

Real Life Group Leaders

Creekside's Church-of-Groups Vision

Facilitator Notes

Notes: These notes are taken from "Leading Life-Changing Small Groups" by Bill Donahue and the Willow Creek Small Groups Team. All Scripture used here is from the New International Version unless noted otherwise.

Mission:

Building a Community to Reach a Community

To connect people into groups of four to ten who come together on a regular basis for a common purpose and are led by an identified leader who is assisting them in their progress toward full devotion to Christ by intentionally providing an environment for connection, community, and

5 Core Values

Mandate: Spiritual Transformation

John 13:15 – I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

What does John 13:15 tell us about our mandate in the church?

Jesus Christ, as Head of the church, intends His followers to become like Him. The church exists not just to collect followers, but to transform them.

We describe the life change the church exists to produce with "The Five G's":

Grace (to personally appropriate and extend the saving work of Christ), **Growth** (pursuing Christ-likeness), **Group** (connecting with others in significant relationships), **Gifts** (serving Christ's body according to spiritual giftedness and passion), and **Good stewardship** (honoring God with our resources through what we give to the church and what we keep).

Method: Small Group Community

Mark 3:14 – He appointed twelve — designating them apostles — that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach

What does Mark 3:14 tell us about the method the church should use to make disciples?

A small group provides the optimal environment for the life change Jesus Christ intends for every believer. Significant relationships (including one-to-one) occur best in the context of a small group. Connecting people in a small group is not an optional sub-ministry of the church, it is essential for growth. Without this connection, people can, at best, attend meetings but they aren't truly participating in church.

A small group of believers who love one another with God's love will experience the life Christ promised at the deepest level possible. This love radically transforms them and demonstrates His power.

Mobilize: Strategic Leaders

Ephesians 4:11-12 – It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

What does Ephesians 4:11-12 tell us about God's plan to mobilize the church?

The most strategic person in the life-change process of the church is the small group leader. Real Life Group leaders are strategic because they are the "front-line" agents of life change and have the greatest opportunity to affect the most people over the longest period of time.

Small group leaders cannot flourish in a vacuum. Leaders need to band together periodically with other leaders for encouragement and accountability (**huddling**). Additionally, church staff and other leaders must provide training in skills necessary for group life (**skill training**) and reminders of the purpose and goals that drive the ministry (**vision casting**).

The ultimate goal of a leader is life change: to help group members grow in Christ-like character through learning, loving one another, and contributing of themselves and their resources. Yet leaders must also help their groups grow in size and eventually birth new groups.

Multiply: Span of Care

2 Timothy 2:2 – And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

What does 2 Timothy 2:2 tell us about how God wants the church to plan for growth?

Groups must expand and multiply so that eventually every believer can be connected to others.

Apprenticeship fosters new leaders and must be an integral part of group life so that emerging leaders continually gain on-the-job experience and can be ready to lead groups of their own as soon as they are ready.

When a group gets too large, its leader cannot provide the care necessary for life transformation of each individual. Though groups must grow, the appropriate span of care of approximately one leader for every ten people needs to be maintained. The next step for groups that grow above ten members is to birth new groups.

Means: Seek and Celebrate

Acts 13:52 – the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit

What does Acts 13:52 tell us what God wants His church to experience?

Effective ministry happens in an atmosphere of prayer and celebration. God wants us to experience a relationship with Him. This means that we speak to in prayer and He speaks to us in many ways, especially through His Word.

Great ministry follows great praying—believers who talk to their heavenly Father and receive because they ask; when they knock, He opens. Leaders are to pray as Jesus prayed: publicly as well as privately, authentically as well as powerfully, specifically as well as continually.

Observe, share, value, and celebrate God's activity. A climate of fun and festivity should permeate gatherings related to ministries.

Developing Disciples

Matthew 10:24-25 – A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master.

What is a disciple?

In the simplest form, a disciple is an apprentice to Jesus. Another way to define discipleship is "living as Christ would if He were in my place." Discipleship—in these broad terms—implies a life of transformation and dependence on the Holy Spirit.

How does a disciple function in the local church?

As a person functions as a Christ-follower in church, they become a "participating member" of that local body. A participating member may be described as one who is maturing in grace, growth, group, gifts, and good stewardship.

Ephesians 2:8-9 – For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.

What role does grace have in making disciples?

