

YOUR
first
FOUR
weeks
OF SMALL GROUP

*a solid plan for building
a healthy small group*

WEEK 1: TEAM

THINK: This purpose of this material is to begin your year as a small group with a common understanding and commitment to growing as a family and working as a team. Each person on your team has a part in making the small group all it can be.

Through this interaction, each person will have a say in planning the future of your group and in coming weeks and months they'll each have a hand in sculpting that reality.

Now would be a great time to pray for your small group, that each person would feel at home, feel free to open up and share, and take ownership of THEIR small group.

TEACH:

Start your time together making sure everyone knows everyone else's name and at least 2 things about them.

The Passage(s):

- Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
- Proverbs 27:17
- 1 Corinthians 12:20-21

Go around and have each person share their name, the craziest thing they've ever done, and their favorite kind of _____.

(Now might be a good time if you plan on establishing a snack schedule or sharing contact info, etc.)

Opening questions:

- Does everyone here have a Bible of their own?
(If not, take note of that and help them get one.)
- What are your hopes for our small group this year?
- What do you think we should expect from each other? (Be there, be respectful, Be honest, etc.)
- Is everyone willing to commit to being at small group each week? Why is that important?

Today we're going to start off by building a strong foundation for our small group. Now even though I help to lead this group in different ways, its really up to each person in our small group to make it what its going to be. And no one wants a small group that is anything but healthy, encouraging, welcoming, respectful, helpful, and fun to be a part of.

**Leaders, you may choose at this point to share a reason why someone might be asked to take a break from small group. Reasons like disruptiveness or disrespect or not keeping confidences might be among them. Weigh that out and decide what's best to say.*

An important part of our group is prayer. Each time we get together we want to dedicate some time to praying for one another. Would someone be willing to keep track of the things we are praying about? That would just mean you use our prayer journal and remind us each week of what we're praying for.

TALK: Okay, let's open up our Bibles (or your Bible app) to **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**.

(While they're looking that up, give everyone a one foot length of yarn or thin string.)

Have a volunteer read those verses. Then discuss...

1. Have you ever needed somebody's help with something? What was it?
2. Have you ever been by yourself and felt lonely at all?
3. What does verse 9 mean to you? Give an example of a household chore that would get done faster with 2 people rather than one.
4. When we read these verses about "if they fall down", we might think about physically falling, but have you ever fell down spiritually and needed someone to help you? Share an example.
5. Look at that piece of yarn/string you have. See if you can break it by pulling it apart from each end.
6. Now take that piece of yarn/string and put it together with 2 other people's string. Braid them together and try again to tear them by pulling on the ends. What do these strings have to do with our small group?

Read Proverbs 27:17, then discuss...

7. Have you ever sharpened a knife? How does that work? Who is one person who "sharpens" you or makes you better?
8. What should we do to sharpen each other?

Next, have a volunteer read
1 Corinthians 12:20-21. Then discuss...

9. What's one thing you're good at that not everyone is good at?
10. If you had to do without either an arm, a leg, both knees, both elbows, or your hands, which would you choose to do without? Why?
11. What are these verses saying about us as different "parts".
12. There is only one you. God only made one out the of the billions of people alive right now, there's only one you. And we need you. You're so valuable you don't even realize it. Do you feel that way? Why or why not?
13. How can our small group function as a team? What can we do for one another that will strengthen our unity?

As we close today, let's brainstorm  something we want to do together as a team (other than meeting here) that will help us strengthen our group.

TAKE:

Close in prayer, that each person would feel valued, included, and loved.

Verse for this week: 1 Corinthians 1:10

our ideas

WEEK 2: INTEGRITY

THINK: How many times a day do you need people around you to exhibit integrity? Imagine being on the center lane on a highway with a car in the right lane. They put on their right turn signal and you think they're getting off the exit. Instead they go left, directly in the path of your car. We need people to do what they say they're going to do, right? That's just one aspect of integrity. As you talk with your group, you'll discover other equally important aspects of integrity; a word that seems to be getting lost in the shuffle. Pray for your group of students.



