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LEADING (SMALL GROUPS THAT THRIVE

A decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping circles in shades of blue, purple, green, and orange. From the center of these circles, numerous thin, light-colored lines radiate outwards, creating a starburst or sunburst effect against the dark background.

FIVE SHIFTS TO TAKE YOUR GROUP
TO THE NEXT LEVEL

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

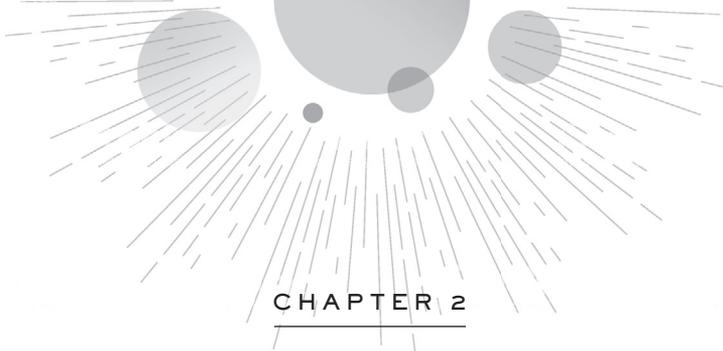


CHAPTER 1

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT GROUPS?

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

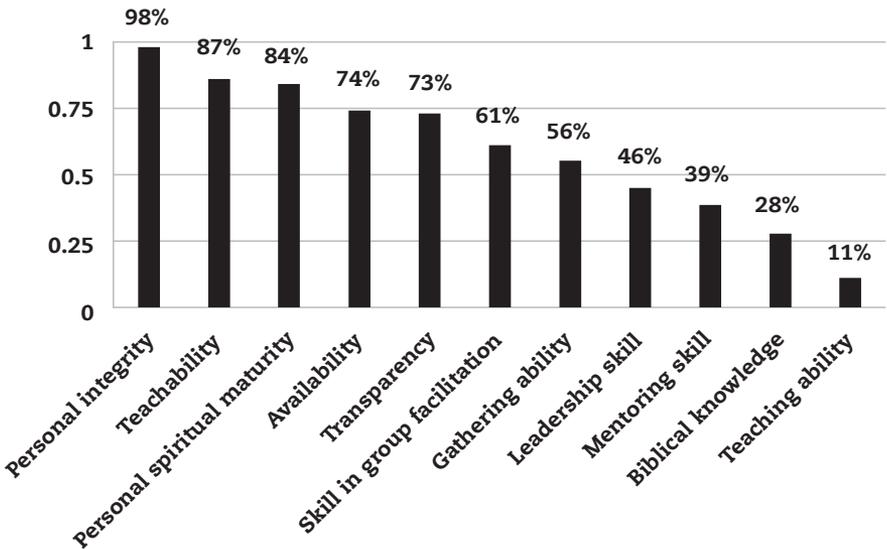
1. 🖐️ **Remember:** What caught your attention in this chapter about thriving small groups?
2. 🦉 **Understand:** Why are groups so important?
3. ⚙️ **Apply:** What are the various “visions” for small groups you have heard in churches and ministries over the years? How do those compare to the vision outlined in this chapter?
4. 🔍 **Analyze:** Considering their challenges, are small groups worth it? Why or why not?
5. 💡 **Create:** Think about the group you are leading or getting ready to lead. What is your vision for your group? Use the following questions to help get you started:
 - a. 🦉 **Understand:** What does a spiritually healthy follower of Jesus Christ look like to you?
 - b. ⚙️ **Apply:** How can your group help its members grow into that kind of Christ-follower?
 - c. ⚙️ **Apply:** What does a “healthy” group look like for you?
 - d. 🔍 **Analyze:** If the group were to end, years down the road, what do you hope will have happened in the lives of your group members because you met together regularly?



CHAPTER 2

WHAT DOES A CATALYTIC LEADER DO?

