

# LEADERSHIP



**FREEDOM**  
CHURCH

# LEADERSHIP

Taking Responsibility to Help Others Follow Jesus Christ

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A Resource of Freedom Church of Philadelphia

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# Mission and Strategy

The mission of Freedom Church is to lead people to become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ; or, more concisely, to make disciples. Disciples of Jesus Christ are not made on accident; rather, disciples are made when a man or woman who has experienced the transforming power of Jesus Christ intentionally embraces Christ's mission to bring this new life to others. Disciples make disciples. Every member of Christ's body has the great honor and responsibility of helping the body grow.

*<sup>11</sup>So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup>until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

*<sup>16</sup>From [Christ] the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

*Ephesians 4:11-13, 16*

The role of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers is to equip those in the church to minister to others. It takes the whole body of Christ to fulfill the whole mission of Christ. All followers of Jesus Christ who have been established in the core practices of discipleship can help others take these steps. In this sense, all disciples can become leaders.

## Our Strategy

At Freedom Church, we describe our growth track for individuals as well as our overall strategy for mobilizing the whole body of Christ for discipleship with the same three words: "Lordship, Discipleship, Leadership," or "LDL" for short. These words describe a three stage

process that we expect to be the common thread running through all of the activities associated with Freedom Church. Though as a church we may have many different ministries and engage in many different activities (children's ministry, campus ministry, prayer meetings, Sunday services, etc.), in essence we always have one goal: Lordship, Discipleship, Leadership.

We have associated with each of these stages in our growth track an important set of concrete actions. Although following Jesus Christ can never be reduced to a list of things to do, these concrete steps are intended to bring greater clarity to the discipleship process.

### **Lordship**

- Repent from known sin
- Believe the good news
- Confess Jesus Christ as Lord
- Be water baptized
- Be filled with the Holy Spirit for ministry

### **Discipleship**

- Attend Sunday services
- Read the Bible and pray every day
- Commit to a Small Group
- Serve on a Volunteer Team
- Pray every day for three friends who do not yet follow Christ
- Give a percentage of your income to the church

### **Leadership**

- Take responsibility

- Build relationships
- Initiate communication
- Provide accountability
- Bring energy

In our ministry strategy, discipleship and leadership development will primarily take place in small groups. Our ultimate goal is for every person to participate in a small group and to lead a small group. The material in this booklet is intended to help prepare men and women to lead a discipleship-focused small group at Freedom Church.

## The Structure and Plan of Our Small Group System

A wide variety of small group systems exist, and each has strengths and weaknesses. We have created our small group system with the specific goal of empowering as many people as possible to make disciples and develop leaders in our fast-paced, achievement-oriented, highly-mobile urban context. Following are some of the features of our groups.

1. **Our small groups are small.** Ideally, each group will have one leader and three to five regular participants. Some groups may have members who cannot always attend because of an inconsistent work schedule, travel, or other responsibilities. Although consistent attendance from each group member is the goal, these groups may include more members so that group meetings will still typically have three to five attendees. Other groups might regularly attract or recruit new members. These growing groups can subdivide into smaller groups (each with a group leader) for the group discussion. In some cases these subdivided groups will transition into independent small groups meeting in a new location.

The reasons for insisting on smaller group sizes are several.

- Smaller groups allow each member the opportunity to talk, ask questions, and really be known. This is essential for discipleship. The group dynamic changes significantly as the size of the group increases.



- Group leaders only have a limited amount of time and energy to engage with group members. Most leaders can realistically only prioritize a few other people.
- To work in the context of busy schedules, many groups will meet early in the morning, on the weekend, or over lunch. It is often difficult to find meeting times and places that will work for everyone in the group if the group is large.

2. **Our small groups are gender specific.** The high level of openness necessary for effective discipleship is typically much easier to achieve when men meet with men and women meet with women. In addition, because our small groups are deliberately quite small, mixed gender groups would regularly have only one male or one female participant, which is not usually a healthy dynamic for discipleship. So, although most activities at Freedom Church allow men and women to participate together, our small groups are gender specific.

