



connection  
groups

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## 11–12 LEADER MANUAL

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# Important '11-'12 CG Calendar Dates

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## 2011

### August

- 20—LC 5-7pm (Chapel)
- 21—1st Encounter Service
- 24—Veteran CG Leader Training 7:30 (Overflow)
- 31—Rookie CG Leader Training 7:30 (Overflow)

### September

- 11—CG Launch during Encounter
- 18—Sermon Based Curriculum
- 25—Sermon Based Curriculum

### October

- 2—Halftime Huddle (FH)
- 23—Sermon Based Curriculum
- 23—Deadline to Choose CG Service Project
- 30—Sermon Based Curriculum

### November

- 6—Sermon Based Curriculum
- 20—Halftime Huddle (FH)
- 27-1—Final CG Meetings for Semester

## 2012

### January

- 8—1st Spring Encounter, CG's resume
- 8—LC 8-10 (FH)

### February

- \*12—Halftime Huddle (FH)

### March

- 10-18—Spring Break (groups do not meet)
- \*25—Halftime Huddle (FH)
- 25—Deadline to Choose CG Service Project

### April

- 15—LC 8-10 (FH)
- 23-27—Final CG Meetings for Year

\*subject to change

# Choosing Curriculum for Your Group

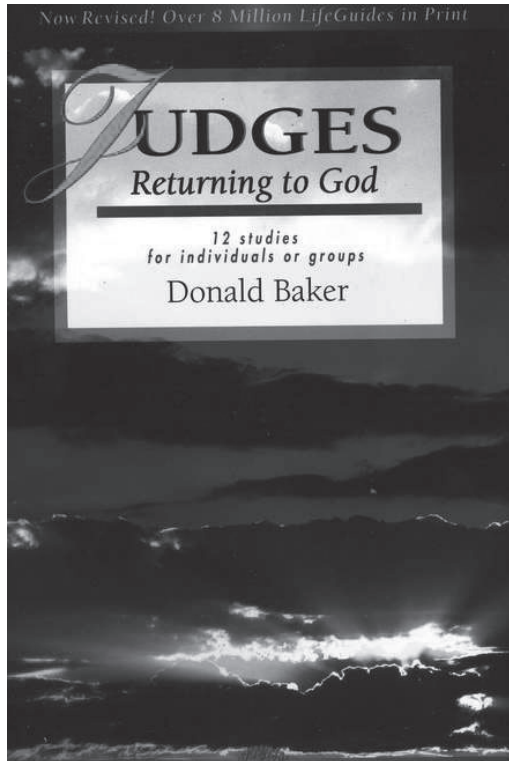
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## HERE ARE THE 8 KEYS TO CHOOSING CURRICULUM:

1. Always be planning ahead for which books from the curriculum bookshelf you would want to study. Familiarize yourself with the topics and book studies.
2. Always be open to choosing something that will stretch your faith as well as your students. Just because you're not fluent with a topic or study doesn't mean you can't teach it.
3. Consider letting your group be involved in the decision. Put it to a vote or just ask for their opinions. This gives students ownership in the group.
4. Read excerpts from each study on web sites such as ChristianBook.com or Amazon.com.
5. Go to Mardel (local Christian bookstore, near Jason's Deli) and peruse the books for yourself.
6. During group discussions, listen for clues that might lead you to another topic or book study. (i.e., "What does it mean that Moses was filled with the spirit of the Lord?" might lead you to do the study on the Holy Spirit)
7. Ask around to other leaders about the studies they are doing. Ask their opinions on each study and get recommendations from each other.
8. Connection Group Curriculum must come from the approved CG Curriculum Bookshelf.