WHAT PASTORS ARE MOST LOOKING FOR



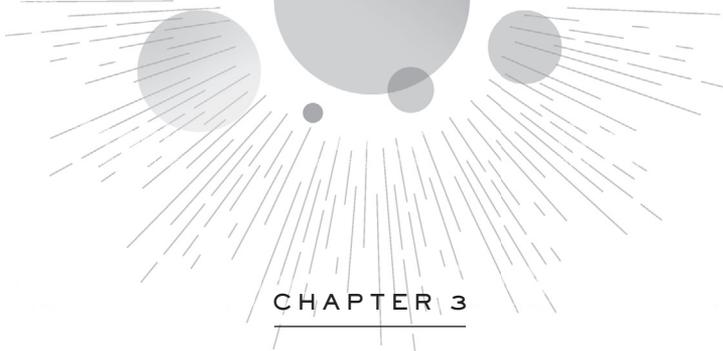
LEADERSHIP ROLE STRENGTHS ASSESSMENT

| HOW WELL DOES EACH STATEMENT BELOW DESCRIBE YOU? | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| VISIONARY | NOT AT ALL ME | SORTA ME | YES, THAT'S MY JAM! |
| I tend to be consumed with thoughts and ideas of what could be, both for myself and others. | | | |
| I know the impact of groups, and I envision the potential impact for small groups on people's lives. | | | |
| I can clearly articulate the purpose of my small group. | | | |
| <i>Count the number of marks in each column, and multiply them by the number in this row. Then add up the columns.</i> | _____ × 1 | _____ × 2 | _____ × 3 |
| Total: _____ (sum) | _____ + _____ + _____ | | |
| GATHERER | NOT AT ALL ME | SORTA ME | YES, THAT'S MY JAM! |
| I often have lots of people over for socializing at my house. | | | |
| I enjoy introducing people who don't yet know each other to one another and watching them become friends. | | | |
| People often wonder how I have so much time to engage with so many people. | | | |
| <i>Count the number of marks in each column, and multiply them by the number in this row. Then add up the columns.</i> | _____ × 1 | _____ × 2 | _____ × 3 |
| Total: _____ (sum) | _____ + _____ + _____ | | |
| DISCUSSION FACILITATOR | NOT AT ALL ME | SORTA ME | YES, THAT'S MY JAM! |
| If no one else is going to lead the group, I will. | | | |
| I love asking good, hard, meaningful questions of my friends. | | | |
| My friends tell me I ask great questions. | | | |
| <i>Count the number of marks in each column, and multiply them by the number in this row. Then add up the columns.</i> | _____ × 1 | _____ × 2 | _____ × 3 |
| Total: _____ (sum) | _____ + _____ + _____ | | |
| LOGISTICS ORGANIZER | NOT AT ALL ME | SORTA ME | YES, THAT'S MY JAM! |
| I love preparing my home so it is welcoming and inviting to guests. | | | |
| My friends tell me I should be a professional organizer. | | | |
| I have systems and processes that work to handle all the stuff that needs to be organized for my life and/or our group (e.g., meals, kids). | | | |
| <i>Count the number of marks in each column, and multiply them by the number in this row. Then add up the columns.</i> | _____ × 1 | _____ × 2 | _____ × 3 |
| Total: _____ (sum) | _____ + _____ + _____ | | |

| INTERCESSOR (PRAY-ER) | NOT AT ALL ME | SORTA ME | YES, THAT'S MY JAM! |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| I regularly and systematically pray for important people in my life. | | | |
| People ask me to pray for them because they know my reputation as a prayer warrior. | | | |
| I feel confident in helping others learn how to pray. | | | |
| <i>Count the number of marks in each column, and multiply them by the number in this row. Then add up the columns.</i> | $\frac{\quad}{\times 1}$ | $\frac{\quad}{\times 2}$ | $\frac{\quad}{\times 3}$ |
| Total: _____ (sum) | _____ + _____ + _____ | | |
| SPIRITUAL GUIDE/TEACHER | NOT AT ALL ME | SORTA ME | YES, THAT'S MY JAM! |
| I know my Bible and feel equipped to apply it to my life and others' lives. | | | |
| I've taught or facilitated Bible or book studies before, so I know what I'm doing. | | | |
| People come to me for spiritual advice and mentorship. | | | |
| <i>Count the number of marks in each column, and multiply them by the number in this row. Then add up the columns.</i> | $\frac{\quad}{\times 1}$ | $\frac{\quad}{\times 2}$ | $\frac{\quad}{\times 3}$ |
| Total: _____ (sum) | _____ + _____ + _____ | | |
| PEACEMAKER | NOT AT ALL ME | SORTA ME | YES, THAT'S MY JAM! |
| I revel in seeing people who are in conflict come to resolution and restored relationship. | | | |
| I lean into and not away from tension in relationships. | | | |
| People say I'm willing to say what needs to be said, no matter how awkward it makes the situation. | | | |
| <i>Count the number of marks in each column, and multiply them by the number in this row. Then add up the columns.</i> | $\frac{\quad}{\times 1}$ | $\frac{\quad}{\times 2}$ | $\frac{\quad}{\times 3}$ |
| Total: _____ (sum) | _____ + _____ + _____ | | |
| Star your top 2 scored roles. | | | |
| Circle your bottom 2 scored roles. | | | |
| What insights does this tool offer you? | | | |

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1.  **Remember:** Why did you agree to lead a small group? If you're not currently leading a group, what is causing you to consider leading a small group?
2.  **Remember:** What caught your attention in this chapter about great small group leaders?
3.  **Understand:** What do you now understand comprises great small group leadership?
4.  **Apply:** After taking the Leadership Roles Strength Assessment, which role(s) do you consider current areas of strength?
5.  **Apply:** After taking the Leadership Roles Strength Assessment, which role(s) will you need to devote extra attention and energy to or gather others around you with those strengths?
6.  **Evaluate:** Which is a bigger pitfall for you in leading others: (a) self-righteousness and pride or (b) inadequacy and unbelief in God's work through you?

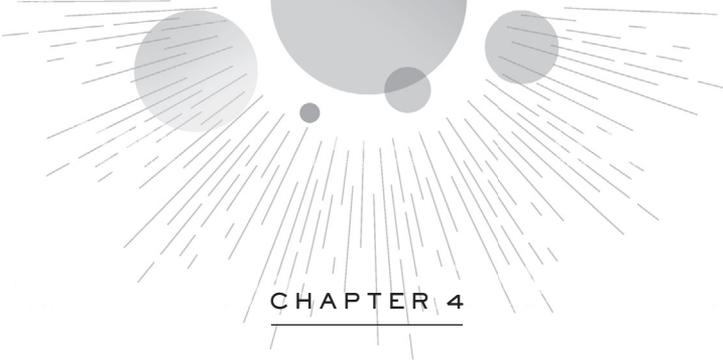


CHAPTER 3

HOW DO I GET WHERE I WANT TO GO?

