” – Philippians 2:13

- God works from the _____-out; not the _____-in.
 - You are no better _____ than you have been _____.
6. If you want to strengthen your teaching, then strengthen the teacher.
 “Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”
 – Philippians 3:13-14
- The _____ process never stops.
7. If you want to become a change agent, then you must also change.
 “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.” – 2 Corinthians 5:17-18
- Effective teaching comes only through an instrument of _____.
 - The more you _____, the more you become an _____ of change in the life of others.
8. You cannot fully develop spiritually unless you develop in life’s other areas as well.
 “And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” – Luke 2:52
- Four areas of development are:
- _____ – “in wisdom”
 - _____ – “in stature.”
 - _____ – “in favor with God.”
 - _____ – “in favor with man.”
- A well-balanced lifestyle is what keeps your _____ from going _____!

True/False Worksheet

- _____ 1. The most basic, core function of every New Testament church is teaching.
- _____ 2. Teaching the Word of God affects everything we do.
- _____ 3. Teaching affects the way we do evangelism, discipleship, ministry, fellowship, prayer, service, relationships, etc.
- _____ 4. Teaching is the one irreplaceable, indispensable, unchanging function of the church.
- _____ 5. The church is fundamentally a teaching-learning organization.
- _____ 6. Teaching the Bible is more important than vision, strategic planning, and effective organization.
- _____ 7. Teachers carry out the vital function of teaching God's Word.
- _____ 8. Teachers communicate knowledge, bestow wisdom, add value, give potential, build futures, and impart life.
- _____ 9. Teachers handle the two most precious things to God: His Word and His people!
- _____ 10. Teaching is a work of transformation.
- _____ 11. Teachers influence class members cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally.
- _____ 12. Teachers increase the depth of biblical knowledge in the church.
- _____ 13. Teachers heighten the level of commitment to Christ and the church.
- _____ 14. Teachers generate new leaders and workers for the church's ministries.
- _____ 15. The most powerful way to lead believers is by teaching them the Bible.
- _____ 16. Teachers have the greatest influence in the church for achieving her mission.
- _____ 17. The greatest leaders of the church are her teachers.

Leader Evaluation Worksheet

Evaluate yourself by circling 1 – 5. 1 is weak, 5 is strong.

1. **I have a good attitude.**

1 2 3 4 5

2. **I have a daily devotional time.**

1 2 3 4 5

3. **I have a willingness to grow.**

1 2 3 4 5

4. **I am open to change.**

1 2 3 4 5

5. **The people who know me best would say that I am walking with God.**

1 2 3 4 5

6. **I will be faithful to prepare my Bible study lesson each week.**

1 2 3 4 5

7. **I will be faithful to outreach/evangelism/visitation.**

1 2 3 4 5

8. **I will do my best to personally exemplify the truths that I teach.**

1 2 3 4 5

9. **I love people.**

1 2 3 4 5

The Incarnation Principle

TRUTH CANNOT BE PASSED OUT UNLESS IT IS LIVED OUT!

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us . . .” John 1:14

Today we are quite confused as to the real meaning on “teaching.” Teaching is all too often expressed via a product instead of a person. We need to emphasize the “fleshing out” of our teaching. Truth does not impact a life as long as it remains in the laboratory; it must hit the streets. Philosophies have little influence as long as they stay on paper. Truth comes alive when it is seen in the laboratory of life. It is then that its impact is felt.

The greatest example of this is God Himself. When God wanted to express truth to mankind He rolled it all up in the life of His Son. Jesus was always God: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being” (John 1:1-3). But God knew that in order to convey Himself, His principles, and His truth, He had to flesh it out. Mankind would never grasp His teachings until they were “fleshed out.” He could not mold us into His principles until He modeled them for us. Therefore, “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). All that God had for the world was boxed up in a package of flesh, the babe at Bethlehem!

God had used other vehicles to express Himself to the people whom He loved so much. However, there was something lacking. Imperfection could not adequately communicate perfection. Man was teaching above his living. So God sent His perfect Son so that perfect truth could be perfectly transmitted. “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature” (Hebrews 1:1-3).