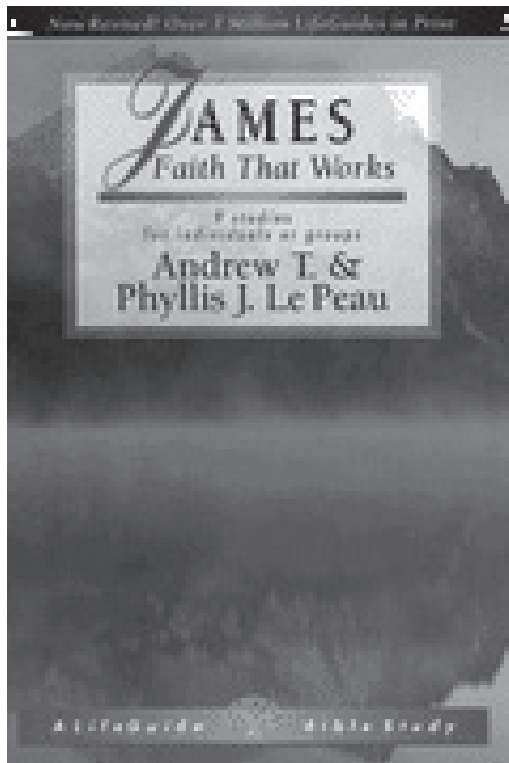
# CG Curriculum Bookshelf



**Judges**

## CONTENTS

Getting the Most Out of Judges	5
<b>1. Judges 2:6-23</b> Caught in a Cycle of Misery	9
<b>2. Judges 3:12-30</b> Breaking Free From Sin's Oppression	12
<b>3. Judges 4</b> Who Can I Trust?	16
<b>4. Judges 6:1-32</b> Overcoming a Poor Self-Image	20
<b>5. Judges 6:33-7:22</b> Changing Your Doubts to Faith	24
<b>6. Judges 9</b> The Importance of Character	28
<b>7. Judges 11:1-14, 28-12:7</b> Conquering the Pain in Your Past	32
<b>8. Judges 13</b> Preparing to Serve God	36
<b>9. Judges 14-15</b> Our Conflict with the World	40
<b>10. Judges 16</b> Accepting Your Spiritual Gifts	44
<b>11. Judges 17-18</b> The Danger of False Religions	47
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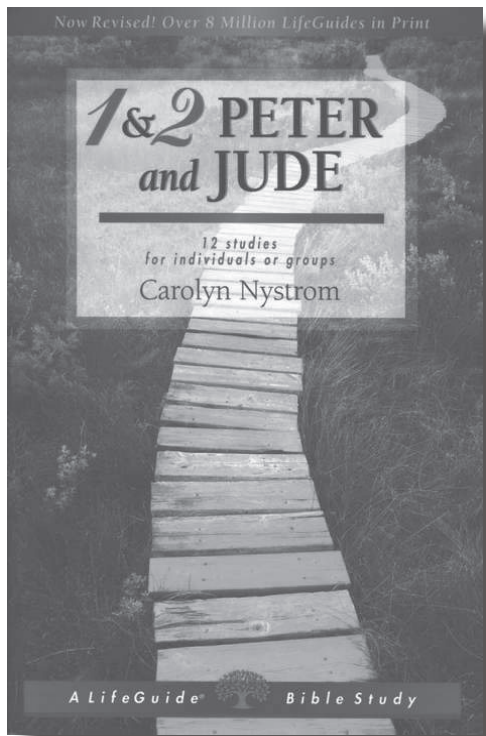


**James**

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<b>1. James 1:1-18</b> Dependable or Double-minded	10
<b>2. James 1:19-27</b> Words, Words, Words	13
<b>3. James 2:1-13</b> Who's the Judge?	16
<b>4. James 2: 14-26</b> Just Works	19
<b>5. James 3:1-12</b> On Preventing Forest Fires	22
<b>6. James 3:13-4:10</b> Makers and Breakers of Peace	26
<b>7. James 4:11-17</b> Getting Perspective	29
<b>8. James 5:1-11</b> What Awaits	33
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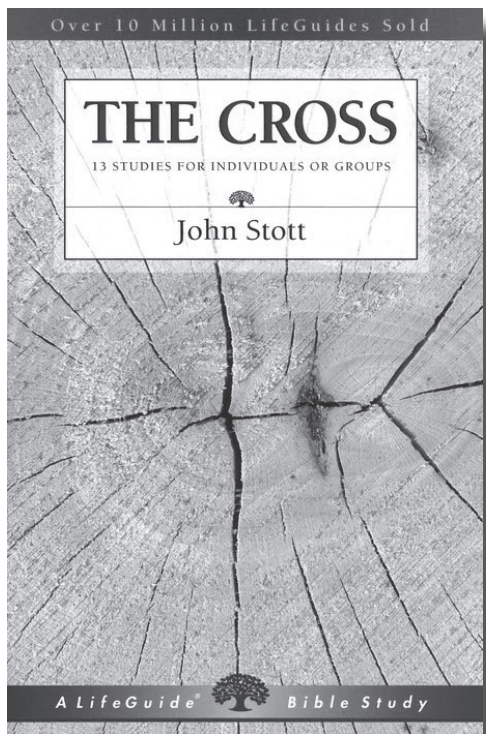
# CG Curriculum Bookshelf



## 1 & 2 Peter and Jude

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<b>2. 1 Peter 1:13-25</b> Called to Be Different	14
<b>3. 1 Peter 2:1-12</b> Do I Want to Grow Up?	19
<b>4. 1 Peter 2:13-3:7</b> In His Steps	24
<b>5. 1 Peter 3:8-22</b> If I'm Living Right, Then Why Do I Hurt So Much?	28
<b>6. 1 Peter 4</b> Christians at Risk	32
<b>7. 1 Peter 5</b> TLC for Trying Times	36
<b>8. 2 Peter 1:1-11</b> The Long Way Home	40
<b>9. 2 Peter 1:12-21</b> If I Should Die...	44
<b>10. 2 Peter 2</b> Follow Which Leader?	48
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<b>12. Jude</b> The Twisted Fate of Twisted Faith	57
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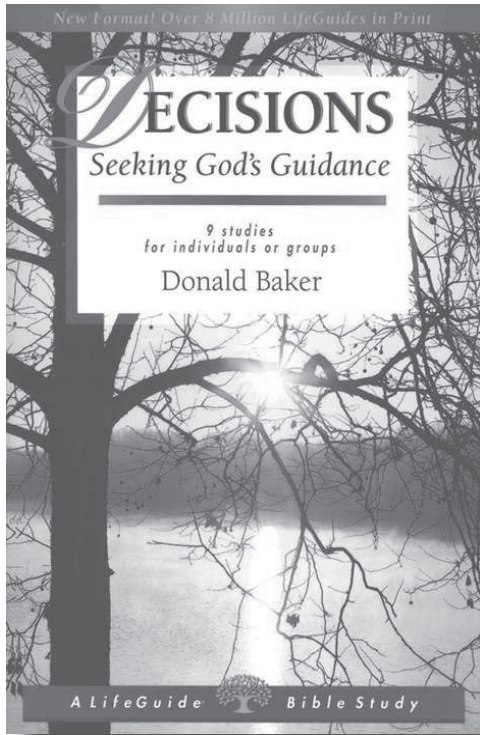


## The Cross

### CONTENTS

Getting the Most out of The Cross	5
<b>1. The Centrality of the Cross</b> Isaiah 53	9
<b>2. Why Did Christ Die?</b> Matthew 27:11-26	13
<b>3. Looking Below the Surface</b> Mark 14:12-26	17
<b>4. The Problem of Forgiveness</b> Romans 2:1-11	21
<b>5. Satisfaction for Sin</b> Romans 3:19-26	25
<b>6. Ransomed by God</b> Hebrews 9:11-28	28
<b>7. Justified</b> Titus 3:3-8	32
<b>8. The Revelation of God</b> John 1:1-18	36
<b>9. The Conquest of Evil</b> Colossians 2:6-15	40
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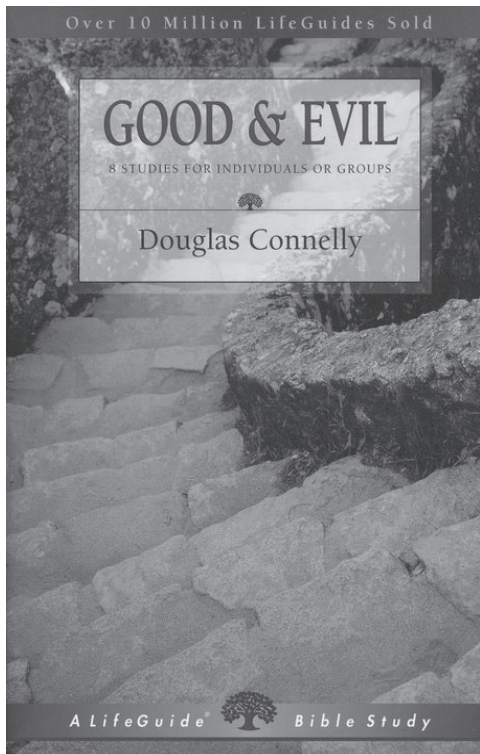
# CG Curriculum Bookshelf