In some circumstances, however, a group of married couples might form a larger group that divides into two groups, men and women, for discussion and prayer. This is a great way for married couples to attend a small group at the same time, but still achieve the level of openness and transparency that emerges more easily in gender specific groups.

3. **Most small group leaders will form their groups by personally inviting others to participate.** A personal invitation to participate in a small group is almost always more effective than a general invitation to sign up online or at a church service. In addition, many people who sign up for a group led by a person whom they have not met never end up attending, or they attend once and move on. Men, in particular, often do not respond to general invitations to sign up for a group. They need to be individually pursued. Although there will be opportunities for new people to indicate interest and sign up for groups, a personal invitation is the most effective approach.
4. **Groups will typically meet for 60 to 90 minutes on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.** We want our small group meetings to work in the schedules of high-achieving men and women with young families. If

these men and women are going to participate in a group and lead a group, group meetings need to be efficiently scheduled.

5. **Leaders who begin groups are typically making an initial 12-month commitment, depending on the pace at which the group progresses.** Our goal at Freedom Church is to make disciples who make disciples. With this end in mind, a typical small group will go through two phases. In phase 1, the leader will take the participants through the Lordship, Discipleship, and Leadership booklets, occasionally interspersed with weekly guides based upon the Sunday sermon. After the group members complete the Leadership booklet, they will be equipped to begin their own groups. The leader will then take the group members through additional phase 2 materials as the group members take those in their new groups through the phase 1 materials. In this way, the leader is continuing to provide help, support, and accountability to his group members as they lead groups for the first time. After his group members complete phase 1 with their groups, the original group may continue to meet, or the group leader may begin the process all over with a new set of group members.
6. **Small groups should use our LDL materials.** During phase 1 of their small groups, group leaders should not use any materials other than the sermon based guides and the Lordship, Discipleship, and Leadership booklets. Similarly, groups in phase 2 should use the phase 2 materials. Groups that stay together beyond phase 2 will have access to a variety of materials for continued growth.
7. **An important part of our strategy is the accompanying event that group members are to participate in at the conclusion of each step.** These key events are closely connected with the material studied in the small groups, and also serve as progress markers in our discipleship process. For the Lordship step, this is Water Baptism and Freedom Empower. For the Discipleship step, this is our membership class. And for the Leadership step, it is our Leader Launch. These events help keep our growing number of small groups connected to our staff and pastoral team and to Freedom Church more broadly. Leaders should accompany their group members to these events at each appropriate stage.



# Practice 1: Take Responsibility

For our small groups in LDL to be successful, someone has to take responsibility to ensure the group achieves its desired goals. This role belongs to the leader. The effectiveness of a small group depends crucially on the leader taking responsibility for the success of his group. Jesus carefully selected the members of his “small group” (the twelve apostles), and then took responsibility to give to these men what the Father had given to him.<sup>1</sup> This is how owners behave. Jesus contrasts the mindset of an owner and that of a “hired hand” in the following passage.

*<sup>11</sup>“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup>The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. <sup>13</sup>The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.*

*<sup>14</sup>“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me — <sup>15</sup>just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

*John 10:11-15*

Jesus is the good shepherd and he “owns” us in a way that no other leader can or should. Jesus has bought us with his blood.<sup>2</sup> However, leaders in the church should imitate Christ’s attitude of ownership when it comes to taking responsibility in the church.

## Take Responsibility for Your Own Life First

Responsibility begins with our own lives. Jesus gave the crowds the following teaching.