We will never teach like Jesus, but the more we become like Him, the more effective our teaching will become. We will only be great proclaimers of God’s principles when we become great practitioners of God’s principles. You see, truth must be wrapped in flesh. Jesus, in the Great Commission, didn’t command us to teach all things, but to “*teach them to observe all things.*” Truth, principles, and precepts cannot be communicated unless it is “fleshed out.” Truth is translated to others by living, not speaking. As James Dobson has said, “Principles are caught, not taught.” We cannot expect people to believe what we talk if it is not consistent with our walk. Howard Hendricks has correctly stated, “Most of us teach above our living.”

Jesus taught this principle in the Sermon on the Mount, and He placed living before teaching:

“Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do the same*, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:19).

It should be the desire of a teacher, not just to teach the Word but to live the Word; that we not be just hearers of the Word, but doers of the Word. When this occurs, we will really know the meaning of “teaching” and we will really impact lives. You see, truth must become incarnate!

Off-Campus Community Group Preparation

Three Weeks Out

- Continue praying for the neighborhood where your community group will be launched.
 - Prayer walk each street in the area.
 - Pray specifically for each home.
 - Pray for God's Spirit to open people's hearts to your invitation.
 - Pray for God's Spirit to draw people to Christ.
- Continue building relationships with people within the neighborhood.
 - As you prayer walk, talk to those who are out in their yards or walking on the streets.
 - Introduce yourself and show interest in their lives.
 - Make a note of those who mention information related to spiritual things.
 - Inquire about people's interest for a Bible study in your neighborhood.
- Continue recruiting a few couples to assist you in launching your community group.
 - Recruit an assistant teacher.
 - Recruit an outreach leader.
 - Recruit a secretary.
 - Recruit a hospitality leader.
- Meet with your community group leadership team.
 - Discuss and decide on advertisement process for your community group.
 - Discuss how you're going to handle the childcare issue for your community group.
 - Develop a list of prospects for your community group.
- Begin working in your six lessons from the *Bible Studies for Life* curriculum.
- Continue reading Brad House's book, *Community*.

Session 3: Focus Your Members
Lesson Handout

Session 3 Goals:

- Discover the goal of the learning process.
 - Discover the importance of teaching for the purpose of application.
 - Discover the importance of using variety within your teaching methodology.
1. As an effective teacher, you must not only know that which you would teach—that is, your content—but you must also know those whom you wish to teach. (1 Corinthians 3:1-2)
 - You don't teach a _____ year old like a _____ year old.
 - You are not teaching the _____; you are teaching _____.
 - Communication is a _____ sport.
 2. You are not interested simply in instilling facts; you want to infect people. (Luke 24:25-27, 31-32)
 - The more you _____ the less they _____.
 - Facts are for the purpose of _____ lives. They are a _____ to an end, not the end itself.
 - Most community group leaders are more interested in how much a learner can _____ into his head and then _____ it onto a piece of paper.
 3. The way people learn determines how you teach. (Mark 1:16-18)
 - The three keys for effective learning are:
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - What is the worst teaching method? _____.
 4. There is no learning without tension. Tension is absolutely indispensable to the learning process. (Matthew 16:21-23)
 - Tense moments _____ our thinking and _____ people in the learning process.
 - Don't give people the _____, give them the _____; because learning is a process that requires patience, not a product that requires purchasing.

