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## **Develop Christian Community**

This document presents thirty small group activities. Begin practicing them in any order. Consult the Index below as a menu or checklist, to select activities that meet current needs. Mark off an activity when the small group is practicing it well, or if it does not apply.

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## A. All Ministries Built on the Rock, Jesus Christ

### 1. Lay the Foundation, Obeying the Commands of Jesus before All Else

**Jesus said that His disciples are to obey all His commands in love. These include serving one another and neighbors in love. This requires forming, developing and reproducing relational churches and *small groups*. To develop Christian community, practice New Testament church body life *withinyour group and between groups*. Carry out those disciplines that transform a group of individuals into a living, loving, serving *body* energized by the Spirit of God.**

**Discussion** assigned to (*volunteers*): \_\_\_\_\_

**Read** or simply tell the parable of the wise and foolish men in Matthew 7:24-27.

**Before reading**, ask everyone to listen for *how* to build their life and ministry.

**Ask:** Since *both* men heard Jesus' words, what was the *difference* between them?

**Answer:** (Let them answer; if they cannot, then explain.) The wise man *obeyed* Jesus' words.

**Ask:** Who is the Rock? (Let them answer.)

**Answer:** The rock is Jesus. Your relationship to Him is the foundation for *everything* else.

**Ask:** How does your group build on the Rock Jesus Christ?

**Answer:** By obeying His commands.

**Read:** Listen for how to make disciples according to Jesus, in Matthew 28:18-20.

**Ask:** How will you make disciples Jesus' way?

**Answer:** By baptizing them and *teaching them to obey all of Jesus' commands*. All discipling begins here; loving, childlike obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ is its *only* foundation. Believers *become* disciples by obeying all of Jesus' commands, and *make* disciples by teaching others to obey all of His commands.

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**Help** everyone *memorize* the seven basic commands of Jesus. He commands many things but they all can be summarized under seven basic commands. These are the commands that the first New Testament church in Jerusalem obeyed from the start in Acts chapter 2. They are examined in detail, with Bible references, under 3. Some groups have written songs to make this memorization easy. Try it if you have creative people!

### Commands of Jesus

- **Repent**, believe and receive the Holy Spirit (transformation)
- **Be baptized**
- **Break bread**
- **Love** God, needy neighbors, fellow disciples, enemies (forgive)
- **Pray**
- **Give**
- **Makedisciples** (witness, shepherd, train and send missionaries)

Implementation (help all to learn and obey Jesus' commands) *assigned to:* \_\_\_\_\_

**A word about implementation:** A *teacher* unaccustomed to mobilizing people for *other* ministries should let someone else with the gift of *leadership* implement what the group plans. Small groups fail when the gift of teaching eclipses the other gifts and ministries that God gives to the body.

## 2. Obey, and Teach Others to Obey Jesus' Command to Repent, Believe and Receive the Holy Spirit

*Lead discussion assigned to:* \_\_\_\_\_

**Read** Mark 1:15; John 3:16 and John 20:22 to find three things that one must do to receive Christ and His salvation.

**Read** Romans 6:1-14 to find how God helps one to repent and be eternally transformed.

**Ask:** What is the immediate result of repentance?

**Answer:** New, holy, eternal life in Jesus.

**Explain:** Repentance is not simply to stop sinning. A toad or a pile of garbage has no sin but is hardly holy. It means to receive the risen Christ's new life, the beginning of an eternal process of transformation. God invades your soul. A new believer with a bad background may appear so sinful that believers assume he is not converted. God, however, sees men's hearts. He knows that the new believer is trying harder than most to live a holy life. Be satisfied with seeing him *try*.

**Read or relate** Luke 15:1-10 to find and discuss how God feels when sinners repent.

**Read or relate** Luke 15:11-32 to discuss what the prodigal son's story would be if he lived today.

**Read** Romans 8:28-30, then Galatians 5:22-23 to find the *result* of repentance.

**Plan** to help seekers in the group or outside of it, to obey this first command. If this is difficult, seek the help of a person from another group with the gift of *evangelism*.

Coordination of what the group planned *assigned to:* \_\_\_\_\_

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### 3. Obey, and teach others to obey Jesus' command to confirm conversion with baptism

Lead discussion assigned to: \_\_\_\_\_

**Read** Matthew 28:18-20 to find Jesus' command and threefold purpose for baptism that leads to *balanced* discipling.

**Ask:** What does it mean to be baptized in the name of the *Father*?

**Answer:** To be baptized in someone's name means to enter into a deep relationship with him. The Israelites were baptized into Moses as they followed Him out of Egypt, 1 Corinthians 10:2.

**Clarification:** Baptism in the name of **God the Father** confirms a relationship of submission to *loving father authority*, as the *Son* has done throughout eternity. All who come to the Father come through the Son:

Baptism in the name of **God the Son** confirms a relationship that transforms one into *the likeness of Jesus the living Word of God*. This continues throughout eternity; the redeemed learn more and more forever and obey His Word. The *written* Word also takes on flesh and becomes incarnate in believers' lives when applied in the power of the Holy Spirit:

Baptism in the name of **God the Holy Spirit** confirms a relationship with the Comforter who lives within and gives believers power to do ministry.

Just as the three Persons of the Trinity cannot be separated and never work *alone*, the above three aspects of discipling—submission to loving authority, application of the Word and Spirit-powered ministry—begin together with a proper relationship with each Person of the Godhead, at baptism.