## Decisions

### CONTENTS

Getting the Most out of Decisions	5
<b>1. Why Is God Silent?</b> Isaiah 58	9
<b>2. Hard &amp; Painful Decisions</b> Acts 20:17-21:14	13
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<b>4. The Anatomy of a Wise Decision</b> Proverbs 3:1-26	21
<b>5. Good Advice</b> 2 Timothy 3:10-4:8	25
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<b>7. How Does God Speak?</b> John 14:15-27	33
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<b>2. Dealing with Disaster</b> Job 1	13
<b>3. Disability and the Goodness of God</b> John 9:1-7	17
<b>4. Struggling with Sickness</b> James 5:13-18	21
<b>5. Our Enemy in the World</b> Revelation 12:7-12	25
<b>6. The Enemy Within</b> Romans 7:14-25	29
<b>7. Overcoming Death's Grip</b> 2 Corinthians 5:1-10	33
<b>8. Finding Hope in a Terrorized World</b> Psalm 46	37
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# Bible Study Resources

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These tools can help you prepare for weekly sessions, answer pressing questions from students, or aid you in your everyday Bible reading. They are all completely free and easily accessible via the internet. This is obviously not comprehensive, but these are a few really good ones that I recommend:

## **Bible.CrossWalk.com**

Find most any Bible study resource you need here. Dictionaries, Concordances, Commentaries, and more are available to you here.

## **BibleGateway.com**

A great Bible reference tool.

## **BiblePlan.org**

Develop a customized plan for reading the Bible.

## **CARM.org**

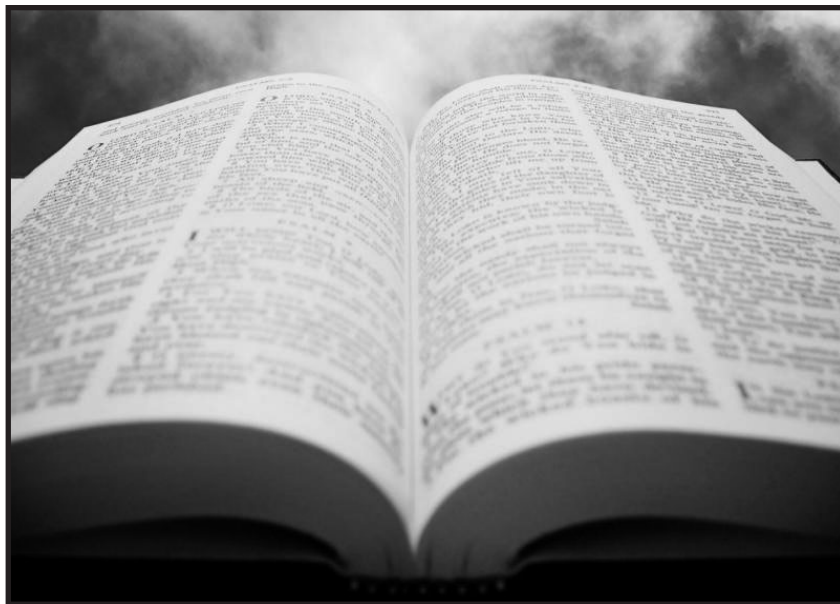
A 501(c)3 nonprofit Christian apologetics organization whose purpose is to equip Christians with good information on doctrine, various religious groups (Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.), cults, Evolution, New Age, and related subjects.

## **DesiringGod.com**

John Piper's internet home-base. You can find sermons, study tools, articles, and more. Visit the Resource Library link at the top of the page.