TEACH: Let's start off today making some plans for a small group get together. What would we like to do together as a group? Get some frozen yogurt? Play some archery tag? Go on a hike? See a movie together? Let's talk about some ideas.

Now, let's imagine we got these plans all laid out. We got the time, location, and all the details worked out. Let's say that day came and that time came and you get your ride to drop you off on time. But you don't see anyone else from our group there. What would you say next time get got together for small group?

Doing what you say you're going to do is known as integrity. But there are other ingredients that go into having integrity. What do you think they are?



Today we're talking about integrity and if our small group is going to stay strong, we all have to have integrity. When you say something, you mean it. You stick to it.

TALK:

If you got your Bible, let's take a look at Proverbs 11:3.

Would someone read that for us? While they're reading that, everybody else write it down on a slip of paper. That's going to be a verse to read every day this week.

(By the way, who remembers last week's verse?)

1. So what does it mean to be "upright"? How can integrity be a "guide"?
2. Have you ever said something to someone and done something else? What was the result?
3. This verse (NIV) uses the word "duplicity". What does that word mean? How does duplicity wreck relationships? How can it affect our small group?
4. Have you ever been tempted to act one way at small group and act a different way when you're somewhere else? Why is that temptation so common?

Another aspect of integrity is....

*Being the same person
at different times.*

Have a volunteer read 2 Corinthians 8:21, then discuss:

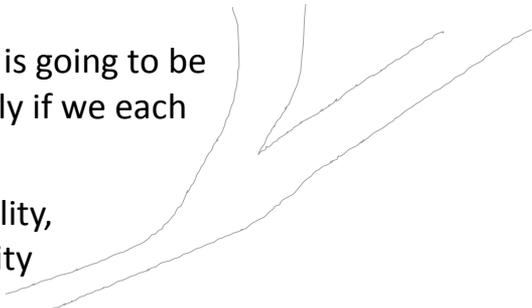
5. Think about a time when you did what was right, but it was a difficult thing to do. Why was it difficult?

Have someone else read Proverbs 12:22.

The heart of integrity is honesty. How does honesty strengthen our small group?

6. Would you rather have God “detest” your lying lips or “delight” in your truthful lips? Do you have any deception right now that needs forgiveness?

Let's read Proverbs 4:25-27. Have someone draw a path that has a fork in the road. On one side (as a group), write characteristics or habits that would help us stay on a firm path. On the other side, write some things that we shouldn't step on because of the “evil” that they represent.

7. Are we a group that is going to be one of integrity? Only if we each decide that we will.
 8. How will accountability, honestly, and integrity help make this the small group we all enjoy and benefit from?
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TAKE: Close in prayer together with a group commitment to integrity. Not only that we are honest with each other, but that we are the same people outside this group as we are inside.

WEEK 3: ME. MISSION. MINISTRY. MEMORIES

THINK: Up to this point, you've talked heavily about the group as a collective whole. But each person in the group must take ownership of their part and their own spiritual growth. This week's talk will focus in on questions that will help each individual student think through their own spiritual health.

TEACH: Welcome everybody. What's a good memory you have in your life so far? What made that such a special thing you remember? Was it who you were with? Where you were? What you were doing?

I don't want anyone to look back a year from now and say "Man, that was a wasted year in that small group." We've talked a lot about our group as a whole, but each person needs to take ownership as well. We are a small group of people who are part of a larger group called... *Southside Students...*

Southside Church...

*Followers of Jesus in Chesterfield...
the Kingdom of God!*

Never ever think you don't matter. You matter to God and you matter to all of us. When we get together and you're not here, we notice! We miss you!

Today we're going to talk about 4 "M" words:

Me Mission Ministry Memories

ME
MISSION
MINISTRY
MEMORIES

Everybody read Isaiah 41:10 at the same time.

While everyone is reading, try and count how many “I’s” and “you’s” are in this verse.

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

God is speaking to and through Isaiah in this passage. But He’s also speaking to you right now.