- People usually do not “_____” to foreign ideas on the first presentation.
 - People need time to “_____.”
 - God moves in our lives by _____, to periodically _____ our equilibrium.
5. Good teachers can't be focused on what they do, but on what the learners are doing. (Luke 10:25-37)
- We must not be _____-driven but _____-driven.
 - Spend more time _____ answers than _____ questions.
6. What's important is not what you do as a teacher, but what the learner does as a result of what you do. (Romans 12:1-2)
- Two important questions to ask yourself:
 - 1) Does the _____ exist for me?
Attitude Exposed: It's my place to _____ for Christ.
 - 2) Do I exist for the _____?
Attitude Exposed: It's their place to _____ to Christ.
(Romans 8:29)
7. The teacher is primarily a stimulator and motivator...not a player, but the coach who excites and directs the player. (John 8:1-11)
- Your task as a communicator is not to _____ people, but to _____ them; not just to _____ them, but to _____ them.
 - Maximum _____ is always the result of maximum _____.
 - The best _____ are the participators.
8. The learner is primarily an investigator, a discoverer, and a doer. (Acts 17:10-11)
- _____ is a necessary part of the learning process.
 - Education must come from the individual learner. You are not to always _____; you are to _____.
 - The name of the game in Christian education is not _____ – it is _____. In the spiritual realm, the _____ of ignorance is not knowledge, it is obedience.

The Philosophy of Teaching

Application Sheet

Three Objectives of the Teacher

Objective 1: Teach people how to _____.

- This allows them to _____ for the truth.
- This is the planting of the _____.

Objective 2: Teach people how to _____.

- This allows them to _____ for the truth.
- This is the cultivating of the _____.

Objective 3: Teach people how to _____.

- This allows them to _____ for the truth.
- This is the bearing of the _____.

Self Evaluation

1. Do you know your members' needs, interests, threats, etc.?
2. Do you use various teaching methods?
3. Do you "fill their heads full" or allow them to discover truth on their own?
4. Would your group view you as a player or the coach?
5. Who do you view as most important, the teacher or the learner?

Doer of the Word

“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.” – James 1:22

Teachers are greatly helped by following the pattern of Peter as he responded to the two questions posed him in Acts 2.

- “And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’” – Acts 2:12

This question initiated Peter’s great sermon on the day of Pentecost.

- “Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren, what shall we do?’” – Acts 2:37

This question is their response to Peter’s sermon and 3,000 people were saved.

As teachers, we should move people from *what* the Scripture means to *how* to apply them.

From *What*

(Acts 2:12)

Apathy

Curiosity

Interest

Mediocrity

Unbeliever

To *How*

(Acts 2:37)

Acknowledgement

Commitment

Involvement

Missional

Believer

The teacher should help people understand “*what does this mean?*” so that they would want to know “*what shall we do?*” Here are some defining words that will help teachers understand actions they need to undertake to help people move from hearing to doing.

“What Does This Mean?”

Articulating

Conceptualizing

Describing

Exhorting

Explaining

Proclaiming

“What Shall We Do?”

Applying

Coaching

Doing

Emulating

Expecting

Practicing

Off-Campus Community Group Preparation

2 Weeks Out

- Continue praying for the neighborhood where your community group will be launched.
 - Prayer walk each street in the area.
 - Pray specifically for each home.
 - Pray for God's Spirit to open people's hearts to your invitation.
 - Pray for God's Spirit to draw people to Christ.
- Continue building relationships with people within the neighborhood.
 - As you prayer walk, talk to those who are out in their yards or walking on the streets.
 - Introduce yourself and show interest in their lives.
 - Make a note of those who mention information related to spiritual things.
 - Inquire about people's interest for a Bible study in your neighborhood.
- Continue recruiting a few couples to assist you in launching your community group.
 - Recruit an assistant teacher.
 - Recruit an outreach leader.
 - Recruit a secretary.
 - Recruit a hospitality leader.
- Meet with your community group leadership team.
 - Finalize advertisement process for your community group.
 - Discuss and plan a meet-and-greet event.
 - Discuss when and where to pass out door hanger cards.
 - Finalize how you're going to handle the childcare issue for your community group.
 - Continue compiling a list of prospects for your community group.
- Continue working in your six lessons from the *Bible Studies for Life* curriculum.
- Continue reading Brad House's book, *Community*.
- Begin reading Allan Taylor's book, *The Six Core Values of Sunday School*.