Christ followers understand and have individually received Christ's saving grace. They have abandoned all attempts to earn God's favor through their own accomplishments. In obedience to Christ's command, they have undergone water baptism giving outward witness to the inner cleansing and renewal experienced in Him.

Christ followers also desire to extend the grace they've received to others through personal evangelism and participation in the ministry of the church in their community, their country, and around the world.

2 Peter 3:18 – Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

How should growth characterize disciples?

Christ followers know that the grace of God that saved them is only the beginning of His work in them. They gratefully respond by actively pursuing a lifelong process of spiritual growth in Christ and by seeking to become conformed to His image. To this end, they consistently nurture their spiritual development through prayer, worship, and Bible study.

They regard the Bible as the final authority in all areas that it teaches about and desire to be wholly obedient to it. Christ followers honestly confront areas of personal sin and engage the Holy Spirit's power in seeking to turn from sin.

Acts 2:46 – Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.

What role do group gatherings serve in making disciples?

A Christ follower honors God's call to participate in community in order to grow in Christ-likeness, express and receive love, and carry out the ministry of the church. For this reason, they give priority to attending the corporate gatherings of the church for the purpose of worship, teaching, and participation in the sacrament of communion, and are connected relationally to a small group for the purpose of mutual encouragement, support, and accountability.

Romans 2:6-8 – We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

What role do spiritual gifts serve in making disciples?

Christ followers recognize that the church is composed of interdependent members, each uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up the body and furthering the ministry of the church. They therefore seek to discover, develop, and deploy those God-given gifts and to seek a place of service within the church with the support and affirmation of the body.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 – Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

What role does good stewardship play in making disciples?

Christ followers realize they have been bought with the price of Christ's blood, and that everything they are and have belongs to Him. In light of this, they desire to be responsible caretakers of the material resources with which God has entrusted them. They recognize the tithe (ten percent of one's earnings) as the historical standard of giving in Scripture. But, moreover, in response to Christ's abundant giving, they increasingly submit their resources to His lordship and display a spirit of generosity and cheerfulness in supporting the work of the church and reaching out, with compassion, to a needy world.

Vision for Real Life Groups

Here is our vision for the Real Life Group effort at Creekside:

To become a church where nobody stands alone

We don't want to be a church with small groups, we desire to be a church of Real Life Groups.

Community is a theme that runs throughout Scripture. God has always been calling out a people for Himself, beginning with Israel and continuing with the church. Even when the Jews were dispersed among enemy nations during times of captivity, they organized themselves into groups and ultimately formed synagogues (Jewish communities of worship and teaching), where they could serve one another and carry out their beliefs. It was natural, therefore, for Jesus to develop a community of followers and for Paul, Peter, and other church planters to start new communities wherever they went as they proclaimed the Gospel.

Definition of Biblical Community:

Christian Community is the body of Christ expressing the life and message of Christ to build up one another and redeem the world for God's glory.

Discussion Questions

What kind of groups should be considered Real Life Groups at Creekside?

A variety of small groups are needed to accommodate the different needs and levels of maturity of people who make up the church. Groups typically form around areas of affinity such as marital status, age, ministry, task, personal need, life stage, special interests, etc. Groups are more than just the ones traditionally considered as a small group; our teams at Creekside also function as groups and should be considered as such. There are four basic categories of groups: Age/Stage Based, Need Based, Task Based, Interest Based (see "*Leading Life-Changing Small Groups*" for details on the characteristics of these categories).

What roles are needed within Real Life Groups at Creekside?

Every Real Life Group at Creekside needs an identified leader. Other key roles are as follows:
Assistant Leader – This person helps with the logistics and hospitality needed to make the Real Life Group gatherings successful. They also help with recruiting
Apprentice Leader – This person is the one who is next in line to lead a break-out group when they are ready and when the size of the group necessitates it.

Also there are Growing Disciples, Open Chair, Seekers, ECRs, Baby-Sitter, and a Coach (see "*Leading Life-Changing Small Groups*" for descriptions of these).

What should be the primary emphasis Real Life Groups, discipling or providing care?

The answer is "Yes!" Both are needed, but vary in emphasis. We want to disciple people – teach them the Scriptures, help them develop spiritual disciplines, understand the Christian faith, and become disciplers of others. But we also want to care for people – to pray for them, encourage them, meet their needs for affirmation and acceptance. Thus we fulfill both the Great Commission (to make disciples of all nations, Matt. 28:18-20) and the great commandment (to love one another, John 13:34-35).