*<sup>3</sup>“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? <sup>4</sup>How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? <sup>5</sup>You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.*

*Matthew 7:3-5*

Leadership begins with leading ourselves. The example we set makes a much greater impact than the words of instruction we offer. Leaders should make it their goal to set an example for their group members in the six core practices of discipleship. (Can you name them?) In addition, the apostle Paul told Timothy to “set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.”<sup>3</sup>

1. **Speech.** Proverbs 18:21 states: “The tongue has the power of life and death...” Leaders need to carefully consider what comes out of their mouths. Is our speech marked by coarseness, gossip, slander, and pessimism or by love, hope, mercy, and encouragement? The way we speak to and about people in our groups will affect their lives and impact how they speak to others.
2. **Conduct.** Paul told the believers in Thessalonica:

*<sup>9</sup>Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. <sup>10</sup>You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.*

*1 Thessalonians 2:9-10*

Actions speak louder than words. James wrote: “I will show you my faith by my deeds.”<sup>4</sup> Do our actions demonstrate to our group members that we are hardworking? That we are honest? That we are reliable? Do we make sacrifices for others? Do we have a social media presence that conveys an honorable message about our conduct? Leaders should set an example for others in the way they conduct their lives.

3. **Love.** Do our words and actions convey love to our small group members? Those in our groups are far more likely to receive what we say if they know that we love them. The apostle Paul wrote that loving others fulfills the entire scope of the Old Testament law.<sup>5</sup> Love, Jesus stated, is to be the distinguishing characteristic of his followers.<sup>6</sup> Nothing else that we do matters if we do not have love.<sup>7</sup>
4. **Faith.** Can our group members see the reality of our personal confidence in Christ? How do we respond to the challenges we face? Do we take bold action for Christ? How is our personal faith deepening? Those in our groups benefit greatly when they see faith in action.
5. **Purity.** Paul told Timothy, "Treat... older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity."<sup>8</sup> Are we flirtatious? How do we talk about those of the opposite sex? How do we dress? What kind of pictures are we posting of ourselves or others? What are we watching? Leaders send a very mixed message to those in their groups when they compromise in the area of sexual purity.

The remaining chapters in this booklet examine four key ways leaders can take responsibility in the life of their groups.

**How consistently are you pursuing the six core practices of discipleship? Where do you think your own example needs the most work? What do you think it means practically to embrace a mindset of responsibility for and ownership of a small group?**

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<sup>1</sup> John 17:4-8

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Peter 1:18-19

<sup>3</sup> 1 Timothy 4:12

<sup>4</sup> James 2:18

<sup>5</sup> Romans 12:8

<sup>6</sup> John 13:34-35

<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

<sup>8</sup> 1 Timothy 5:1-2

## Practice 2: Build Relationships

Relationship is the heart of discipleship. Discipleship is not primarily about holding meetings, or working through materials, or transferring information. Discipleship is about the powerful transformation that results when we connect deeply and purposefully with other followers of Christ. Meetings, materials, and systems are valuable only to the extent that they facilitate the development of relationships that bring growth.

Though Jesus, and the apostles after him, clearly had a strong sense of mission and operated with deliberate strategies, they did not become so task oriented that they viewed the people they worked with as “projects” or pieces on a chess board. Instead, they spoke of these men and women as one would speak about a close friend or family member.

*God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.*

*Philippians 1:8*

*I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.*

*John 15:15*

*<sup>7</sup>... Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, <sup>8</sup>so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. ... <sup>11</sup>For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, <sup>12</sup>encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.*

*1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, 11-12*

The small group system we use at Freedom Church is designed to put relationships at the center of the discipleship process. In a classroom setting, for example, information can be presented to many people at



one time. But it is difficult to evaluate how participants are responding to what they are hearing and the extent to which they believe it and are integrating the material into their lives. Similarly, books are portable, can be read at one's leisure, and can convey information in exceptional detail. But a book cannot respond to our questions, ask us how we are processing its contents, or pray for us when we experience difficulty. It is for these reasons that we present the foundations of the Gospel (Lordship) and the key practices of the Christian life (Discipleship) in a small group format rather than in a classroom setting or in a book to be read on one's own.

As a small group leader, it is essential that you prioritize relationships. The following are several important practices.

1. **Pray for your group members.** Most people have no other person on the planet regularly praying for them. There is no greater gift we can give another person than to earnestly bring him before the Father in prayer. The apostle Paul made it a habit to pray for the men and women in the churches he started.