Session 4: Building a Ministry Team
Lesson Handout

Session 4 Goals:

- Discover the importance of strong leadership in community groups.
- Discover the importance of atmosphere and connection within community groups.
- Discover the importance of building a leadership team.

In this lesson we will discuss what it means to lead your community group by examining four principles. These four principles will help develop a group that is molded into a Ministry Team!

L _____
Your community group must have strong leadership.

1. The teacher/leader must know his _____.
 - Our purpose is to _____ People, _____ People, and _____ to People.
 - If the teacher/leader is _____, no one is sure.
2. The teacher/leader must fill three roles to _____ himself with the three tasks of our community groups.
 - Task #1: Reach People – the teacher/leader must fill the role of _____.
 - Task #2: Teach People – the teacher/leader must fill the role of _____.
 - Task #3: Minister to People – the teacher/leader must fill the role of _____.
3. The teacher/leader must _____ others with the three tasks of community groups.
 - Task #1: Reach People – the teacher/leader must enlist an _____.
 - Task #2: Teach People – the teacher/leader must enlist an _____.
 - Task #3: Minister to People – the teacher/leader must enlist _____.
 - Each ministry objective must be “_____” by a ministry leader!
4. The teacher/leader must know his _____.
 - Our strategy is to _____ new leaders and _____ new groups.
 - A strategy puts _____ to your “good intentions.”

5. The teacher/leader must know how to maximize the group _____.

 - Each ministry objective must be “owned” but each ministry objective must also be “_____.”

The 70-Minute Sunday Morning Schedule

- 1st: Fellowship for 10 minutes
- 2nd: Announcements/Promotions for 5 minutes
- 3rd: Outreach Emphasis for 10 minutes (Task #1 is aired)
- 4th: Care Group time for 15 minutes (Task #3 is aired)
- 5th: Bible Study for 30 minutes (Task #2 is aired)

6. The teacher/leader must _____ with God.

 - You can’t lead by _____.

E _____

Your community group must have a passion for souls.

1. What is the most important priority of community groups?

2. We must be _____ about this “good intention.”
3. Your group will be no more _____ than you are!
“Everything rises and falls on leadership.” – John Maxwell

A _____

Your community group must accept others.

1. The 3rd Place Principle:
 - The “1st Place” is your _____.
 - The “2nd Place” is your _____.
 - The “3rd Place” is where you hang out and _____.
2. Three key actions by the teacher and group leaders to set the right atmosphere.
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
3. Lego Principle: People must “snap-on” to others or they _____.
 - Of those who join the church and attend worship only, _____ are active after five years. Of those who join the church and attend a small group and worship, _____ are active after five years.

- Our community group ministry is the church's strategy and method for _____ new members.
- People's "snap-on points" are _____. Relationships start with knowing people's _____. So wear nametags.

D

Your community group must develop new leaders.

1. Groups come packaged with "_____."
2. Remember: Each group's objective must be _____ by someone.
 - When it's everyone's job, it's _____ job.

Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody Author unknown

This is a story of four church members named *Everybody*, *Somebody*, *Anybody*, and *Nobody*. There was an important job to be done and *Everybody* was sure that *Somebody* would do it. *Anybody* could have done it, but *Nobody* did it. *Somebody* got angry about that, because it was *Everybody's* job. *Everybody* thought *Anybody* could do it, but *Nobody* realized that *Everybody* wouldn't do it. It ended up that *Everybody* blamed *Somebody* when *Nobody* did what *Anybody* could have done.

3. The community group leader should have another member teach _____ so new teachers will be developed.
4. Your group should "_____" a minimum of every two years.
5. The secret to success is the _____ of people!

Obituary Author Unknown

Our church was saddened to learn this week of the death of one of our most valued members, *Someone Else*.

Someone's passing creates a vacancy that will be difficult to fill. *Mr. Else* has been with us for many years and for every one of those years, *Someone* did far more than a normal person's share of the work. Whenever there was a job to do, a class to teach, a visit to make, or a need to meet one name was on everyone's list, "Let *Someone Else* do it." Whenever leadership was mentioned, this wonderful person was looked to for inspiration as well as results: "*Someone Else* can work with that group."

