

Leading Small Groups

How to lead a small group effectively

Training Manual



The Salvation Army New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga Territory

Compiled by Alastair Kendrew, 2011

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SESSION 1

Introduction

Session Overview

- Course overview
- Definition and explanation of small groups

Introduction

Welcome. It's great that you're reading this. It means you're probably:

- A small group coordinator looking to train your team of leaders
- A group leader looking to improve your group ministry
- Someone considering whether to become a small group leader or helper
- Someone signed up to lead and wanting to get started.

Small groups are essential to a healthy corps and helping guide a group of people is extremely rewarding.

This booklet is designed as a course/manual for small group leader, and in particular, leaders of what are often referred to as Life/Home Groups. However, many of the principles outlined should apply to all small groups. For example, developing authentic relationships (session 3) and facilitation skills (session 5).

Feel free to work through cover to cover, or just dive in and out of individual sessions as you find most useful.

Objectives

After completing this course, you will:

- Have a common vision for small groups within your corps
- Understand the concept of authentic relationships, their importance in group life and have practical ideas for fostering them within groups
- Have the basic facilitation skills needed to encourage participation and openness by all members of a small group
- Have had exposure to various ideas for running small group sessions, including openers, worshipping and praying in small groups
- Be able to start a small group
- Know where to go to get assistance.

Small Group Description

WHY

As a corps grows, it becomes impossible to maintain a sense of church community through large gatherings alone. To be a place where ‘no-one stands alone’, people need to have, or be developing authentic relationships with at least a small number of people within the corps.

Meeting together regularly with other Christians provides accountability and discipline in our Christian lives, in the same way that going to the gym with a partner increases your chance of keeping fit.

It is important that each member of your congregation has someone praying specifically for them, and that there are people who they know well enough to turn to in times of need.

A special type of learning occurs when people gather together in small groups to study God and how to apply His principles to their lives. This opportunity for discussion and debate helps all participants grow in their relationship with God.

Besides, none of this is too radical – the early Christians did this 2000 years ago (Acts 20:20, Acts 2:44-47, Hebrews 10:25).

WHAT

In its simplest form, a small group is a gathering of a small number of people for a purpose. Examples of small groups include:

Small Group	Primary Purpose
Bible Study	Learn about God through studying the Bible
Training course	Learning about the topic
Craft group	Making something
Home League	Fellowship, supporting missionaries
Kids club	Entertaining children
Music team	Leading the church in music
Life/Home Group	Support, sharing, caring, application, prayer
Prayer group	Prayer

Natural Church Development (NCD) is a survey tool for improving the health of a church. One of their key indicators is ‘holistic small groups’, defined as groups where ‘*Christians find intimate community, practical help and intensive spiritual interaction*’.

- ❑ **Intimate community** (hearts): ensuring all members have, or are forming authentic relationships with other members of the group. This helps provide a support network for participants to share in each other's celebrations and times of need, and ensures members can answer the question 'who prays for you?'
- ❑ **Practical help** (hands): helping each other in practical ways, being relevant to every day life and providing opportunities to serve
- ❑ **Intensive spiritual interaction** (heads): to enable people to learn how to apply Christian principles to their lives, through small group study, and to hold each other accountable for actions agreed during these studies.

Clearly a Life/Home Group is most likely to be holistic as it is designed for these three purposes; however, it is possible for any small group to be holistic. For example, a music team can create an intimate community by sharing and praying for each other, and can build intensive spiritual interaction through looking at words of songs or making devotions a priority.

The remainder of this booklet is written primarily for Life/Home Groups.

WHERE

Each small group determines where it meets, although it is usual to meet in someone's home.

It is preferable to meet in the same place each time, as it helps:

- ❑ People feel comfortable and so be more open
- ❑ The coordinator to visit and to feed people through to the group.

It is particularly important to consider the needs of members with children. It may be more appropriate to rotate the meeting place or coordinate baby-sitting.

WHEN

The small group determines when and how often it meets, but will typically require 1½ hours. As such, ideal times are in the evenings, or mid-morning.

Small groups need to meet at a minimum fortnightly. Even fortnightly, if you miss one meeting, it is a month between attending which affects group dynamics and the openness of the group.

People may enjoy the occasional night off and have other events that prevent them attending, so it may be appropriate to schedule a regular night off.

Groups enjoy meeting socially so it is helpful to schedule regular social events (refer to Appendix B for social event ideas).

Some meeting models include (week five – months with five weeks):

Type	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
#1: Alternate with regular social	Study	Social	Study	Week off	Week off
#2: Three per month	Study	Study	Study	Week off	Social
#3: Fortnightly	Study	Week off	Study	Week off	Social
#4: Get together with other groups	Study	Social	Study	Week off	Large gathering

WHO

Although not typically focused on evangelism, small groups should always be open to new people attending. This may impact existing dynamics, but new people also bring diversity to a group and would you want to prevent other people from having the benefits of attending a small group?

The size of a group depends largely on the size of the venue, however, when a group has more than 10 people attending on any particular week, it becomes very difficult to maintain the right group dynamics. In the short term, the group should look to break into two smaller groups for discussion, but as it grows, you should look to celebrate the group's success and look to split into two (refer to Session 7).

In general, we suggest Small groups be based around where people live, rather than on age, gender, etc. However, it is up to the group to decide and it is quite acceptable for groups to form around other demographics, for example, a youth small group, a parent's group, a women's or men's group, etc.

HOW

We recommend each small group to have a leader to ensure that the group continues to operate, as groups without a leader are more prone to disband.

The leader is responsible for ensuring the group meets, but does not need to facilitate each meeting (in fact, it is preferable to have other member's involved).

All small group meetings should look to include the three components of intimate community, practical help and intensive spiritual interaction.

SESSION 2

Structure

Session Overview

- ❑ A basic model for a small group meeting

Model Overview

As we've already seen, there are three parts to a holistic small group, and clearly these parts are mainly developed in the small group meeting:

- ❑ **Intimate community:** developing authentic relationships, sharing life experiences and being genuinely interested in each other
- ❑ **Practical help:** We are interested in more than Bible knowledge. We want to dig out truths that are going to make a difference in our daily lives, offer practical support to each other and provide opportunities to serve
- ❑ **Intensive spiritual interaction:** provide opportunity for debate and discussion around applying Christian principles to our lives, and to hold each other accountable for actions agreed during these studies.

All three of these must be kept in use and in equal balance (but not necessarily equal time) for best results. When these three elements are observed in a group meeting (and even better when they also occur outside the group meeting), the group will be healthy and will reproduce healthy well-balanced Christians.

A proposed structure for small group meetings is:

- ❑ Welcome (until time to start): as people arrive, friendly discussion about the week, to create a welcoming environment
- ❑ Opening / Ice-breaker (5-10 mins): a warm-up question, particularly useful for new groups
- ❑ Worship (optional) (15 mins): a short time of worship
- ❑ Body (45-60 mins): the study with application
- ❑ Prayer (15 mins): looking within and without
- ❑ Food: enables you to keep talking to people – could be first

This structure covers the three components of a healthy small group, and provides a natural flow from warming up, through to study and personal application, then an opportunity to pray for each other and the commitments made during the study.

Welcome

‘People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care’.

One of the most important characteristics of an effective small group is demonstrating that they care for each other. The best way to demonstrate this is through knowing what is happening in each other’s lives and remembering events from week to week. The welcome time is an excellent time to demonstrate this (e.g. if someone says they are going away for the weekend, at the next study, people should ask how was your weekend away).

For some leaders, this comes naturally. For others, you may need to take notes each week and use these as part of your preparation.

It takes time to create a welcoming, sharing environment, but showing an interest in people as they arrive goes a long way towards achieving this goal.

Opening / Ice-breaker

When you are ready to start, let the group know they are beginning. This could be as simple as stating ‘we are starting now’.

In the early stages of a group, an ice-breaker is an excellent way to get to know each other better and to get people talking. Once the group is established however, ice-breakers may be considered tacky, and so a wide-angle question relating to the topic will be more appropriate (an ‘opener’).

Another idea is to have ‘Praise Reports’ – a chance for all members to tell the group about the good things that have happened to them and the answers to prayer they have received over the last week.

ICE BREAKER QUESTIONS

- Two truths and a lie: Everyone in the group tell two truths about themselves and one lie, with the other members guessing which was the lie
- Empty your baggage: Have everyone write on a piece of paper anything currently on their mind (e.g. work, family situation), then screw all the pieces of paper up and throw them into a rubbish bin

Questions dealing with the past:

- Tell about the best birthday present you ever received
- Share one of the happiest days of your life
- What is the best advice you ever received?
- Share a time when you believe you were led by God

- What is the story behind the longest time you have gone without sleep?
- Who is the most famous person you have met and where was it?
- What do you miss most about childhood?