**Read** Acts 2:38-42 to find how Jesus' apostles practiced baptism.

**Ask:** When did Jesus' apostles baptize the converts? (Let the group respond.)

**Answer:** *Immediately*. The apostles baptized both Jews and gentiles without delay. They did not use baptism as a graduation ceremony after a Newcomer's Class or Catechism but as the initial confirmation of repentance and faith.

**Clarification:** The apostles' only *invitation* for one to show his desire to receive Christ was to be baptized. They never offered God's grace through any other *decision-making* ritual (such as raising hands). Their only requirement for baptism was to be *bad*, admit it, and ask forgiveness in Christ's name. Missionaries that baptize without delaying for requirements of man's making report a much higher rate of following through for converts.

For an example of how God demands a demonstration of humble obedience for spiritual healing, read (or relate) 2 Kings 5:1-14 (Naaman the leper) and discuss how it parallels baptism.

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For further study on baptism read (or relate) Acts 8:26-40 (the Ethiopian in the desert) and Acts 16:12-40 (Lydia and the Philippian jailer). Use your concordance for additional passages, if desired.

**Plans:** One or more with the gift of shepherding arranges with your elders, pastor, or someone authorized by your group (according to the policies of your church) to baptize anyone in your families or group who has not obeyed Jesus in this initial step.

Arrangements to carry out plans *assigned to*: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. Obey, and Teach Others to Obey Jesus' Command to Break bread (the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion)

**Lead discussion assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Read** (or relate) Matthew 26:17-28 to find and discuss the setting in which Jesus instituted this most sacred ceremony.

**Read** (or relate) Acts 2:41-47 to find where the members of the first church celebrated Holy Communion.

**Ask:** Where did they serve the Lord's Supper?

**Answer:** In their homes. Healthy small groups normally celebrate it regularly (Acts 20:1 shows that the normal practice was the first day of the week).

**Read** 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 to find the very essence of communion.

**Read** also Leviticus 11:1-6 and compare 1 Corinthians 11:26-34 to find how seriously God wants believers to worship the way *He* says.

**Ask:** What did God do to those who did not respect the body of Christ that paralleled what He did to the disobedient sons of Aaron?

**Answer:** *He zapped them (to say they sleep was a euphemism for being zapped).*

**For further study** on the Lord's Supper, read (or relate) its Old Testament origin in Exodus chapters 11-12.

**Plans:** One or more persons with the gift of shepherding should arrange with your elders, pastor, or someone authorized by your group (according to the policies of your church) to celebrate the Lord's Supper as a small group, if applicable.

Arrangements to carry out plans *assigned to*: \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. Obey, and Teach Others to Obey Jesus' Command to Love God and Man in Practical Ways, Including The Needy and Enemies (forgive)

**Lead discussion assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Read** (or relate) Matthew 22:36-40, then 1 John 3:14-18 to find and discuss how believers know they really love God.

**Read** John 13:34-35 to find and discuss how people will know that someone is a Christian.

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**Read** (or relate) Luke 10:25-37 to find, then discuss the importance of showing love in a *practical* way.

**Read** (or relate) Matthew 18:21-35 to find and discuss another aspect of love upon which your relationship with God Himself depends.

**Plan** with one or more that have the gift of *compassion* to arrange for and carry out a ‘mercy ministry’ for those in need.

Arrangements for this **assigned to**: \_\_\_\_\_

**Plan** with one or more that have the gift of *exhortation* to help anyone who needs to forgive, to seek reconciliation.

Arrangements for this **assigned to**: \_\_\_\_\_

### 6. Obey, and Teach Others to Obey Jesus’ Command to Pray

**Discussion assigned to** \_\_\_\_\_

**Read** John 16:24 and 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to find how Jesus and His apostles command prayer.

**Read** (or relate) Genesis 18:20-32 to find and discuss the meaning of *intercession*.

**Read** Matthew 5:44 and 1 Timothy 2:1-4 to find and discuss for whom believers should pray and why.

**Read** Ephesians 6:10 -20 to list and discuss God’s disciplines for *spiritual warfare*.

**Read** Luke 9:37-42 and 10:17-20 to discuss Jesus’ practice of casting out demons, and why He gave a gentle rebuke to His disciples after

**Read** Luke 10:17-20 to discuss why Jesus gave a gentle rebuke to His disciples after they had cast out demons.

**Plan** for one or more with the gift of faith to organize regular intercession and spiritual warfare by the group.

Arrangements to carry out plans **assigned to**. \_\_\_\_\_

### 7. Obey, and Teach Others to Obey Jesus’ Command to Give

**Discussion assigned to** \_\_\_\_\_

**Read** Luke 6:38 to find and discuss how and why believers should give.

**Read** 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 to find and discuss the *New Testament* standard for how much to give.

**Read** (or relate) Matt. 25:14-30 to find and discuss the rewards of Christian stewardship and punishment of false stewards.

**Ask:** What is the essence of Christian stewardship?

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**Answer:** A steward manages things owned by another. Believers are God's stewards; He owns everything. A wise steward makes careful, prayerful use of *time, talent and treasure*.

**Plan** for one or more who have the gift of giving (and maybe a little bit of wisdom) to help others develop a plan for giving and stewardship of their time and talents.

Arrangements for stewardship **assigned to**. \_\_\_\_\_

### 8. Obey, and Teach Others to Obey Jesus' Command to Make Disciples (evangelize, shepherd, train leaders, and send missionaries)

**Lead discussion assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Read** Matthew 28:18-20 to find and discuss exactly *how* Jesus says to make disciples.

