

Leader's Notes

1. We're providing this material to you to remove some of the stress and frustration of developing a plan to lead a specific group study. It isn't meant to replace your individual preparation to lead. Our hope is that you would use it as a guide to your engagement with the text and the Holy Spirit and allow Him to lead you as you help your study's participants to have their own relevant encounter with scripture and the Holy Spirit.
2. This plan isn't meant to constrain you to lead in any specific way. **Please do modify it to better meet the needs of your group and to honor your gifting and authentic style.** For example, when and how you pray and share prayer needs should be in a rhythm that is good for your group as long as you are praying as a group. For another, who reads and how scripture is read should fit your group and its needs as long as it is read somehow.
3. **Be authentic.** If you find yourself saying "They are asking" as in, 'I didn't write this question and I don't really understand why it is being asked.' Don't ask it. Ask something else. It is okay not to understand everything. No one understands everything. If you don't believe in what you're saying, why should anyone else believe it? One way to turn this into a positive is to admit to the group that you are struggling with figuring out a particular bit and allow someone else to contribute their God-given wisdom.
4. Some questions, especially earlier in the study, aren't meant to be a mile deep or transformative. These questions are intended to prompt the participants to notice what is there. They give the participants a way to begin to care about the specific words on the page and to begin to discuss the relevance of the scripture to their needs.
5. Portions of the plan in quotes are meant to be spoken out loud to the group as in, "Who's buried in Grant's Tomb?" You don't have to repeat the question or statement exactly as it appears. Restate it in a way that feels comfortable and natural for you.
6. Portions of the plan in *italics* are meant to be notes to you that you can use as prompts in aiding group discussion and aren't intended to be read verbatim to the group. They may not be the definitive answer but should be a good possible answer. As part of your preparation, please add to and edit the notes to fit where you intend to lead the discussion.
7. A **Follow up question** helps participants open up a little more and look a little deeper and is meant to be asked after there has been some discussion of the prior question.
8. The last page is the participant handout.
9. Please remember that our focus, purpose and practice is to **Love God, Love Others and Make Disciples.**

Loving and Caring for Others

- 1) Scripture: Acts 2:42-47; 1 Peter 4:10; 1 Corinthians 9:19; Ephesians 4:11-14
- 2) Objective: After studying the listed scripture and participating in the discussion, each person should be able to identify where God might be calling him or her to use their unique gifting and calling to serve the other members of their C-Group family.
- 3) Resources: Millcreek Community Church Membership Class handbook.
- 4) Preparation:
 - A. Pray for guidance
 - B. Review Leader's Notes and read entire lesson plan
- 5) Prayer requests & Open in prayer
- 6) Intro:
 - A. "Last time I asked you describe how these three parts of our purpose, Love God, Love Others and Make Disciples, look in your everyday life. Did visualizing that make you think about any changes you'd like to make?" *If you closed last time's study with a different question or application, substitute your closing for this one.*
 - B. "This week we will study how the church, at its very earliest stage, lived, served and worshipped together. We'll also examine how our Community Groups fit this early model and how our purpose to 'Love God, Love Others and Make Disciples' is practiced by our groups. We'll talk about how COVID has affected our need for community and how we can change what we do to keep on fulfilling our purpose.
 - C. When we are done, each of us should be able to identify where God might be calling us to use our unique gifting and calling to serve the other members of our C-Group family."
- 7) The study
 - A. Ask for a volunteer to read Acts 2:42-47
 - B. Ask everyone to complete question 1 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.
 - i) "There is a lot going on in these verses. Look them over and write down the three things the church was doing that are most significant to you and identify the need each one was meeting."
 - (1) *devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching* (Growth)
 - (2) *and to the fellowship,* (Relationships)
 - (3) *to the breaking of bread* (Confession and Remembering)

(4) *and to prayer.*

(Communication with God)

(5) *This list isn't exhaustive, and it is fine to identify the need as something else. We're seeking to connect what the early church did, and what we all need as people of God.*

C. **Follow up question** "What outcomes do you find in this passage that resulted from how this earliest church was living their faith and loving one another?"

i) Filled with awe, needs met, enjoying favor, daily growth, meeting needs

D. **Another Follow up question** "Of all these practices of the early church, which do you see practiced at MCC?"

i) *Encourage your group members to see that what we try to do in our Community Groups is substantially the same as what the early church did. Please feel free to discuss how we succeed at that and where we need to improve.*

E. Ask everyone to complete question 2 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.

i) "How has COVID changed your perspective on your C-Group and specifically, how has it changed how you participate in it?"