Questions dealing with the present:

- How do you tune into God?
- How would you describe yourself to someone who does not know you?
- Describe a typical day in your life
- What foreign country would you like to visit and why?
- People might be surprised to find out that I ...
- I am most like (Mum, Dad, other ...)
- I am a bundle of nerves when I ...
- If your house caught fire, what three things (not people) would you rescue first?

Questions dealing with the future:

- Describe your ideal house and how you would furnish it
- What would you do if someone willed you a million dollars
- What is something you think God wants you to do?
- What spiritual goal are you reaching for? Why?
- If you could do anything you want this time next year what would it be?
- What epitaph would you want on your tombstone?
- If given the choice, how would you prefer to die and why?
- What is your biggest fear about death?

Worship

Some groups enjoy spending time worshipping God together. It is important for you to agree as a group what works best for you, such as:

- Singing or listening to a CD
- Prayers of worship or adoration
- Reading passages of scripture.

You must decide whether singing is an appropriate form of worship for your group before introducing it. Remember, group singing is not a usual New Zealand cultural event except on special occasions like carol singing.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR GROUP WORSHIP

Should you choose to include a worship slot, here are some suggestions:

- Length is not the determiner of quality. 10-15 minutes is adequate
- Be sure that you have prepared your heart for worship beforehand
- Look for others in the group who have skills in worship and utilise their gifts. Can someone else lead this slot? Does anyone play an instrument?
- You don't have to sing – people may prefer to listen and reflect
- Should you choose to sing, select two or three songs with which to begin. Introduce one new song at a time while singing well known ones
- Let there be quiet times between songs and praises. Don't feel that there needs to be either talking or singing taking place at all times
- Allow people to worship in their own way
- Allow God to help you plan worship before hand. Unplanned worship is many times an excuse for the undisciplined Christian.

Make sure you review your worship regularly to find an approach (or approaches) that work best for your group.

Body

The number one principle for all Bible application is **learning = change**.

‘The scriptures were not given for our information, but for our transformation.’ DL Moody

‘All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.’ 2 Timothy 3:16,17

Our primary task as Small Group Leaders is not to explain the scripture to our group, but to challenge them to be changed by the scriptures.

APPLICATION PRINCIPLES

- Don't think of yourself as a teacher, but as a facilitator
- Have in mind one central idea or theme for application
- Start wide with open, general questions then lead the group to specifics
- Allow the Holy Spirit to personalise for each group member
- Challenge the group to the specific application
- Let them know that they will be sharing next week on their progress
- Give positive encouragement as they share victories and defeats
- Application is more effective as its basis in the Bible if the group member sees you read from the Bible (or if using a book, make sure you recognise the scriptural foundation).
- Application that has impacted the Small Group Leader tends to more deeply impact the small group member.

APPROACH

There are a number of different ways to plan the body of your meeting. **The easiest, and arguably the best, is to use a book** (see Appendix A – Resources)

However, if you have a particular topic that is of interest to the group and you cannot locate appropriate resources, you may decide to prepare a study yourself.

Always start by deciding what is your aim – the single most important message you want the group members to leave with? Then you can work on how you will get this message across and how the desired transformation will occur.

Here are three ideas to help structure a lesson.

a) 4MAT Model – Why, What, How, What if/what else?

Step	Explanation	Example – Prayer Models
Why?	A key principle of how adults learn is that they need to know ‘What’s in it for them’. When you start any session, start by introducing the topic and explaining (or extracting from the members) why the session will be of value to them.	There are many different ways of praying. If you are struggling with your prayer life, it could be there’s a different approach that will work better for you. If you are happy with your prayer life, tonight’s session may help you add variety to your praying.
What?	This is where you define the topic – the text you are studying or content you are expecting the people to learn. If the members of the group know most of the content, try to extract it from them by general and open questions. If it is new, explain the content but keep the explanation short.	Has anyone heard of prayer models? What are the different ways people pray? Will someone share how they pray? Introduce the various prayer models, potentially one at a time.
How?	This is the application part of the study. With this new knowledge, how do I do it? How do I use it? It may be appropriate to allow time for practice.	Explanation or practical exercise to enable people to work out which model is best for you. Add some application / commitment so that people go away and try out different models. Explain that there will be opportunity at the next meeting to share how they got on.
What if/ what else?	Anything else you want people to know – extra for experts; where to find out more, etc.	If you were really stimulated by the session, you may like to read the following books... If you want extra homework, try out each of the different models.

b) Funnel Method

Start with a range of general questions, slowly honing in on the areas you want people to learn or take note of. Finish with hard hitting details that will encourage members to do something or think differently as a result of the study.

Example: Keys to Spiritual Growth

Who is a Christian you look to as an example? What do you learn from them?

Read Acts 2:38-47. What actions and attitudes marked the early Christians?

Four things: They were devoted to learning, committed to fellowship, hungered for communion and had a passion for prayer.

Describe each point in turn, allowing discussion and time for personal application for each one. For example, under Committed to Fellowship –how does a deep commitment to fellowship with other Christians help you grow in your faith? How can you deepen ties with other Christians in the coming days?

c) What it's not, before what it is

Start by discussing what the topic is not. Then what it is, before helping people apply the learning to their lives.

Example: What is a Christian?

Brief story about how when people do things they know that are wrong, they often justify it by comparing to people who are much worse (e.g. Hitler). How do people play the comparison game with their financial status? Moral condition? Family life? Religious devotion? Why do they do this?

A few false beliefs ...	What you really need ...
1. Good works will get you to heaven – how good is good enough?	1. You accept that you are a sinner and understand that God loves you
2. They believe in God – so do demons	2. You feel the work of the Holy Spirit changing you
3. They attend Church – so what	3. People notice that you are changing
4. They once raised their hand at a worship service – Jesus tells the parable of the sower to communicate that some people fall away.	4. Your view of sin changes – things that you used to think were OK are no longer OK
	5. You want God's goals for your life, not your own

Encourage members to reflect on where they are at with God and is there anything that needs changing in their lives.

Prayer

Probably the most powerful section of the meeting is the prayer time. This is an opportunity for people to share issues from their lives, and as the group sees answers to their prayers, their faith grows, and the group develops.

KEY PRINCIPLES IN GROUP PRAYER

- ❑ The leader's modelling of conversational prayer is pivotal
- ❑ Limit time for prayer requests
- ❑ Don't force people to pray
- ❑ Encourage lots of people to pray by talking English, not spiritualese, and restricting people to only pray for one topic per prayer. Otherwise, you'll find less confident people won't pray as 'they could never pray like that' or there's simply nothing left to pray for!
- ❑ Be creative in your approach.

The Salvation Army Territorial Strategic Mission Plan (TSMP) resources include tips for praying in small groups (head to www.sarmy.net.nz , choose Strategic Mission Plan >> Resources >> Goal One).

THE ACTS MODEL OF PRAYER

One approach to prayer is to use the ACTS model:

- ❑ Adoration – praise God for one of His characteristics, ideally discussed during the meeting
- ❑ Confession – allow everyone a chance to confess their own sins to God for reconciliation. If the group is very open, it may be possible to have people confess their sins to one another
- ❑ Thanksgiving – answered prayers, new group members, spiritual blessings, relational blessings, changes in people's lives, material blessings, etc.
- ❑ Supplication – look out (e.g. pray for an issue from the World, New Zealand, our Church, our Leaders); look in (pray for each other) and pray for the empty chair
- ❑ Listen – allow time for people to listen to God. To help, you may guide their listening by asking questions (e.g. is there something you want us to know about our group, my relationships, my character, our Church, etc.)

PRAYER DIARY

Almost the most important part of prayer is writing down what you've prayed for. This serves two purposes:

- ❑ Once you've captured the prayer requests, the diary can be used to remind people what to pray for
- ❑ You can see what prayers have been answered. This both encourages the group and shows things that you need to keep praying for.

A simple A4 exercise book is sufficient. If it is any smaller, it is difficult for the group to see what to pray for from a distance.

Go through the prayer diary each week at the start of the prayer session crossing off answers to prayer.

Food

Whether food is part of a small group meeting is up to the group to decide, however, food tends to break down barriers and encourage the group to get to know each other better.

Food works equally well before and after the meeting, although if it is before, sometimes the meeting feels like it just ends and people are kicked out the door.

Do you want the host(ess) to provide food as part of their ministry?

Do you want everyone in the group to contribute each week?

Do you want a roster?