**Read** (or relate) John 21:15-17 to find and discuss another purpose of discipling.

**Read** Acts 1:8 to find and discuss *where* to witness for Jesus, to start the discipling process.

**Ask:** What was the *local community* that corresponds to *Jerusalem* in the apostles' case?

What *nearby communities nearby of the same culture* correspond to *Judea* for your group?

What *nearby ethnic group* corresponds to *Samaria* for your group?

What *distant people groups* correspond to *the ends of the earth* for your group?

What *help* does Jesus promise believers in Acts 1:8?

**Plan:** Ask one or more with the apostolic (missionary) gift or vision to arrange for the group's participation in training and sending missionaries that reproduce your group life within a neglected people group.

Arrangements to carry out plans **assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

### 9. Establish the *Authority* for your Group's Work (enthroned Jesus through your obedience in love)

**Lead discussion assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Read** John 14:15 to find and discuss the *right motive* for obeying Jesus.

**Ask:** Why is obedience to Jesus so important?

**Answer (1):** Loving obedience is the only way to enthrone our King. People can praise Him with their lips until they are hoarse but without loving, childlike obedience, it is empty; He cannot receive it (Isaiah 29:13: 1 Corinthians 13:1).

**Answer (2):** Loving obedience is the foundation for all other teaching and ministry. An obedient discipling body builds all other ministries and spiritual disciplines that the New Testament requires on this foundation of obedience. A healthy small group or cell functions as a tiny church within a larger church, giving total pastoral care, not just Bible study.

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**Answer (3):** Loving obedience establishes the authority for your group. As a community committed to obey our Lord Jesus Christ, a small group or house church must settle the question of authority. Putting obedience to the commands of Jesus and His apostles before all other human rules and policies resolves arguments about what to do. Jesus alone has all authority; believers simply do as He and His apostles say. Without this Rock foundation, small groups lack the sense of authority, purpose and direction needed for lasting results.

**Plan:** Authorize one or more with the gift of discernment to monitor regularly the progress of the group in obedience by comparing their priorities and plans with the will of God as explicitly expressed through His New Testament commands. Anything not specifically commanded in the New Testament *must* be given lower priority.

Arrangements to carry out plans *assigned to*: \_\_\_\_\_

## B. Base Agreement on What your Christian Community Is and Does

### 10:Covenant to Agree on Aims, Work out Differences

**Lead discussion assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Explain why your group needs a Covenant.**

**“Nearly every new group goes through a difficult time some weeks after it is born.”**

**People discover, alas, that the other members are also human! The honeymoon is over. Some develop the love, patience and forgiveness that they need to continue; others drop out. To make this vital part of group formation easy, explain** as soon as possible that each small group should write its own “*Covenant*.” This makes up part of your Bible study during the first few weeks. Discuss each phrase of the Covenant, defining what the group *is* and *does*.

**Read** 2 Chronicles 23:16 to find and discuss the concept of covenanting together.

**Clarification:Do not seek a ready-made Covenant; think through the New Testament principles on your own, to compose your own covenant. Keep it brief, to repeat in less than a minute. You might include a pledge to obey Jesus’ commands and a phrase about serving one another with the different spiritual gifts that God has given each believer. You might also resolve to train new leaders on the job for new groups. Some groups write their Covenant as a song.**

When the Covenant is completed and everyone has signed it or in some way formally agreed to it, the group ought to *name* itself if it hasn’t done so yet and celebrate. Perhaps a feast!

**Discuss:** Here are some practical “do’s and don’ts” that you’d probably *not* include in the covenant (keep it general):

- Limit your group to about 7 to 12 adults if possible. Keep it small enough to practice the “one anothers” (discussed below). Few groups maintain the relational body life described in the New Testament if they grow beyond 14 adults. Keep multiplying new groups!



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- Business dealings and politics are taboo at your meetings.
- If possible, do not meet in the home of the main leader (people may think he owns the group and hesitate to take initiative). You might meet in the homes of friends who you hope to bring into the group.
- Don't always serve a meal, unless you have a hostess who simply loves to clean up afterwards!
- Include the children as much as possible in the activities. Learn to appreciate their presence. When necessary, cooperate with other groups to provide childcare.

Carrying out the work on your covenant and group policies *assigned to*:

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### 11. Practice Relevant *Small Group* Worship

*Lead discussion assigned to:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Discuss and agree on* the essential elements of worship for your meetings:

**General:** For small group worship, aim at *total participation* rather than perfection in the music and teaching. Do not aim at entertainment, but edification (building up everyone present).

**Praise:** It may be sung, prayed, read, chanted, set to poetry or danced—God doesn't care as long as it's from the heart. Adapt the style to a small group; make it easy for *all* to participate.

**Prayer:** Pray for one another; intercede for those who need it. Do not let prayer time be merely a series of medical reports. Pray for new ministries; ask for opportunities to serve; pray for other churches and their leaders, etc.

**Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness:** Especially before Communion, confess in a way that is meaningful for your group, including young believers. Many will have much to confess. You might do it silently, but help new believers to learn to confess to God as 1 John 1:6-10 and 1 Corinthians 12:26-32 instruct believers.

- **The Lord's Supper:** the New Testament churches broke bread in *homes*, Acts 2:46.
- **The Word:** *Apply* Scripture to the people, their current activities and the plans of the group. Avoid formal pulpit oratory for small groups; group discussion is better unless new members are shy. Tell stories from the Word that illustrate or give the historical basis for the truths taught. Do not allow the discussion to deal *only* with negative needs (problems). This creates an ingrown, defensive group. Always give *most of the time* to positive things, ministry development and opportunities to serve. Relate teaching to what your people will *do*.
- **Giving:** Give to God, but don't pass a 'plate' for a small group! You might have a box or large envelope by the door. A cell group might pass the funds through the main church treasurer for tax purposes. However you handle funds, make sure they are spent on needs or ministries agreed upon by your group or its leaders.