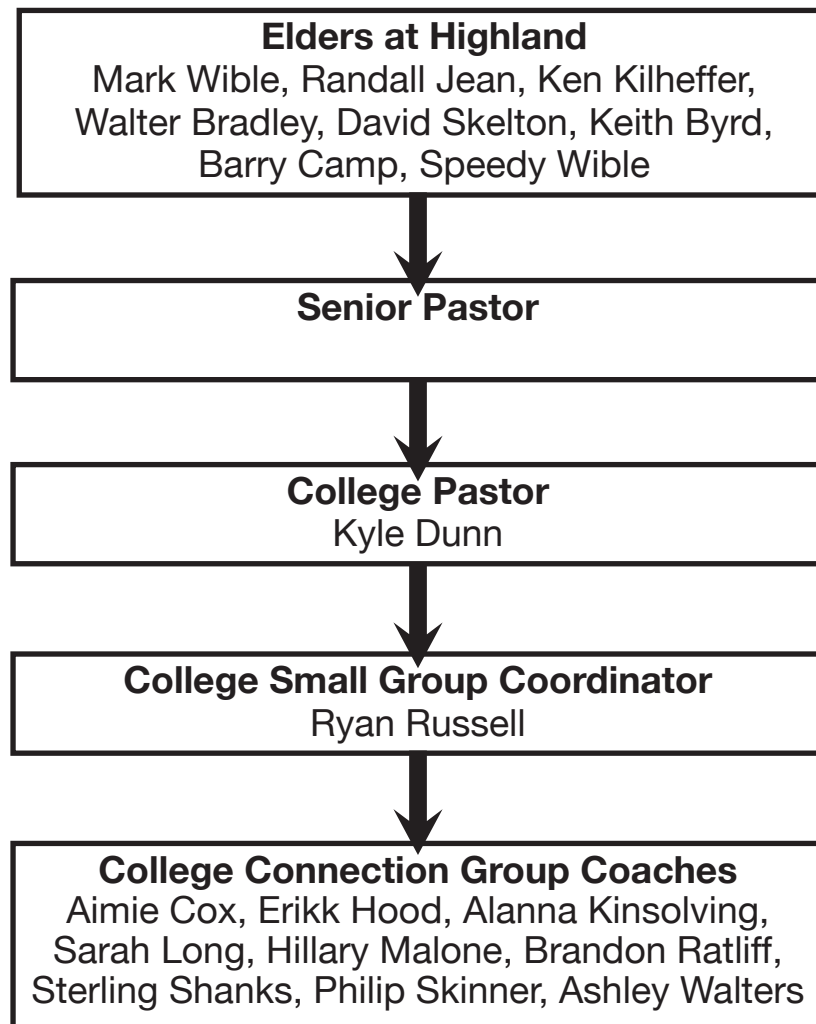
## **GodRules.net**

A web site for more theological study—offers many different standpoints and doctrinal issues, not just ours.



# Highland College Connection Groups Leadership Chart

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## IMPORTANT NOTES:

1. Questions about yours or other college Small Groups are most effectively and efficiently handled through the above ladder, starting at the bottom. That's the way we're set up to help you, and we want to help the best we can.
2. Leadership decisions beyond those explicit in your "Leader Job Description and Expectations" need to be communicated with and approved by the Small Group Coordinator, who then may take it to the College Pastor, and so on.
3. Remember that your group is not its own entity! Your group plays a vital role in Highland Baptist Church's mission of helping people follow Jesus. Don't lose sight of the big picture.

# Connection Group Leader Covenant

The College Ministry @ Highland Baptist Church

Fall 2010- Spring 2011

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## CHARACTER QUALITIES FOR LEADERS

- Consistently maturing as a disciple of Jesus
- Seeking growth as a leader
- Loyalty to your group
- Willingness to hold your group to group standards
- Willingness to administrate and delegate responsibility
- Ability to listen
- Integrity – public and private
- Love for others
- Humility

## JOB DESCRIPTION

- Commit to group leadership at Highland for one school year (renewable)
- Be a member of Highland Baptist Church
- Administrate all aspects of a group's experience
- Enable the group to build friendship and community
- Create and maintain a safe group environment that promotes vulnerability and confidentiality
- Lead your group under Highland's "closed/feeder" small group philosophy
- Pray daily for yourself, your church, and your small group members
- Participate in all training sessions as scheduled by the Small Group Coordinator
- Meet weekly with your Connection Group
- Choose and lead curriculum from the CG Curriculum Bookshelf
- Spend at least 5 hrs./wk. preparing for, leading, and building friendships with your small group
- Meet weekly with your Co-Leader, if applicable
- Maintain accountable relationships with your Small Group Coordinator and CG Coach





### **COVENANT AGREEMENT:**

I understand that taking the role of Connection Group Leader requires a substantial level of commitment from me. I will be accountable to the Small Group Coordinator and the College Pastor as a spiritual leader in the college ministry. *I hereby covenant* with the College Ministry @ Highland Baptist Church, the College Pastor, the Small Group Coordinator, and the CG Coaches to maintain the above stated Character Qualities and fulfill the above stated Job Description with complete integrity. And finally, **I will not let this scare me because I know that the staff at Highland loves me unconditionally and will always operate with grace.**

**Name (print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT:**

1. A Covenant Agreement is like a spiritual contract. By signing this document, you are allowing us to hold you accountable to your commitment to God.
2. This document is for you to know exactly what Highland Baptist Church expects from its spiritual leaders. The book of James says that those in positions of leadership will be held to higher standards than others. But it's a blessing!
3. This is only an example copy for your reference. Ryan will retain the signed copy.

# Hosting Your Group

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## WHY IS HOSPITALITY IMPORTANT?

Making your CG meeting place a warm and open environment is a must. Comfort inspires discussion, trust, friendship, and vulnerability. No matter how good a facilitator you are, a group in discomfort will not respond positively.

## WHERE SHOULD A GROUP MEET?

1. Ideally, groups meet in apartments or houses near campus. If your group is too large for your space (i.e. most Co-ed groups), discuss with Ryan an acceptable meeting place (possibly the college house or other available space at Highland or Baylor).
2. As good as it might sound, your group should not have a group meeting in restaurants, coffee shops, etc. You need be able to control your environment.
3. Try to choose a meeting place that can be the same every week for the whole year. Predictability is a precept for Connection Groups. Ryan is more than willing to help you with this.

## WHAT IF YOU CO-LEAD?

1. Decide before your group begins in September what your meeting place will be. You'll need at least 15 seats each week.
2. Commit to working together to be hospitable (see 5 keys below).
3. Don't expect your Co-Leader to know what you expect – communicate clearly with each other and plan ahead.

## 5 KEYS TO HOSPITALITY

1. **CLEAN, CLEAN, CLEAN!** Clean your meeting space so that it looks presentable and comfortable.
2. **Let your roommates know when you are having CG so they will not interrupt.** Put a sign on the outside door so that if they show up and forget, they can be as quiet as possible as they come in.
3. **Make sure that the temperature fits the season, turn A/C or heat on 1 hour early.**
4. **Have food available and ready at least 15 minutes before hand.**
  - a. **This is something that you can pass off to members after the first week.** Create a sign-up sheet to pass around for the semester's food and drink people, then shoot that weeks volunteers a reminder e-mail a few days before your meeting.
  - b. **If you are up to it, an old trick to making people feel good when they come in is to have some fresh-baked sweets in the oven or freshly made. The aroma creates a major positive vibe!**
5. **Have some music playing as your group comes in.**

# Inviting Your Students to CG Meetings

## Your First Group Meeting

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### WHAT DO I NEED TO BE PREPARED TO INVITE MY STUDENTS?