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

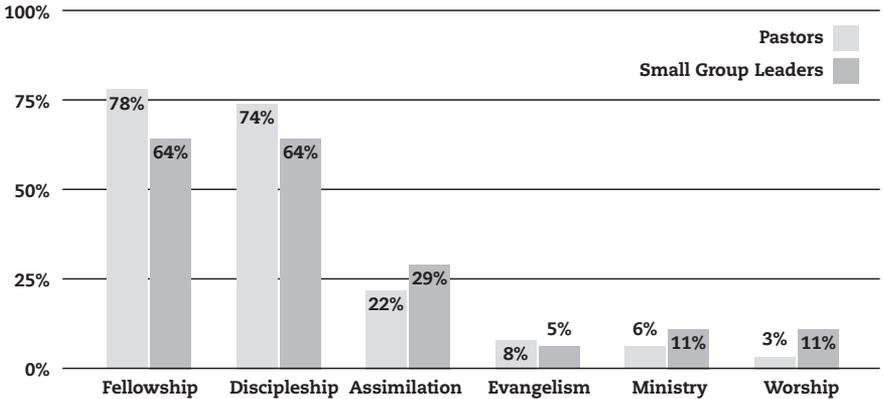
1. 🖐️ **Remember:** What caught your attention in this chapter about group development?
2. 🦉 **Understand:** How does group development theory explain group experiences you've had, both positive and negative?
3. ⚙️ **Apply:** Think about the last group you participated in or led. At which stage was the group when the group season/term ended?
4. ⚙️ **Apply:** Which stage do you think your small group is currently experiencing?
5. 🔍 **Analyze:** What are ways you've seen group leaders effectively provide directive leadership as a group first forms?
6. 📅 **Evaluate:** If your group will only meet for a specific (and short) period of time, how can you adjust your expectations for what can and should be accomplished?



CHAPTER 4

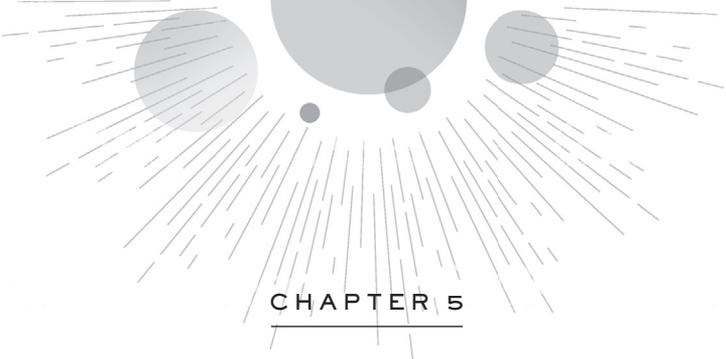
CONFUSED TO COMPELLING

THE TOP PRIORITIES OF SMALL GROUPS



REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1.  **Remember:** What caught your attention in this chapter?
2.  **Understand:** What do you now understand about the relationship between an outward-facing purpose and inward-focused community?
3.  **Apply:** What words or phrases come to mind when you think about the purpose of the group you're currently leading?
4.  **Analyze:** Think about the problems you've experienced in groups you've been a part of in the past. How could you reframe those problems as purpose problems?
5.  **Evaluate:** How might problems related to your group's purpose be related to the problems you're experiencing in leading the group?
6.  **Evaluate:** Think about a recent experience that galvanized your group. What did you do? Was the goal at the onset to grow together or was the closeness of your group a by-product? What's the next experience your group could engage in to help you grow closer together?
7.  **Create:** If you were to draft a new 5C purpose for your small group, what would you want it to be?



CHAPTER 5

DISENGAGED TO DEDICATED

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

CHECKLIST FOR PRE-MEETING COMMUNICATION

- I've sent a personalized welcome note to every new member as soon as they joined that includes:
 - A statement about why we do our group
 - A plan for the first meeting (so that the new member feels comfortable)
 - What I expect from everyone at the first meeting
- I've asked an existing member of our group to reach out to each new person (if there's an existing group that new members are being added to).
- I've sent a reminder about the first meeting (a couple of days before the meeting) and expressed my excitement about it.
- I've taken the time to pray for each individual by name.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

SAMPLE AGENDA FOR YOUR GROUP'S FIRST MEETING

- Welcome the group.
- Clarify the purpose of the group (connecting it to your group members' felt needs).
- Get to know each other.
 - Complete introductions.
 - Do an introduction or icebreaker activity (see some of our favorites at thrivinggroups.com).
- Return to purpose. Ask people to comment on why they are there and what they wish to glean from the group, and revise/establish your group's purpose as necessary.
- Pray together, asking God to make that purpose happen.
- Try out whatever format your group will use (discuss sermon, do introduction to Bible study, etc.).
- Explain the initial structure for your group's next meeting—when, where, how to prepare for it, how long sessions will run, etc. (think of this as a syllabus for your group).

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

SAMPLE AGENDA FOR YOUR GROUP'S SECOND MEETING

- Review your group's purpose.
- Continue to get to know each other: do something that helps people get to know each other a bit more (and become comfortable sharing).
- Set group expectations and ground rules that will help your group be effective. To develop a list of Dos and Don'ts, ask:
 - What do you love about groups?
 - What do you hate about groups?
- Sign a group covenant that captures the group's purpose and how it will work together (consider consulting with your ministry leader for a sample covenant).
- Begin pursuing your freshly articulated purpose.