It was common knowledge that *Someone Else* was among the most liberal givers in our church. Whenever there was a financial need, everyone just assumed *Someone Else* would make up the difference. *Someone Else* was a wonderful person; sometimes appearing super-human.

Were the truth known, everybody expected too much of *Someone Else*. Now *Someone Else* is gone! We wonder what we are going to do. *Someone Else* left a wonderful example, but who is going to follow it? Who is going to do the things *Someone Else* did? When you are asked to help, remember-- we can't depend on *Someone Else* anymore.

When it comes to building a great community group, it begins with building a great leadership team.

We Can Do More Than Me!

Off-Campus Community Group Preparation

1 Week Out

- Continue praying for the neighborhood where your community group will be launched.
 - Prayer walk each street in the area.
 - Pray specifically for each home.
 - Pray for God's Spirit to open people's hearts to your invitation.
 - Pray for God's Spirit to draw people to Christ.
- Continue building relationships with people within the neighborhood.
 - As you prayer walk, talk to those who are out in their yards or walking on the streets.
 - Introduce yourself and show interest in their lives.
 - Make a note of those who mention information related to spiritual things.
 - Inquire about people's interest for a Bible study in your neighborhood.
- Continue recruiting a few couples to assist you in launching your community group.
 - Recruit an assistant teacher.
 - Recruit an outreach leader.
 - Recruit a secretary.
 - Recruit a hospitality leader.
- Meet with your community group leadership team.
 - Spread the word regarding when and where your community group is meeting.
 - Invite people to your meet-and-greet event.
 - Pass out door hanger cards.
 - Continue compiling a list of prospects for your community group.
 - Assign responsibilities for when the community group meets.
- Finalize your first week's lesson from the *Bible Studies for Life* curriculum.
- Continue reading Brad House's book, *Community* and Allan Taylor's book, *The Six Core Values of Sunday School*.

APPENDIX 7

QUESTIONNAIRE DATA ANALYSIS

Table A1. Community group ministry pre-project results

P	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Total
1	5	5	6	5	6	5	6	4	6	5	53
2	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	60
3	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	60
4	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	60
5	5	5	6	5	6	5	6	6	5	5	54
6	4	5	6	6	6	6	6	3	6	6	54
Total	32	33	36	34	36	34	36	31	35	34	
										Mean	56.833

Table A2. Community group ministry post-project results

P	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Total
1	5	6	6	5	6	6	6	5	6	4	55
2	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	58
3	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	60
4	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	60
5	4	5	6	5	6	5	6	6	6	6	55
6	5	6	5	6	6	6	6	4	6	6	56
Total	31	34	35	34	36	35	36	33	36	34	
										Mean	57.333

Table A3. t-Test: Paired two sample for means

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	56.83333333	57.33333333
Variance	12.16666667	5.466666667
Observations	6	6
Pearson Correlation	0.940068455	
Hypothesized Mean		
Difference	0	
df	5	
t Stat	0.807572853	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.228010558	
t Critical one-tail	2.015048373	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.456021116	
t Critical two-tail	2.570581836	

Table A4. Leadership assessment pre-project results

P	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Total
1	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	3	3	42
2	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	4	3	2	42
3	5	5	5	6	5	5	5	5	4	4	49
4	4	4	5	6	5	4	5	4	3	3	43
5	5	6	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	47
6	3	3	4	4	4	5	5	4	3	3	38
Total	26	27	29	29	26	29	30	26	20	19	
									Mean		43.5

Table A5. Leadership assessment post-project results

P	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Total
1	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	3	3	43
2	4	4	4	5	6	6	5	5	4	4	47
3	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	60
4	4	4	5	6	5	5	6	6	5	5	51
5	5	6	5	4	5	6	6	5	4	4	50
6	4	5	4	5	5	6	6	5	3	3	46
Total	28	29	28	31	32	34	34	31	25	25	
										Mean	49.5

