

# **MAXIMIZE YOUR LEADERSHIP**

**Session for**

# **Group Leaders**

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**Colonial Presbyterian Church**

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# LIFE Groups!

Jesus said,

**“I have come that they may have LIFE,  
and have it in its fullest!” John 10:10**

WHY Join a LIFE Group?!  
We are designed for Community!

- ❖ Communion with God, and community with others  
(Matthew 22:37-40)



- ❖ We fulfill the Great Commission by
  - Sharing life together
  - Studying God's Word together
  - Praying together
  - Serving together



What does that look like?! A LIFE group is growing. People are being *transformed*! “It is in authentic community that people find real hope in the midst of pain, loss, loneliness, depression, and sin in their lives. God gave us the gift of community to meet our needs. The real need of our culture is to *meaningfully connect* with a few other people. When we do, we are able to change, to grow, and to heal” (Michael Mack). As a result, the group does not just meet, it is actively involved in something outside itself – it has a heartbeat, a mission and a purpose! It reaches out to those beyond themselves to invite others on the sanctification journey, and reaches out to serve others in the name of Christ!

## **WHY DO WE HAVE LIFE GROUPS AT COLONIAL?!**

In early 2007, the Pastors and Session of Colonial voted to become a church OF small groups, not a church that has small groups. Why and what's the difference?

The Church is God's chosen vehicle for the operation of His love and grace in the earth. The power and work of the Holy Spirit through a dynamic church is how God gets things done - it's how He builds His kingdom. Though the world does not see or know it yet, the Church has what the world is looking for.

How do we get that message out? Scripture and church history have taught us that the most effective model for a dynamic church body, which consistently administers the love of God, comes in the form of small groups that will pray, share, study and serve together – all four components. As a result, these groups are, in many ways, the “life” of the church, and that is why we have decided to call this four-component model LIFE Groups. Colonial is a big place, and on two campuses, so if we are serious about making an impact in our community as a truly dynamic force of Gods love, power and grace, we have to take seriously the model of Church that the scripture presents.

## **WE CELEBRATE OUR GROUP LEADERS AT COLONIAL?!**

By choosing to become Group Leader, whether in LIFE Groups, Beth Moore studies, CPW circles, Men's Fraternity, Mornings for Moms, Alpha, and so many others, you are joining a tradition that includes such paragons of the faith as:

- Peter
- Timothy
- Aquila and Priscilla
- Paul
- Titus
- Modern day pastors Yongi Cho and César Castellanos ...and many, many others from around the world!

Being a part of a small group is the most efficient way to reach those who are outside of the faith. By being a group leader, you are about to embark on an adventure that can literally change the face of our community. As you live out the teachings of Jesus to make disciples of all nations reach with your friends, relatives, acquaintances, co-workers, and neighbors, you will experience real world transformations.

In the Beginning God ... And now you join the work God began at the creation of the world: to be a partner in redeeming the hearts, minds, and souls of those for whom Jesus died to redeem. It is people like you who have always made a difference. Never let anyone say that a small group can't change the world ... Jesus started with twelve... and groups have continued to impact the world like nothing else has. Are you ready to “give it away”? That is where Colonial is going, and I hope you'll go there with us!

- Jan Neisess, Associate Director of Connection and Care  
and Coordinator of the LIFE Groups

# God's Purposes for Small Groups

**“A church that is changing lives is organized around small groups, where people can find friendship, be mentored in the faith, understand and discuss the Word, identify and use their spiritual gifts in service, and provide care for one another.” - Bill Donahue**

## Why?

1. **CARE:** A church's ability to provide care and a personal touch is often lost as it grows, therefore, the care needs to come from all members, not just the pastors or other staff of the church. With small groups, someone is in charge of caring for 6-12 people, and each person knows that not only is someone there for them, but an entire group!
2. **LEADERSHIP:** Small group ministry at a church thrives on the ability to identify and develop qualified leaders to shepherd little flocks of believers, who then reach out to the strays who need Christ. It works best when each group has an apprentice leader who is trained by the leader, who can then go out and develop another group.
3. **MULTIPLICATION:** The kingdom of God advances one life at a time, beginning with the command: “Go and make disciples”. Keeping open places to welcome new people, and sending others on to share the values and excitement of the group experience. One group, over time, developing leaders and multiplying groups has the potential to reach hundreds of people over a few years time.
4. **SHEPHERDING THE LITTLE FLOCK:** The best discipleship is group discipleship. Jesus practiced it, spending much of His time with no fewer than three of the twelve. Group learning has distinct advantages in that all learn from the wisdom and experience of many people. We act like the body of Christ as we grow together in the knowledge and application of God's Word, as well as in bearing one another's burdens.