1. What does this verse do in your heart? Do you really believe it?
2. It’s been said that even if you were the only person on the planet to save, Jesus still would have come and did everything He did to save you. Would you say you have a personal, one-on-one friendship with God or is it more based on our small group?

Read Psalm 118:6.

3. This verse asks a question that’s actually more of a statement. What is it and how can making that statement help you stay close to God and stay strong every day?

Let’s talk about Mission.

4. What is a mission? Is it always good? What is your “mission” as it relates to school? To your family? To your friends? To God?

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, then discuss...

5. Who is writing here? What is he saying?

6. Based on Paul's strong words here, what do you think his mission is? Have you ever thought about what your life's mission is?



Think about this statement (by Wes Jackson) that was printed on a Starbucks cup:

"If your life's work can be accomplished in your lifetime, you're not dreaming big enough."

Paul seemed pretty clear about his "life's work", didn't he? He simply wanted to "win some".

7. Why do you think Paul didn't say "win all"?
8. Take the next few minutes and think about your own "mission" for your life. Create a statement that captures it, but feel free to work on it some more later. It can be a work in progress!

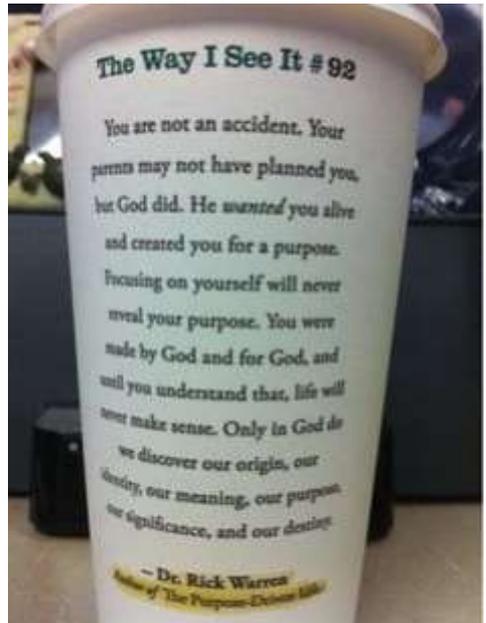
(Before moving on, read this other cup!)

Now, let's talk about "Ministry".

9. What comes to mind when you hear that word?
10. Do you consider yourself a "minister"? Why or why not?

**Read and discuss
2 Corinthians 3:6**

11. So, are all of us ministers or not?



Finally, we're going to talk about MEMORIES.

12. It's been said that memories make up who we are. What memories do you have that have shaped you as a person?
13. What is one memory you want to make during your lifetime? (Something you want to do, somewhere you want to go, some accomplishment, etc.)

Have a volunteer read Colossians 1:10.

14. What are the key verbs in this verse? Where are these things happening in your life? If they're not, what needs to be done to help them start happening?

Most people will live their lives with at least some regrets of what they did or didn't do. But the memories you collect along the way will make a deep impact on your sense of joy, your sense of self, and your view of God. So live a memory-making life!

TAKE: As you close, have students each choose ONE of the M's to think/read/pray more about this week. You might even give everyone a pack of M&Ms to remind them!

By the way, if you fill an M&M tube with quarters, it equals \$14. Think about that for your small group to raise \$ for missions!

You might also use the M&Ms as ice breaker questions. Here are some samples:



Green: What's something you really want to GO and do but you haven't yet

Yellow: What's one thing you're afraid of right now?

Red: What's something in our world that you would stop if you could?

Blue: When was the last time you were really sad? What was it about?

Orange: What is the most recent movie you've seen? Did you like it?

Brown: What is one BIG life event you've experienced?



