



# LEADERS' GUIDE

## HOW TO LEAD A CITY GROUP

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### INTRODUCTION MAKING DISCIPLES

#### Describing a disciple

A disciple is someone who is increasingly worshipping God the Father, being changed by the Holy Spirit, and obeying Jesus Christ in all of life, as part of the church family, and is helping others to do the same.

#### Crystal clear purpose

City Groups are not about the activity but about bringing people to maturity.

Our purpose is to be a family of disciples on mission. One way we can facilitate this as a church is through City Groups. City Groups give us an excellent opportunity to encourage, challenge and spur one another on whilst participating in a shared interest or purpose. Different City Groups may emphasise different aspects of family, discipleship and mission; all City Groups are aiming to make disciples. We must be purposeful about this – discipleship doesn't just happen, it happens because we want it to happen and we go about it intentionally.

Discipleship is a process.

Discipleship begins before we submit our lives to Jesus and continues throughout our lives. (Mission)

Discipleship is about transformation not just information.

Discipleship must touch every part of our lives.

Discipleship happens in the context of relationship. (Family)

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### OVERVIEW THREE SIMPLE STEPS

Every good story has a beginning, a middle and an end. These three simple steps will help you make the most of each phase of the story of your City Group.

#### 1. Plan

The success or failure of your group starts long before the first session. Though we can't guarantee that things will go according to plan we do know that good planning gives us the best possible chance to serve people

well and achieve our goals. It may be an oversimplification to say 'If you fail to plan, you plan to fail' but, as with most proverbs, there is a lot of truth in it. Your time and energy is valuable, as is that of all the people who will join your group, so be a good steward of it by taking time to plan. In this phase you'll outline your objectives for the group and nail down the details of what the group will look like, how they will be resourced, and what a "successful" outcome for the group will look like.

## **2. Execute**

To actually run the group you'll need a great attitude, some skill and the humility to learn from your experiences; running the group week by week is the most unpredictable part. Remember that the point of all City Groups is to make disciples so you'll need to get to know people and help them in their journey to maturity. In this phase you'll be reacting to live situations as the term progresses – are the group gelling well, are the objectives being achieved, how could you and your group members better serve one another?

## **3. Review**

Too often we skip this stage but it is critical that we don't. Unless we stop and take stock we may not learn the lessons of the past. All through the account of creation in Genesis we see that God pauses at the end of each day and looks back on all he has made; we need to do the same. In this phase you'll reflect on the term, assess whether objectives were achieved and leave your group members equipped to meet the new term of City Groups.

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# **1. PLAN**

## **1.1 Pray**

Prayer is an ongoing part of our everyday lives so, of course, it makes perfect sense to pray for the things we are involved with, including City Groups. When we are living prayerful and obedient lives we can be confident that God is leading us – and where better to be than where God is leading us? Pray for God's specific help in shaping your group and ask Him to give you hope and wisdom.

## **1.2 Define success**

Although the idea of success *is* a biblical one (Joshua 1:8) we might be more comfortable thinking in terms of fruitfulness. We need to be clear about what we are hoping to achieve because without this we won't know how to plan, how to use our resources or how to measure the fruitfulness of our efforts. This doesn't need to be complicated, in fact it needs to be simple. Try to be clear in your mind what you are aiming for and put it into writing (it may well include both a primary and secondary focus). Discuss this with your coach and keep referring to this mission statement throughout each step of the City Group, right through to the end of the review.

Example: "As we study the Bible together, I am aiming that the members of this City Group will love Jesus more as a result of what they've learnt about him." "My aim is that, as we knit socks, we will, with God's help, learn to instinctively depend on God in all things." "As we eat cake, I hope that group members will develop relationships with other Christians where they can be spurred on, and spur others on in maturing as a disciple of Christ."

## **1.3 Prepare your co-leader**

One of the great ways we can intentionally make disciples through City Groups is by carefully giving others opportunities to learn about leadership and get some on-the-job training and experience (apprenticeship). Try to identify and involve your co-leader as early as you can. Make sure you are both clear about what you are aiming for, how it will work and what your respective roles will be. Try to find ways to give away meaningful responsibility and make sure you give plenty of feedback, support and encouragement.