Preparation

The amount of time you spend preparing is up to you. As a minimum, you should have prepared the study and prayed for the meeting. However, you reap what you sow, so the more you prepare, the better the results.

Here is a checklist for preparing your small group meeting:

People

- Who is attending and why? List all the people coming, with one need or request for each person. Pray for each person and the group as a whole.

Arrangements

- What needs to be arranged? Location, children, seating, Bibles, refreshments, music, supplies, etc. Who will do it? Are you sure?

Relationships

- How will I build positive relationships among members of the group?
- How can I help the people feel cared for and caring?
- Is there anything I should be doing pastorally before the meeting?
- What am I doing to prepare my apprentice for the meeting? Is there anything my apprentice should do during the meeting?

Discussion

- What questions will I use to help people discover and apply the truth?
- What will I do to draw silent members into the discussion?
- How will I help new members enter into our study?
- What will I do with a dominant member?

Prayer

- Who will pray and when? What kind of prayer will be used?
- How can I make our prayer time more productive? More than words?

Time

- What time is available and how will I use it?
- What is our 'real starting time' and 'ending time'? How firm am I?
- How will I open and close each segment of the meeting?
- Can I ask others to take responsibility for different parts of the meeting?

Follow-up

How much you choose to follow up on your members is again up to you, but remember – you reap what you sow.

As a minimum, you should take a note of any issues facing people in your group and ask them about them next time you see them. You may find it helpful to keep a diary specifically for your small group.

In addition, you may choose to be more proactive with your contact, maintaining a plan for regular ministering to each person.

As a Small Group Leader, you should become the first point of contact when members of your group face significant events in their lives.

SESSION 3

Building Authentic Relationships

Session Overview

- ❑ The need for authentic relationships in small groups
- ❑ The five components of authentic relationships

Introduction to Authenticity

One of the primary objectives of a small group is to develop authentic relationships within the group (refer Session 1). Session 2 outlined the structure of a small group meeting. This session outlines what goes on around the structure, namely, the development of authentic relationships.

Authentic relationships permeate all aspects of group life, especially outside of the meeting, and must be intentional.

In his small group study book *Community* (Zondervan Publishing), Bill Hybels suggests there are five components of authentic relationships:

- ❑ Self Disclosure: know and be known
- ❑ Care Giving: love and be loved
- ❑ Humility: serve and be served
- ❑ Truth telling: admonish and be admonished
- ❑ Affirming: celebrate and be celebrated

These are defined in the next section.

Five Components of Authentic Relationships

SELF DISCLOSURE: KNOW AND BE KNOWN

'In a moment of complete honesty, I think we would all love it if there were some people in our lives who trusted us enough to discuss the deep and tender parts of themselves. I think we would love to be able to unlock some of the vaulted feelings we carry to people who really cared. Most of us gravitate toward friendships, dating, marriage, golf leagues, racquetball clubs or a small group because somewhere floating around within us is a yearning to know and be known by others.' Bill Hybels, *Community* (InterActions Bible Study Series, Zondervan)

The paradox is that if you want people to really know you, you have to really get to know them.

We have been given two ears, but only one mouth. Everyone must make a real effort to get to know the other members of the group by showing an interest, asking questions, and listening. We can apply this to our groups by:

- Asking questions that help people open up
- Building trust (honour confidentiality, reduce belittling/teasing)
- Using relevant icebreaker / opening questions
- Taking risks (re-write material to suit, be prepared to model vulnerability)
- Spending time together outside the group meeting.

CARE GIVING: LOVE AND BE LOVED

‘Unless you are exchanging deeply committed levels of love with a few people, you will die slowly on the inside. This is precisely why so many people feel almost nothing at all. Through the whole course of their lives, they have never exchanged deep levels of love with anybody. ... This is not God’s plan for us. He hungers for us to be loved and to give love to others. As a matter of fact, he wants this for us even more than we hunger for it ourselves’ Bill Hybels, Community (InterActions Bible Study Series, Zondervan)

If we stop to notice, people communicate things to us all the time. To develop authentic relationships, we need to **notice** what they are communicating and **act**.

How do you notice things people are communicating to you?

- Active listening (e.g. ‘Tell me more – I really want to understand’; ‘Wow! I couldn’t help but notice your joy when you said that.’)
- Take notes, write things in your diary
- Spend time thinking and praying about each member of your group in detail before the group meeting. This way, you’ll remember things about them that you can ask about when they arrive.

Active listening flows into thoughtful remembering (acting), for example:

- Sending emails, notes, cards, flowers or making phone calls
- Remembering birthdays
- Delivering meals
- Really noticing (e.g. if you ring someone to ask how they are, and they’re down because their baby-sitter fell through – do more than just say how sorry you are – if possible, offer to baby-sit or find a baby-sitter for them).

HUMILITY: SERVE AND BE SERVED

'It is perhaps the supreme paradox in God's kingdom. Greatness and servanthood are not simply compatible; they are synonymous. No one will know greatness in his kingdom without knowing servanthood. No one.' John Ortberg, *Gifts (Pursuing Spiritual Transformation Series, Zondervan)*

Serving often goes unnoticed, but not serving sticks out like a sore thumb.

How to building a contagious climate of serving (Carl George, *Nine Keys*):

- Serve each other and be served, encourage awareness of each others burdens and take practical steps to address
- Tell each other about things you are serving in outside the group
- Serve together on a short or long term project.

'A great way to serve is to find people who can't return the favour. The Bible refers to the Poor, Orphans, Widows and Strangers. These letters form an acrostic: POWS. In effect these are prisoners of war, held captive by life's tragedies and trials. Giving to them is nothing like our Christmas giving, when we often receive as well as give presents. Christlike giving, includes serving and loving someone who may be unable to give back. This kind of giving creates an atmosphere of humility within groups.' Bill Donahue (*Building a Church of Small Groups*).

TRUTH TELLING: ADMONISH AND BE ADMONISHED

'Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body.' Ephesians 4:25

'Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.' Colossians 3:15-16

Withholding the truth robs people of opportunities for spiritual growth.

You do not have the right to admonish members of your group, if they do not perceive that you are working on knowing, loving and serving them.

Guidelines to truth telling:

- Control your emotions (Ephesians 4:26,32)
- Practice careful and patient instruction
- Give grace (Colossians 4:6)
- Pray for them before you sit down

- ❑ Practice discernment (Proverbs 15:14)
- ❑ Pray
- ❑ Converse (To determine if you are in error or not)
- ❑ Listen intently (James 1:19-20) – be quick to listen and slow to speak

AFFIRMING: CELEBRATE AND BE CELEBRATED

We live in an affirmation deprived culture.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching; Hebrews 10:24-25

Lessons in affirmation

- ❑ How a person's family celebrated effects their leadership and/or participation in group celebrations
- ❑ The level of self-disclosure and care giving in your group will impact the ability of your group to celebrate
- ❑ Start small (cards for birthdays etc.)

Ideas for encouraging affirmation within your group:

- ❑ Start your meeting with praise reports – how your week has been – and make the most of opportunities to celebrate
- ❑ Write each member's name on individual pieces of paper (one page per person) and have everyone in the group write something encouraging for each person
- ❑ Sit someone on a chair in the middle and all pray for them.

SUMMARY

It takes intention to move groups from casual acquaintance to a committed fellowship of intimate knowers, extraordinary lovers, humble servants, gracious admonishers and joyful celebrants.

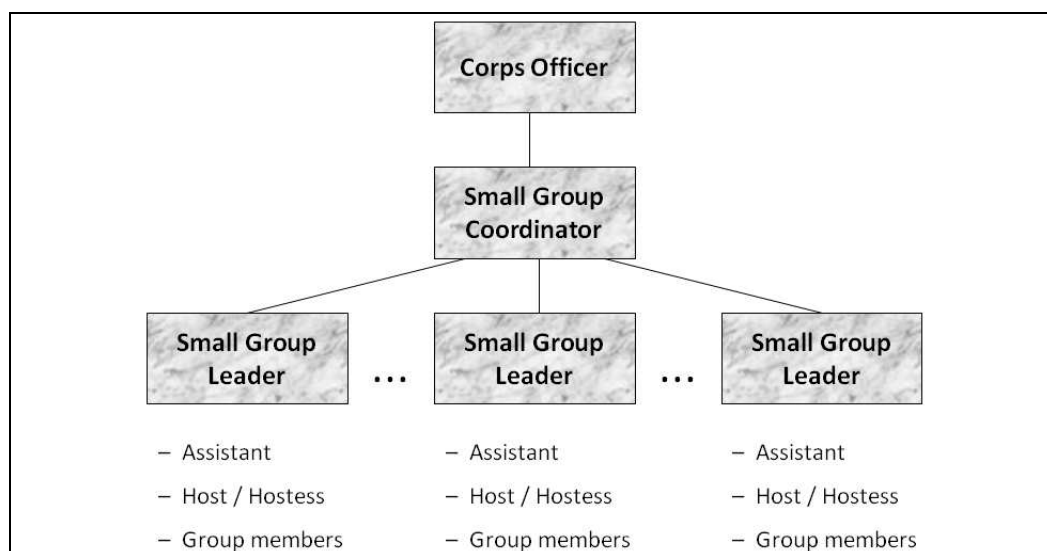
It's a risky business, and needs to be modelled by the leader. But, what is the cost of failure? At best, you'll have a group of mediocre relationships, but more likely, you'll have lonely, unsupported people, who will eventually come to the conclusion that small groups don't work. They may never try again.