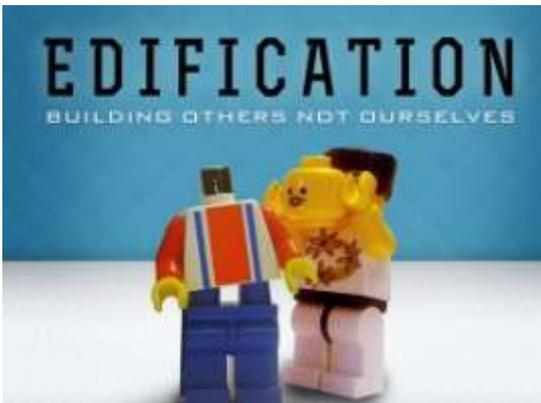
WEEK 4: EDIFICATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT

THINK: Edification is a word not used too much anymore. It may have to do with our self-absorbed culture. Or maybe its just too long to say. Not sure there's an emoticon for it yet either. But regardless, edification is an important part of any small group! When its absent, so are students. And rightfully so. Have you ever been somewhere where people seemed indifferent toward you? You probably don't enjoy it there. Imagine small group without edification! *Yikes!*

The word edification means “the instruction or improvement of a person morally or intellectually.” Other synonyms are: training, tutelage, & guidance. Sounds a bit like small group, huh?

As students arrive at small group this week, be

deliberate in personally saying something positive to every one of them individually. You'll reference it later.



TEACH:

Welcome everybody! Let's start off with a simple question: Why are you here? How many of you were here last week? Why did you come back this week? How many of you have not been here for any of our first 3 weeks? Why weren't you here? What happened?

There's a really powerful thing that everyone of us brings to our small group. It's one of the most powerful things humans have and it's something that almost always gets overlooked and unused. Can you guess what it might be?

It's called edification. Ever heard that word before?

To edify basically means to build someone. We are all surrounded daily by people who need to be built up.

FOR LEADERS:



I've got an app called "Periscope" Basically Periscope is a one-way video chat that broadcasts to anyone else on Periscope who chooses to watch. Those watching a broadcast can text short comments in, asking questions or sharing thoughts. It's certainly not a "Christian" app and of course there are pitfalls so discretion is important, but I've used it to simply try and spread encouragement and love to those who are struggling. It's amazing how many times I've heard a complete stranger say, ***"Thank you. I really needed that."***

I've never met a person who didn't at some point (probably right now) need to be built in some way. And the crazy thing is every person has the same opportunity to give it to anyone else around them.

When was the last time you went **OUT OF YOUR WAY** to build someone up?

TALK:

Have somebody read 1 Thessalonians 5:11, then ask:

1. If you're reading from the NIV, this verse starts with "Therefore". What question should you always ask when a verse starts with "Therefore"? (What's the Therefore there for?) So, what is the context here? What was said just prior to this verse that leads into it?
2. Who is someone who has encouraged you in your life? How have they done that? Who is someone in your life that needs encouragement? Will you do it?
3. What are some ideas for "building someone up"? What are common obstacles to doing that?

Read Ephesians 4:29, then discuss this...

4. What instruction is being given here?
5. How many times a day do you hear "unwholesome" talk? What is the #1 source of it? TV? Music? Others people? You?
6. Do you think its realistic to really live out this verse when so few people in our culture seem to do it?
7. Have you ever interacted with someone who was desperate for encouragement because they seemed so beat down? What did you do? Why?
8. This letter is written to the church in Ephesus by Paul. In other words, this is instruction to followers of Jesus. But do you see where is verse also includes people who aren't following Jesus? How is the way you talk and build up other part of your testimony?
9. What does "only" in this verse mean?

10. This verse also includes the words “*according to their needs*”. How can you know what someone’s needs are? What are needs that every person has? What are some examples of possible individual needs someone might have that’s unique to them?

As we close today, we want to commit together to be the strongest small group we can possible be; first for each person’s edification and encouragement, but also for the benefit of those who aren’t here. Because every time we get together as a small group we have the potential of shaping the life of every person in our group. AND we have the potential to build each other up so that the rest of our week we can shine God’s love to other people.

TAKE:

Okay, so we’ve been through these 4 weeks of talking about what it means to be a strong, purposeful, fun, and encouraging small group. What other adjectives do you think should describe us?

Is there anything else we should agree on as a group that we haven’t discussed yet? _____