*...we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith.*

*2 Thessalonians 1:11*

2. **Show God's love for your group members.** Greet them enthusiastically when they arrive for the meeting. Take a genuine interest in their lives. Interact with them outside of the meeting. Speak to them with appropriate words of affection and encouragement. In short, treat them like friends or family.
3. **Never put the meeting agenda ahead of the needs of your group members.** The religious leaders of Jesus' day made the error of elevating laws and structures over people. Jesus corrected them with a simple but profound statement: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." In our context, we need to remember that small group meetings and materials were made for people, not the other way around. A lesson can always be picked back up in a subsequent

meeting if something more important is happening in the life of a group member.

4. **Getting through the contents of the LDL materials is meaningless if the group members are not truly absorbing it and putting it into practice.** You may have noticed that the concepts in the LDL booklets are quite simple. It is not the complexity of the material that changes lives; it is the belief and application of the material. It is pointless to race through the exercise on Lordship, for example, without talking with your group members to see if they are beginning to make changes in their lives out of a desire to obey Jesus. Do your group members understand the Gospel? Is the reality of Christ's sacrifice for their sins affecting their hearts? Do they have a real hope of eternal life? If they are planning to be baptized, why do they want to be baptized? It is important that we establish a level of relationship with our group members that allows us to genuinely engage them and the material in this depth.
5. **Meet practical needs when it is appropriate and within your ability to do so.** We may not be able to meet the needs of the multitudes, but all of us can help a few.

*<sup>17</sup>If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? <sup>18</sup>Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.*

1 John 3:17-18

**What are some further ways we can prioritize relationships in our small groups? Overall, are you primarily mission driven or primarily relationship driven? How can relationship and mission work together?**



## Practice 3: Initiate Communication

Communication within and outside of group meetings is essential for the success of a small group. Most small groups meet for about one hour weekly or bi-weekly. Building relationships, trust, and camaraderie will happen very slowly if no communication takes place between the regular meeting times. In addition, the momentum and excitement generated during the group meeting will be lost quickly if it is not supplemented with follow-up communication outside of the gathering. Here are a few ways leaders need to take responsibility to communicate.

1. **Contact each of the group members a couple of days before the group meeting to confirm they will be attending.** Don't assume that they will remember that the group is meeting or that they will attend without being contacted.
2. **During the group meeting, call on specific group members to read from the booklet, to answer a question, or to pray.** Don't wait for individual members to volunteer to speak. This is particularly important when a group is just beginning.
3. **Ask group participants how they are doing, how their families are doing, and how work is going.** Don't settle for superficial answers. Engage them until you feel like you know how they are really doing. Group members will often hesitate to open up until they are convinced you genuinely care about them and truly want to know what is going on in their lives.
4. **Text or call group members regularly between group meetings.** Hebrews exhorts us to "encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today,' so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness."<sup>1</sup> Use texts and calls to encourage your group members and to reinforce and continue conversations that took place during the group meeting.

5. **Open up your life to the group members.** When you share your celebrations and challenges they will be drawn to you and encouraged to open up their lives as well. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

*"Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well."*

*1 Thessalonians 2:8*

6. **Encourage your group members to communicate with one another outside of the group meeting.** Groups become much stronger when the members develop friendships with one another, not just with the leader.

Small groups die without good communication. It is your responsibility as a leader to initiate healthy communication.

**Do you find it easy to initiate communication with others outside of official gatherings (i.e. Sunday services or small groups)? Are there any concrete steps you think you will need to take to ensure that you initiate communication with your group members outside of meeting times? What are some ways you can practically generate good communication among group members?**

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 3:13

## Practice 4: Provide Accountability

All of us benefit from accountability in our lives. Knowing what we should do typically comes more easily than consistently doing it. After Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, he told them the following.

*<sup>15</sup>"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. <sup>16</sup>Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup>Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."*

*John 13:15-17*

Blessing comes not in knowing what to do, but in actually doing it. One of the ways a leader can practically help the members of his small group is by providing positive and supportive accountability. This accountability should come in the form of encouraging group members to maintain the commitments they have freely made, not by pressuring group members to take on responsibilities they are not comfortable with or by condemning them for falling short in some area.