**Facilitate: give everyone a role.** Don't try to do everything yourself because you will spoil your people and burn yourself out. Among the tasks you can delegate are: making calls to potential new people, arranging for childcare, food coordination, in-home hosting, prayer requests, sending e-mails, and planning outside group events. The key is to get everyone involved in some way. If you do this, your people will begin to call the group, “my group” or “our group” instead of “the group.” When that happens it means they have taken ownership of the group

- The goal of small groups is spiritual growth: to grow in our love for God and one another.
- Small groups are God's delivery system of care – He uses all of us!
- The most strategic person in the life-change process of the church is the small group leader.
- Groups must expand and multiply so that eventually every believer can be connected to others.
- Effective ministry happens in an atmosphere of prayer and celebration – together!

# The Five Habits of Life-Changing Groups

The five habits that create a group where spiritual growth and transformation occurs are:

## CARE

- ✓ Being “for” each other
- ✓ Encouraging each other
- ✓ Coming alongside one another

## SAFETY

- ✓ Having a “come as you are” culture
- ✓ Feeling safe enough to be yourself
- ✓ Accepting each other unconditionally, confidentially

## AUTHENTICITY

- ✓ Being “real” with each other
- ✓ Taking relational risks with one another

## GROWTH

- ✓ Hebrews 10:24 – spurring one another on
- ✓ Pushing each other to take growth steps
- ✓ Naming the areas where growth needs to happen

## HELP

- ✓ Providing resources others may need
- ✓ Can be practical: helping move, filing tax returns, etc.
- ✓ It's also about asking for help when it's needed

### Confidentiality

“What is said in the group stays in the group” is the most important rule of every group because you will not see life change without trust.

No one will talk about the tough issues of life unless they are sure what they said remains in the group.

Discuss this rule on day one and often after that. Every time a new person comes to the group it should be talked about again.

## Setting the Ground Rules

**Key: Ground rules are rules agreed upon by all members of the group, that ensures that the group process works.**

Ground rules provide the “guard rails” for a group

- Clear expectations are essential for a good outcome
- Ground rules ensure that the five healthy habits flourish in the group

The role of the leader

- Responsible for making sure the ground rules work
- Stewards the process and purpose of the group

Examples of ground rules held by most groups:

- Begin and end on time
- Attend the meetings
- Call when you can't come
- Appoint a timekeeper
- The kind of food and beverage served (dietary needs, appetizer v. dinner food, etc.)
- Participation from everyone
- No interrupting or carrying on separate conversations
- Confidentiality/safety (even with e-mails!)
- Bring up issues or dissatisfaction right away
- Set up how one leaves the group

# What is Coming Up for You as Group Leader at Colonial!

## 1. **GroupLink: Sunday, February 8<sup>th</sup>**

**At Wornall it is held from 9:45 – 10:45 am in the Terrace Room**

**At Quivira is it held from 11:00 am – 12 noon in the Prayer Room**

### **What is GroupLink?**

It is one-hour mix and mingle event where people come to connect with others in their same stage of life and area of town to form community groups. This allows us to connect large numbers of people in a short period of time.

### **What is Your Role?**

Group leaders

- a. If forming a new group – sign up to come!
- b. If there is room in your group to add one, two or even more, sign up to come. Encourage your group members to come with you!
- c. If we get more people than we have leaders, you can facilitate a discussion to help get the group started, and assure them that we will seek to get a group leader for them.

**YOU can also volunteer to: (Use the bottom of the Leader Info Sheet to sign up)**

1. Plan the event (food, decorations...)
2. Help set up for the event one hour before the time it begins, clean up after it
3. Greet people, keep refreshments stocked...