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- **Fellowship:** Provide time before, during or after group worship for ample conversation between members. This is often when make the best plans, pray for people's needs and deal with those who are too shy to talk in front of everybody. Make sure *everyone* has an opportunity to talk with someone who will *listen!*
- A **definite beginning and end** to the formal part of worship: Too much informality keeps believers from taking worship seriously. Let people know they are in God's presence, although meeting in a private living room.

Coordination of worship activities *assigned to:* \_\_\_\_\_

### 12, Install your Leaders in the Biblical Way

*Lead discussion assigned to:* \_\_\_\_\_

**Read** Acts 13:1-3 to find and discuss why Paul received the laying on of hands.

**Read** Titus 1:5-9 to find and discuss the ideal character of those named as shepherds.

**Read** 1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6 to discuss why Timothy received the laying on of hands.

If you have new leaders who lack this anointing, arrange for it and give it the same importance that the church in Antioch did.

*Assigned to:* \_\_\_\_\_

### 13, Base your aims on the Word of God

*Lead discussion assigned to:* \_\_\_\_\_

**Read** Ephesians 4:11-16 to find and discuss the aim or result of using the spiritual gift of teaching for its true purpose, then make concrete plans to bring your group's practices into line with it.

**Ask:** Who is responsibility in your group to see that your teaching, shepherding and discipling all equip all your people for ministries? (Ministries required by the New Testament are listed under Task # 6.)

**Answer:** The Bible places this responsibility on the 'pastors and teachers' but in today's more traditional churches few teachers accept it.

**Clarification:** In many churches a senior pastor or elder sets the pace, proclaiming what God is doing this *month* and *year*. All your teachers are to show from God's Word the *immediate purpose* for your activities. Do not preach simply to download as much information as possible; pedantic exposition paralyzes purposeful action. Clarify from the Bible how God is working *now* and what you will do in the *immediate future*. God is working and so is your group. The renewal of the Holy Spirit is *daily* (2 Corinthians 4:16).

Ask one or more to see that such *purposeful* teaching occurs regularly.

*Assigned to:* \_\_\_\_\_

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### 14. Balance and Blend Different Ministries

**Lead discussion assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Read** 1 Corinthians 12:4-13 and 13:1-3 to find and **discuss** the meaning of church ‘body life.’

**Ask:** What does the Holy Spirit do for a church that is willing to be a loving, serving *body*?

**Answer:** He gives believers gifts for different ministries and harmonizes them as when believers love one another.

**Clarification:** Seldom do churches form strong, reproductive small groups with an *ideological* motive (someone has attended a workshop on cells and comes back stirred, with a sure method to get instant growth). Rather, form small groups from a motive of love, desiring to provide fellowship, serve and shepherd each other effectively, and win more to Jesus. To shepherd a flock effectively, God requires groups small enough to give each person and family the attention they need. It is also easier to win friends for Christ in small groups.

Name one or more to help coordinate ministries. Find out what people can do and who needs their help. See Tasks 5 and 6 for gift-based ministries.

**Assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

### 15. Look upon the Field that God has Given you to Harvest

**Lead discussion assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Read** (or relate) John 4:1-43 to find and discuss the importance of Jesus’ exhortation in verse 35 to ‘look at the fields.’

**Plan** to study the people of your community (‘demographics’). Know who is there, discern ethnic or other trends, find out what they are thinking, why people stay away from (you may be surprised to find the *real* reason is not indifference but the church’s irrelevancy—often something that can easily be remedied with loving concern).

This *specific research assigned to:* \_\_\_\_\_

### 16. Keep the Vision Alive and Growing

**Lead discussion assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Plan** to keep the vision before your people. Help everyone to talk and sing about the vision. Keep talking about what God will do in the *future* (weak churches talk about the *past*).

**Ask:** Please finish the phrase, “Our group exists to...” (do what?)

**Answer:** Possible answers (if no one mentions an item and you think it applies, bring it up):

- Win people to Christ
- Proclaim God’s Word

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- Practice the “one another” relational church body life
- Multiply groups to bring Christ and the Holy Spirit’s power to every family in your community
- Multiply churches so there will be one in every neighborhood in your area.

**Ask:** What are ways to keep your vision before the people?

Possible answers (if no one mentions an item and it applies, bring it up):

- Help everyone to pray regularly for this vision, at home and with the group
- Enable every person in your own group to participate actively.
- Name your group to help believers see it as a concrete entity—for example.
- Sing about reproducing your group, recite poems or dramatize it (ask creative people to write music or skits for it; let children people participate in it).
- When groups meet to celebrate together, interview people who have come to Christ, or had personal or family victories, and want to testify about it.

Ask one or more persons with the gift of faith to work with others with the gift of leadership to arrange what your group agrees upon to keep building the vision.

**Assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

## C. Crops Are Reaped

### 17. Organize and Plan for Harvesting

**Lead discussion assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ask:** If a group is weak in evangelism, what is normally the best way to help it renew this area of obedience to Jesus? (Hint: it usually does not help to seek a new *method*.)

**Answer:** Before looking for a magic method, find people who are using the gift of evangelism effectively in another group or church. Arrange for them to help you *do* evangelism— don’t simply plan a workshop. In turn, help their group with a ministry in which your group is strong (perhaps discipling young married couples, mercy ministry or intercession, etc.).