Small Group Leader Roles

Session Overview

- ❑ Small group ministries structure
- ❑ Small group roles and role descriptions

Organisation Structure



CORPS OFFICER

Accountable to: The Divisional Commander (and Corps Leadership Team)

Accountable for: The small group ministry in relation to the mission statement, core values and goals of the corps

Responsible for: Recruiting and equipping the Small Group Coordinator
Appointing the Small Group Leaders.

SMALL GROUP COORDINATOR (OR EQUIVALENT)

Accountable to: The Corps Officer

Accountable for: The coordination and growth of the small group ministry

Responsible for: Recruiting and training Small Group Leaders

Commencing new small groups

Writing small group ministry reports to the Leadership Team

Teaching consistent with the Salvation Army's doctrines

Qualifications: A personal relationship with Jesus Christ

A Soldier or Adherent of the Salvation Army

SMALL GROUP LEADERS

Accountable to: The Small Group Coordinator

Accountable for: Leading a weekly/fortnightly small group meeting

An Assistant Leader, and/or Host(ess) to become more effective leaders

Responsible for: The members of his/her small group

Attendance at small group leaders training and meetings

Recruiting and training an Assistant

Reporting on small group meetings to the Coordinator (see Appendix C)

Teaching consistent with the Salvation Army's doctrines

Qualifications: A personal relationship with Jesus Christ

A Soldier or Adherent of the Salvation Army (or committed to working towards this with a definite decision date in mind)

Small Group Leader

A Small Group Leader provides focus for the group and ensures that the group continues to meet regularly. Provide an entry point and contact person for new people wishing to join the group.

Training Received: Two initial training sessions (this booklet)

Time Commitment: One year (option to continue each year)

JOB DESCRIPTION

- Meet the profile of a Small Group Leader
- Be responsible for the leadership and shepherding of your small group
 - Shepherd the people in your group through care and attention (phone calls, personal notes, meeting any needs, etc.)
 - Nurture group members so they become fully devoted followers of Christ and participating members of the church.
 - Conduct 'life changing' small group meetings in a way that facilitates intimate community, practical help and intensive spiritual interaction
 - Talk and pray with your assistant and host(ess) before each meeting
 - Work with the host(ess) to make people feel comfortable
 - Follow-up on all prospect assignments with a phone call
- Provide a quarterly report to your Coordinator (see Appendix C)
- Attend regular training meetings organised by your Coordinator
- Select and develop an assistant in your group, and help develop your assistant in any areas that need improvement, for when you multiply
- Multiply your ministry by inviting others to your group. You might do this by inviting these people to a social event which your group has organised

PROFILE

- Be consistent and committed in living the Christian lifestyle, being led by The Holy Spirit and having a strong commitment to prayer
- Embrace the vision and goals of the Salvation Army, be loyal to its leadership and be committed to what God has called us to do
- Be a faithful giver of time, talents and money
- Maintain a solid family life

Small Group Support People

SMALL GROUP ASSISTANT

The growth of small groups will depend on our leadership. The best way to double our leadership is to appoint assistants who help the leader while learning how to lead themselves. They can also fill in when the leader is away.

It is up to the Small Group Leader how the Assistant is used, but they could:

- Open the meeting and lead the icebreaker activity
- Lead the sharing time
- Plan for refreshments and/or arrange babysitting (if required)
- Lead the study or fill in for the leader occasionally
- Contact and support group members between meetings.

SMALL GROUP HOST(ESS)

Takes the pressure off the Small Group Leader by arranging the venue and cleaning up afterwards. Allows someone with the gift of hospitality to exercise their gift and if the group multiplies, it enables the Assistant to remain and the Small Group Leader to start a new group.

The Host/ess needs to:

- Meet people at the door. Show them where to put coats etc. Have a genuine interest in each guest with a warm and ready greeting
- Provide a comfortable place for the meeting
- Set up refreshments before the meeting to be ready to meet the guests, and wait until all the guests have gone home before cleaning up.
- Have extra Bibles and pencils on hand for those who may forget theirs

WORSHIP LEADER (OPTIONAL)

The Small Group Leader may not have music or worship leading abilities, or may choose to allow someone with these gifts to exercise them.

BABYSITTER (OPTIONAL)

If possible, avoid having young children in the same house during the study (unless they're sleeping) as it will be difficult for the parents to concentrate and relax. Can you find a babysitter close to the Host(ess) where people can leave their children? Otherwise, consider having a different couple from your small group watch the children each week in a house close by.

Small Group Coordinator

Small Group Coordinators care for Small Group Leaders and ensure that each Small Group Leader is able to operate effectively. They provide training for leaders, and provide a mechanism for people interested in small groups to join.

JOB DESCRIPTION

- Take active, prayerful and positive leadership of the small group ministry
- Oversee the pastoral care of all involved in the small group ministry
- Closely work with and develop the Small Group Leaders and their groups
- Have ambitious growth goals for the small group ministry
- Work hard with leaders to identify and include 'prospects' into the small group structure. Systemise the way this will happen
- Assist with difficult situations as requested by the Small Group Leader
- Sources or approves the purchasing of small group resources.

PROFILE

A Small Group Coordinator will meet the criteria set out for Small Group Leaders and additionally have the following qualities:

- Leadership*: recruit, motivate, train, make others effective in their ministry
- Love*: be a lover of people
- Faith*: believe that nothing is impossible with God
- Organisation*: able to follow through with plans, procedures and reports
- Enthusiasm*: be a thermostat, not a thermometer.

VISITS

An important part of small group ministry is systematic visiting of groups by the Coordinator to provide feedback and develop leaders with on-the-job training. The Coordinator should agree with each Leader an appropriate level of support (e.g. within two months of starting and at least once a year after that).

During a visit, the Small Group Coordinator will want to observe:

- The leader's teaching style, particularly in the Body section of the meeting
- An empty chair, both physically and philosophically
- The leadership teamwork
- Things to encourage the Leader!

SESSION 5

Facilitation

Session Overview

- ❑ The need to maximise interaction
- ❑ Tips on how to facilitate an effective group, including tips for encouraging interaction, questioning techniques and handling difficult situations

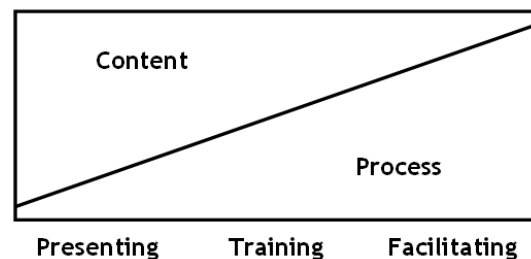
Teaching Approach

When teaching, there are two main things to consider:

1. What you are trying to teach – the content
2. How you are going to teach it – the process

The approach you follow depends on how much content you need to teach:

- *Presentation*: one way transfer of information – leader talks and the participants listen
- *Training*: two way transfer of information and understanding.
- *Facilitation*: sharing of information, understanding and therefore learning. Facilitator provides little (if any) content.



People learn best by relating new learning to their own experiences, so in general, it is better to err on the side of more process (i.e. facilitating or training) rather than presenting. This means lots of interaction and using questions to draw out experiences and knowledge from the participants, supplemented by short inputs of content if needed.

When preparing a session, the first question you should ask is ‘how much do the participants know about this topic?’ as this determines how much content you bring compared to extract from the participants. If you choose a presentation style to tell people about a topic they already know about, they will quickly become bored and disengaged.

The notes that follow provide tips on how to facilitate an effective group session. If you already have plenty of skills in facilitation, and just want a few tips, read the short version. If you’re looking for some more in-depth teaching, use the detailed version.

Facilitation Tips - The Short Version

HOW DO YOU ENCOURAGE INTERACTION?

