

## Leading small groups

*Acts 2:42, 46-47 – And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

We attend church services weekly, to worship God, meet our fellow Christians, to function as the Body of Christ, to listen to a sermon, to pray, to sing.

So why do we have small groups besides this?

1. To be able to get to know each other better as Christians, in this small group.
2. To become more close and more able to care for one another.
3. To study the Bible together, and to have more opportunity to share this with each other, talking and asking questions.
4. To learn from each other and learn to apply the Bible better in our own lives.
5. To have more time to pray together.
6. To worship together, in a way in which the members of the small group can have more input than is often possible in church services.
7. To become active together, for example in a service project or evangelism.
8. To invite people who still feel a barrier to attend a church service, but are interested in the Christian faith, who for example will respond to an invitation for the alpha course.
9. To build and encourage one another in discipleship.

As you can see, small groups may be started for several reasons. A congregation may have different kinds of small groups. This depends on the needs, possibilities and spiritual gifts of the members.

## **How do we lead a small group?**

The skills you need are different for each kind of small group. For example, if the small group sings in worship, or comes together for prayer, you obviously need different skills. The same applies for a small group for Bible study or evangelism.

However there also are general skills and principles important for leading a small group:

1. Cordiality and hospitality towards all members.
2. Promoting mutual acceptance, respect and the development of relationships.
3. Being able to take charge, to intervene when necessary, to give all members to opportunity to participate.
4. Dealing with conflict and solving it when it occurs.
5. Being able to help each member to develop; being focused on the growth of all members.
6. Being able to put yourself aside in all of this, when this is necessary.
7. Being able to deal with emotions in other people; sadness, frustration, stress, insecurity, anger, fear etcetera.

Every able person who leads a small group, will do so in a slightly different way, as fits the character and gifts of that person. This is fine.

It may happen, that you are fit as a small group leader, but lack some of the skills that are needed in your small group, and therefore make use of the gifts and talents of other small group members.

For example:

- The meeting is not in your home, but in the home of one of the members.
- One of the members plays the instrument to accompany worship.
- One of the members provides the service or evangelism project.
- You are not giving all Bible studies yourself, but alternate with members.

This may enhance the group's functioning, because everybody's contribution is one of the core values of a small group.

Even if some skills are lacking in the group, this doesn't have to be a reason to abstain from having small groups. All kinds of solutions may be thought of. For example:

- No one in the group is able to come up with a Bible study made by himself, therefore the group buys small group studies, ready to be used.
- Nobody plays an instrument, therefore the group sings along with cd's .
- Nobody knows how to do evangelism, therefore as a group you join an evangelism project that is already functioning.

In short, you can be creative as far as content, structure and materials in your small group are concerned.

### **How often?**

Small groups may meet weekly, two weekly, or even once a month. This depends on the possibilities and situation of all members.

You may want to meet for half an hour, an hour, or two hours, it depends on the activity you're planning and what fits best with the members.

You can share a meal together, or not. You can include care for babies and little children in your small group, or try to find a quiet moment, when they are sleeping or otherwise taken care for.

As long as your choices are geared toward reaching the goals of your small group in the best way possible, each choice is fine.

### **Put it into practice**

Today we will experiment with leading a small group.

We will all sit in small groups of four persons, and in every group one will be the leader.

You may choose a prayer meeting or a bible study meeting.

We have material for the bible study available for you.

The prayer groups may first want to take time to talk with each other, to ask how everybody is doing, and to collect prayer requests and subjects to pray about, and then start praying together.

We will take about half an hour for these small groups.

The purpose of this activity, is that the leader will practice the following:

- Make sure everybody in your group feels at ease
- Give all group members the opportunity to join in
- Bring appreciation and respect among the group members
- Give opportunity for the group members to get to know each other better, and to care for one another

### **Evaluation:**

- What was the experience like?
- How did you like it to lead?
- What was standing out for you?

### **Further development?**

1. Does your congregation have small groups?
2. What kind of small group attracts you most?
3. Are you interested in becoming a small group leader? Talk with your course leader; there are many materials available, and possibilities to help you become a good small group leader.