Shepherd Leader Training

Basic Training for Current and Potential Leaders
of FCC's Shepherd Groups

Introduction

Vision Statement of FCC
First Christian Church is an assembly of believers whose vision is to glorify the Triune God of Heaven and whose standard for faith and practice is the Bible, the Word of God. Our emphasis is on the person of Jesus Christ as our Savior, Sanctifier, Healer and Coming King. This involves committing ourselves to excellence as we…

Celebrate His majesty in whole-hearted worship
Educate His people through the systematic expository teaching of Scripture
Demonstrate His compassion and concern for each other in loving service and fellowship
Communicate His gospel in lifestyle and in speech to those who do not know the Love of Christ. We do this not only through our own opportunities but through local and foreign missionaries.

We believe that at their best, small groups accomplish all four of these objectives and are thus in harmony with the vision of FCC. We believe our Shepherd Groups are a God-given tool for seeing this vision grow into a reality.

What is a Shepherd Group?

A gathering of 6-12 people, led by trained lay-leaders, that meets at least once a month in a mutually agreed upon place to know an experience God, to offer mutual care and accountability, and to experience biblical fellowship.

Why Shepherd Groups at FCC?

They are the primary place for pastoral care in this growing congregation, the main means of biblical togetherness.

What are distinctives of FCC Shepherd Groups?

- 12 or less in size
- Balance worship, Bible study, sharing and prayer
- Meet at least once a month
- Led by trained leaders who receive ongoing support
- Committed to developing new leaders through apprenticeship
- Committed to multiplying as needed

How does one get involved in a Shepherd Group?

1. Invitation—personal connection to group or leader, asked to join
2. Request—indicate interest generally on Sunday friendship registry or by calling leader(s) from the Shepherd Directory
3. Start a new group—if interested in forming your own small group, speak with the Associate Pastor for Worship and Small Groups to discuss the possibility

The Nature of Christian Community and the Need for Shepherd Groups[1]

1) God is the Original Community

   a) The triune God is the "original community"; community is inherent in His nature.
   b) Community, predating even creation, is the highest form of life—the continual giving and receiving of relationships.

2) The Church is the "House of God"

   a) In the OT, the tabernacle and the temple were called God's "house."
   b) In the NT, the people of God are being built into a "spiritual house."

3) The Church happens in face-to-face mutual ministry

4) Sociology: Traditional Churches (TCs) vs. Small (Fellowship) Group Churches (FGCs)

   a) The "strangulation point" of TC is its building, for FGC is its number of leaders
   b) TCs rely mainly on staff-led programs; FGCs aim to be "people-based"
   c) TC evangelism and follow-up tends to be less personal than FGC
   d) FGCs maintain a "span of care" of about 1 to 10 regardless of growth and thus maintain accountability and caring capacity.

The Biblical Purposes of Small Group Ministry

1) Progressive Sanctification

   a) The theological term for the process of the Christian becoming more and more like Christ.
   b) *Justification* is a one-time event that occurs at the moment of salvation; *sanctification* is a process beginning at salvation and continuing until the believer goes home to be with the Lord.
   c) We need each other in this process!!! Sanctification is not accomplished in isolation from other believers. In fact, God designed it so that this process should take place in community, namely, in the Church (Heb 10:23-25)
   d) Small groups provide the encouragement, correction and accountability that keep us from drifting.