1. Map and directions to your meeting location (directions for phone call, map for e-mail reinforcement).
2. A plan for what to say when you get your student on the phone – if you're awkward they will be, too.
  - a. Your excitement for that person needs to be evident in that phone call.
  - b. Invite them to your group instead of informing them they are in your group.
  - c. Have a script-like list in front of you to make sure you cover all your bases with each person.
  - d. If you co-lead a group, plan with your co-leader a similar script.
  - e. If you co-lead a group, guys call the guys and girls call the girls.

### WHEN WILL I KNOW WHO IS IN MY GROUP?

1. This year, we will have one big CG Launch that will happen during Encounter on September 11. You will find out who is in your group shortly after.

### WHAT NEEDS TO BE INCLUDED IN MY INVITATION PHONE CALL?

1. Invitation
2. Type of Group (co-ed, same-gender)
3. Classification of Group (freshman, sophomore, etc.)
4. Day and Time of Group Meeting
5. Directions over phone to meeting place
6. Confirmation e-mail will be sent with supplemental map
7. Where to park when they get there
8. Remind about bringing Bible/pen/note pad
9. Your name and classification

### AFTER YOUR FIRST MEETING:

Your group is a Feeder Group:

1. What this means is that no matter what time of year a student signs up to be in a CG, I can call on you to invite them to your group.
2. Feeder groups can still be predictable, because you can expect to be adding someone to your group at some point during the year. Some groups will be asked to add more than others – it just depends on the student's preferred day/time, their classification, and the type of group they prefer.
3. Use the same invitation criteria as above.

# Finding Help for the Task of Leading

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## 2 CONSISTENT TRENDS IN CG LEADERSHIP :

1. 100% of CG Leaders occasionally need help with their group.
2. 99% of CG Leaders do not seek out help for their group.

- **This year, I want to break these trends.**
- **We want students to have the best small group Bible study possible because we believe they are the best tool we offer to help them follow Jesus.**
- **As leaders, we must practice humility and learn from each other.**
- **What kind of help do we need?** Bible study help, group planning help, troubled student help, hospitality pointers, creative group-time ideas, creative outsidegroup-time ideas, just to name a few.
- **So, we have created 3 explicit avenues of help for Leaders:**

## AVENUES OF HELP FOR CG

1. Small Group Coaches - A coach is an experienced leader, an older student or adult, and well-qualified advice-giver. Each coach is assigned specific leaders to support throughout the school year, but all are available to you if you should need them. They provide ideas, encouragement, accountability, troubleshooting, prayer, and more.
2. Small Group Coordinator – it needs to be said here in writing that Ryan’s phone line and e-mail address are always wide open for you. Please do not hesitate to call or e-mail. Not everything can wait until the next Monthly Update.
3. [cgleader.wordpress.com](http://cgleader.wordpress.com) - this blog was created for equipping, edification, encouragement, and challenging of CG Leaders. There are some helpful posts located here.



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# Closed Group Philosophy

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There are two main types of groups. The questions that separate them are, “What is the purpose of the small group?” “Can I bring my friends to group?” and “What’s the first step of involvement in this church?”

**OPEN GROUPS.** The purpose of an open group is numerical growth and outreach. They seek to expand their group as time goes on, often hoping to multiply the group when it gets too big. They often leave an open chair, whether literally or symbolically, to remind the group they need to be bringing people in. Since members are bringing in guests, many participants’ first interaction with the church is through the small group, and from the small group, they are encouraged to be involved in the larger church services.

**CLOSED GROUPS.** The purpose of a closed group is spiritual growth and community. Members are not encouraged to bring their friends (unless they go to the same church and need a small group), but to focus on growing existing relationships with others in the group. Closed groups are commitment based. Participants were already involved in the larger church services and joined a small group as a second step. Closed group members are still encouraged to be outreach minded, but through avenues other than the small group.

We use **closed groups**. We sometimes refer to these as **closed/feeder** groups since students are signing up for groups throughout the year, and we are feeding them into your group to build upon your Day 1 roster. This is still a closed group system because the additions come from those within the church instead of outside.

You’ll probably get this question at some point this year: “Can I bring my friend to CG?” Here are the guidelines:

- Is this a friend that goes to Highland and wants to join a CG? If so, sure (as long as you’re OK with adding another person to your group). If not, sorry but no.
- It may feel awkward keeping people from coming to a church small group, but they will understand once you remind them you’re a closed group and encourage them to bring that person to Encounter instead. Making exceptions creates a slippery slope.

# Sparking Discussion in Your Group

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- Everybody wants to have great discussion in a group. But what is good discussion?
- Good discussion requires involvement, deep thought, and an intentional facilitator.
- **Remember** – Students lives can only be impacted and affected by the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. We as leaders just need to work to create the optimal environment for the Spirit to work.

## **HERE ARE SOME FACILITATING GOALS FOR SPARKING GOOD DISCUSSION:**

1. Work to engage and involve everyone in the discussion.
2. Challenge students to internalize the topic – how does it relate to them personally?
3. Work to create a safe environment for vulnerability.
4. Make sure everyone who gives input feels valued and affirmed.
5. Avoid advice giving as a leader. During a discussion, make it your goal to form everything you want to say into a question.
6. Make sure the main topic stays the main topic. Think of the main point like a tree trunk where all the branches (discussion) stem from the trunk and draw nourishment from the trunk.

## **THE KEY TO FACILITATING GREAT DISCUSSION IS ASKING GREAT QUESTIONS. HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS:**

1. Ask open-ended questions.
  - a. Questions with one-word or one-sentence answers kill discussion.
  - b. A good question might be, “Why do you think commitment is necessary for a successful small group?”
2. Ask good follow-up questions.
  - a. When a student gives an answer, use it as a launching pad for more discussion on the topic.
  - b. E.g. “That’s a great thought, but can you unpack what you mean when you say that discipleship requires commitment?” Or, “What makes you say that?”
3. Don’t be afraid to stir the pot.
  - a. Great discussion happens when there is questioning among your group. Don’t avoid the topics that are “debatable.” Be ready, though, to manage the discussion when it gets heavy like this. Refer to the section of this manual entitled “Answering the Hard Questions” for help.
4. Ask application questions.
  - a. E.g. “How does this concept change your perspective of discipleship or God?”
  - b. E.g. “How will you change your attitudes or actions this week because of this Scripture?”

