

INTRODUCTION

God has a plan with the world. He's not just letting things happen randomly.

1. Reach those _____ from God - Help people get into relationship with Jesus.
Acts 1:8

2. _____ God's people. Romans 8:29; Ephesians 4:11-13; 2 Peter 3:18

Exercise | What might a life-changing small group look like? If you held up a picture of a life-changing small group, what would you see? What are the parts and pieces?

THE COMPONENTS OF LIFE-CHANGING SMALL GROUPS

A. LIFE-CHANGING SMALL GROUPS EMBRACE _____.
(Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12-13; I Peter 3:8-9)

→ Our groups have to be places where it's okay to be less than _____.
People have to know that their weaknesses and imperfections are not going to be used against them.

B. LIFE-CHANGING SMALL GROUPS PAY ATTENTION TO THE _____.
(Ephesians 4:14-16)

“It has been said that spiritual and emotional growth is a path further and further into reality. I always try to remind people that as painful as it may be, truth is always your friend. No matter how difficult it is to swallow, truth is reality and that is where ultimate safety, growth, and God are. We need to know the truth...whatever the truth is, it is our friend. And it is where God lives.” -Henry Cloud, *How People Grow*

THE GROWTH FORMULA

(Ephesians 4:15)

$$\frac{\text{Grace + Truth}}{\text{Time}} = \text{Growth}$$

C. LIFE-CHANGING SMALL GROUPS LEAD PEOPLE TO _____.

→ What might keep us from self-disclosure or vulnerability? Really, what makes us feel unsafe?

- Previous wounds - Family, other groups, etc.
- Harsh personalities (legalistic people in the group) - “They poison the water supply of community.”
- The leader - Failing to model vulnerability, moving too quickly.
- Truth without grace - That is the law, judgment.
- Current pain - Fear that you will be so messy that people will push you away.
- Performance issues - Feeling that they need to perform to earn approval.

D. LIFE-CHANGING SMALL GROUPS LOVE THROUGH _____.
(Galatians 6:2; Matthew 22)

E. LIFE-CHANGING SMALL GROUPS DELIVER _____.

→ Each one of us carries two buckets:

- Good Bucket - We collect _____ messages about ourselves.
- Bad Bucket - We collect _____ messages about ourselves.

Exercise

What are some of those positive and negative messages we collect in life? Think about your own life. You have either the word “positive” or “negative” at your table. Talk at your table about some of those kinds of messages we receive.

NEXT STEPS TO CREATING LIFE-CHANGING COMMUNITIES

A. _____ IT - Begin with yourself.

How committed are you to knowing the truth about yourself?

→ You need to ask yourself some really important questions:

- What is it about community that I resist?
- What is it about authentic relationship that scares me?
- What beliefs do I have about myself that keep me from wanting to connect deeply with others?
- What is the truth about me (What parts of me feel unacceptable to others? What about me feels less than perfect?)

B. _____ IT - Normalize safety, truth and vulnerability.

C. _____ IT - Enlist the help of others.

D. _____ IT - Engage the hearts of your group members.

→ How do you engage group members at a feeling level?

1. Ask feeling questions along with your thinking questions (see page 6).
2. Use “Get-to-know-you” Questions—even if it cuts into the lesson.
3. Have group members share and pray in pairs.
4. Story telling - “This is your life” (and then we would respond with a blessing).

E. _____ WITH IT - Give it time.

CONCLUSION

Take a moment to look back over the components we talked about and talk through these questions:

→ When you look at these components of life-changing small groups, which one feels most like a stretch for you personally?

→ Why do you think this might be so difficult for you?

→ Which of the next steps do you need to focus on as a growth step?

ENGAGING THE HEARTS OF GROUP MEMBERS

Thinking Questions vs. Feeling Questions

THINKING QUESTIONS

FEELING QUESTIONS

“How do people cope when they lose a loved one?”

“Have any of you ever lost a loved one? How was that for you?”

“How do people handle injustice in our world?”

“When was the last time you were wronged?”

“What are some childhood experiences we share in common?”

“When did you feel _____ when you were a child?”

“How should Christians deal with disappointments?”

“What disappoints you about life?”

“What are the challenges for parents in the 21st century?”

“What scares you about being a parent in a world like ours?”

“How does God supply our needs?”

“When was a time you most needed God?”

- There is nothing wrong with thinking questions.
- Problems arise when we never get around to asking feeling questions as well.
- Thinking questions allow us to gather information about each other, but feeling questions allow us to experience each other.
- To achieve deeper levels of community we need to go past gathering information and create experiences where we encounter one another. Feeling questions make that possible.

GET-TO-KNOW-YOU QUESTIONS

- Who is your number one advisor in life and why?
- One of my biggest pet peeves is...
- You have three wishes. What would you wish for?
- What is the most daring thing you have ever done? What made it so daring?
- What’s the story behind the longest time you’ve gone without sleep?
- Next year looks better to me because...
- Next year may be a problem because...
- I am most like my mother/father in that I...
- I wish before I got married someone had told me...
- I wish before I had children someone had told me...