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1.  **Remember:** What caught your attention in this chapter about gathering and starting your group?
2.  **Understand:** What do you now understand about the leader's role in starting successfully?
3.  **Apply:** With regard to size, location, how you spend your time together, and other logistics, what can you put into practice immediately?
4.  **Analyze:** How might a small adjustment in size, location, or how you spend your time together affect group life?
5.  **Evaluate:** In humility, how has your inattention to developing key group structures or starting your group well hindered individual and group growth?
6.  **Create:** For the next group or season, what plans would you make to provide good leadership from the very start?

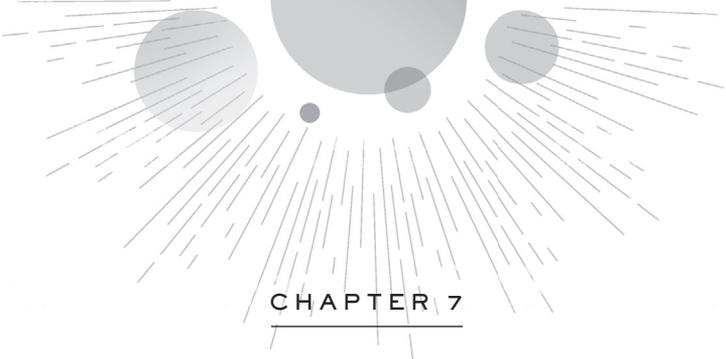


CHAPTER 6

MINE TO OURS

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

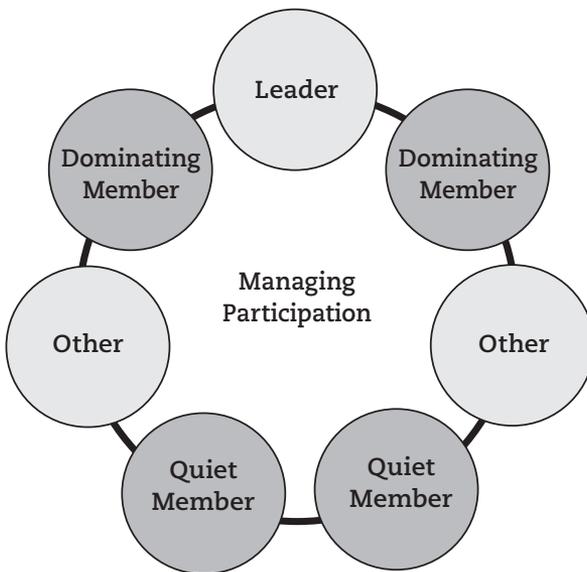
1. 🖐️ **Remember:** What caught your attention in this chapter about cultivating shared ownership?
2. 🦉 **Understand:** What does it mean for a leader to move group members from *consuming* to *contributing*?
3. ⚙️ **Apply:** In what area of group life can you give away ownership immediately?
4. 🔍 **Analyze:** If you were out of the country for a month, what do you think might happen with your group gatherings?
5. 📖 **Evaluate:** How would you evaluate your willingness to give away your leadership? What keeps you from being more willing?
6. 💡 **Create:** Imagine that you are not able to lead your group for four weeks in the near future. What plans for shared leadership do you need to implement in order to cultivate continued individual and group growth?



CHAPTER 7

TRIVIAL TO TRANSFORMATIVE

MAKE SEATING ARRANGEMENTS WORK



REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note the inverted funnel sequence. In fact, we've been using it throughout the book for these questions at the end of each chapter.

1. 🖐️ **Remember:** What caught your attention in this chapter about stimulating better discussions?
2. 🦉 **Understand:** What do you now understand about the kinds of questions that are likely to produce the best discussions?
3. ⚙️ **Apply:** How might you apply this new understanding about questions and seating arrangements in your next group gathering?
4. 🔍 **Analyze:** After completing the Two-Minute Tip asking a group member to write down all of the questions you asked during the group discussion, what did you learn about your tendencies?
5. 📖 **Evaluate:** What adjustments might you make, now that you're aware of your inclinations?
6. 💡 **Create:** What question(s) can be your new "go-to" when you sense the discussion is falling flat?
7. 💡 **Create:** Name the individuals in your group whose participation you'd want to help catalyze (either more or less participation!). In your group discussions, where would you seat them? Draw it out!



CHAPTER 8

AVOIDANCE TO EMBRACE

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

PRE-DISCUSSION REFLECTION PROMPTS:

How do you typically approach conflict?

1. Do you, as the leader, confront members who don't contribute to the group?
2. Do you have ground rules about speaking the truth in love that set up group members to interact well with each other?
3. Do you hold group members accountable when they violate these rules?
4. As a leader, do you clarify important issues and perspectives, even if it might create an awkward moment?
5. When conflict rears its ugly head, do you immediately try to squelch it or let it linger?
6. When things get out of hand within your group, do you spend time in prayer?

How has your group previously dealt with conflict?

1. Has your group embraced conflict or shut it down?
2. When arguments have occurred, have group members initially used descriptive evidence, or have they initially expressed feelings?
3. In what ways have group members been held accountable by other group members?
4. When have you seen group members say hard things, even if it has resulted in awkwardness or conflict?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1.  What did God reveal to you through the reflection prompts?
2.  If “conflict” and “tension” were people, what three words might you use to describe your relationship with them?
3.  **Remember:** What caught your attention in this chapter about leveraging tension and engaging conflict?
4.  **Understand:** What do you now understand about the benefits of conflict?
5.  **Apply:** What might it look like to determine how much a situation is a “group thing” or an “individual thing”?
6.  **Analyze:** Is there a particular issue that you “buried” (or was buried by the group leader) in a previous group experience? What happened, and what was the result?
7.  **Evaluate:** Consider the last time you experienced conflict within a small group. What did you learn from it? How did it help or hurt your group? In which areas might you ask the Lord to help you grow?
8.  **Create:** What are the first three things you want to think about or do the next time you sense tension?