## **1.4 Prepare your sessions**

It's time to get practical and specific. Make sure you have planned all of the physical elements of your City Group. This would include the venue, times and dates, material you will be using, any specific delegation, communication, expectations, hospitality, etc.

## **1.5 Prepare your group members**

To give people the best chance of really participating in and enjoying the group they will need to be well prepared. You can do this by being clear in your communication with them. They will benefit from a sense of ownership if they are clear about what the group aims to achieve and can be praying and preparing themselves. They will also need to know what is expected of them. Obviously they will also need to know all the practical details and have done any preparation that might be needed (Do they need to read a specific

passage/book in advance? Do they need to find craft supplies/a project they want to do? Do they need to make sure their bike is in working order?)

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## **2. EXECUTE**

### **2.1 Pray**

Once you know who is in your group you can begin to pray for them regularly and by name. Ask God to help you to love the people you lead and take time to talk to God about them individually. You might be tempted to spend all your time in prayer asking God to make you a good leader but, whilst this is important, try to make sure you are also praying for others.

### **2.2 Measure success**

With constant reference to your mission statement you should be able to see how effective your group is being and make adjustments as you go through the process. There may be expectations you need to adjust or elements you need to introduce. Is everybody clear about the objectives? You could simply ask “Are we achieving what we aimed to achieve?” If so: great! If not: think about what changes might need to be made. Have a chat with your coach about what the group sessions have been like so far; do they have any useful input for you?

### **2.3 Support your co-leader**

How is your relationship with your co-leader? Are there things you appreciate about them that you can encourage them in? Are there things they are doing well that you could encourage them to stretch themselves to do even better? Are there things you feel would be better handled differently – can you talk to them about these and agree together how to move forward?

### **2.4 Manage your sessions**

Is the venue working for the group? What changes could be made in order to enable it to better meet the group’s needs? Do you need to find more study material? Plan more cycling routes? Do some research so you are better equipped to help your group members?

### **2.5 Care for your group members**

Are the group getting well? Is anyone being left out? Are there any awkward relationships that would benefit from some input? Is there anyone who hasn’t been able to attend – do you know why? Is there anyone who would benefit from a loving and challenging frank (but gentle?) conversation? Are there any life circumstances your group members are experiencing that you feel would benefit from referral to the Pastoral Team?

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## **3. REVIEW**

### **3.1 Pray**

Thank God for all that has happened. Make a list of things you are grateful for and really mark the moment by giving God praise for answered prayer. Prayer is a conversation so take time to listen as well as speak. David asked God to ‘search’ him and ‘know’ him and it’s helpful to ask God to speak to us about ourselves sometimes. Finally, pray for your group – by now you’ll know them better and can thank God for them and ask him to lead them and provide for them more knowledgeably.

### **3.2 Assess your success**

Refer to your Mission Statement – what fruit have you seen? What fruit did you hope to see but didn’t? What unexpected fruit has been borne? If you had another go, what would you do differently? Does your coach have any suggestions/wisdom to impart?

### **3.3 Encourage your co-leader**

Discuss with your co-leader how they feel this term has gone. What did they enjoy? What did they feel went well/could have been done differently? What do you feel they did well? Try and give them several things you appreciated that they brought to the group and one area in which you feel they could develop their skills in the future.

### **3.4 Review your sessions**

Did the venue work well for the group? If you were studying together, was the material at a suitable level for the group members to understand and benefit from? Were there any difficulties with what the group

members were asked to do that could have been foreseen and/or handled differently? Did people like the biscuits?

### **3.5 Transition your group members**

Have you talked to your group members about what they will be involved in next term? If you're continuing with your group, how will you develop this for next term? If you/they want to do something different next term, have they thought about what that might be? What could they do next term which will help them to grow in maturity? (i.e. if they lack knowledge of scripture, could you feed them into a Bible Study based group? If they would benefit from friendship with people with similar/different interests, could you point them in the direction of a social group with a suitable focus?)

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## **WHAT'S NEXT?**

### **Celebrate!**

Congratulations! You have planned, executed and reviewed a term of leading a City Group. Hopefully you and your group members now worship God the Father more than you did before, obey Jesus Christ more than you did before and have been (and are still being) changed by the Holy Spirit, in all of life; and you have done this together.

There will be things you feel went well – recognise and celebrate these. There will be things you wish had gone better – learn from these and move on.

And rest. ●