# Group Service

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**EACH CONNECTION GROUP WILL DO ONE GROUP SERVICE PROJECT PER SEMESTER. THE PURPOSE IS**

- 1. To bless our community by serving them**
- 2. To bond your group through serving together**

Connection Group leaders will be responsible for choosing both the date of the service and what the group will do. Here are some ideas, but you are welcome to find other opportunities.

1. Highland Care Center 254-754-8923
2. Mission Waco 254-753-4900
3. Highland Senior Adult Ministry (Lynn Hoffman, Senior Adult Coordinator) 254-754-0335

There is a deadline for each semester (see CG calendar) by which leaders must tell Ryan their project and the date. Groups may serve any time during the semester, but your project must be approved by Ryan beforehand.

1. Serve with just your group or team with another group!
2. Serve during or outside of your group time...just pick a time that works best for your group!

The week after you serve, spend some time during your group talking about your experience.



# Managing Different Student Personalities in Your Group

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- As a facilitator, you need to manage the different personalities in your group. Sometimes it's necessary to suppress a personality and other times you have to work to draw someone into the conversation in order to have a productive and enjoyable group discussion. It's important to remember that the Holy Spirit changes peoples lives, but you are tasked with creating the optimal environment.
- Here are a few common group personality types and some practical ways to manage them:

## **1. The Dominant Personality – this person is always the first to answer questions and needs to get his/her two cents into every conversation.**

- a. If this gets out of hand during group, don't be afraid to remind the entire group that everyone needs to contribute in order to have the best discussion. This works for the non-talkers, too. A good way to say it is that if there are 10 people in the circle, everyone needs to contribute 10%.
- b. If you discern that this can wait until after group-time, have a conversation with that person 1 on 1. Tell them that you need to work on pulling more people into the conversation and you would like them to help you. Ask them to try and be the last person to give an answer, and work out a signal that lets them know to wait until others have answered. Give them ownership in a positive action, not corrective discipline.

## **2. The Non-Talker – this is the opposite of dominant. This person comes to group to listen and leave. They are too timid to interject their own thoughts, especially with the other types of personalities in the circle. Chances are, they have really great things to say, you just have to draw them out intentionally.**

- a. This is easily remedied by asking specific people questions. Don't give them an option. Let them know the entire group needs their input and they are valued.
- b. Make sure to affirm these people as often as you can. They need your encouragement since you're asking them to put themselves on the line by speaking up.

## **3. The Topic-Turner – it doesn't matter what you are talking about, this person has no filter and will bring up a completely off-topic subject. These people love tangents, and they often start with long stories.**

- a. If you're not careful, tangents will eat up your group time. This is where "facilitator" comes into play. You lead and manage time, so don't be afraid to step in.
- b. Ask them to save their question or topic for after the current discussion.

## **4. The Bully – this person tends to make slightly insensitive comments here and there. They love to be the center of attention. They are similar to the dominant personality, but are usually less interested in saying right answers.**

- a. It's important in these situations to be affirming to the others in the group. Let them know that group is a safe environment by quieting the bully. Your group members need to know they can trust you to maintain security and safety in a vulnerable environment.

# When and How to Refer a Student to a Professional

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- Every once in a while you will encounter a student who struggles with issues beyond your level of comfort and competence.
- It isn't a question of your spiritual depth, life wisdom, friendship, or leadership ability—it's a question of professional training.
- Sometimes it is necessary to refer a student to see a professional counselor.
- Counseling is not a realm exclusive to “messed-up” or crazy people. In truth, most of us could benefit from a session or two with a pro.
- Most people who benefit from counseling are at a place when their thinking patterns are tangled and knotted and unhealthy. Counselors are trained to ask questions, dig, and expertly untangle the knotted thinking patterns.

## **AS A CONNECTION GROUP LEADER, YOU SHOULD PRAYERFULLY...**

### **1. Listen and watch for indicators that it might be appropriate to refer one of your students. For example:**

- a. You have visited one-on-one with a student for three meetings and you seem to be covering the same ground.
- b. The student brings up a topic that is “over your head”—e.g., “How do I stop having homosexual thoughts....”
- c. The student brings up a topic that you are not comfortable discussing.
- d. You observe that even after one-on-one discussions, the student is sliding toward self-destruction.
- e. The student indicates or even hints at thoughts of suicide or something criminal.

## **IF YOU BELIEVE A REFERRAL IS NEEDED...**

### **1. Take an intermediate step before telling the student, and before contacting a professional.**

- a. If you tell a student they need to see a counselor, they could have a negative reaction. There is a right way and a wrong way to bring it up.
- b. STEP 1 – contact Ryan and get his feedback.
- c. It could be that the person just needs to meet with a college staff member ...and not a professional.
- d. If you suspect that a professional is needed, it is helpful to discover if such a specialist is actually available in Waco before offering it—Ryan can help you.
- e. There are different types of counselors—Ryan can help you steer the students to one with a Christ-centered approach.
- f. When you confer with Ryan, protect the student's identity—unless it is a life threatening or suicidal or criminal situation.
- g. Do not talk to anyone else about the student—go to Ryan first. Gossip among other group leaders or friends can be destructive to the Body of Christ.

## **IF YOU AND RYAN AGREE THAT COUNSELING IS NEEDED...**

Get the contact information from Ryan and pass it along to the student.