CHAPTER 9

YOUR CARE

YOUR SELF-CARE PLAN

Complete the plan below for this week and then start a new one each week, noting progress over time.

| | WHERE I AM RIGHT NOW: | WHERE I WANT TO BE: | WHAT I CAN DO THIS WEEK TO MOVE FROM WHERE I AM TO WHERE I WANT TO BE: |
|----------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Enjoying God's Word | (e.g., Reading the Bible when I have time, randomly picking a passage each time, or reading a few verses each week) | (e.g., Reading and journaling every day, finding a Scripture to claim for myself, working on a Bible study) | (e.g., finding a place, researching HeReadsTruth or SheReadsTruth for a study, or calling a mentor or pastor for recommendations) |
| Praying with Intimacy | (e.g., praying only at meals and in desperate times) | (e.g., praying for group members regularly, praying the Lord's Prayer, establishing a dedicated prayer time in my schedule) | (e.g., learning the ACTS model for prayer, scheduling ten minutes each day to pray, asking others about their prayer practices) |
| Worshipping with Passion | (e.g., nonexistent, listening to worship music) | (e.g., reading a Psalm out loud each day, memorizing worship songs filled with Scripture, verbally praising God) | (e.g., asking a friend for a playlist, scheduling a hike alone, intentionally seeking to appreciate God's creation, finding a book on work as worship) |
| Pursuing Community Intentionally | (e.g., in a small group, have a mentor) | (e.g., identify people, pain, and protections; understand my boundaries; know who will keep me accountable in my leadership responsibilities) | (e.g., set aside an hour to pray through a list of people, begin a list of boundaries to discuss with a trusted friend) |

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

First, take some time to individually reflect on these questions on leadership burnout:⁹

1. What do I expect others to give me?
2. Who do I hope will affirm me?
3. Who am I trying to please?
4. How honest am I being with myself and others?
5. What lie am I believing?

Second, engage these questions with others:

1.  What did God reveal to you through the reflection activity and prompt?
2.  **Remember:** What caught your attention in this chapter about care and sustainable leadership?
3.  **Understand:** What is the relationship between your small group leadership and your personal spiritual health habits and behaviors?
4.  **Apply:** Which of the spiritual enrichment habits come(s) most naturally to you?
5.  **Analyze:** Which one(s) might need your intentional pursuit?
6.  **Evaluate:** What gets in the way of your pursuit of these organic habits? What does that reveal about your current condition?
7.  **Create:** What are your two most concrete action steps related to these organic habits?



CHAPTER 10

YOUR LEGACY

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. 🖐️ **Remember:** What caught your attention in this chapter about developing leaders?
2. 🦉 **Understand:** Which element of the three-phase leadership development plan is most important? Which one is most neglected?
3. ⚙️ **Apply:** At which of the three phases do you need to start?
4. 🔍 **Analyze:** From that starting point, what potential do you see in moving forward in leadership development within your specific small group?
5. 📄 **Evaluate:** What could hinder your leadership development efforts? How might you overcome those challenges?
6. 💡 **Create:** Outline a plan for raising up a new small group leader in the next season of group life.



CHAPTER II

YOUR CHARGE

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. 🖱️ **Remember:** What caught your attention in this chapter about group multiplication?
2. 🦉 **Understand:** What does multiplication mean? What are the various ways multiplication can be accomplished?
3. ⚙️ **Apply:** Given the state of your current small group, how would you assess the group's readiness to multiply?
4. 🔍 **Analyze:** What benefits do you foresee in multiplying your group? What challenges and/or drawbacks do you foresee?
5. 📄 **Evaluate:** What reservations do you have as the group leader? In light of those reservations, how might you more readily trust in God's provision?
6. 💡 **Create:** Partner up with another leader (or two!) and develop some commitments and checkpoints for your multiplication plans.

YOUR BEST NEXT STEP

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. 🖐️ **Remember:** What caught your attention in this chapter?
2. ⚙️ **Apply:** Which key ingredients of the *Leading Small Groups That Thrive* model are in place in your group? Which are missing?
3. ⚙️ **Apply:** As you reflect on your leadership technique, what skills do you need to focus on? (If you are discussing this as part of a group of leaders, notice one another's relative areas of strength and weaknesses, and work to help each other develop them.)
4. 🔍 **Analyze:** How could ongoing assessment help you grow as a leader for your group?
5. 📖 **Evaluate:** What does it mean for you to be faithful in leading your small group?
6. 💡 **Create:** Which of the five action steps listed in this chapter will you start with? Why?



APPENDIX A

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU GROW AS A LEADER

Check out the *Leading Small Groups That Thrive* website at thrivinggroups.com for additional resources to help you grow into a catalytic leader, including:

1. Our list of favorite icebreakers
2. Sample group covenants
3. *Leading Small Groups That Thrive* Assessment
4. Sample group meal planning menus
5. Printable Leadership Role Strengths Assessment
6. Printable Purpose Development Exercise
7. Printable leader's Self-Care Plan

thrivinggroups.com



APPENDIX B

THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR PASTORS

CHAPTER 1: WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT GROUPS?

CASTING A POWERFUL VISION FOR GROUPS

Key Insight: More than 90 percent of pastors say groups are the primary vehicle for discipleship in their church, but less than 40 percent of pastors mention groups from the pulpit on a monthly basis or more.