**Read** (or relate) Acts 10 to find and discuss how to start a new group working through seekers and new believers.

**Ask:** How did God prepare Peter to do evangelism where he was not in control?

**Ask:** *God used an exclusive meeting to bring the people to Christ. Who was there?*

**Ask:** *What sort of message did Peter give? What did he emphasize?*

**Answer:** Peter simply related the gospel story. The apostles always told about Jesus’ death and resurrection.

**Read** Luke 24:46-48 to find and discuss the specific things of which believers are to be witnesses.

**Ask:** What two historical events are believers to relate witnessing?

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**Ask:** What two additional things are believers to proclaim to those who receive this news (verse 47)?

**Ask:** For whom is this proclamation (verse 47)?

**Read** Luke 10:5-7 to find and discuss why, when penetrating a neighborhood, Jesus said to seek a *person of peace* (a hospitable person, although not yet converted, who opens doors for Christian workers).

**Read** (or relate) Acts 16:16-34 to find and discuss why it is important to do evangelism through heads of households.

**IMPORTANT: Small gatherings for evangelism can be led effectively by new believers.** These *Gathering Groups* differ from most small groups in that they are often led by new believers, sometimes even unconverted seekers such as Cornelius in Acts 10, who called a group together to hear about Christ. Zacheus, Levi, Lydia and the Philippian jailer also brought others to Christ as new believers. The only requirement to lead such *gathering groups* is to be able to gather unbelievers together to hear the Good News. New believers with unsaved friends can often do this easily. Do not bring many older believers to such meetings or the seekers feel outnumbered, become passive and fail to participate.

These evangelistic groups are short-lived. Some of the people receive Christ, others reject Him and drop out. The group either becomes a regular group or feeds into another group that is able to receive them. If it becomes a regular group led by one of the new believers, a more mature believer should disciple this new leader behind the scenes, as Aquila and Priscilla did for Apollos in Acts 18.. If its people join another group, make sure it has the right kind of music and people of an age and disposition that appeal to the new babes in Christ.

Some churches provide a separate service with a more lively worship style for young-thinking people.

**ALSO IMPORTANT: Do not force everyone to do evangelism.** Some Christians have few unsaved friends and relatives who are willing to listen to the gospel). It does little good to force them to do evangelism. Let them intercede for those who do, disciple younger believers and serve in other ministries. For a group of such people, you might skip the evangelism activities below.

Practical plans and organization for harvesting **assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

### 18. Prepare to Relate the Good News

**Lead discussion assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Prepare:** To help new believers pass on the gospel message, teach them key Bible stories about it that are easy to relate to others in an informal way. Do not try to win converts with a philosophical or theological approach. It almost never works. The apostles simply told the gospel story. Start with stories from the Old Testament if the people lack a worldview with one all-powerful, Holy and God that relates in love to people.

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Stories that reveal the gospel include:

- **The need to repent:** The Prodigal Son: Luke 15:11-32.
- **The need to turn from idolatry or other occult practices:** Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel: 1 Kings 18.
- **The need to forgive and receive God's forgiveness:** The parable of the unforgiving debtor, Matthew 18:21-35.
- **The arrest of Jesus:** Matthew 26:31-58
- **The trial of Jesus:** Mark 14:53 through 15:23
- **The sacrificial death of Jesus:** Luke 23:13-56
- **The resurrection of Jesus:** Luke 24:1-35
- **The final instructions of the risen Christ:** Matt. 28:16-20; Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:6-8
- **The ascension of Jesus into glory:** Luke 24:49-53; Acts 1:9-11
- **The coming of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost):** Acts 2
- **The conversion of Saul:** Acts 9:1-31
- **The conversion of the Ethiopian through reading prophecies of Jesus:** Isaiah 53; Acts 8:26-39
- **The conversion and baptism of the jailer and his family:** Acts 16:16-34
- **The final judgment:** Revelation 20:11 through 21:8

Name one or more with the gift of evangelism to help communicate the gospel. *Assigned to:*

\_\_\_\_\_

Name one or more with the gift of teaching to help everyone memorize a repertoire of Bible stories that support all major Christian doctrines and duties. *Assigned to:*

\_\_\_\_\_

### 19. Let the Good News Flow through Networks of Families and Friends (don't extract converts from their people)

*Lead discussion assigned to:* \_\_\_\_\_

**Read** Acts 16:13-15 and verse 31 to find and discuss why workers should seek entire families.

**Clarification:** When possible, start with the head of a family. Remember, God does not see a person as an isolated individual, but as part of a larger circle of family and friends (Acts 16:31). Do not overemphasize the 'personal' aspect of salvation or faith. Scriptures never mention that aspect; it is a purely human tradition. An unhealthy individualistic approach to evangelism divides families and extracts converts from their 'circle' rather

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than teaching them from the beginning to love them and seek reconciliation. The apostles witnessed to Lydia, then, immediately reached her entire family (Acts 16:13-15).

For converts to witness at once to their family and friends use a method of evangelism that they can imitate at once and pass on. Methods that require electronic equipment, expensive facilities or extensive training always stifle this normal flow. Serious studies in mission fields all over the world show that many more come to Christ when believers witness just as Jesus and His apostles did: simple tell the good news and let it flow as it will. The gospel follows the same channels as gossip. It is good gossip.

Ask persons who easily build relationships to help others do this. **Assigned to:**

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### 20. Balance Evangelism with Mercy Ministry

**Lead discussion assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Read :** Luke 10:25-37 to find and discuss what Jesus demands that believers do for those in your community who are in need.