(1) *I'm not sure its important, it doesn't feel as rewarding, I crave the contact because I have so little.*

(2) *Masks, social distancing, Zoom meetings, periods of not meeting*

(3) *Everyone knows that bad things have happened. Make a space to acknowledge them and set the stage for God making them better, even if better is just a change in how we view events.*

F. **Follow-up Question** "What good would you like to come from your C-Group or D-group even if you have to be creative and flexible to accomplish that good?"

i) *I hope this is a good kind of free-for-all for your group. Please ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to dream better things for your group and trust Him to lead you in their fulfillment.*

G. Ask everyone to complete question 3 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.

i) "The same purpose that drives our church- Love God, Love Others, Make Disciples- drives our Community Groups and Discipleship groups. Look at the scripture passages listed and write down what you do in your C or D- Group that the early church did. Feel free to add what you see in scripture that you don't currently practice but would like to explore.

(1) Love God Together in Community- Acts 2:42-47

(a) *Teaching, fellowship, eating together, prayer, helping each other*

(2) Love Others in the Community- 1 Peter 4:10 & 1 Corinthians 9:19

(a) *Each person using their gifts to serve each other*

(3) Make Disciples by equipping each other to reach the community- Ephesians 4:11-14” *Ideally, these answers come from the participants. Whether they get them from the study, the Sunday sermon or elsewhere, the best thing that can happen here is they are verbalized by the participants. If they struggle to answer...*

(a) *Exploring and developing each person’s spiritual gifts towards maturity*

H. Ask everyone to complete question 4 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.

i) “You’ve looked at a good many aspects of group life tonight. Of all of them, which seems to you like it would be most rewarding to help make happen. Please don’t let how you see yourself limit what you think you can do. If you can do it without God, you need to dream a little bigger. See yourself through God’s eyes and write down what it would look like for you, with God’s gifting and your group’s help, to make that thing happen.”

(1) *This is big, dreamy stuff. Please help your group members connect where they feel called to serve with their place within your C or D-Group family.*

(2) *Teaching, hosting, prayer, communication, cooking, worship, setting up chairs, washing dishes, loving on people to name a few*

8) Summary:

A. Encourage your group members to apply the ideas or principles they developed from question 4. Plan on asking them next week about the results.

B. Close in prayer

C-Groups

Acts 2:42-47

1) There is a lot going on in these verses. Look them over and write down the three things the church was doing that are most significant to you and identify the need each one was meeting.

2) How has COVID changed your perspective on your C-Group and specifically, how has it changed how you participate in it?

3) The same purpose that drives our church- Love God, Love Others, Make Disciples- drives our Community Groups. Look at the scripture passages listed and write down the things you do in your C-Group that the early church did to fulfill the purpose listed. Feel free to add the things that you see in scripture that you don't currently practice but would like to explore.

Acts 2:42-47- Love God Together in Community

1 Peter 4:10 & 1 Corinthians 9:19- Love Others in the Community

Ephesians 4:11-14- Make Disciples by equipping each other to reach the community

4) You've looked at a good many aspects of group life tonight. Of all of them, which seems to you like it would be most rewarding to help make happen. Please don't let how you see yourself limit what you think you can do. If you can do it without God, you need to dream a little bigger. See yourself through God's eyes and write down what it would look like for you, with God's gifting and your group's help, to make that thing happen.

For next time... Read 2 Timothy 2:1-2