1. Sit in a circle with everyone including the leader facing each other
2. Gather information by asking open questions that encourage people to expand and cannot be answered with yes or no
3. Be careful with 'why' questions as they may make people feel defensive. Rather than 'Why did you ...?', try 'What were your reasons for ...?'
4. Use 'rebound' and 'boomerang' questions to have other group members answer questions before you do (e.g. 'What do others think?'; 'Does anyone have a different idea we could consider?')
5. Use closed questions only to end someone's contribution when you need to regain control (e.g. 'So you had a good time then?')
6. Watch for those who would like to participate, and ask for their contribution. Read faces and body language
7. See that everyone is involved in the discussion and has a chance to share
8. Guide the discussion by switching from one person to another. Interject your viewpoint and experience only occasionally

COMMON MISTAKES THAT PREVENT INTERACTION?

1. Have the group members sitting in rows so that they can't easily see each other or have the leader clearly separated from the other group members
2. Ask lots of questions that can be answered 'yes' or 'no'
3. Ask complex questions that no-one knows the answer to
4. Answer all questions asked of you – and a few you ask of others as well
5. Don't give people time to think. Fill all silence
6. Pick on people, keep asking them questions and pressure them to pray
7. Try to maintain control. Prevent all tangents as soon as you notice the conversation taking off
8. Ask rhetorical questions or make questions sound conversational. Anticipate when people want to answer then move on quickly
9. Ensure the group knows that you know all the answers
10. Criticise people and allow people in the group to criticise others as well
11. Be more interested in getting through the content than the people present
12. Share your viewpoint first

Facilitation Tips - The Detailed Version

Generating interaction starts by recognising what you're aiming for. How you achieve it is a combination of seating arrangements, good questions and silence.

To complete the picture, we've added a section on how you handle difficult situations, such as people dominating the conversation, people joking during serious conversations, discussion tangents, etc.

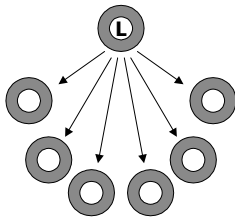
The topics covered are:

1. *Types of interaction*
2. *Seating arrangements*
3. *Good questions*
4. *Use of silence*
5. *Handling problem situations*

1. TYPES OF INTERACTION

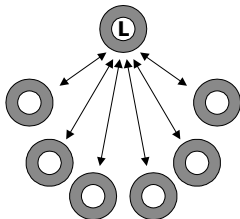
There are three main types of group interactions. Each is appropriate to achieve different purposes. In small groups, we are aiming for number three.

#1: Leader talks – the members listen



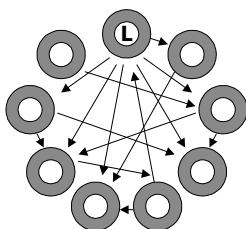
- No interaction
- Useful for introducing content
- Participants get bored if used for too long
- No sharing of experiences or knowledge by members

#2: Leaders asks questions – the members respond directly to the Leader



- Some opportunity for members to contribute
- No interaction between members – no opportunity for members to build on each other's experiences
- Leadership by control which if used for too long leads to tension

#3: Interaction – all members interacting with each other, the leader guiding the conversation



- Opportunity for everyone to participate and share their knowledge and experience
- Informal, relaxed feel

2. SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

Where and how people sit will have a significant bearing on the level of interaction in your group. If you want to generate interaction between group members, sit people in a circle (with the leader part of the circle – not out on their own).

If you are using visual aids (e.g. watching a DVD), make sure everyone can see the TV/screen, but return to your circle for discussion.

Seating arrangements can be used to control potentially difficult situations. For example, the leader may wish to sit next to a disruptive member to have the occasional quiet word or to sit opposite so that they can maintain eye contact.

While less relevant for small group ministry, if you are ever leading a large group, you may need to sit people in rows so that they can see the speaker and any slides/DVDs presented. However, to cement the learning, break the group down into smaller groups (no more than eight) and ask them to sit facing each other. A good way to achieve this is to have people sitting at tables. Then the tables become the discussion groups. If your chairs are in fixed rows, ask the people to move to form small groups to the side.

Maintaining an empty chair reinforces to the group that they are open and would welcome extra members. Also, if someone turns up unexpectedly, they do not feel unwelcome.

3. QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

By the use of correct questioning techniques, you impart knowledge, seek input from members, and can gauge how well that knowledge is received and understood. Through your manner of presentation, it is also vitally important that you encourage participants to ask questions as this is essential for active learning.

There are many reasons why you ask questions:

- To keep the meeting lively, maintaining interest
- To keep the meeting on track if it drifts from the topic
- To check understanding
- To aid retention of learning

Questioning techniques can be divided into many different types based upon the questioner and how the questioner uses the question. An understanding of the following types of questions will be useful to you as a leader.

Question Type	Application	Example
Open – requires a response of more than one word	<input type="checkbox"/> Stimulate and open up discussion	<input type="checkbox"/> Tell me about ... <input type="checkbox"/> How did you ... <input type="checkbox"/> Why do you think ...
Closed – requires a response of one word	<input type="checkbox"/> Summarising <input type="checkbox"/> A specific answer <input type="checkbox"/> Keep people quiet	<input type="checkbox"/> Do you ... <input type="checkbox"/> When ... <input type="checkbox"/> Who ...
General – a question asked of the whole group	<input type="checkbox"/> Open up a discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Promote group thinking <input type="checkbox"/> Bring out options <input type="checkbox"/> Create involvement	<input type="checkbox"/> What do these verses teach you about ... <input type="checkbox"/> When you hear ... what do you think? <input type="checkbox"/> How would you respond to ...
Direct – a general question to a specific individual	<input type="checkbox"/> Involve a quiet member <input type="checkbox"/> Search out options from individuals <input type="checkbox"/> Keep control <input type="checkbox"/> Give a jolt to an inattentive person	<input type="checkbox"/> Name + pause + general question
Combined – a combination of a general and direct question	<input type="checkbox"/> Gain involvement of all participants but avoid lengthy delay while waiting for someone to volunteer an answer	<input type="checkbox"/> Ask question + pause + nominate one person
Rebound – rebounded from one member of the group to another or to the whole group	<input type="checkbox"/> Fully develop an answer <input type="checkbox"/> Keep the group thinking <input type="checkbox"/> Correct errors and mistakes	<input type="checkbox"/> What do others think about that? <input type="checkbox"/> Has any one got any other points we should consider?
Boomerang – originates from a participant, with the leader boomeranging it back to them	<input type="checkbox"/> Reduce dependency on the leader for answers <input type="checkbox"/> Stimulate discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Fully develop an answer	<input type="checkbox"/> What do <u>you</u> think the answer might be?

Question Type	Application	Example
Rhetorical – a question that does not require an answer (don't pause for too long!)	<input type="checkbox"/> Stimulate thought prior to moving onto a further explanation or discussion	<input type="checkbox"/> Open or closed question, with no time for an answer
Leading – a series of questions that “lead” / assist the individual or group to answer	<input type="checkbox"/> Lead the group to an answer you want them to provide	<input type="checkbox"/> Any question with the answer you want embedded in it <input type="checkbox"/> Do you think that ... might have ...?

4. USE OF SILENCE

One of your key weapons for generating interaction is the use of silence. Conversely, not allowing silence is the best way to kill interaction.

Many leaders ask a question then wait only a few seconds before expecting an answer. When the answer doesn't come immediately, they feel inclined to either answer the question themselves or ask another question. Most people need a bit of time to think, or they may be a little nervous about contributing. Providing silence allows them the time they need, and also sets the expectation that you want a discussion.

Ask a good open question and count slowly to 30 in your head before adding anything more. It will feel like a very long time, but often transforms a group's discussions.

5. HANDLING PROBLEM SITUATIONS

As leaders, we will often find ourselves in situations where individual or group behaviour is affecting the group adversely.

The key thing to remember with any situation is empathy, empathy, empathy! Handle all situations in a loving and caring manner, and you are more likely to be successful.

Three common types of situations are:

- a) Quiet or dominant group members
- b) Inappropriate group behaviour
- c) Inappropriate individual behaviour

a) Quiet or Dominant Group Members

Drawing out quiet people

- Volunteer quiet ones by asking them questions. Be bold
- Ask the group to write down an answer, then see if a quieter/less confident person might read what they have written
- Recognise quiet people tend to be more well thought through and therefore have much to contribute if you can get them to share
- Talk to them privately and encourage them to share. Help them understand their quietness is cheating others of their wisdom and insight
- Make sure the group functions with a non-judgemental attitude. Their quietness may be related to fear

Dominant members

- First admonish / correct in private
- Ask them to hold their thought and you will get back to them later
- Let a dominant player in on the game plan and ask them to work with you (i.e. let them know that letting others contribute will help them grow)

b) Inappropriate Group Behaviour

Tangents

- Ask the participant to hold off until later
- Summarise the participant's viewpoint and move on
- Create a 'car park' – record the tangent and return to it at the end if time
- Address directly the fact that a tangent has been raised (e.g. "That seems to be a different issue") then restate the purpose of the discussion, asking others for input.

