

The Relational Small Group

DiscipleShift, Session Ten (Chap. 10)

4th Key Shift: From Activity to Relationship

What actually happens in a small group?

“Programs in a church don’t exist simply so a church can be busy doing good things. That’s ineffective. Making disciples is the main reason why a church exists, so everything in a corporate body needs to funnel people toward a relational small group in which discipleship can best happen. While small groups are not the *only* ministry in the church, they are the primary means of making disciples who make disciples” (p. 184).

“A group needs to know what it exists for” (p. 185). It’s appropriate to ask!

What are some unrealized yet poor reasons as to why a group may exist?

The purpose of a small group is encouraging discipleship, but what other things tend to take its place?

Components of a Small Group

a) **Shepherding**

The small group leader is a type of _____. He or she creates an environment where shepherding can take place and people care for each other.

“A leader must encourage all members of the group to become shepherds themselves” (p. 188).

What does a shepherd notice? What does a shepherd do? Whose flock is it?

b) **Teaching**

So it’s a Bible study?

Yes...the content is centered on and drawn from God’s Word.

No...it’s about facilitating a discussion, not lecturing. Q/A, modeling, storying are featured which makes for a more dynamic, interactive time!

c) **Authenticity and Accountability**

_____ is the foundation.

“Sharing breaks the power of secrecy in people’s lives” (p. 192).

“When real life issues are shared in a small group, sensitivity and tact are needed in big ways. Too often, group members will immediately want to fix other people’s problems. But we encourage small group leader to train their people **not** to be _____” (p. 192).

“Note that a leader must encourage transparency for the right reasons. Sometimes people share simply for the sake of being sincere or authentic, or because it is a value of the group and they want to feel included or affirmed. But that doesn’t go anywhere if the heart behind it is not being transformed. The reason to be transparent is to take the _____ and be the kind of person Jesus wants you to be. That’s why a disciple-making group needs a level of _____ and _____ that goes beyond what happens at a typical Bible study group. But it also needs to be a place where accountability is expected and given. Love is the foundation, and accountability is one of the parts of loving another person well” (p. 193).

What kind of boundaries or guidelines does a small group need?

“Relational discipleship is Jesus’ plan. There is no Plan B” (p. 196).

_____ life group rhythm is ideal. But keep in mind, shepherding happens in the life group (collectively) as well as outside of it (individually).

“Many groups run their course in a few months. Certainly a few years. It’s perfectly okay to end a small group. Sometimes it’s the best thing you can do” (p. 190).

A life group leader should state frequently and openly:

- the purpose of the group (discipling!)
- the guidelines and expectations of one another (boundaries)
- the timeline (it will end; not meant to be permanent)
- the hope for growth and expectation for raising up leaders (responsibility is shared)
- the goal of branching (multiplication increases capacity and impact)

Discussion: In small groups, comment on these common objections/dysfunctions. What’s going on? What needs to happen?

- “I don’t want our group to end. We love each other so much!”
- “Our group started such a long time ago. If you joined us now, it would be awkward for you.”
- “I’m really sorry, but we don’t have any more room.”
- “Normally, we just show up and talk about whatever the topic is that night.”
- “I don’t have time for a life group. I already am doing so much in the church.”
- “She just asked me about something I had only shared with my life group.”