## 2. **“Taste and See” during Lent, week of March 1 through week of April 12**

For those who want to experience a group just for a season of 6-8 weeks, we encourage them to come to GroupLink and then join a new or existing group. We are including the opportunity to get involved in Alpha which begins March 4.

## 3. **The development of coaches**

If you are interested in supporting and encouraging group leaders, please contact me to get started in the training process. For more information about what it means to be a coach, go to [www.colonialkc.org/LGinformation](http://www.colonialkc.org/LGinformation). If interested in having a friend and partner in ministry to journey with you as a leader, please note it on your Leader Info Sheet

## 4. **Growth and multiplication of leaders and groups**

1. Invite NEW people to Colonial into groups!
2. Reach out to neighbors, friends, co-workers... start new LIFE groups at work or home!
3. Development of LIFE Lines (support groups). LIFE Lines are
  - a. Griefshare, led by Joan George on Wednesday evenings, offered throughout the year
  - b. There are groups currently meeting that are associated with Abounding Love and Care n' Club ministries.
  - c. We are looking at starting Divorce Recovery, Celebrate Recovery, and other support groups as well. In the meantime, we are working with other ministry groups in the metro area to provide support group care for our members who are asking for it.

## 5. **The Leadership Huddle**

**March 17 at Wornall – Rm 302 7-9 pm or March 19 at Quivira – Rm 119 7-9 pm**

From your evaluations of our leadership training times together, it is often noted that leaders would like to spend more time with other leaders – as iron sharpens iron! This year, we want to offer this opportunity several times. Please come to one or both of the times above.

## **Available Online for Leaders at [www.colonialkc.org/LGresources](http://www.colonialkc.org/LGresources)**

(or click on LIFE Groups, then choose on right hand column "resources for groups and group leaders")

### **Resources**

- "Year of the Bible" resources (internet links to online commentaries, dictionaries, bible study tools...)
- Find a new Bible study resource for purchase
- Information sheet on the Group Study resources Colonial owns that you can check out for your group
- A list of service opportunities for your group to be involved in
- Information to find out more about becoming a LIFE Group Leader or Coach
- Update your LIFE group information – membership changes, meeting time changes, etc.

### **Leadership Resources:**

- Resources from *Maximize Your Leadership* will be posted here (not posted yet)
- Videos to equip you as a small group leader (several 3-10 minute videos from small group experts talking about how to handle various group dynamics to increasing your own leadership skills. These videos are rotated about once a quarter.)
- Training Session Packet (August 2008 material) – pick up all the materials in case you missed it!  
Includes Articles: *God's Purpose for Small Groups*, *The Five Habits of Life-Changing Small Groups*, *Setting the Ground Rules*, *When Groups Get Messy: Confrontation and Conflict Resolution*
- Sharing Your Story – encourage authentic community through sharing the story of lives
- The Big Picture on Small Groups
- Prayer Resource Packet 1
- Prayer Resource Packet 2
- Dealing with Difficult Members
- Training Session Packet (January 2008 material) – pick up all the materials in case you missed it!  
Includes Articles: *Telling Your Story*, *How to Respond to Someone Who is Hurting* and articles included in the August 2008 packet
- How to Have a Great LIFE Group! (Fall 2007 material) – pick up all the materials in case you missed it!  
Includes Articles: *How to Begin a Great LIFE Group* and *Guidelines for LIFE Group Leadership*
- Ice Breaker activities to cultivate community

# Thriving as a Small Group Leader

## VIDEO TRAINING SESSION by RUSS ROBINSON

Some small group leaders thrive, leaping from adventure to adventure. Others are barely hanging on. The difference between enjoying and enduring has to do with calling.

Learn how to embrace your leadership position by living out your calling in response to each person, every meeting, and every opportunity that presents itself.



Russ Robinson has held a variety of ministry roles in the past several years. Russ served on the Willow Creek Community Church staff beginning in 1995, first as Director of Small Groups, and then as Executive Director of Ministries and Small Groups. Prior to his staff role, he also served as an Elder for four years. From 2002-2004 he was also Senior Pastor at Meadowbrook Church in North Haledon, N.J. As Director of Ministries and Small Groups for Willow Creek in South Barrington, I.L., he championed much of the transition to Willow becoming a "church of small groups." That meant connecting over 18,000 people into 2,700 small groups, where he led over 200 staff and 4,000 volunteer leaders.

