

Small Group Discipleship Ideas

Ways to help small group members grow to be more like Christ.

Study

1. Select curriculum that centers on discipleship and spiritual growth.
 - a. Be Still (4 sessions on contemplative prayer, book + DVD)
 - b. Growing To Be Like Christ (6 sessions on discipleship, book + DVD)
 - c. The Discipleship Series (Eight 6-session studies on discipleship written by various authors, Zondervan)
 - d. Use “Review/Purchase Small Group Studies” links on SOV Leader Page to search for more studies.
2. Ask members of the group to read the same passage(s) each day for five days, perhaps a key passage from the weeks study. Encourage them to read slowly and take notes on what God is telling them during their reading. Share thoughts on what members’ learned through this exercise.
3. Ask group members to be prepared to read their favorite scripture verse at the next meeting, and to explain why that verse is so meaningful to them.
4. Challenge group members to memorize Galatians 5:22-23. At the next meeting, discuss what we can do to cooperate with Jesus (the Gardener) so that we will be fruitful in the Spirit.

Solitude/Silence

1. Challenge group members to schedule a personal retreat (either a few hours or a day) during the course of the group session. Encourage them to spend time thinking about the past few months: What has God taught them? What struggles do they face? What prayers has He answered? What might God want them to be doing? Each group members should share the date of their retreat so that the group can pray for them and follow-up on the experience.
2. Discuss as a group the challenge of living in our fast-paced world. Together make a list of specific and practical ways group members can slow down their lives (i.e., obey speed limit, choose the longest check-out line, walk rather than drive somewhere, etc.). Have each member choose one suggestion to implement this week and discuss the experience at your next meeting.
3. Set aside a specific Sunday for the whole group to practice the Sabbath. Let it be a day of total and God-focused rest. Gather that evening for a relaxing meal with no agenda!

Prayer

1. Keep a small group prayer journal and review at each meeting to see how God is working in the lives of the group members.
2. Encourage group members to say “flash” prayers for anyone they see, praying silently for those you come into contact with and asking for God’s joy and presence in their lives. Take some time to discuss any responses or differences in those peoples’ lives.
3. During prayer requests, give each person a piece of paper pre-printed with the statement “I want to be more like Jesus in this area: _____”. Have members fill in the blank, then pass the paper to the person on their right, asking that person to pray for you. Remember to ask the person you are praying for how they are progressing in the area they identified on their paper.
4. Read Psalm 96:3 (NLT) aloud and have everyone write a prayer of thanksgiving for the “glorious deeds” he has done in their lives and the “amazing things” he does for them regularly. Have members read their prayers aloud as they feel comfortable.

Worship

1. Ask group members to find a song that reflects their spiritual journey or where they are now. Have members bring their song to the next meeting and explain why that song was chosen. If time permits, play all or some of their song while they explain.
2. Choose and suggestion from the “Small Group Worship Ideas” Handout to use in your small group.

Confession/Forgiveness

1. Read Philippians 4:8 aloud, then ask group members to write down those things God is calling them to stay away from. Have them tear up the pieces of paper and throw them into a trash can you’ve brought to the group. Ask them to prayerfully commit to God to think on whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy.
2. As a leader, model authenticity by sharing your struggles and seeking God’s guidance on how to overcome them.
3. Read Ephesians 4:32 aloud, then ask group members to do one of two things. 1) Write a letter of forgiveness to someone who has hurt them. The letter is not intended to be mailed and doesn’t need to be shared with others. 2) If they can’t think of anyone to forgive, write a letter of thanks to God for forgiving their sins.

Fellowship

1. Inform the group that at the next meeting, members will have a chance to affirm one another during group time. They should give specific examples of how they have seen spiritual growth. Close in a prayer of thanksgiving for God’s work in the lives of group members.
2. Bring some blank note cards to your group meeting. Have each person write a note of encouragement to someone outside the group in whom they have seen growth in Christ.
3. Read 1 Peter 1:7, then ask members to share a time when they have been “refined by fire” and the ways it produced spiritual growth. Considering doing this exercise while seated around a fire or in front of a fireplace for greater impact.

Fasting

1. Challenge the group to turn off the TV for one week (or even a few days). Use 30 minutes you would normally spend in front of the TV to read the Bible or a classic Christian book. Involve your children. At your next meeting, discuss the experience of spending time with God instead of the TV.
2. Decide as a group to do a one-day fast. Pray during those times when you would normally be eating. Include a few situations that all of you will pray about during the fast.

Other

1. Have each group member complete a Spiritual Health Assessment and Plan (download from Leader Page at www.shepherd-lutheran.org). Form partnerships within the group, having partners share with one another the area of their spiritual life they would like to improve. Then follow-up regularly (once a session) to encourage and prayer for progress for their partner.
2. Questions related to spiritual growth to use during discussion (can also be used as icebreakers in groups that have been together long enough to have established trust):
 - a. How did you come to Christ? Were there any defining moments or turning points along the way?
 - b. Who in your life has had the greatest spiritual impact on you?
 - c. Who in your life might God be calling you to impact spiritually?
 - d. Who in the Bible do you most relate to? Why?
 - e. Who in the Bible, other than Jesus, would you most want to be like? Why?
 - f. Which fruit of the spirit would you most like to see in your life; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control?
 - g. Was there a time in your life that you stopped growing spiritually? What caused the stoppage and what happened to get you growing again?