Questions to consider:

- Does your church have a clear vision for small groups and how they support, extend, and contribute to your church's overall discipleship strategy?
- To what extent do your leaders know the impact of small groups at your church?
- Do all of your materials—from web sign-ups, to bulletin announcements, to group leader applications, to leader training resources—share the same vision for groups at your church?

CHAPTER 2: WHAT DOES A CATALYTIC LEADER DO?

PAINTING A PICTURE OF NEXT-LEVEL GROUP LEADERSHIP

Key Insight: Because most pastors look for spiritually mature, teachable people with integrity to lead small groups, often leaders lack the skill set to actually lead a thriving group. Leadership development must be a key priority, but one-size-fits-all approaches are ineffective.

Questions to consider:

- How does your church currently develop leaders? To what extent do you provide developmental pathways that meet the needs of leaders at various stages of their development and their groups' life spans?
- Based on the *Leading Small Groups That Thrive* model, how can you expand your training systems to equip leaders with the skills they need to catalyze thriving small groups?
- How do you demonstrate the value you place on leaders? How do you talk about them, celebrate them, and show your appreciation for the key contributions they make as leaders?

CHAPTER 3: HOW DO I GET WHERE I WANT TO GO?

MAPPING A PLAN TO DEVELOP A THRIVING GROUP

Key Insight: Most groups (even work teams) take more than six months to gel, but so many small group models are built on a 10–15-week group season.

Questions to consider:

- Are you asking too much or too little from small groups based on the season model you use?
- What adjustments to your model for groups might you consider based on the insights of group development research?

- From a systems perspective, how can you enable and equip leaders to accelerate their group's growth to increase their group's chances to move to the promised land?

CHAPTER 4: CONFUSED TO COMPELLING

ENERGIZE YOUR GROUP BY ARTICULATING YOUR PURPOSE

Key Insight: Your church must be crystal-clear about why small groups exist within your discipleship and ministry framework and how they complement weekend services and other ministries and classes.

Questions to consider:

- Take a look at your stated purpose for small groups across your materials, trainings, and announcements. Does your small groups ministry benefit from a 5C (clear, compelling, challenging, calling-oriented, consistently held) purpose?
- Based on an understanding that externally focused groups contribute the most to spiritual growth, how can you shift from “creating a safe environment” or “building close relationships” in groups to pursuing the unique purpose you’ve identified for your ministry?
- How can you instill a clear purpose and strategy in your leadership training and ongoing communication to get everyone in your ministry speaking the same language?

CHAPTER 5: DISENGAGED TO DEDICATED

SET THE STAGE TO KEEP PEOPLE COMING BACK

Key Insight: Stimulus plus structure creates spaces where people can grow. By connecting to people's felt needs and quickly establishing predictability and relational safety, you can give your groups the soil they need to flourish.

Questions to consider:

- What are the key needs of people in your community, particularly those who are not already connected in community? How can your groups meet those important needs while still pursuing their unique purposes?
- Evaluate your sign-up mechanisms, childcare practices, policies related to using church facilities, and so on. To what extent does the suite of support you offer to small groups provide the stability and predictability new members are craving?
- What resources could be developed to help leaders more effectively manage group logistics so that people feel comfortable and ready to dive deeper into the group?

CHAPTER 6: MINE TO OURS

CULTIVATE COMMITMENT THROUGH SHARED OWNERSHIP

Key Insight: The most effective groups are owned by the entire group rather than just leaders, but the reality is that people tend to commit and invest in places where they can make a big impact, and they can only contribute significantly in a few areas of life. No one can commit with excellence to a zillion things at once.

Questions to consider:

- At your church, is there space for your leaders and group members to be all-in with their small group or are they constantly pulled in all directions? When you put it all together, what are you asking your people to do?
- Have you defined what a fully engaged group member looks like? What does the ideal group member look like?
- Considering what you ask of your leaders, are you inciting leader-only ownership? How can you help leaders move toward shared ownership?

CHAPTER 7: TRIVIAL TO TRANSFORMATIVE

STIMULATE MEANINGFUL DISCUSSIONS

Key Insight: Good leaders are not the same as good group discussion facilitators. Seeing the impact of discussion practices in contributing to spiritual growth, training leaders to facilitate discussion is a really good use of training times.

Questions to consider:

- When you write out sermon-based discussion questions, to what extent do you write good questions with discussion in mind, rather than trying to identify correct answers?
- How might you structure your weekly discussion questions based on the *Remember-Understand-Apply-Analyze-Evaluate-Create* framework?
- Have you considered developing a resource to help your leaders plan outstanding gatherings?

CHAPTER 8: AVOIDANCE TO EMBRACE

ENGAGE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS WITHOUT DESTROYING YOUR GROUP

Key Insight: Leaders need to lean into tension rather than away from it, but they must have the resources to do it effectively.

Questions to consider:

- Identify some of the most challenging situations your leaders have recently experienced. How might you create case studies from those situations to train your leaders?
- To what extent do your ministry leaders talk not only about key successes related to small groups ministry, but also about the messiness and the challenging situations that didn't turn out well? Use these stories to cast a vision for and normalize challenge and tension in groups.
- What support systems are in place for when leaders engage

challenging and emotionally-taxing situations? Do they know when to consult with you? To what extent do leaders feel supported by you in times of difficulty?