**Ask:** What priority did Jesus and His apostles give to loving others in a *practical* way?

**Ask:** What needs do your friends and relatives have, that you might help them with? Family problems? (Do they simply need a friend to listen to them?) Drug or alcohol abuse? Immigrants who need help to find their way around or learn English? The best way to detect felt needs is to mix with people of the community and *listen* to them. Be creative in finding how to do this. Every community is different. There is no one ‘best way.’

Coordination of mercy ministry or development projects **assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

## D. Dutifully Serve One Another Within the Family of God

### 21. Keep Groups Small Enough for Edifying Interaction and Total Participation

**Lead discussion assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Read** Gal. 5:13 (below) to find the *reciprocal* nature of New Testament Church life and ministry:

**For you, dear friends, have been called to live in freedom, not to satisfy your sinful nature, but to serve one another in love.**

Notice the words ‘one another.’ There are many such ‘one another’ verses in the Bible.

**Discuss:**

**Clarify** what true New Testament church *body life* is. Encourage one other, pray for each other, confess faults to one another, etc. Believers cannot do this in large meetings. Organize small group meetings—small groups or cells. *Smallgroups* allow interaction

## Develop Christian Community

between all participants. Do not ask shy newcomers to talk before the group. Talk to and listen to each other, to deal with those spiritual disciplines that our Lord and His apostles command. With the aid of the Holy Spirit, each participant uses their own God-given gifts to help others grow and serve. Organize it in your own way, but build on relationships, so that your people find it easy and joyful.

**Clarify** the scope of New Testament church body life. It is larger than your church or group. Practice the “one another” dynamics of the New Testament not only *within* groups and churches but also *between* them, because a group small enough to do it with all of its members is too small to have a complete gift balance. God gives many spiritual gifts. For example, if your group is weak on evangelism, don’t go seeking another *method*. Look rather for *who* can help you, someone in another group or church that has the gift of evangelism and is willing to assist you, as you in turn aid that group in some other way. God uses this voluntary, loving interaction between groups and churches powerfully to develop ministries.

### **Discuss:**

A *small* group allows interaction between all. Talk to and listen to each other to deal with the spiritual disciplines commanded by our Lord and His apostles. Each person, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, uses his/her own God-given gifts to help others grow and serve. **CAUTION:** do not force shy newcomers to talk before the group.

**Clarify** *how to keep groups small enough to practice the ‘one anothers.’* Multiply new groups, not by dividing them in two but by training new leaders on the job and letting them form their own groups. The leader of the parent group mentors them as long as they need it.

**Clarify** *what church body life is.* Beginning with the most important command, to love God and man, practice the “one another” dynamics of the New Testament—not only *within* groups but also *between* them. Practice them in groups small enough to allow each person to be heard. Persons encourage one other, pray for each other, confess faults to one another, etc. You cannot do this in large meetings.

**Clarify** how to hold each other accountable. As a family oriented community, your purpose is not limited to accountability among individuals, such as a few men meeting to help each other to grow spiritually. Aim for complete honesty before the group. It may start with a private group just for men, or for women. At first both men and women hesitate to deal with deep personal needs in the presence of the opposite sex and strangers. However, in time they graduate from such dependency and keep the family together in normal group.

Name one or more with the gift of leadership or helps to see that your group practices the ‘one anothers.’ They are dealt with in detail in the next three *Group Activities*.

Arrangements **assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

## 22. Build Loving Fellowship One with Another (within and *between* groups)

**Lead discussion assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_



## Develop Christian Community

**Discuss** specifically *how*, and with *whom*, to practice these ‘one anothers.’ Study the ones you need most urgently to practice. Let the group decide which ones to study.

### Love:

Love one another: John 13:34-35; 5:12, 17; Romans 12: 10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 John 3:11,14, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 1:5; 1 Peter 1:22

Love one another to fulfill the law: Romans 13:8

Increase love one for another: 2 Thessalonians 1:3

Abound in love for another: 1 Thessalonians 3:12

Love each other deeply, to cover a multitude of sins: 1 Peter 4:8

### Interact with care:

Have fellowship one with another: 1 John 1:7

Forgive one another: Ephesians 3:13; 4:32; Colossians 3:13

Greet one another with a holy kiss (embrace in some cultures): Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14

Wait for one another to break bread: 1 Corinthians 11:33

Bear one another’s sufferings: 1 Corinthians 12:26

Helping others to practice this mutual shepherding *assigned to*: \_\_\_\_\_

**23:Serve one another** (within and *between* groups)

*Lead discussion assigned to*: \_\_\_\_\_

### Serve:

Serve one another with the gifts each person has received: 1 Peter 4:10

Serve one another in love: Gal. 5:13

Be kind to each other: 1 Thessalonians 5:15

Care for one another: 1 Corinthians 12:25

Bear the burdens one for another: Gal. 6:2

Wash one another’s feet as a sign of humble service: John 13:14

Work with one another: 1 Corinthians 3:9; 2Corinthians 6:1

### Teach :

Teach one another: Colossians 3:16

Instruct one another: Romans 5:14

### Encourage:

Encourage one another: Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 10:25

## Develop Christian Community

Exhort one another: Hebrews 3:13

Speak the truth to one another: Ephesians 4:25

Lay down our lives one for another: 1 John 3:16

Spur one another to love and good deeds: Hebrews 10:24

### **Edify:**

Edify (strengthen, build up) one another: 1 Thessalonians 4:18 & 5:1, 11

Edify one another gathering together each one with a hymn, a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or its interpretation: 1 Corinthians 14:26