2) Biblical Fellowship

   a) Fellowship is too often associated with social activities in the church, but biblically, the concept really centers around the main thing we hold in common with other Christians: *our relationship with God.*

[1] Much of this training manual has been borrowed or adapted from the Bethlehem Baptist Church Shepherd's Training Manual by David Livingston (accessed at hopeingod.org). As BBC is a church we admire for their faithfulness to the Gospel and the Great Commission, we are intentionally attempting to emulate their approach to small group ministry.

b) C.J. Mahaney writes this about fellowship:

"Fellowship means to participate together, or to communicate the things we hold in common. The greatest common denominator between us as Christians is our relationship with God the Father, through God the Son, by God the Holy Spirit. This forms the content of true fellowship. Our relationship with God should be the main topic of communication within our small groups as we participate together to fulfill his purpose in the local church" (*Why Small Groups*, 11-12).

c) True biblical fellowship can never be just another word for mere social activities! Social activities are just a jumping off point. C.J. continues:

"Nothing compares to the fellowship we enjoy when we worship together, study and apply Scripture together, encourage and correct each other, and communicate to one another our experience of God. Nothing. Social activities can create a context for fellowship, but they are a place to begin—not a place to remain.
When I spend an extended time with another Christian, my main desire is that we know fellowship. I want to hear of his relationship with God, and how God is revealing himself to him. I want to communicate my current experience of God as well, and impart a fresh passion for God" (*Why Small Groups*, 12).

d) John expresses this connection between our fellowship with God and our fellowship with other believers in 1 John 1: "that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ (1 Jn 1:3)."

c) Here are some others ideas for fellowship in our small groups (*Why Small Groups*, 23-24):

i) Worship God together
ii) Pray for one another, (esp. for things that burden us and for how God is at work in our lives)
iii) Utilize our spiritual gifts to help others grow in God
iv) Carry one another's burdens (Gal 6:1-2)
v) Share about our spiritual experiences
vi) Confess our sins to one another (James 5:16)
vii) Correct one another when we see someone has failed to recognize and take responsibility for his sins (Gal 6:1)...this would be a more difficult aspect of fellowship!
viii) Serve one another in practical ways

3) Mutual Care for One Another

a) Small groups are also a place where every member can give and receive care:
1 Corinthians 12:24-26 24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, 25 that there may be no division in the body,

but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

b) Christians have always been characterized by their sacrificial (agape) love for each other

i) **Galatians 6:2** "Carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ"

ii) **John 15:12-13** "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends."

c) All over in Scripture we are told to do certain things for one another (we sometimes refer to these as the "one-anothers" of Scripture:

i) Be at peace with each other (mark 9:50

ii) Love one another (Jn 13:34)

iii) Be joined to one another (Rom 12:5

iv) Be devoted to one another (Rom 12:10)

v) Honor one another (Rom 12:10)

vi) Rejoice with one another (Rom 12:15)

vii) Weep with one another (Rom 12:15)

viii) Live in harmony with one another (Rom 12:16)

ix) Accept one another (Rom 15:7)

x) Counsel one another (Rom 15:14)

xi) Greet one another (Rom 16:16)

xii) Agree with one another (1 Cor 1:10)

xiii) Wait for one another (1 Cor 11:33)

xiv) Care for one another (1 Cor 12:25)

xv) Serve one another (Gal 5:13)

xvi) Be kind to one another (Eph 4:32)

xvii) Forgive one another (Eph 4:32)

xviii) Submit to one another (Eph 5:21)

xix) Bear with one another (Col 3:13)

xx) Encourage one another (1 Thess 5:11)

xxi) Build up one another (1 Thess 5:11)

xxii) Be humble toward one another (1 Peter 5:5)

xxiii) Confess your sins to one another (Jas 5:16)

xxiv) Fellowship with one another (1 Jn 1:7)

4) Experiencing and Expressing Gifts of the Holy Spirit

a) The small group needs to be a place where people can discover their spiritual gifts and then use them for the edification of the others.

b) The most obvious place where the gifts of the Holy Spirit are discussed in Scripture is in 1 Corinthians 12-14.

The Structure and Distinctives of Shepherd Groups at FCC[2]

1) Introduction

a) FCC is a growing church—without attention, loneliness becomes a widespread problem.

b) Shepherd Groups are our conscious attempt to offer deep relationships to all attenders at FCC, at a ration of about 1 to 10.

c) Shepherd Leaders are then supported (currently) by the Associate Pastor of Small Groups (APSG), and (eventually) as we grow, by a team of overseeing elders. The overseeing elders will mentor and equip Shepherd Leaders at a ratio of 1 to 5.

d) The overseeing elders will be subsequently trained, encouraged and supported by the APSG.