During the Discipleship step of LDL, group members are introduced to six key practices of discipleship. These practices are very easy to understand. The challenge is making each of these practices an established habit. Group leaders should diligently provide accountability around these practices. For some people, it will take months to change the patterns in their lives. Those who have dug themselves into a financial hole, for example, may need encouragement to attend a Financial Peace University class. Such a class can help them get their finances in order and establish a plan for giving a percentage of their income to the church (one of the six practices). Others may never have really prayed before in their lives. They may need consistent opportunities to pray with others as they learn how to pray and begin establishing the discipline of prayer in their lives.

In addition to the six key practices, which should receive great attention, leaders can provide accountability in the following areas.

1. **Group meeting attendance.** When work and family pressures increase, it's easy for the regular small group meeting to get crowded out. But men and women often don't realize how important this time is for their growth and spiritual health. Leaders can lovingly remind group members to prioritize these gatherings.
2. **Moral purity.** There are seemingly countless opportunities to compromise morally in our daily interactions, the workplace, the media we consume, and our relationships. We all benefit when others love us enough to speak into these areas of our lives.
3. **Attitude.** Complaining and self-centeredness are commonplace in our culture. Paul exhorts the Philippians with these words.

*<sup>3</sup>Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup>not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

*<sup>5</sup>In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus...*

*<sup>14</sup>Do everything without grumbling or arguing, <sup>15</sup>so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky...*

*Philippians 2:3-5, 14-15*

It must be reiterated here that although accountability can be a great gift in someone's life, it can be perceived as intrusive and offensive if it is unwanted or not delivered in love. Accountability should not be pushed upon anyone who is not open to this help. Small group leaders need to regularly examine their own hearts to ensure that they are providing accountability out of love for the group members, not out of their own insecurity or obsession with authority.

All small group leaders should also continue to participate in small groups that they are not leading. Leaders need accountability, too!

## Provide Accountability

**How can you provide accountability in a way that is not off-putting? In what areas do you feel you could benefit from accountability?**





## Practice 5: Bring Energy

Systems, resources, and meetings are helpful; but in themselves, they do not motivate people to action. That is the work of God's Holy Spirit working in, and often through, people. Leaders, with the help of the Holy Spirit, have the opportunity to be catalysts in the lives of their group members and to add energy to the activities they participate in. Men and women often come to group meetings, Sunday services, and other events discouraged, overwhelmed, or with a passive disposition. Leaders can make a big difference in the environments they enter when they actively and energetically engage others and God himself. In fact, others will often look to the leader to determine what their own attitude and energy level should be.

It's not just about what group members learn at meetings, though that is clearly important. It's also about what they feel. Are group members experiencing hope? Do they believe they can really grow in Christ? Are they excited about embracing God's mission? Is the love of Jesus Christ inspiring a deep sense of wonder and gratitude?

The apostle Paul was so passionate about Jesus Christ that others accused him of being "out of his mind." But Paul explained that he had been won over by the love of Christ.<sup>1</sup> To the Colossians, Paul described his ministry efforts with these words:

*<sup>28</sup>[Christ] is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. <sup>29</sup>To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.*

*Colossians 1:28-29*

If we are not excited about living as Jesus' disciples, we are unlikely to inspire others to take steps of discipleship. The good news is that if you are feeling weary or overwhelmed, Jesus will help you as you humbly come to him in prayer. He will often use brothers and sisters in Christ to

encourage and strengthen your soul so that you can, in turn, be a blessing to others.

Following are several things we can do to bring energy to the groups we lead.