## **HERE ARE SOME BASICS WHEN RECOMMENDING COUNSELING...**

1. The way to do this is to tell the student that you have been worried about them, that you asked Ryan (but you didn't share their name), and Ryan helped you identify someone who might be an encouragement to them.
2. Ask them just to try one appointment—it's not a long-term commitment.
3. Ask them if they would like you or someone else to ride with them to the counselor's office (but not sit in on session).
4. Encourage them to share their struggle with their parents.
5. Mention that professional counseling has a cost, but most insurance companies cover it with just a small co-payment.
6. Comfort them, that if they cannot afford it (usually around \$50 per session), that Highland would be happy to bless them by paying for a limited number of sessions.
7. Hold them accountable—say, "Can I call you in a couple of days and find out if you've made an appointment?"
8. Once they attend a session, encourage them for stepping out to try something that might make a difference.
9. Do not ask them to talk about what was discussed in the session.
10. Never discuss any of these matters in front of your group.
11. Bring these matters up one-on-one, and always meet in a public venue if possible.

## **WHAT IF THEY ARE RESISTANT TO THE IDEA OF COUNSELING?**

1. Do not press them or guilt them.
2. If the situation is not critical, wait a couple of weeks and suggest it again.
3. However, it is appropriate to courteously decline their request to meet one-on-one for further talks on the same subject until they have tried a counselor.

## **WHAT ARE SOME TOPICAL INDICATORS YOU SHOULD BE AWARE OF?**

1. Suicide
2. Criminal tendencies
3. Physical Abuse
4. Sexual Abuse
5. Sexual Addictions
6. Drug/Alcohol Abuse

# Transitioning from Fall to Spring with Excellence (Freshman Groups)

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## **VULNERABLE TRANSITION SPOTS FOR FRESHMAN GROUPS:**

**1. Thanksgiving Break** – by this time if you haven't communicated with your group about sticking with Highland and CG's for the Spring semester, it probably won't happen. Most freshman are focused on Christmas break already and about 30-40% of them will be considering the Greek Life which includes fall parties and rush-like events in the late fall. Make it a point to say something every week at your CG meeting about how the group is a one-semester commitment and they need to start thinking about whether they want to continue for the Spring semester.

**2. But I can't meet on that day anymore!** – I recommend sticking to your guns about the same day you already meet on from semester to semester. Switching day and time is too confusing, and always leads to more people dropping/fading out of your group. If you have one or two students who cannot for any reason meet on that day anymore, recommend joining another group that meets on their preferred day. Seriously, it's worth it! You are a leader, not a group-pleaser; if you lead them—they will follow.

**3. Spring Greek Rush** – once your group makes it into the Spring, the Greek life will start to entice many of your members. Do not lose heart – continue your meetings and speak freely about the importance of commitment and community. Encourage them to speak honestly with you about their new intentions with CG, because they are probably different from the ones they told you in the Fall. Do not give up on meeting together as some are in the habit of doing!!! Push through and be the example of commitment to them!

## **KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

1. Freshmen never have a plan or a schedule – they're just feeling things out.
2. Communicate early and often.
3. Meet on the same day of the week both semesters!
4. Push through and exemplify commitment – believe me, they need to see it from you first!

# Transitioning from Fall to Spring with Excellence (Upperclassmen Groups)

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- Upperclassmen are a different breed. They know the schedules, the down time, the busyness, and they're usually committed to way too many things.
- The key to transitioning well with upperclassmen is communication – and lots of it!

## **VULNERABLE TRANSITION SPOTS FOR UPERCLASSMEN GROUPS:**

**1. Thanksgiving Break** – by this time, most upperclassmen are completely scared by upcoming finals for classes that you wouldn't even know what to do with (e.g. "Vibrations" – what?!).

- a. Be very clear with your group about your meeting schedule.
- b. It might be a good idea to send them a copy of our CG Schedule.

**2. But I can't meet on that day anymore!** – I recommend sticking to your guns about the same day you already meet on from semester to semester. Switching day and time is too confusing, and always leads to more people dropping/fading out of your group. If you have one or two students who cannot for any reason meet on that day anymore, recommend joining another group that meets on their preferred day. Seriously, it's worth it! You are a leader, not a group-pleaser; if you lead them—they will follow.

**3. Sing** – Beginning the Spring semester, you will hear the phrase "Sing practice" way too many times. If you're not careful and intentional, Sing can steal people from your group. The truth about Sing that no one talks about is that most people don't have to be at every practice! Encourage your students to be open about their priorities with their Sing Chair and they will usually find grace (e.g. "Sorry, but I can't practice on Tuesday nights for this month because I'm previously committed to my Bible Study that meets then."). Remind your students early and often that it's not a question of their organization, it's a question of your student's priorities and commitment. Start talking about this with your Sing students before the Spring semester.

## **KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

1. Upperclassmen are usually highly organized and highly over-committed. It's okay to challenge them to reprioritize.
2. Communicate early and often – your commitment will spark theirs.
3. Meet on the same day both semesters!
4. Be willing to have tough conversations. Every one of us needs them to keep us committed.

# What if My Students Aren't Coming?

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**THERE ARE BASICALLY 2 PRINCIPLES TO AVOIDING ATTRITION IN YOUR GROUP. THEY ARE OUTLINED HERE.**

**1. Use “commitment” language.**

- a. Connection Groups are based on commitment, so this won't be anything out of the ordinary. Your students need you to talk up the level of commitment to the group. They will respond to what you make of it. If you make it a big deal, they will. If you use passive language, they will respond passively.
- b. It is always okay for Connection Group leaders to use language like “expect,” “need,” and “anticipate” when referring to CG weekly attendance.

**2. Establish consistent communication through multiple mediums.**

- a. Your students are most likely disorganized or highly organized but overcommitted. They need you to send them reminder e-mails, Facebook messages, connect with them on the phone every once in a while, or even send random text messages to them about CG (i.e. “I'm excited about CG on Monday night, see you there!”).
- b. Don't swamp your students with reminders – but nudge your way into their life a little bit. This is a method of exemplifying your commitment to them.