Private conversations

- Use non-verbal methods to regain the participants' attention (e.g. make eye contact, move closer)
- Ask one of them a question (say the participant's name first)
- Ask them to refrain from talking (privately, if possible).

c) Inappropriate Individual Behaviour

Excessive joking, particularly in a serious part of the meeting

- Privately ask the participant to minimise jokes
- Resume the session after the interjection (be as serious as possible)

Time schedules (ie, people arriving late, leaving early)

- Ignore the behaviour
- Adhere to schedule – don't let everyone suffer for one person's lateness
- Remind members of time frames
- Privately request promptness (as a courtesy to the rest of the group, not just to you)

Distractions

- Use non-verbal means to get the participant's attention (e.g. eye contact)
- Privately ask the participant to stop

Wrong viewpoints?

- Summarise the participant's viewpoint; ask others for their opinions
- Allow the group to correct it. Ask probing questions to draw out the right conclusion.
- If the group is not successful, you may have to teach the truth from the scripture and conclude
- Agree to disagree. Verbalise that we can have differences of opinion and still love one another and grow together
- Agree in part, then state how you differ and why

One final thing ...

A spirit-filled believer is a Christian who is available and open to do what God wants them to do, and to feel what God wants them to feel.

You will be more effective as a leader, the more you are in tune with God. God will direct you, enable you to understand your group member's needs and will provide you with all the resources you need to lead your group. But you have to ask Him!

'If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.' James 1:5.

Consider your motives for being the leader. Your commitment to praying for your group prior to a meeting is a good test.

SESSION 6

How to Start a Small Group

Session Overview

- ❑ A practical method for starting a small group
- ❑ Suggestions for the first four gatherings (social event, setting expectations and two studies).

Starting a Small Group

Pray! Ask God for wisdom and direction in choosing your assistant and to put you together with the people He wants in your group.

Complete the **Small Group Plan Sheet** as much as possible (see next page).

Schedule an appointment with the Small Group Coordinator. This will ensure that your small group is advertised, resourced properly, well situated, and the timing is coordinated with other groups.

Begin building a prospect list of people you are going to ask:

- ❑ Praying through the Prospect List will keep your attention and attitude toward them warm and will inspire you to make phone calls and home visits as God directs.
- ❑ Working the Prospect List will keep the list alive and active. This responsibility can be shared by others in the small group but ultimately will only happen if the Leader is giving regular care to the people on this list.

For a successful start we suggest that the first meeting be a social event for people to get acquainted (including food). Those invited can hear a brief description by the leader about the formation and purpose of the small group. This would be an excellent time for the leader (and others) to share what a small group experience has meant to them.

All lessons are for you as leader to decide what to do. Potential lessons for the first four meetings are provided for use if you desire.

Small Group Plan Sheet

STEPS TO FORMING AND BUILDING YOUR SMALL GROUP

Leader:	
Assistant:	
Host(ess):	
Meeting place:	
Meeting time:	
Start date:	

Prospects:	Name	Phone

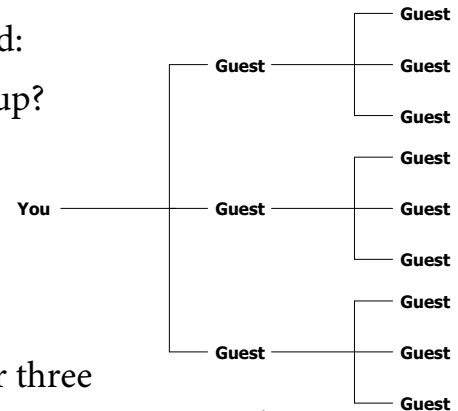
Baby sitter?	
Worship leader?	

- Have I met with my Small Group Coordinator to gain approval?
- Pray

BUILDING THE PROSPECT LIST

Approach prospects with these invitations in mind:

- Are you interested in helping start a small group?
- Will you commit time each week to help make this small group successful?
- Do you know three other people who could join with you in the future?



Note: You and your three guests plus each of their three guests total a group of 12 prospects already. It's as easy as one, two, three.

HOW TO SELECT A SMALL GROUP ASSISTANT

1. *Selection of your assistant*

- Pray – ask God
- Identify candidates by looking for people with potential influence, character, people skills, drive/energy and common sense
- If you can't think of anyone, discuss this with your Coordinator

2. *Recruiting your assistant*

- Have the right attitude. Assume a 'yes' – don't be apologetic. Communicate 'I believe in you'
- Timing and place are everything
- Pop the question and give a maximum of one week for a decision
- Call if they have not responded within the seven days
- If no, ask why, but don't push
- If yes, encourage them to attend the Small Group Leader's training

3. *Training your assistant*

- Make a commitment to coach your assistant. This will require regular opportunities to lead parts of the meeting, with feedback after each opportunity
- When providing feedback, ask the assistant to self-evaluate first, supplementing their views with your own. Always provide positive feedback first, then any developmental areas, followed by more positive feedback.

First Meeting of your Small Group

Purpose: Enable group members to meet and get to know one another in a relaxed atmosphere. This is the first time everyone in the group is getting together, so it is an important meeting on several levels.

These will be the first impressions the group members will get of each other. It will also be the first impressions they try to give. Therefore, it is important to structure the time so that everybody feels comfortable and can be 'at their best'.

Your people will also be forming their impressions and feelings about your leadership skills. What you do (and don't do), what you say (and don't say) and how you operate will tell them a great deal about what they can expect from you as a leader and the group as a whole.

It is also an important time because of the tone it sets for the group. It emphasises that our ministry is relational – that is, we recognise that people are God's main change agents for our lives, so we associate with people in order to facilitate change. It emphasises that our ministry here is practical – that is, we recognise the need to meet people's spiritual needs 'where they are' and help them grow spiritually in the 'real world'. And it emphasises that our ministry is recreational – that is, we recognise it's OK to have fun! In fact, laughter should be a part of every meeting.

For these reasons, it is important to plan this first meeting well and get the group off to a fantastic start. Remember that people do not care how much you know, until they know how much you care!

In a word, this first meeting should be a 'social' activity. You should select a group activity that will meet the following criteria:

- Non-threatening – no one is put on the spot or made to do something embarrassing
- Neutral environment – don't pick a place associated with 'churchy' type activities
- Conductive to spontaneous conversation – there should be no pressure to talk, it should just happen. It should flow out of the activity rather than be planned. If someone prefers to be quiet, it shouldn't be that noticeable
- Casual – formal attire usually stifles free sharing
- Enjoyable – allow for humour, for people's wit to come out
- Inexpensive – try not to hurt people's wallets too badly, especially if some of your group members are on tight budgets

- ❑ Creative – show your group members by planning and forethought that they matter to you. Nothing shows appreciation like a pleasant surprise
- ❑ Food – have some kind of food as part of your activity
- ❑ 100% attendance – do not leave anybody out for any reason. Make sure the whole group will be there

Whatever activity you decide on, notify group members and outline the basic agenda (time, place, cost, etc.). You may want to have some surprise element planned that they don't find out about until it happens (being sensitive to the non-threatening aspect mentioned earlier). Often, travelling to some place together, rather than meeting there can get your time off to a fun start. Be sure to end at your designated time.

The main point with all this is to be sure everyone has a good time and can't wait for what's next. Accomplishing this at the onset will pay off in the long run for the success of your group.

Some ideas for social activities are included in Appendix B.

Second Meeting of your Small Group

Aim: To take group members the next step in getting to know each other; to increase their comfort with each other and with group discussion by answering questions about themselves in a casual non-threatening environment.

Having successfully completed your first social time together, this meeting will focus on sharing specific likes / dislikes, interests, background and other personal information by each group member.

As you get together for this first meeting in a home:

- ❑ Be careful to observe seating arrangements
- ❑ Start as close to on time as possible (you'll be setting the precedent for future meetings)
- ❑ Provide paper and pens for everyone this week. No Bibles are necessary
- ❑ Host(ess) to provide refreshments

Ask the following questions (or substitute with some of your own if you like). Let people have fun, letting them make witty comments and wisecracks as you give the questions. It can go a long way toward building rapport.

After all of the questions have been read, go back and have people share their responses. With each question, have a different person start as the first one answering – that way, no one ends up always being last.