### **Give spiritual care:**

Confess sins one to another: James 5:16

Pray for one another: James 5:16

**Helping others to practice this mutual serving *assigned to*:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **24: Cultivate Unity One with Another (in and between groups)**

*Lead discussion assigned to:* \_\_\_\_\_

### **Act with humility:**

Honor one another: Romans 12:10

Be of one mind one with another: 2 Corinthians 13:11; Romans 12:16; 15:5

Do not criticize one another: Romans 14:13

Do not speak bad one of another: James 4:11; 5:9

Submit to one another: Ephesians 5:21

Be clothed with humility toward one another: 1 Peter 5:5

### **Live in harmony:**

Have patience one with another: Ephesians 4:2

Live in peace one with another: Matt. 9:50

Receive one another with hospitality: Romans 15:7; 1 Peter. 4:9

Glorify God together: Romans 15:6

Helping others to practice this mutual fellowship *assigned to*: \_\_\_\_\_

## **E. Each One Serves with Spiritual Gifts and Natural Talents**

### **25. Practice Spiritual Gifts Listed in Romans 12:6-8**

*Lead discussion assigned to:* \_\_\_\_\_

## Develop Christian Community

**Relate** the biblical *examples* or explanations for gifts that need clarification. Some are too long to read; recount by memory the relevant parts. Mark gifts in the brackets [ ] that need to be developed in your group. You will probably need to arrange for help from *other* groups (and give help to them in areas in which your group is strong).

[ ] **Serve**: Samuel, 1 Sam. 1:20-28; 3:1-21; Deacons, Acts 6:1-7; Dorcas, Acts 9:36-41

[ ] **Prophecy**—messages from God for strength, consolation and encouragement; 1 Corinthians 14:3

[ ] **Give**—Abigail, 1 Sam. 25; guidelines: 2 Corinthians 9

[ ] **Teach**—Ezra: Nehemiah 8; purpose, Ephesians 4:11-16

[ ] **Encourage**—exhort: Paul with the Ephesian elders, Acts 20:17-38

[ ] **Lead**—servant leader who helps others to minister: Moses, Ex. 18:13-26

[ ] **Show mercy**—The sheep and goats, Matt 25:31-46; Good Samaritan, Lk 10:30-35; David with Saul, 1 Sam. 24

Ask persons with these gifts to help others discover and use them. **Assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

### 26. Practice Also the Gifts Listed in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, 27-30

**Lead discussion assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] Counsel with **wisdom**—Solomon, 1 Kings 3:5-28

[ ] Base decisions on **knowledge** (facts)—Bereans' searching the Word, Acts 17:10-12

[ ] **Help**—Aquila and Priscilla, Acts 18:1-5, 24-28

[ ] Go, as an **Apostle** (sent one, with itchy feet, a spiritual entrepreneur)—Romans 5:20-21; Paul and Barnabas, Acts chapters 13-14

[ ] **Discern**—Nathan, 2 Sam. Chapters 11-12; Paul, Gal. 2:6-21

[ ] **Heal**—Jesus and the paralytic, Mark 2:1-12; Peter and John heal the crippled man, Acts chapters 3-4

[ ] **Administrate**—Nehemiah: Nehemiah chapters 2-3

[ ] Do **miracles**—Elijah: 1 Kings 18:16-46; Elisha: 2 Kings chapters 2-5

[ ] Speak in **tongues**—Cornelius' household, Acts 10:44-48. Use this gift with the following:

[ ] **Interpret** tongues—see cautions in 1 Corinthians 14

[ ] Use **faith** (all need it but some stir it in others)—the leper and the centurion, Matt. 8:1-13; Old Testament faithful, Hebrews 11

Ask persons with these gifts to help others use them. **Assigned to:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

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### 27. Practice Additional Gifts Listed in Ephesians 4:11

*Lead discussion assigned to:* \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] Announce the Good News (**evangelist**)—Philip; Acts 8:26-40

[ ] **Pastor** (shepherd) — Acts 20:28-34; 1 Peter 5:1-4 (see *Vital Pastoral Duties*, below)

Vital Pastoral Duties besides Teaching (Ministries of persons with the pastoral or shepherding gift)

Mobilize

You, more than anyone else, are responsible to see that each member of your group uses his or her gifts in ministry to edify the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16). Review the gifts listed in *Group Activities 25-27* regularly and discuss them every few months with those who do not yet know their area of ministry. If you are more of a teacher and not able to do this well, you *must* ask another to share the leadership.

Aim for Balance

Do not over-emphasize any of the gift-based ministries (1 Corinthians 12:14-30). A church's greatest weakness is nearly always its strongest ministry taken to *excess*.

Network

Remember: No small group has all the spiritual gifts it needs! New Testament group body life requires interaction *between* groups. *Poor* Christians in Macedonia, for example, had the gift of giving and used it to strengthen the Lord's work in other places (2 Corinthians 8:1-5, compared with Acts 18:1-5).

The exhortations in the New Testament to serve each other with different God-given gifts in the body were made to *clusters of small groups*. The 'churches' in Jerusalem and Ephesus, etc., were not single congregations. There was no church building (chapel or temple), historians say, to house large congregations for over 275 years after Christ. They met as small groups in homes.

Ask persons with the gifts of apostle or pastor to help others use them. Arrangements *assigned to:* \_\_\_\_\_

## F. Follow up All New Testament ministries

### 28. Review and Do All Ministries Required by the New Testament

*Lead discussion assigned to:* \_\_\_\_\_

**Discuss** the following gift-based ministries required by the New Testament. Mark any that need to be developed *now* in your group:

POY! List of **VITAL CHURCH MINISTRIES**

A church or cell is fully planted when it is doing the activities that the New Testament requires.