Russ is the co-author (with Bill Donahue) of *Building a Church of Small Groups*, *The Seven Deadly Sins of Small Group Ministry* and *Walking the Small Group Tightrope* which is highly recommended by Jan Neisess for every small group leader to read!

# How to Thrive as a Small Group Leader

By Russ Robinson

Thrive: to prosper, succeed, bloom, flourish...

## What is my job?

"You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you are going because  
\_\_\_\_\_." - Yogi Berra

Three thoughts:

What Jesus did...

What Jesus \_\_\_\_\_...

What Jesus is doing...

What Jesus did...

Mark 3:14 "He called to himself those he wanted, that he might *be with* them and that he might *send them out*..."

Two key things he did: 1) be with, 2) send out

Your presence is the key variable for any group!

What Jesus promised...

Matthew 28:19-20 "Therefore go and make disciples... and surely *I am with you always*..."

Two primary truths: 1) We are doing what he asked, 2) He is always with us as we do

What Jesus is doing...

Matthew 18:20 "For where two or three come together in my name, *there am I with them*."

Jesus is with us in every meeting and every interaction.

What is my job? \_\_\_\_\_

"Eighty percent of success is showing up." - Woody Allen

## How to thrive in your job!

To avoid the meeting to meeting experience, and allow spiritual transformation to take place, requires proper preparation.

1. To prepare, ask yourself the four “H” ways in order to “be with” your group.

**Head:** what do I want my group to \_\_\_\_\_?

**Heart:** what do I want my group to \_\_\_\_\_?

**Hands:** what do I want my group to \_\_\_\_\_?

**Homework:** what do I want my group to \_\_\_\_\_?

Example - If doing a spiritual gifts study...

Head: I want my group to know the spiritual gifts described in the Bible.

Heart: I want my group to feel how treasured their uniqueness is.

Hands: I want my group to take a spiritual gifts inventory test.

Homework: I want my group to plan to use their gift this week.

Example – Activity for putting on the full armor of God

### Assignment:

Choose one of the following and plan your groups Head, Heart, Hands and Homework in the space below:

- 1) The Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9-14)
- 2) The Love Chapter (1 Cor. 13)
- 3) Psalm 23

## Prepare Good Questions that Lead to Discussions

Two features of the good question:

1. Personal (introspective)
2. Interactive (group-based)

When your questions are both, you will cause depth, spiritual growth and action in your group.

John 3:16... “for God so loved...”

Examples of better questions:

- P: Where were you when you realized God loved you?
- P: When has God’s love felt most real to you?
- I: What are the misconceptions people have about God that cause them to miss His love?
- I: How do people best understand God as a lover and not a judge?

1 Corinthians 10:13 “There is no temptation you have experienced that is not common to everyone. But God is faithful. He will provide a way of escape, so you may be able to bear it.”

Interactive question:

*What are the biggest cultural temptations?*

*How is a last exit before a toll booth similar to what God offers to us?*

*Brainstorm ways to escape typical temptation*

Personal question:

*What escape routes have you tried?*

*Have you felt trapped by a temptation, like there is no way of escape?*

## Evaluate: How did the meeting go? (or Where did Jesus show up?)

What worked well?

What could be improved?

What should be celebrated?

What needs follow-up between meetings?

## Make Smart Investments in People

Jesus' pattern:

The 72 – with whom do you \_\_\_\_\_?

The 12 – with whom you are \_\_\_\_\_?

The 3 – with whom you \_\_\_\_\_?

You have a limited time and investment for each person in your group. Don't just pay attention to the squeaky wheel. Pay attention to those who will make a difference as well!  
Are you properly invested in each person according to their traits in your group?

The "case study" method of learning – how did Jesus invest in each of his disciples?  
Draw out the principles that apply. And as with Jesus, you will lose people along the way.

Case Study: How Jesus invested in Peter:

Peter: high energy, potential, and frustration group member / big ideas but poor follow through / wonders if Peter will ever get it – but when he does, look out!