2) Is a Shepherd Leader a Pastor?

a) As a pastoral role, Shepherd Leaders fit a definition of pastor as one who is *passionate* about God and *compassionate* for people.

b) Pastors get people to deal with God.

c) Pastors treat people as distinct individuals

3) An Overview of Leading a Shepherd Group Meeting[3]

a) Aim to balance the five essential elements of a healthy small group

b) Cultivate open, deep, personal sharing

---

[2] For a visual diagram of the shepherd group accountability structure, please see Appendix A.

[3] We will deal more fully with these three points in next week's training session

c) Learn and practice good group dynamics

4) Ongoing Training – Quarterly Shepherd's Meetings

5) Leadership Job Descriptions

a) The Shepherd Group Leader

i) The Shepherd Leader is the most important pastoral link in a church which is based on small groups. The Shepherd Leader is the person who is at the closest level of care and concern for the members of the church.

ii) Since the role is more pastoring-oriented than teaching-oriented, your lifestyle is crucial. As a Shepherd Leader, you will be modeling the Christian life to your group. Is your walk dynamic and vital? They will know. Dry and lifeless? They will know.

The Shepherd Leader			
Critical Task	Good	Fair	Poor
Prerequisites:			
Professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ			
Weekly attending First Christian Church			
Seeking to maintain a healthy personal relationship with God			
A member of, or taking steps to become a member of First Christian Church			
Modeling *(Prayer life, Christian growth, and lifestyle must be healthy):*			
Exemplary lifestyle:			
1. consistent, obedient walk			
2. not undermining church teaching			
Willing to step down or furlough if requested			
Organizing *(Able to manage practical logistics of group meetings):*			
Well prepared to lead 1-4 meetings per month			
Well balanced group meetings including all essential aspects			
Recruit hospitality person for meeting place, food communication, etc.			
Recruit and train apprentice for future group leadership			
Watch for newly emerging potential apprentices			
Define start & end times and stick to them			
Shepherding *(Able to help each person grow):*			
Pray weekly for each member of the group			
Encourage group members to spend time together outside of group meeting, and do so yourself*			
Encourage members to seek ministry abilities and opportunities			
Facilitate genuine personal sharing of strengths and weaknesses, spiritual progress, needs and problems			
Check up on & encourage group members who are absent from either group meetings or Sunday worship services			
Stress the importance of confidentiality in the group			
Duties to Elder or Pastor *(See the group as a well-connected part of the whole Body)*			
Attend quarterly Shepherd Meetings consistently			
Arrange for semi-annual visit and feedback session by overseeing elder			
Report group progress and problems to overseeing elder at Shepherd Meeting			
Refer acute issues to elder or pastor			
Submit info for the Shepherd Group directory in both fall and spring in a timely manner			
***In groups consisting of unmarried men and women, it is usually best to have a male and female co-leader, as a single male may not be the best person to give pastoral care to a single female.**			

The Overseeing Elder (Currently Pastor Nathan)			
Critical Task	Good	Fair	Poor
Duties to Shepherd Leaders:			
Pray weekly for Shepherd Leaders under your care			
Visit group meetings routinely (once per "semester")			
Meet afterward with Shepherd Leaders to give feedback			
Assist each Shepherd Leader to identify and train apprentices			
Pastorally advise Shepherd Leaders whenever needed			
Assist in planning multiplication of groups whose attendance reaches 12			
Duties to Group Members:			
Seek to know each group member and monitor participation in the church and worship with the Shepherd Leader			
Give pastoral care or referrals when necessary in acute situations			

