



LEADING A SMALL GROUP • Crucial Elements

Though groups may include a variety of members, personalities and people from a wide range of backgrounds, there are some elements which characterize every effective Christian small group. A prospering small group will have each of these elements: Christ-centered focus, community, each person richly experiencing Christ, progressive life-change and outward impact. Each area will be developed throughout this book.

Quality Biblical Content

This might come as a surprise, but small group Bible studies study the Bible. Central to the Christian faith is the belief that God has revealed Himself to us in His Word. But the ultimate goal of studying the Bible together is to point the group to Christ, not to view Bible knowledge as an end in itself, but to see the Bible as a map that leads us to Christ.

Your group needs to experience Christ, not just learn more about the Bible, as valuable as that is. In no way do we want to move away from the Bible - it is the Word of God - but as you study the Scripture you want to help your group to see the person to whom the Scriptures point, that is Jesus. This is not to look to find Jesus in every text but to look to discover how the text relates and points to Christ and his redemptive work.

Community

Community is the sense within the group that members are a team, bonded together as friends and committed to each other's well-being and growth. This doesn't happen all at once, but healthy, growing groups have an increasing sense of community. Over time, individuals rejoice together, and share in sorrow together. These groups move from being "Tom's group" to "our group," as members begin to take ownership of the group. The leader can help facilitate this, but community is not primarily a leadership issue. Rather, it's a oneness that becomes apparent when individuals come to value others in the group. Chapter 6 will give you insight into understanding community and some ideas on how to nurture this in your group.

Each Person Richly Experiencing Christ

As a leader your role is to stimulate group members to encounter and experience Christ for themselves. One of the most intimidating things that a small group leader faces is thinking that they have to have all the answers - the "map" memorized. Leaders don't need to have all the answers, but they do need to be experiencing Christ for themselves and know how to point others to Him. This comes from knowing people's greatest needs (chapters 4 and 5) having an understanding of how real change happens (chapter 5) and being skilled at asking good questions that engage the heart (chapter 8).

You want each person in your group to taste, see, and personally encounter Christ as you come to the Scriptures.

Progressive Life-Change

Successful small groups are about life-change. On the roadtrip of life, we all hit potholes, dead ends, construction zones, and pileups - sometimes twenty cars or more. As a result of the wear-and-tear brought on by life's challenges, each week the members of your group show up in less than showroom condition, sometimes in need of some serious bodywork. Their condition may be obvious, or not so obvious.



As a leader (in need of your own bodywork, of course) you want to allow the Scriptures to expose our brokenness, our potholes, and then follow the passage as it points toward a solution and ultimately to a person, Jesus Christ. This is how life-change happens. If a group stops short of being a catalyst for life-change, it has fallen short of all God intends for the group.

Outward Impact

A small group needs an outlet to put into action what they are learning. As the group reaches out to others, at least two things happen: the group is strengthened and more lives are changed. Seeking to make an impact is a difficult step for many groups because it's safer to become ingrown. But virtually all groups need to take the key step of turning the focus of the group from "getting" to "giving." We'll talk more about this in Chapter 10.

End 

Cru.Comm is the small group material for Campus Crusade for Christ's Campus Ministry. It was created by Centerfield Productions, the field based division of CruPress. We'd love to hear your feedback on this study. Please write us at centerfield@uscm.org