CHAPTER 9: YOUR CARE

CULTIVATING AND SUSTAINING YOUR OWN HEALTH

Key Insight: Too many leaders care for others at the expense of themselves, and many coaching structures aren't built to care for the leaders as much as their leadership.

Questions to consider:

- To what extent are your leaders experiencing or approaching burnout? Do you have mechanisms in place to identify early signs of burnout in your leaders?
- How might you adapt your coaching approach with small group leaders to focus more on your leaders and their personal care in addition to their group leadership?
- What sorts of rhythms, such as sabbaticals, periodic assessment, etc., do you practice with your leaders to help them take stock of their personal health and readiness for leadership?

CHAPTER 10: YOUR LEGACY

RECRUITING AND RAISING UP NEW LEADERS

Key Insight: More availability of training prompts growth in groups. The more leaders are trained, the more their groups contribute to spiritual growth.

Questions to consider:

- Have you clearly described what constitutes leader material for your ministry? Help your leaders identify people they can guide and mentor.
- What systems do you have in place for investing in the potential new leaders that current leaders identify?

- When you look over the *Leading Small Groups That Thrive* model, in which elements do your leaders need more training and resourcing? How might you provide it to them?

CHAPTER 11: YOUR CHARGE

EXPANDING AND MULTIPLYING GROUPS

Key Insight: Groups that have multiplied and groups that are newer contribute the most to members' spiritual growth. Growth and momentum are essential to maximizing the impact groups can make.

Questions to consider:

- What is your ministry's vision for growth and expansion? To what extent have you shared your vision and your rationale with your leaders?
- How can you prepare group leaders and members for group-level multiplication thinking by encouraging them to take micro-level action, such as inviting an unchurched person to church?
- What resources do your group leaders have for:
 - Determining when to end a group
 - Ending a group gracefully
 - Launching a new group from an existing group
 - Launching a brand-new group
 - Casting a vision for continual growth

CHAPTER 12: YOUR BEST NEXT STEP

Key Insight: Continual assessment at individual leader, group, and ministry levels will enable your ministry to achieve maximum impact.

Questions to consider:

- With a few colleagues or trusted leaders, and thinking about your ministry as a whole, consider how well-equipped your group leaders are to:

- **Focus on Purpose.** Do they know and focus on their group's unique purpose under the umbrella of your ministry's overall purpose, prioritize what matters most, and continually refocus the group to pursue its purpose?
- **Set the Stage.** Following your direction and encouragement, do they pay attention to group size, gather the right people who can benefit from the group experience, structure group gatherings to support the group's purpose, and establish communication norms that set the stage for effective engagement?
- **Cultivate Shared Ownership.** Do they invite and inspire group members to continually deepen their commitment to the group by taking on greater leadership roles, spur members to share life with one another, and communicate frequently with members?
- **Stimulate Meaningful Discussions.** Are your leaders equipped to ask great questions, fully contribute themselves but let group members shine, and facilitate meaningful group discussions?
- **Embrace Difficult Conversations.** Do they stifle conflict and tension or cultivate mutual accountability and leverage healthy tension for the good of group members and the group as a whole?
- **Care for Themselves.** Do your leaders possess and act on a plan to care for themselves and continually sharpen themselves?
- **Develop Other Leaders.** Do they regularly identify potential leaders, invite them into relationship and developmental opportunities, and then invest intentionally in them?
- **Multiply and Grow.** Are your leaders regularly thinking about multiplying and taking steps—no matter the length of time their current group has been meeting—to prepare for and implement growth and multiplication practices?

Based on your answers to this quick assessment, what is the next best step for your small groups ministry?



APPENDIX C

WHERE DID WE GET THESE IDEAS?

Stats, Numbers, and Data

For this mixed-method study, we employed a quantitative survey design across three populations: pastors/ministry leaders, small group leaders, and small group members.

PARTICIPANTS

We recruited small groups pastors and ministry leaders through smallgroups.com, via snowball sample, and via respondent-driven sample, enabling us to locate individuals who might also be interested in participating. Through an online survey, we invited pastors and ministry leaders to tell us about their churches—specifically, their denomination, weekly attendance figures over the last few years, and geographic location. We also asked them about their specific small groups ministry models—what their primary purposes are, what they look for in leaders, how they train their leaders, how they organize groups, and how involved their members are in groups.

We then asked them to nominate 3–5 of their best current small groups—at least one group among their very best and at least two groups they considered to be “above average.” From there, and with the

encouragement of those pastors, we invited leaders and members from those nominated groups to tell us about their small groups. We asked them about their individual spiritual health and growth, how they spent their group time, communication between leaders and members, discussion practices and experiences with other group members.

In total, 90 small groups pastors and ministry leaders participated, which then yielded a sample of 135 leaders and 825 members of “above average” small groups, as nominated by their pastors or ministry leaders.

The pastor/ministry leader data represented churches ranging in weekly attendance from 30 to 3900 ($M = 1158$, $SD = 1075$) and reported on average 48 percent church participation in small groups. With regard to church denomination, 39 percent of our sample identified as non-denominational, 11 percent identified as Baptist (SBC, ABC, other), and 8 percent identified as Assemblies of God/Pentecostal/Foursquare. The Christian & Missionary Alliance, Christian Church, Evangelical Free, Friends/Quaker, Methodist, Nazarene, and Presbyterian/Reformed denominations are also represented in the sample. Additionally, the sample comprised churches from over twenty-two states in the US and three churches abroad.

