

Small-groups at Trissels

Important things can happen in small-groups:

- Building friendship, belonging
- Living out our faith in Jesus; application of Scripture
 - Doing something good together (service projects, outreach)
 - Debriefing our lives; talking about moments of temptation, anger, fear; helping each other know and obey Christ
- Leadership and ministry gifts emerge and develop

Shape of group meeting

- Take time in first sessions to learn to know each other.
 - Perhaps take turns sharing personal life journeys.
 - Or do exercises like this: each person makes list of 4 items which tell about significant roles or aspects of life, then shares 1 minute on each item.
- Discuss expectations in first sessions:
 - frequency of meetings
 - eg. every other week
 - length of meetings
 - eg. hour and a half
 - where meet
 - eg. in the same home, or rotate to different homes
 - length of commitment to group
 - eg. until May or June; then group can “reshuffle” with other groups in the Fall (or group can decide to continue meeting).
 - confidentiality of any personal information shared in group
- Possible elements to start a meeting: conversation that catches up on member’s lives, ice-breaker questions, singing.
 - See mega-collection of ice-breakers at trisselsmc.org/#/groups/group-leader-resources.
- Each meeting has clear God-elements, such as prayer and Bible reading.
 - Time in the Bible centers on members’ lives (applying and responding to God’s word) rather than on a curriculum (Bible knowledge). Most of us, even if we stopped learning anything new about Jesus and the Bible, could work a lifetime at putting into practice the material that we already know!
 - See examples of simple forms of group Bible reading on pages 3 & 4.
- Close each meeting with prayer for each other. Each person is given opportunity to share a personal prayer need. Then pray, don’t give counsel.
 - Pray as one group, or in groups of 3 or 4; or break out according to gender. Persons can spontaneously pray for another’s need; or the group can agree who will pray for whom.

Small-group leader role

- Leaders facilitate group decisions re: scheduling and structuring meetings
- Leaders are not expected to always do the upfront roles. Rather they make room for group members to exercise gifts, initiate activities. They lead in the sense of responsibility: watching over health of group (eg. making sure someone does not monopolize time), doing all they can to create environments and experiences that allow group members to connect with the Holy Spirit and build deep relationships with each other.
 - Good article on role of small-group leader (uses image of “spiritual safari guide”!) is at trisselsmc.org/#/groups/group-leader-resources.
- Leaders consistently pray for small-group members.
 - Research shows that this may be a small-group leader’s most important job; read article at trisselsmc.org/#/groups/group-leader-resources.
- Harold as pastor is available for encouragement, ideas, counsel.

One way to form groups

Groups can grow organically around the group leaders (rather than a centralized program run by church leadership).

- On a Sunday morning several weeks before a group begins, its leaders
 - 1) describe their vision for the group or any focus or emphasis
 - eg. “We’ll read the Bible each time we gather, and pray for each other. And try to do a service project once a month.”
 - 2) say the probable day of the week the group will meet
 - 3) invite interested persons to contact them about participating.
- During the next weeks, the leaders invite persons to be part of their group (most people will need to be personally invited—few respond to a general announcement.)
- Optimum size - 7-12 persons.

Question-based small group Bible study & interaction

*Before the Bible study, ask:**

- What are you thankful for this week?
- What problems do you or others have this week? Is there any way this group can help?
- With whom did you share last week's lesson?
- How did you apply what you learned last week?

Read a Bible passage (20-30 verses—unless a smaller amount contains a full story or idea). Let persons take turns restating the text.

*Then ask:**

- What did you like about what we just read? What didn't you like?
- What did you learn about God? What didn't you understand?
- What do you personally need to do about what you learned?
- What phrase or verse do you want to take with you as God's message for you?

Alternate set of questions:

- As the text was read, what word or phrase popped out for you? Where did your mind stop to wander or wonder?
- In the text, where is God's shalom disrupted?
- In the text, where is God at work?
- What does the text tell us about the future God intends for us?
- How can we as a church join in God's work?

*After the Bible study, ask:**

- Do you know anyone you can share this passage with?
- Do you know anyone who needs help? What can this group do to help them?

**Feel free to reword, skip, or add!*

Small group Bible reading (*Lectio Divina*)

Choose a passage of scripture

(e.g., Numbers 6:22-27, Psalm 23:1-6, Psalm 84:1-4, Isaiah 40:27-31, Isaiah 55:6-13, Lam 3:19-26, Luke 6:27-38, John 15:1-7, Romans 8:32-39, 1 Cor 13:1-7, Eph 6:10-18, Phil 4:4-8, Col 3:1-4, 1 Thes 5:16-24, 1 Tim 6:6-12, 1 Peter 3:8-12, 2 Peter 3:9-14)

Preparation

Do an exercise that helps each one be conscious of the presence of God (e.g., spoken prayer, sit quietly, sing).

First Reading

- Someone reads the passage aloud, slowly, once or twice. Each one listens attentively for a word or phrase that stirs (or disturbs!) them.
- Listen as persons speak a word or phrase aloud.

Second Reading

- Someone reads the passage aloud. Each one ponders how this passage touches their life.
- Listen as persons respond to the passage with "I hear..." or "I see..." or "I sense..."

Third Reading

- Someone reads the passage aloud. Each one asks, "Is there an invitation here for me to do something?"
- Listen as persons respond to the passage with "The invitation to me is..." (*Alternate:* "I am being called/asked to...")

Prayer

Ask God to help you do or be whatever God is asking of you.

Small group Bible reading based on members' personal devotions and/or the Sunday sermon

- Persons share truths that struck them from devotional Bible reading.
- Group notes previous Sunday's sermon text, major points, illustrations; then share things not known before.
- Persons share areas where they need prayer in applying the text -- "the Lord told me to do something; pray for me that I can do it."
- Some sermons are hard to discuss; then work through the sermon text using these questions:
 - What stands out to you in this passage? (Probe)
 - What seems to be the main point? (Dig & Discuss)
 - Can you illustrate this with an example from your own life? (Illustrate)
 - What do you need from God right now? (Respond)