Potential questions:

1. My favourite movie of all time is ...?
2. My idea of a great holiday is ...?
3. Two of my pet peeves are ...?
4. My favourite food is ...?
5. If I could change one thing about myself, I'd change ...?
6. If I could spend an evening with anyone who has ever lived (outside of Jesus Christ and family), I'd like to spend it with ... because ...?
7. Growing up, I saw God as ...?
8. One thing I have learned about God in the past year is ...?
9. Before I die, I would like to ...?
10. If I could visit any era of history, I would visit ...?
11. The one aspect of my spiritual life that I would like to strengthen is ...?
12. One character of my quality that I would like to develop is ...?
13. My favourite childhood memory is ...?
14. My favourite free time activity is ...?
15. The two most important things that I would like from my involvement in this small group are ... and ...? (Be sure to use this as your last question).

Spend some time discussing question 15 (you might want to write down the answers). Then, share you goals for the small group, such as:

- Develop meaningful, caring relationships with others. To get involved in each other's lives.
- Strengthen our personal relationship with Jesus through prayer and application of the Bible (not to grow in knowledge, but to grow in obedience to God and His Word).
- To grow this group so that we can reach more people. This will not be a closed group. We want to bring new people in and as we grow too large, to branch off into two groups.

GUIDELINES

It is important that people feel comfortable sharing within the group knowing that everything discussed is done so in confidence.

You should start by agreeing to some guidelines, such as those below.

Group Guidelines

We agree to:

1. Keep everything discussed in the group within the group (unless specific permission is given otherwise).
2. Provide equal opportunity for everyone to talk. No one is to dominate the discussion and no one will be forced to share if they are not comfortable doing so.
3. Only talk about our self and our situation, avoiding conversation about others.
4. Show respect for each other at all times.
5. Leave as friends. We want to allow rigorous debate, but we will not make conversations personal. Should we disagree, we will do so with grace.
6. Pray for each other.

Finally, discuss any information about upcoming weeks together:

- Dates, times, places
- Baby-sitter information
- What to bring: Bible, pen or pencil, application material

End your time together in prayer (leader only unless you know the group would feel comfortable with conversational prayer).

Potential Studies for First Two Weeks

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THAT SHOW GOD'S GRACE – LESSON #1

An important part of our time together will be to look at what the Bible says and then consider how we might apply these principles we learn about.

The idea of people gathering in groups is not new. In fact it is very old, as old as the Bible itself. Look at Acts 20:20 (If you are unsure of how to look up a Bible reference ask someone in your group to show you.) When the church started there were no church buildings. Where did people like Paul (a missionary) go to meet up with Christians?

According to Acts 2:44-47, Christians also met where?

Look at the following verses. Each contains an instruction as to how believers should act toward one another. Find the basic instruction and underline it, then tell in your own words, how you could put this into action in your group.

- ❑ (Rom 15:7 NIV) Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.
- ❑ (Rom 14:13 NIV) Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.
- ❑ (1 Pet 1:22 NIV) Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.
- ❑ (1 Pet 5:5 NIV) Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'
- ❑ (James 5:16 NIV) Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.
- ❑ (Heb 10:24 NIV) And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.
- ❑ (Heb 10:25 NIV) Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
- ❑ (Eph 4:32 NIV) Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THAT SHOW GOD'S GRACE – LESSON #2

There are some ways we cannot get to know God better without the help of other people. Someone has said that, 'God has no Lone Rangers.' It appears that God has built our need for others firmly into how we grow our relationship with Him. An example of this interdependence is a church. The idea of local churches did not originate with men, but with God. His idea was that it would demonstrate that people were not only joined to Him, but also to each other.

1. Acts 2:42-47 is a snap shot of life in the early church. In the list of things that happened, what one aspect stands out the most to you. Discuss this with the group.

2. What are some of the ways you feel you could develop good relationships with others in the group? Discuss your ideas with the group.

3. Rate each of the following points in order of their importance to having good fellowship in your group. No.1 is the most important.
 - Agreeing about beliefs
 - Making sacrifices for each other
 - Doing things together
 - Staying in touch
 - Praying for each other
 - Becoming Bible literate
 - Having a genuine concern for one another

4. What benefits do we receive when we develop relationships with other believers according to Ephesians 3:14-19

5. Rewrite Romans 14:19 in your own words and share your version with the Group.

What Else?

Session Overview

- Multiplying your small group
- Considering people for whom extra grace is required
- Exposure to a range of resources (study guides) available (Appendix A)
- Ideas for social events (Appendix B)

Multiplying your Small Group

A tension in all small groups is how to develop intimacy while remaining open to new people joining. New people bring a new life and vibrancy to groups, and without them, groups typically die eventually. But it takes a little while for a group to trust a new person so the group is likely to take a short term backward step in developing authentic relationships.

Groups must always be open to new people, but we recognise that there may be seasons in which the group needs to work on developing relationships with the people already in the group.

If the group is open, it should expect to grow. When a group has more than 10 people attending, it becomes difficult to maintain the right group dynamics. In the short term, the group should look to break into two smaller groups for discussion, but as it grows, you should look to celebrate the group's success and multiply into two.

WHEN ARE YOU READY TO MULTIPLY?

- When the group is averaging 12-14 people in attendance each week
- When your assistant has completed the Small Group Leaders training
- When your Small Group Coordinator and Corps Officer have given their approval

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR GROUP TO MULTIPLY?

The Small Group Leader initiates a meeting with the assistant to discuss the multiplication process. They pray, discuss and agree together who will stay in the current situation and who will leave beginning a new small group (the best scenario is for the apprentice to stay and take over the current group, and the Small Group Leader to leave with approximately 4-6 people).

The one who is leaving decides on the 4-6 people in the group they want to challenge to go with them. One of the people should be a potential host(ess) for the new group.

The Small Group Leader and Assistant need to be in complete agreement on the above people (if there is any problem, the 'edge' should always be given to the Assistant).

At the next small group meeting, the Small Group Leader should begin to prepare the group for the upcoming multiplication:

- Our group has been growing, and we feel that for us to continue to reach out and minister to more people, we need to multiply
- Would you pray and allow God to prepare your heart for this change?
- The proposal is for the Small Group Leader (or Assistant) to leave in approximately one months time
- No one will be forced to go or stay. It is their choice. A few people might be approached on an individual basis to 'go' with the ones leaving
- What questions do you have?

The one who is leaving now talks individually to the potential host(ess) asking them to consider becoming their host(ess) for the new group. Ask them to let you know their decision by the next week.

Each week, include prayer for the transition in the prayer time, and allow time for members to discuss the change and ask questions.

EGR – Extra Grace Required

INTRODUCING THE EGR

An EGR is someone for whom extra grace is required from the believers in the group. There are two kinds:

- ❑ *EGR temporary*: someone going through a difficult situation but where proper support from the group will see them through
- ❑ *EGR dominant*: normal support does not resolve the issue. They will kill the group if unattended. Although the circumstances that triggered the EGR episode have passed, the EGR member may still be in a bad space and continues to require extra grace. The circumstances may have contributed to a ‘receptivity change’ in the EGR member. They may move closer or further away from God.

DEALING WITH THE EGR DOMINANT

- ❑ Use prayer
- ❑ Seek support from your Small Group Coordinator
- ❑ Do not isolate the EGR, instead seek to (re)introduce them into the mainstream life and ministry of the group
- ❑ Do not attempt to avoid dealing with outstanding issues involving an EGR
- ❑ Determine the exact nature of the ‘out of phase’ behaviour and develop a grace-filled strategy to take the heat out of the problem. Developing a solution may involve generating a list of all of the possible options available and prayerfully selecting the best from the list
- ❑ Go for ‘win-win’ solutions
- ❑ Review progress with your Small Group Coordinator regularly until the EGR is fully back into the life and ministry of the group. At the review stage, the Coordinator may determine that the EGR’s problem is killing the group. In these circumstances the Corps Officer will be consulted.

Course Summary

Summary

WHAT IS A SMALL GROUP?

A 'holistic small group' is a special type of small group where Christians find:

- ❑ **Intimate community** (hearts): authentic relationships with other members of the group, providing a support network and ensuring members can answer the question 'who prays for you?'
- ❑ **Practical help** (hands): helping each other, being relevant to every day life and providing opportunities to serve
- ❑ **Intensive spiritual interaction** (heads): enabling people to apply Christian principles to their lives through group study and accountability.

A Life/Home Group is most likely to be holistic as it is designed for these three purposes; however, it is possible for any small group, with intent, to be holistic.

Our holistic small groups are designed to be open, welcoming new members. Where groups grow to 14 members, we expect the groups to multiply.