The leaders and members ranged in age from nineteen to eighty-three years ($M = 44.5$, $SD = 14.1$), and 36 percent of the sample identified as male. Eighty-seven percent of the sample identified as White, 5.6 percent Hispanic, 4.3 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 3.4 percent Black, and 1.3 percent American Indian. Participants had attended their respective churches from two months to forty-six years ($M = 8.5$ years, $SD = 7.9$ years).

MEASURES

Our key outcome variable was adapted from Steve Gladen’s Spiritual Health Assessment, measuring individual spiritual health.¹ In addition to attitudinal measures, each dimension was augmented by a behavioral measure, asking about frequency of concrete behaviors. The items, some of which were reverse-coded, are as follows:

WORSHIP: YOU WERE PLANNED FOR GOD'S PLEASURE

1. I desire to please and honor Jesus in all that I do.
2. If I go several days without reading the Bible, I find myself unfulfilled.
3. How I live my life shows that God is my highest priority.
4. About how often, if at all, do you personally read the Bible (not including church worship services, small group, or other church-sponsored event)?

FELLOWSHIP: YOU WERE FORMED FOR GOD'S FAMILY

1. I have a deep and meaningful connection with others in the church.
2. I do not gather regularly with a group of Christians for fellowship and accountability.
3. I intentionally spend time with other believers (outside of my spouse/family) in order to help them grow in their faith.
4. In a typical month, about how many times (if any) do you gather with other adults from church outside of church-sponsored activities?

DISCIPLESHIP: YOU WERE CREATED TO BECOME LIKE CHRIST

1. A review of how I use my finances shows that I think more about God and others than I do about myself.
2. I feel sorrow and regret when I realize I have sinned.
3. When I realize my attitude does not please God, I take steps to try and fix it.
4. About how often, if at all, do you meet with at least one other believer (excluding spouses and roommates) for discipleship purposes (e.g., confess your sins to others, pray, read the Bible together, share or seek biblical advice)?

MINISTRY: YOU WERE SHAPED FOR SERVING GOD

1. I am currently serving God with the gifts and passions he has given me.

2. I am intentionally putting my spiritual gift(s) to use serving God and others.
3. I intentionally try to serve people outside my church who have tangible needs.
4. About how often, if at all, do you find yourself meeting a perceived need without being asked?

EVANGELISM: YOU WERE MADE FOR A MISSION

1. While interacting with others on a normal, daily basis, I seek opportunities to speak out about Jesus Christ.
2. My heart is full of passion to share the good news of the gospel with those who have never heard it.
3. I find that my relationship with Jesus comes up frequently in my conversations with those who do not know him.
4. In the past six months, about how many times have you personally invited an unchurched person to attend a church service, small group, or other church-sponsored event or activity?

Additionally, we asked about the extent to which their current small group contributed to each of the above-mentioned dimensions of spiritual health.

We also assessed a variety of group practices:

- **Time.** We asked about how much time the group spent together during each regularly scheduled group meeting and how that time was spent (e.g., fellowship, discussion/study, serving others, prayer, worship, logistics/announcements).
- **Group discussion.** We learned about group members' willingness to say hard things and the extent to which they talk among themselves as opposed to talking to the leader and the leader talking back to them individually. We asked about group rules, accountability, and leaders' willingness to confront group members about contributing to the group.

- **Group conflict.** We asked about the existence of conflict and the leader's role in facilitating conflict management.
- **Biblical community.** We asked about connecting with other members and the extent to which members had shared their story with other members and how many others' stories they knew.
- **Leader characteristics.** We asked members to assess the credibility of their leaders: their expertise, trustworthiness, and goodwill.
- **Communication frequency and leader commitment.** We asked members to share how frequently their leader(s) communicated with them as a behavioral measure of their commitment to the group and its members.
- **Group gatherings.** We asked about the kinds of questions leaders ask during group gatherings and how they lead and facilitate discussions.

Separately, we asked leaders:

- **Their small group priorities.** Using Gladen's five dimensions, we asked leaders about the priorities of their specific small groups.
- **Leader development.** We asked how they have been developed as leaders and their previous group leadership experience.
- **Group membership demographics.** They reported the number of members in the group, the percentage of members who attended 75 percent and 50 percent of the time, and how long the group had been together.
- **Commitment to the group.** We measured commitment by asking leaders how committed they were.
- **Multiplication.** We asked if the group had multiplied, and if so, how many times, how often, and how many individuals and couples had left the group to serve as leaders of a new group.

DATA ANALYSIS

When we asked members to share how much their small group contributed to each of the above-mentioned dimensions of their spiritual health, we computed the average for each individual (Cronbach's alpha = .854, indicating a strong measure of the five items comprising the small group's contribution to one's spiritual health). For each group, the average scores of each member were then averaged to provide a group-level average. Thus, the average of how much each member reported that the group contributed to his or her individual spiritual health became our primary, group-level, dependent variable, while controlling for the spiritual health of each individual in the group in each of our statistical tests.

We conducted rigorous data analysis, including multiple regression and ANOVAs, to assess relationships among variables. From this data, only statistically significant results were presented. Additionally, we identified the small groups that had the highest scores on our dependent variable, the group's contribution to their individuals' spiritual health. Several of the top twenty groups were also profiled in our data.

We also followed up with site visits and interviews with several of the top 20 groups, observing and asking questions about their particular group practices. We collected stories from group leaders to learn about their groups' experiences, challenges, success stories, and practices.

This book and the recommendations throughout represent this rich set of data, supported by additional psychological and communication research, presented to help leaders facilitate individual spiritual growth through small group practices.