Qualifications for Spiritual Leadership
From the Pastoral Epistles

1 Tim. 3:2-7 (elders), 3:8-13 (deacons); 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Tit. 1:6-9 (elders)
(see also 1 Peter 5)

1) Social Qualifications[4]

   a) To those within the church: above reproach (1 Tim 3:2, 3:10; Tit 1:7)
   b) To those outside the church: a good reputation (so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil) (1 Tim 3:7)

2) Mental Qualifications

   a) Prudent (sound-minded) (1 Tim 3:2)
   b) Respectable (1 Tim 3:2)
   c) Sensible (Tit 1:6)
   d) Holding to the mystery of the faith with a clean conscience (1 Tim 3:9)
   e) Able to teach (1 Tim 3:3, 2 Tim 2:24)
   f) Holding fast to the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict (Tit 1:9)
   g) Correcting those in opposition with gentleness (2 Tim 2:25)

3) Moral Qualifications

   a) Faithful to spouse (1 Tim 3:2, 3:12; Tit 1:6)
   b) Temperate (1 Tim 3:2)
   c) Not addicted to wine (1 Tim 3:3, 3:8; Tit 1:7)
   d) Free from love of Money (1 Tim 3:3)
   e) Not fond of sordid gain (1 Tim 3:8; Tit 1:7)
   f) Not accused of dissipation or rebellion (Tit 1:6)

[4] These categories are from J. Oswald Sanders, Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer (Chicago: Moody Press, 2007), pp. 39-46.

g) Loving what is good, just, devout, self-controlled (Tit 1:8)

4) Personality Qualifications

a) Not pugnacious (1 Tim 3:3; Tit 1:7)
b) Not self-willed (Tit 1:7)
c) Not quick-tempered (Tit 1:7)
d) Uncontentious (1 Tim 3:3)
e) Gentle (1 Tim 3:3; 2 Tim 2:25)
f) Kind (2 Tim 2:24)
g) Patient (2 Tim 2:24)
h) Dignified (1 Tim 3:8)

5) Domestic Qualifications

a) Faithful to spouse (1 Tim 3:2, 3:12; Tit 1:6)
b) Manages own household well (if he can't manage his own household, how can he manage the household of God?) (1 Tim 3:4, 3:12)
c) Keeps children under control with all dignity (1 Tim 3:4)
d) Has children who believe (Tit 1:6…*note: this is not dealing with adult children who are no longer at home under their parents' authority*)

6) Maturity Qualification

a) Not a new believer (lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil) (1 Tim 3:7)

First Christian Church
Statement of Faith

The Bible
We believe that the Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is the Word of God given by divine inspiration and is inerrant in the original manuscripts, and therefore the unchanging, absolute authority in matters of Christian faith and practice, and it is true and reliable in regard to all matters which it addresses.

God
We believe that the one God is Spirit: omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, sovereign, and perfect in holiness, justice and love. He is eternally existent in three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and is the Creator, Sustainer, and providential Overseer of all things.

Jesus Christ
We believe the deity and humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ as the one and only Son of God, conceived of the Holy Spirit, and born of the virgin Mary. We believe in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

Holy Spirit
We believe the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Triune God. His work is to reprove or convict mankind of sin, to reveal God's righteousness and judgment, to regenerate those who repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and to indwell, teach, guide and help the believer.

Salvation
We believe since all men are sinners and guilty before God and are dead in trespasses and sin and therefore unable to save themselves that God has out of His infinite love and grace given His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to become the Savior of all who will repent of their sins and believe on Him.

The Church
We believe that the invisible and universal church is an organism composed of all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who have been called out from the world, separated from sin, and vitally united by faith to Christ, its believing Head and Sovereign Lord. We also believe that the visible and local church is an organized body of believers in Christ who are voluntarily joined together, and who meet at regular times for teaching in the Word, fellowship of the saints, observance of the ordinances, administration of discipline, exercise in prayer, and participation in public worship and evangelism.