What to do with Peter? 2x4 leadership – knock him over the head! Jesus confronted

Peter because he could take it.

Who is the Peter in your group?

Case Study: How Jesus invested in James

James: (we look outside the Bible for more information) was the first one executed from among the Apostles / the person with the most hidden potential

What to do with James? Put him in "OJT Training"

Who is your James?

Case Study: How Jesus invested in John

John: visionary, artistic, spiritual, tender / the compassion, faithfulness, they will give you the love you need / the encouragers, shepherds, "don't forget" people

What do you do with a John? Lean into them, personally

Who is your John?

Invest in apprenticing... name the people who are in your inner circle:

Case Study: How Jesus invested in Thomas

Thomas: the cynic, questions everything, even you and your qualifications

What do you do with Thomas? Be patient... the light bulb will come on!

Who is your Thomas?

Case Study: How Jesus invested in Judas

Judas: The one you will lose / who will stab you in the back and break your heart / is the kind of one that Satan invades in the community because they appear to be good

What do you do with Judas? Be truthful and accepting of them... Jesus washed his feet

Who is your Judas?

## **Leverage Time between Meetings**

Ideas: Call, e-mail, send a note card, text, sit together at church, do activities and errands together, share meals together, help out one another, or use other digital discipleship “connections” such as FaceBook, twitter, blog... Do what comes naturally to you and them.

## **Final Thoughts**

YOU are not a church volunteer doing a tour of duty.

Small groups are a ministry, and a part of your lifestyle –  
God is using your life to impact others – eternally.

2 Timothy 2:2

“You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.”

**In order to thrive as a leader, use these tools and have a multiplying mindset – a 2 Timothy 2:2 perspective: have a baton in the hand, handing it to another how who will hand the baton to another, and leave an eternal legacy!**

**The only thing that goes from here, earth to heaven: people. Investing in people is what matters!**

**Take a risk and invest!**

# Walking the Small Group Tightrope: Meeting the Challenges Every Group Faces

By Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson

Zondervan Publishing/Willow Creek © 2003

Leading a small group is more about art than painting by the numbers. Just as there are essentials to know, there are not automatic formulas to make a group a success. It is the group leader's ability to master the art of managing the dynamic tensions that consistently exist in every group in order to enter into life-transforming, life-giving small group.

This book looks at the six areas in which group leaders must balance in order to have the kind of group, community and friendship that God wants for us.

<b>The Six Challenges</b>	<b>The Six Tensions</b>
The Learning Challenge	Truth balanced with Life
The Development Challenge	Care balanced with Discipleship
The Relational Challenge	Friendship balanced with Accountability
The Reconciliation Challenge	Kindness balanced with Confrontation
The Impact Challenge	Task balanced with People
The Connection Challenge	Openness balanced with Intimacy

For this leadership session, we will focus on the first challenge: **Balancing Truth with Life**

**What is the balance in your group between Bible study and the sharing of life? How much should a group focus on biblical content? How much time should a group spend on helping members with personal issues? Obviously, both are important, the challenge is to avoid drifting too far toward one or the other.** What follows is a summary of the information contained in the book.

## Truth

As God's people, we are committed to the truth: "Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heaven," (Psalm 119:89) and God's promise in Isaiah, "So is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11). These verses make it clear that God's truth is central to community.

An emphasis on truth apart from life will turn you into a Pharisee. A life without truth turns you into a person without a foundation, "blown here and there by every wind of teaching" (Eph. 4:14).

Sadly, many small groups, especially ones termed "Bible studies" default to becoming a "truth group," which really means a group focused on doctrine, right and wrong answers, fill in the blanks, and the accumulation of information. Members value those who know the most. It is in these groups that people become preoccupied with finishing the lesson. They believe the more you know, the more raw material the Spirit will have to work with to change your heart. There is some truth in that, but a half truth. God wants a heart to work with, or truth has no effect. In response to the Pharisees, Jesus said, "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me" (Matthew 15:8). Unfortunately, some small group study materials reinforce this mind-set by asking questions that require answers instead of prompting discussions.

Truth *will* set you free, but not all truth, just applied truth. Truth matters when it moves from the head to the heart, then out to the hands and the feet.