Table A6. t-Test: Paired two sample for means

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	43.5	49.5
Variance	15.5	34.7
Observations	6	6
Pearson Correlation	0.789079032	
Hypothesized Mean	0	
Difference	0	
df	5	
t Stat	3.985266985	-
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.005237835	
t Critical one-tail	2.015048373	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.01047567	
t Critical two-tail	2.570581836	

APPENDIX 8

OFF-CAMPUS COMMUNITY GROUP ATTENDANCE

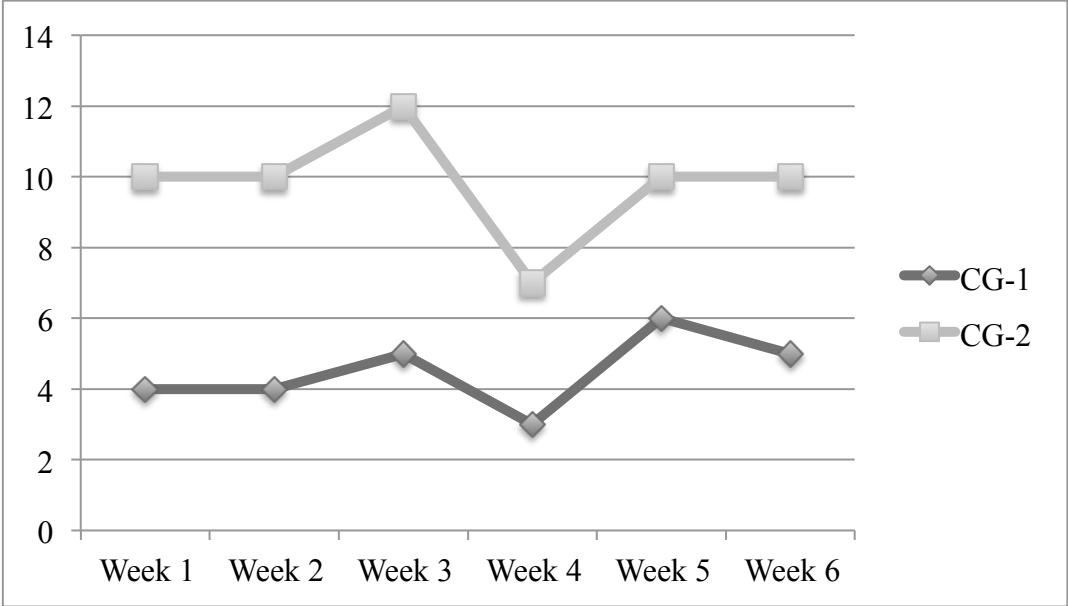


Figure A1. Off-campus community group attendance

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING AND LAUNCHING STRATEGIC OFF-CAMPUS COMMUNITY GROUPS AT HIGHLAND PARK BAPTIST CHURCH, MUSCLE SHOALS, ALABAMA

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The purpose of this project was to develop and launch strategic off-campus community groups at Highland Park Baptist Church in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. Chapter 1 presents the goals, ministry context, and rationale of the project.

Chapter 2 endeavors to establish a biblical and theological basis for off-campus community groups by examining the Bible's depiction of community. Scripture portrays the doctrine of community in several different ways. Community is seen in the unity found within the Godhead. Community is evident in the creation of humankind. Community is observed in the call and establishment of Abram and Israel, and it is witnessed in Christ's redemptive work upon the cross as he reconciles humankind back to God the Father and to one another. And finally, community is evident in the early church as they are of one mind, working together to spread the gospel message.

Chapter 3 provides a framework for properly discovering, developing, and deploying off-campus community group leaders. These leaders are an essential component in the discipleship process of the church. Consequently, the way community group leaders are discovered, developed, and deployed is central to the overall health and success of the small group.

Chapter 4 describes in detail the methodology of the project.

Chapter 5 provides an evaluation of the project as well as some suggestions of what should have been done differently.

VITA

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