The Last Things
We believe that the second coming of Christ is the hope of the church and will be personal, bodily, visible and redemptive. It is the source of encouragement and consolation, the motive for purification and holiness, and the inspiration for activity and service. We believe the believer was judged as a sinner at the cross of Christ and is passed out of death into life. As a child in the family of God, he is being judged and chastened during his lifetime, and as a servant his works will be judged for rewards at the judgment seat of Christ. The impenitent wicked will appear before God for judgment at the Great White Throne, and they will suffer eternally in the lake of fire together with Satan and his angels. After the Great White Throne Judgment and after all enemies of God are consigned to their place of eternal punishment, the present order of things will be dissolved and the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness, shall be created as the final state in which the righteous shall dwell forever.

Group Dynamics

1) Introduction: A Healthy Shepherd Group

   a) Five Components are central to a healthy shepherd group
      1. Worship—may be incorporated into small group by singing, praising Him for truths from His word, paraphrasing a Scripture portion, etc.
      2. Bible Study—receive the Word as God-breathed and authoritative; create a relational, inductive study that spurs each one to deepen his/her understanding and beliefs.
      3. Fellowship and Accountability—share lessons learned about God and how He is at work; devote time to hearing the genuine state of each other's heart.
      4. Prayer—far from a minor add-on, make group prayer a mainstay, lifting up one another and the world.
      5. Mission—to multiply joy, make small group a place for spreading; Try the "empty chair" prayer for growth, or pursue ministry toward those outside the group (the elderly, those with disabilities, the homeless, etc.)
   b) There are numerous models for incorporating these five elements into a shepherd group, depending on the time allotted and the level of relationship already present in the group.

New Group, 90 min	***Mature Group, 90 min***	***Mature Group, 120 min***
Icebreakers in pairs, 20 min	Worship, 10 min	Warm-up, 15 min
Group interaction, 25 min	Warm-up, 10 min	Bible Study, 40 min
Bible Study, 25 min	Bible Study, 40 min	Worship, 20 min
Sharing & Prayer, 20 min	Mission Update, 10 min	Mission prayer, 10 min
	Sharing & Prayer, 20 min	Sharing and prayer, 25 min
		Plan outreach event, 10 min

2) Fellowship and Accountability

   a) The essence of fellowship is sharing with others what God has shown you.
   b) Why is Genuine Sharing Hard?—It can be threatening to beheld accountable for spiritual life; determine together to pursue deep sharing.
   c) Accountability is not merely targeting one another's sins; it is even more tracking down evidences of grace in one another.
   d) The New Testament Pattern of Deepening Relationships—The "one another" passages in the Bible exhortus to have depth of relationship that can only happen by

the Spirit of Christ. Only those filled with the Holy Spirit can fulfill the commands to…

Know. Accept one another (Romans15:7).
Serve. Bear one another's burdens (Galatians6:2).
Teach the Bible to one another (Colossians3:16).
Submit to one another (Ephesians5:21).
Encourage. Honor one another (Romans12:10).
Build up onea nother (1 Thessalonians5:11).
Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians5:11).
Sharpen. Confess your sins to one another (James5:16).
Exhort one another (Hebrew 3:13).
Confront one another (Romans15:14).
Reconcile (continuous). Live in harmony with one another (Romans12:16).
Bear with one another (Ephesians4:2).
Worship (continuous). Pray for one another (James5:16).
Sing to one another (Ephesians5:19).

e) Questions to Ask in the Initial Stage of Group Life—To foster and initiate relationships in your small group, ask good questions.

Here are some questions for getting past the introductory level of group discussion, questions designed to bridge the trust level in the deeper questions listed above:

Questions about the past:

1. Tell about the neatest birthday present you ever received.
2. Share one of the happiest days of your life.
3. What is the best advice you ever received?
4. What can you identify as a "turning point" in your life?
5. Share a time when your feelings were hurt.
6. Share a time when you believe you were led by God.