**Pray.** Intercede, have daily personal & family devotions, do spiritual warfare and pray for healing

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**Evangelize.** Witness for Jesus and baptize

**Make disciples.** Train believers to obey Jesus

**Give.** Be stewards of time, talent and treasure

**Teach God's Word.** Equip believers to serve

**Strengthen family life and marriage.** Coach privately persons or families with problems

**Show mercy.** Serve the hurting and needy

**Cultivate loving fellowship.** Provide time free from scheduled activity, for spontaneous interaction

**Organize.** Serve one another and other congregations, using spiritual gifts in harmony

**Correct and restore.** Watch for wolves and weak lambs

**Worship.** Let all believers participate actively, celebrate Communion regularly

**Start churches and cell groups.** Keep congregations multiplying

**Extend Christ's kingdom.** Prepare and send workers to neglected peoples, nearby and afar

**Train leaders.** Model shepherding skills for apprentices

Review *assigned to*: \_\_\_\_\_

## G. Group Leaders Constantly Train New Leaders

### 29. Practice the 2 Timothy 2:2 Training Chain Reaction

*Lead discussion assigned to*: \_\_\_\_\_

*Read* 2 Timothy 2:2 to find and discuss the steps of reproduction, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” Then review the four steps:

**1** “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses ...”

(It began with Paul and other witnesses from **Antioch**.)

*With whom does it begin for your group?*

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**2** “entrust...”

(Timothy was to entrust the teaching to able shepherds in Ephesus.)

Who should you train to assist now and start a new group later?

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## Develop Christian Community

### 3“...to reliable men who will also be qualified...”

(The chain passed from Ephesus to many towns nearby.)

Who else can you train later?

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### 4“...to teach *others*.”

(From the towns near Ephesus it spread to many, many other places. )

Paul started a similar chain reaction with Titus who named and prepared elders to shepherd new churches in Crete, Titus 1:5-9.

Where might you start an entirely new church or chain reaction?

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**Plan** now to keep groups reproducing by helping new leaders to disciple other leaders of newer groups. Each leader continually prepares his own *Timothies* (apprentice leaders ) in his own group, to share the leadership and form new groups.

Coordination of this reproductive pastoral training **assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

### 30: Practice Trouble-Shooting for Small Groups

**Lead discussion assigned to:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Clarify and assign the job of correcting any of the following problems that need solving:**

**Children fuss, make mothers nervous:** Form a child-friendly group or work with other groups to share common childcare. Let kids participate!

Correction **assigned to:**

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**Someone in chronic crisis usurps the group’s attention:** If one seems to enjoy being the victim and getting attention, do not feed this sick appetite. It will take up too much of your time and only makes them worse. Arrange for a pastoral counselor to help them get their attention off themselves and to minister to others.

Correction **assigned to:**

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## Develop Christian Community

**Some smugly criticize others who are not in small groups or house churches:**

Challenge them firmly to obey Matthew 7:1-5, which forbids judging one's brothers.

Correction *assigned to*:

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**Petty rules frustrate participants:** Build organization on relationships, not structures, policies or forms imported from other churches. Do not force groups to divide in order to multiply. Rather, let potential leaders form their new groups with whoever cares to accompany them. Give maximum freedom. If other leaders force rules upon you that hinder the group development, pray and try to explain patiently the New Testament principles you have learned. Bear down hard on the fact that you are obeying the commands of Jesus. You might ask power hungry, legalistic persons, "Do you prefer that we obey *you* instead?" (Smile when you say it!)

Correction *assigned to*:

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**Materials fail to stimulate, hold interest or yield needed ministries:** Before locking into specific materials, use the Scriptures listed under these *30 Group Activities*. Discuss the commands of Jesus, the One Anothers, spiritual gifts and the ministries required by the New Testament. Equip leaders with tools to mine the Word on their own. Relying too much on *materials* creates passive students rather than active disciples.

Correction *assigned to*:

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**Groups become mere Bible studies:** A good small group is a tiny *church*, so keep it doing *everything* a church should do! For new churches, do not start mere 'preaching points.' They almost never meet people's needs and seldom reproduce.

Correction *assigned to*:

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**Building programs or other temporary projects lure attention away from God's purposes as stated in His Word:** Discern your God-given priorities: start with His *commands and ministries required by the New Testament*. Keep other emphases strictly secondary. Excessive emphasis on building programs kills the excitement about what God is doing in the smaller discipling communities.

Correction *assigned to*:

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**Visitors don't return:** Befriend them. Visit them. Listen to them. Offer to do things with and for them. Invest *time* in the Lord's work. If your group is not the best one for them, help them join another group.

Correction *assigned to*:

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**Converts backslide:** They are babes in Christ—spiritual babies. Babies dirty their diapers. Be patient. Don't demand instant perfection. Make sure you deal with repentance and baptize them without undue delay. Overwhelm them with love and acceptance.

## Develop Christian Community

Assure them of God's forgiveness and grace. Help them love their family and friends. Help them to forgive, love and become reconciled with anyone that they are having a hard time with. Help them to ask forgiveness.

Correction *assigned to:*

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**People don't want small groups; they just want to go to church and be passive**

**hearers:** Invite them cordially; if they still don't respond, let them lie in still pastures. Go seek the other sheep 'who are not of this fold.' You will only frustrate the passive sheep and yourself, if you keep prodding. Work with someone who has the gift of evangelism to start a group totally among new people.

Correction *assigned to:*

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