SMALL GROUP STRUCTURE

A proposed structure for small group meetings is:

- ❑ **Welcome** (until time to start): as people arrive, friendly discussion about the week, to create a welcoming environment
- ❑ **Opening / Ice-breaker** (5-10 mins): a warm-up question, particularly useful for new groups
- ❑ **Worship** (optional) (15 mins): a short time of worship
- ❑ **Body** (45-60 mins): the study with application
- ❑ **Prayer** (15 mins): looking within and without
- ❑ **Food**: enables you to keep talking to people – could be first

This structure covers the three components of a healthy small group, and provides a natural flow from warming up, through to study and personal application, then an opportunity to pray for each other and the commitments made during the study.

AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Authentic relationships permeate all aspects of group life, especially outside of the meeting, and must be intentional. There are five components:

- Self disclosure:** know and be known
- Care giving:** love and be loved
- Humility:** serve and be served
- Truth telling:** admonish and be admonished
- Affirming:** celebrate and be celebrated

It takes intention to move groups from casual acquaintances to a committed fellowship with authentic relationships and must be modelled by the leader. Without it, you'll have lonely, unsupported people, who will eventually come to the conclusion that small groups don't work. They may never try again.

SMALL GROUP ROLES

Each small group is encouraged to have a Leader, an Assistant and a Host(ess).

The Small Group Coordinator supports the Leaders, provides training, approves the purchasing of resources and coordinates prospects.

The Corps Officer has ultimate responsibility for our small groups.

SMALL GROUP FACILITATION

People learn best through interaction, best achieved through:

- Seating arrangements:* a circle that includes the leader and an empty chair
- Questioning techniques:* open, general questions, rather than closed ones.
The use of rebounds and boomerangs to keep the focus off the leader
- Silence:* to promote group members talking rather than the leader.

STARTING A SMALL GROUP

- Work through the Plan Sheet
- Your initial small group meeting should be a social event
- Optional suggestions have been provided for the first four weeks

WHAT ELSE?

When your group grows to 10 or more, you will want to break into smaller groups for discussion. As it continues to grow, you should celebrate the success and look to multiply (but handle this sensitively).

There are a lot of good resources available. Refer to Appendix A for ideas.

APPENDIX A

Resources

A few years ago, the most difficult part of being a Small Group Leader was finding or developing your own studies. Now, there is a wide range of excellent materials that will keep your group going for a number of years.

The most important step is to understand your group:

1. What are the goals and intentions of this group?
2. What is the level of spiritual depth and maturity?
3. How much time are they willing to invest in personal preparation and in the actual group time together?
4. How much preparation do you want to invest as the leader?

As there is a wide-range of materials available, it is often difficult to know where to start. We recommend our own Territorial Strategic Mission Plan resources. After that, there are a lot of good studies from Willow Creek, or you could try one of the 40 days series from Saddleback.

If you're looking for something specific, talk to your coordinator, spend time in a Christian bookshop, or simply search online.

To purchase materials, seek approval from the Small Group Coordinator (in case you already have the material, and to check that other groups haven't used that material and found it dry).

TERRITORIAL STRATEGIC MISSION PLAN (TSMP) RESOURCES

A range of quality small group resources are available free from our intranet.

1. Go to www.sarmy.net.nz (no login is required)
2. Hover over the Strategic Mission Plan menu and click TSMP Resources
3. Each resource is presented in a green band. Click the band and the resource will open for printing.

There is also a range of resource recommendations on the site, but due to a technical issue, a login is required for these. Ask your Corps Officer.

Resources for small groups include:

- ❑ *Getting Started*: Five studies for understanding the mission of The Salvation Army and the four TSMP goals. People completing this study have commented that this is an excellent introduction to The Salvation Army and that every corps ought to do it

- ❑ *Dynamic Discipleship*: seven studies for understanding dynamic discipleship - based around loving God and loving others
- ❑ *Knowing God*: six studies for personal or group use, exploring how to get to know God through 'holy habits' (spiritual disciplines).
- ❑ *Mission Matters* (Soldiership Material): while intended as soldiership material, there is no reason why a small group could not use *Mission Matters* to gain an understanding of The Salvation Army, our history, DNA, doctrines (beliefs) and distinctives.
Note: due to the size of this booklet, it is not available for free printing – order copies by emailing mailorder@nzf.salvationarmy.org.
- ❑ *Therefore I Will*: unpacks the various 'I will' statements from the Soldier's Covenant across 12 sessions (e.g. relationships, integrity, family life). While intended as content for sermons, could easily be adapted for small groups.

WILLOW CREEK / JOHN ORTBERG RESOURCES

- ❑ *Interactions Small Group Discussion Guides*: 20 small group guides (Zondervan). Each study has six lessons and includes leader's notes within the book so you only need to purchase one copy of the book (around \$15). Of the 20 books, *Essential Christianity*, *Authenticity*, *Commitment* and *Community* are particularly recommended.
 - ❑ *New Community Bible Study Guides* by Bill Hybels and John Ortberg (Zondervan). 12 small group guides
 - ❑ *Old Testament Challenge Small Group Guides* by John Ortberg (Zondervan). Four small group guides covering 32 weeks of study
 - ❑ *The Life You've Always Wanted* by John Ortberg (Zondervan)
 - ❑ *Tough Questions Series*: very in-depth. Seven studies, each with six sessions. You need to purchase a guide book for each study (around \$15) plus a leader's guide book for the entire series (around \$50). *How Does Anyone Know God Exists? Is Jesus the Only Way? How Reliable is the Bible? How Could God Allow Suffering and Evil? Don't All Religions Lead to God? Do Science and the Bible Conflict? Why Become a Christian?*
 - ❑ *Walking with God Series*: three series, each with 10 sessions. Purchase a guide book for each study and a leader's guide for the full series (expensive)
- Other Courses – eight weeks, requiring participant's guides and leaders guides.
- ❑ *Becoming a Contagious Christian*
 - ❑ *Network training course (Spiritual Gifts)*

SADDLEBACK RESOURCES

- 40 Days of Purpose*: each study has six lessons and includes leaders notes within the book so you only need one copy of the book.
- 40 Days of Love*
- 40 Day of Community*
- 40 Days in the Word*

POTENTIAL TOPICS FOR SMALL GROUP STUDIES

Personal Spiritual Development

- How to develop your relationship with God
- Personal devotions
- How to listen to God
- How to pray
- How do you find your way around the Bible?
- Spiritual gifts
- How to be filled with the Holy Spirit
- How to grow in grace
- Mission
- How to share your faith
- Giving

General Topics

- World religions
- Early church history
- What is worship really all about?
- Tough Questions (*refer Willow Creek resources above*)

Relationships / Sexuality / Christian Morality

- Family, children, parenting, teens
- Workplace ethics
- Peer pressure
- Self worth / esteem
- Past hurts
- Loneliness, depression

RESOURCES FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

For further development, consider subscribing to www.smallgroups.com (Christianity Today).

The following books are recommended reading:

- ❑ *Leading Life-Changing Small Groups* by Bill Donahue (Zondervan)
- ❑ *Making Small Groups Work (Henry Cloud and John Townsend)*: Discover how you can help a group of any kind move beyond a small group to a growth group
- ❑ *Small Groups Leader's Handbook – The Next Generation*: A collection of stories from successful leaders of small groups, explaining their keys to success
- ❑ *Successful Small Cell Groups (Dr Yonggi Cho)*: Guidelines for making Small Groups work
- ❑ *Small Group Ministry (Carl George et al)*: Strategies for reaching different types of people through small groups.

APPENDIX B

Ideas for Social Events

- Board games or cards
- Dessert evening
- Dinner at a café or restaurant
- DVD or movie
- Harbour cruise
- International food evening (e.g. Thai, Indian, Chinese, Turkish)
- Laser strike
- Make a short home video
- Murder mystery dinner
- Outdoor adventure (bush walk, biking, horse riding, etc.)
- Overnight stay (e.g. rent a holiday house for a night)
- Picnic
- Pool party
- Pot luck dinner
- Progressive dinner
- Sporting event (go to watch a game or show)
- Ten pin bowling
- Treasure hunt

APPENDIX C

Small Group Leader's Report

Leader:		Year:	
Apprentice:		Term:	

To be provided to the Small Group Coordinator each term.

CONFIRM YOUR GROUP

When does your group meet?	
Where does your group meet?	
Anyone joined your group this period?	
Anyone left your group this period (and why)?	
Who is now in your group?	

UPDATE

How has your group been going (highlights / issues)?	
Any resources used you want to recommend to others?	
Anything you need help with?	

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THIS TERM?

What will you study?	
A social event?	
Serving others?	