Questions about the present:

1. How do you tune in to God?
2. How would you describe yourself to someone who doesn't know you?
3. Describe a typical day(or Tuesday, or Saturday, or Friday evening).
4. If you had to move and could only take three things with you, what would you take?
5. Give three words that describe how you feel right now.
6. What social problems are you particularly concerned about?

Questions about the future:

1. Describe your ideal house and how you would furnish it.
2. What would you do if someone willed you a million dollars?
3. What is something you think God wants you to do?
4. What spiritual goals are you reaching for? Why?
5. If you could do anything you want this time of year, what would it be?
6. What epitaph do you want on your tombstone?

f) Getting Personal—During your group meetings, don't be afraid to get personal. When conversation seems shallow, insert deeper questions.

You can lovingly, but directly, press issues home to people's hearts with questions like the ones above, or. . .

- How would what we are talking about affect you personally?
- Have you ever struggled with this issue personally?
- We are often abstract when discussing Scripture: how does this affect you daily?
- How has God been working in your life lately?
- Are there things you have been convicted about? How did the conviction come about? What steps have you taken to deal with those things?
- What have you heard in the sermons recently that have been particularly convicting or comforting?
- What areas of obedience have you been working on?
- Where have you recently experienced God's kindness and love in your life?

3) Agenda for a Shepherd Group Meeting

a) The Purpose of the Group Controls the Agenda—Truly transformational small groups must purpose to stimulate sanctification: the process of being freed from sin and made more like Christ in our actual lives.

b) A Typical Group Agenda

i) Opening Exercises and Worship—(approximately 30 min.)

(1) Review your small group vision and purpose

(2) Opening prayer

(3) Sing a couple songs or read a psalm for worship

(4) Introduce new people; use some kind of ice-breaker

ii) Bible Study—(40min.)

(1) The Bible is essential for life transformation; serious study is crucial.

(2) Include personal, specific application and prayerful response to the Scripture.

(3) The Bible study should not overwhelm the small group time for five reasons:

(a) Can result in being "informed beyond their obedience"

(b) People may reach "saturation point" in concentration on Bible

(c) Forces "make or break" pressure on Bible study

(d) Limits those who would consider shepherd leadership

(e) Will overwhelm prayer time and ability to practice "one another" commands

iii) Sharing—(15 min.)

(1) Ask your group, "What work of His power and grace does Christ want to do in my life right now?"

(2) Allow time for silence for the Holy Spirit to work.

iv) Mission-focused prayer—(15 min.)

(1) This concluding portion should aim to get people focused outside themselves and even the group.

(2) A good question to ask is "How does Christ want to use me to touch the hurts in the world this week?"

4) Overview of Group Dynamics

a) Size of Your Group—Five is an optimal number with which to start; if the number grows beyond about fifteen, the group dynamics deteriorate rapidly. Two smaller groups are more vital than one large group.

b) Room Set-Up-- A few simple adjustments will make your room welcoming, hospitable, and interactive:

1. The group should sit in a circle. Put chairs close together, but not in each other's lap. Every person should be able to see everyone else, and don't let anyone sit in a second row behind the others.
2. Have people all sit on the same level, not some on the floor and some in chairs. Choose a meeting room that will accommodate 12-15. When people have to start sitting on the floor it's time to multiply your group.
3. Watch where you sit, trying to be somewhat central so you can see everyone and communicate that you areaccessible to everyone in your whole group.
4. Make sure the room is well-lighted so that people can see each other and easily read their Bibles.
5. Serve the refreshments (if you have them) first so people can have something when they arrive while you are waiting for others to arrive. And don't let them become distractingly elaborate or expensive.
6. Anticipate distracting noises and eliminate them, e.g., turn off the telephone, radio, television, etc.
7. An occasional meal together is a great way to turn strangers into friends. Recruit others to help. Keep the agenda simple, aim to make it fun.

c) Using Initial Ice-Breakers-- A set of Quaker Questions has been used for many years to help groups get acquainted:

(1) Where were you living at age 7, and how many brothers and sisters were in your household?