**BUT WHAT IF YOU PRACTICE THESE PRINCIPLES AND STUDENTS STILL DON'T COME AND DON'T RETURN PHONE CALLS OR E-MAILS? HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS:**

1. Put the ball in their court. Send them an e-mail that says to them you love them and want them to come to group, but you've noticed their absence and wonder if they are still able to commit. Ask them straight up, “Do you still want to be a part of this group? I won't think less of you either way.” Only do this after you have exhausted the other suggestions.
2. Ask questions that express your concern about their spiritual lives (i.e. “I've noticed you haven't been to CG in a while and I can't seem to get in touch – is there something going on in your life that you'd like to talk about in private?”) This may just have to be something you leave in an e-mail inbox and hope they respond.
3. Never tell someone they will be “kicked-out” of group if they don't come.
4. Whatever the circumstance, operate with grace and love. These will be the characteristics that win students back into groups or at least give them a clear picture of Christ.

# Answering the Hard Questions

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One inevitable aspect of small group leadership is that you will be asked questions that you have no idea how to even begin to answer.

“Can God create a rock big enough that He Himself cannot move?”

“Do you believe angels are on earth watching over us?”

“Why isn’t the Apocrypha (Deuterocanon) a part of the Protestant Bible, but still is a part of the Orthodox Bible (Septuagint)? Didn’t the first century Christians use the Septuagint?”

## **THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT YOU DON’T HAVE TO KNOW HOW TO ANSWER THEM IMMEDIATELY. BUT YOU MUST DEAL WITH THEM—SO HOW?**

- 1. Validate the question** – students need to feel like their questions, no matter how easy or hard, are accepted in your group. Also realize that validating one person’s question makes the others in the group more comfortable. A statement as simple as, “That’s a great question...” suffices. Every question is a potential growth opportunity for you and your group.
- 2. Respond with humility** – even if you could answer a question with great detail, don’t. This is your chance to spark discussion in your group. If the question is worth pursuing, open it up to the entire group BEFORE giving your own response. No matter what, though—don’t act like a know-it-all. They are not there to hear your rants or biases.
- 3. Be a team player** – If you co-lead, ask your co-leader if they have any thoughts on the matter before voicing your own.
- 4. Postpone your answer** – Ask for permission to research the question a bit. Use the resources listed in your Leader Manual to find something out about the topic and to have something tangible to bring back to the next meeting. If you don’t find anything there, or you want some guidance, get in touch a college staff member. If you choose this tactic, do not forget this during the week. Follow through.
- 5. Challenge the student** – Don’t let them get off that easy. They asked the question, so they must have some interest in knowing an answer. Refer the student to some Bible Study Resources that could help them answer their question. Your manual includes a list of common and free helpful resources for tough questions.
- 6. Don’t forget about your original topic** – Most difficult questions are the result or the cause of a tangent. Don’t be afraid to set the question aside for the time being and finish the discussion or Bible study at hand. Make sure and get back to it, though. If you ignore a question, it may be the last question anyone ever asks.

# Ideas for Getting to Know Your Students

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## **THERE ARE TWO BASIC INTERPERSONAL THEORIES THAT YOU SHOULD BE AWARE OF:**

1. Men build intimacy side by side – by doing something
2. Women build intimacy face to face – by talking
3. If you are a same-gender leader, apply these principles to your respective group activities.
4. If you are a co-ed leader, get creative and blend these two principles into one activity.

## **HERE ARE SOME IDEAS FOR YOU TO USE AS A SPRINGBOARD:**

1. Throw a Football
2. Do your grocery shopping together
3. Play tennis
4. Go hit golf balls (even if you don't golf )
5. Go bowling
6. Swim at the SLC
7. Go to a park and do everything they have
8. Ride bikes
9. Go Skiing (Spring Break trip)
10. Play ping-pong
11. Climb the wall at the SLC
12. Go canoeing at the marina
13. Throw a Frisbee
14. Play basketball
15. Buy and fly kites
16. Challenge another group to a sport
17. Play charades
18. Host a cook out
19. Play board games
20. Go to Waco Water Park
21. Go to the skating rink
22. Go fishing
23. Play video games
24. Visit elderly church members
25. Play miniature golf
26. Float in the Brazos river
27. Throw horseshoes at Cameron Park East
28. Challenge a group to a scavenger hunt
29. Play racquetball
30. Have a skit/improvisation night
31. Build a campfire somewhere
32. Walk on the Lake Waco Dam
33. Go Christmas caroling
34. Have a water balloon fight
35. Go to the Mayborn Museum
36. Go to a ball game
37. Cameron Park Zoo
38. Paint a room together
39. Small Group date – dinner and a movie
40. Shoot guns together (at a range)
41. Try sports together that you don't play
42. Sit on a roof and talk
43. Have a picnic
45. Climb trees
46. Go to a pet store
47. Play pool
48. Make art together
49. Walk the Bear Trail
50. Bake cookies/desserts
51. Show old pictures of yourselves
52. Wash your cars together
53. Host a study hall for your group
54. Weekend road trip
55. Go to concerts
56. Hang out in coffee shops
57. Volunteer together
58. Explore Waco together
59. Rearrange furniture

# Having a Successful Group

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**THERE IS NO FORMULA FOR HAVING A SUCCESSFUL GROUP, BUT GOOD LEADERS DO THESE THINGS WHICH OFTEN LEAD TO HAVING A SUCCESSFUL GROUP. THIS HAPPENS WHEN LEADERS:**

1. Let their driving desire be that the group encounters Jesus in a deeper way.
2. Set an expectation of commitment. It's the foundation of true community.
3. Don't limit the group to a 2 hrs/wk Bible study. Time spent together leads to a healthy group!
4. Are always prepared, both for discussion and by being in the right mindset and attitude.
5. Have a friendship with their co-leader. It feeds into the group dynamic.
6. Start the domino effect of honesty and vulnerability themselves. The dominoes won't fall by themselves.
7. Have confidence but aren't trying to impress anyone.
8. Strive to know each group member on a spiritual and personal level.
9. Remind themselves continually that they are privileged to play a part in God's kingdom by leading others in their faith.
10. Measure success by asking themselves, "Am I working as if working for the Lord?" (Col 3:23) instead of measuring by things they can't fully control (spiritual fruit, attendance). We water, he makes it grow.

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