## Life

People come into groups to talk about their lives, to tell stories, engage with one another. After all, their lives are important to them! Of course, if groups drift too far this way, members start to believe that the group is “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” Meeting the needs of members is vital, but God’s truth needs to shape our responses rather than life experience or the “theological drifting” toward believing Oprah is evangelical. Though Oprah encourages and uplifts, she readily mixes truth and error, serving it up as a spiritual elixir to all who listen – a congregation of nearly 22 million viewers.

Sadly, there are many groups that are famous for becoming “prayer and share” groups – they share their prayers, which is aka the latest gossip “I’m concerned about...”

When activity and social interaction become primary, there is a temptation to avoid the truth – but truth calls us to change! Members may be *informed* about God through tidbits here and there, but never really *transformed*.

## Truth Meets Life

What if we could bring these two ends of the spectrum together? When this happens, spiritual transformation happens – and that should be the outcome of any group meeting together.



Parker Palmer, who oversees the “Courage to Teach” program for K-12 educators across the country and parallel programs for people in other professions, including medicine, law, ministry and philanthropy, writes: “In him [Christ], truth, once understood as abstract, principled, propositional, propositional, suddenly takes on a human face and human frame. In Jesus, the disembodied ‘word’ takes flesh and walks among us. Jesus calls us to truth, but not in the forms of creeds and theologies or worldviews. His call to truth is a call to community – with him, with each other, with creation and its Creator. If what we know is abstract, impersonal, apart from us, it cannot be truth, for truth involves a vulnerable, faithful, and risk-filled interpretation of the knower and the known.”

For the small group leader, we must stand in the tension between truth and life. That is, “make sure truth is very present in your meeting, but also make sure truth is brought to bear on life in community. You must call members to open their lives to one another so they can be changed.” (page 33 of *Tightrope*) Truth has to meet life for people to become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

## How to have Truth meet Life

- Connect Scripture with Story
- Turn questions into discussions
- Practice active listening
- Vary learning styles

## Connecting Scripture with Story

Jesus used stories to teach. “Groups grow when Scripture and story collide with members’ lives, demanding that they shape their ongoing story in conformity with God’s story, becoming more like Christ in the process. Thus truth and life are integrated in the group’s learning process.” (page 35 of *Tightrope*)

### *Turn questions into discussions*

For the most part, asking a question means you are after a certain answer – except in small groups. Questions need to create discussion. They need to invite insights, opinions and personal reflection. Yes, personal. A truth-focused group would ask: “What does God promise us when we are tempted?” (referencing 1 Cor. 10:13) The better question: “When have you felt most trapped, like there’s no way of escape from temptation?” That requires personal reflection that opens up discussion and allows several people to engage. At some stages in your group, you may want to choose to break the group into groups of twos or threes so people feel safer to talk and engage even more freely. Bottom line: for truth to meet life, the small group has to move from general “yes and no” content to more personal questions.

### *Vary Learning Styles*

Everyone learns differently, and different truths require different kinds of presentation and interaction. It is easy to get into ruts as a group to “read and discuss then pray” each week. Keep engagement and “anticipation” of the meeting high by changing the routine, where you meet, adding music to your worship time, bringing fun projects or learning activities to the lesson – yes, even though we are adults, many of the most memorable “lessons” come from those that involve us crafting some kind of project, partly because it gives us time to think and process. Don’t overlook the potential of role-playing the scripture you are reading.

There are those who are experiential learners. When you want a group to value serving the poor, don’t just teach it, but pile into cars and go visit a homeless shelter and serve meals, bring blankets, coats, etc.

### *Practice Active Listening*

Leaders need to be better listeners and facilitators. When we really hear what someone is saying, with our eyes and ears, we can seize holy moments that God is at work and the Holy Spirit is in charge of the agenda.

You can help yourself by noticing:

- What the mood of the group is? Does a change when a statement is made?
- Are people leaning in, engaged in discussion, or slouched in their chairs?
- Do their expressions communicate guilt, sadness, lack of interest, confusion?
- What are people saying by their tone of voice?

### **Conclusion:**

As you and your group carefully walk the truth-life tightrope, you will see the fruit of your efforts – spiritual transformation in members’ lives!