(2) What were the winters like?

(3) What was the center of warmth in your life when you were 7 years old? (This can be a person, a place in the house, or a time of the year like Christmas.)

(4) When did God become more than just a name to you?

ii) Here's another set of questions to use in an on-going way after the group is past its get-acquainted stage:

(1) What was an important event in your life this past week? Take one minute to fill us in on the details.

(2) What is one of the better things that happened to you this week?

(3) What was a significant thing which happened to you this past week?

(4) Who has had the greatest influence on your life since we gathered last?

d) The Life Cycle of a Shepherd Group—Expect your group to go through five different stages, periods of familiarity and closeness which affect the group dynamics.

(1) **Acquaintance/Exploration/Forming/ "Birth"** (First 1-3meetings)—This is a time of exploration and tentativeness; good preparation and leadership are crucial. Much time is spent "telling our stories."

(2) **Conflict/Norming/Transition/ "Childhood"** (Second 2-6 meetings)—Differences in personality and expectations can cause conflict. Writing a covenant is crucial. As a leader, clarify group objectives; if some leave, try to guidet hem to a group that may suit them better.

(3) **Bonding/Kinning/Conforming/ "Teenage"** (Meetings 6-12)—Here people have committed to the group. Members should seek support from each other, not just leader. Ask elder for council and prayer; choose an Apprentice Leader.

(4) **Serving/Performing/Maturity/ "Adult"** (Meetings10-?)—The group is in full throttle here. Work to keep relationships deep and honest. Guard against meetings dominated by one person's problems. Maintain preparation and discipleship.

(5) **Multiplying/Termination/ "Birthing"** (Last 4 meetings)—Prepare your group for closing or multiplying. Resolve any "frayed edges," review where you are and have been, and see how the Apprentice Leader can step into leadership of his/her own group.

5) Vision: Developing Group Loyalty

a) Group Covenants and How to Make One—Covenants help build the dynamics of commitment, trust, and accountability.

b) In forming a group covenant, here are some suggested steps.

(1) Set aside an evening to discuss and pray about the covenant.
(2) Pray for God's leading in honesty, trust, and unity.
(3) Ask each group member to list expectations; share the lists.
(4) List activities and attitudes members have liked and disliked in other groups.
(5) Consider activities that will meet these goals and expectations.
(6) Make some specific decisions—be realistic yet soul-stretching.

Sample Small Group Covenant

1. The purpose(s) of our group is. . . . (use the back if necessary)
2. We will meet for_____weeks, after which we will evaluate our direction.
3. We will meet from _____to _____, and we will strive to start and end on time.
4. We will meet at_____(place).
5. The "serve" component of our group will have the following plans and parameters. . . (Consider going as a group one time inside the church and one time outside the church annually.)
6. The "learn" component (biblical curriculum) will be. . .
7. We will agree to the following primary values for our group:

Priority: While we are in the group, we will give the group meeting priority, and if we are unable to attend or are running late, we will call ahead.

Participation: Everyone is given the right to their own opinion, and "dumb questions" are encouraged and respected.

Confidentiality: Anything of a personal nature that is said in the meeting is never repeated outside the meeting.

Open chair: The group stays open to new people as long as they understand the ground rules. The guidelines for filling the open chair in our group will be. . .

Group birthing: At the appropriate time, this group will help start or birth other groups (after approximately one year).

Apprentice leader(s): We will strive to identify and develop the apprentices in our group.

Other:

8. For the agreed upon time, we will seek to serve one another by sharing some or all of the following roles and responsibilities: leader, apprentice(s), subgroup leaders, host/hostess, prayer coordinator, event planner, administrator, service project coordinator,etc.

_____/_____
_____/_____
_____/_____
_____/_____
_____/_____
Leader Apprentice

(Please sign and give a copy to your leader)