1. **Pray.** Take a few minutes to pray before you meet with your group. Pray for your group members and ask God to help you bring his life to them. If those in your group seem particularly burdened, take a few minutes to pray at the beginning of the meeting.
2. **Verbalize the promises of God.** Our hope is grounded not in our feelings, but in what God has spoken. We can fight discouragement, apathy, and lethargy with the power of God's word. Remind yourself and your group members of some of the many great things that God has said in the Scriptures.
3. **Be an active listener.** Our eyes, our expressions, and our overall body language communicate a great deal to others. Lean in. Smile. Focus. On one occasion, when Paul the apostle looked directly at a man as he preached, Paul could see that the man had faith to be healed.<sup>2</sup> This man's body language communicated something! We can express faith through the way we listen and respond to others.
4. **Remember the bigger picture.** The day to day routines of life can become monotonous. We need to remember the greater mission that Jesus has called us to. Remind your group members of the overall vision of LDL. Remind them that the things God does in their lives will affect their friends, their families, and scores of people after them. Paint a picture of the future we're working toward.
5. **Offer specific words of encouragement.** When Nathanael approached Jesus, Jesus greeted him with the words, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."<sup>3</sup> Most people have very few specific, positive things said about them in a given day. Decide to make your small group an environment of encouragement.
6. **Lighten the mood with humor.** Proverbs 17:22 states: "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." Some people mistakenly think that all spiritual activity should be serious and

somber. But humor energizes us. Have fun when you meet with your group members.

**In which of these ways do you feel most confident to practically energize the ministry environments in which you participate?**

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:13-15

<sup>2</sup> Acts 14:9

<sup>3</sup> John 1:47



# Beginning a New Group

1. **Who should be in your group?** Jesus spent all night in prayer before choosing the twelve men he would spend the majority of his public ministry with.<sup>1</sup> One of the benefits of keeping our small groups small and forming them primarily through personal invitation is the ability to assemble the group with God's guidance. Obviously the membership of our small group is not as important as Jesus' selection of the twelve apostles, but we do want God to help us form groups that will be mutually beneficial for all the members. Here are some suggestions.
  - **Write down a list of potential small group members.** Whom have you been praying for? (Discipleship practice #5!) Are there people who are new to Freedom Church with whom you have connected? Are there any existing connections among a group of men or women that might naturally lead to a small group? Jesus included two sets of brothers who were already fishing partners in his group of twelve.<sup>2</sup> Do you serve on a volunteer or ministry team with people who are not yet in a group? Are there several people you know who are in your same line of work? Is there a group of people that you are already regularly interacting with for some other reason? Take some time to brainstorm possible group members and begin praying through this list.
  - **When and where are you planning to have the group?** Think through this carefully. These details will significantly impact who can be involved.
2. **Pitch the group.** The relationships we build with other men or women in a small group can change our lives forever. But sometimes those we are inviting to participate don't clearly see this on the front end. We need to sell them on the idea. How we can effectively do this depends on the frame of mind of the person we are inviting. If we are inviting nonbelievers to join a group, we may want to emphasize how reading and discussing the Scriptures with a few other people has really helped us come to know God and grow in our personal lives. If we are inviting

those with previous leadership experience in a church context, we may want to emphasize the overall strategy of LDL and how they can actively participate as leaders in our mission of making disciples. Take some time to think about what aspects of LDL might be most appealing to those you want to invite to participate.

3. **Establish clear expectations.** It is important for your group members to know what to expect from participating in the group, and what you expect from them. What you communicate in this regard will depend, of course, on the people who are joining your group. You probably shouldn't expect an unchurched friend to commit to a 12 to 24 month process on week one. But those who are already in a leadership mindset might be helpfully challenged by this vision. The following are some expectations that you might consider communicating with your group (with modifications as appropriate).
- Group meetings will last one hour, and group members will not be expected to remain longer. (In some contexts the typical meeting length might be longer or shorter, but this should still be communicated clearly.)
  - During phase 1 and phase 2 of the group, the group leader will determine which materials are used (namely, the LDL materials supplied by Freedom Church).
  - The purpose of the group is to help group members be disciples and, eventually, make disciples. It is not just to spend time together, or just to study the Bible, or just to pray, although each of those are important components.
  - Group members are expected to attend faithfully and arrive on time.
  - Group members are expected to hold in confidence what other group members share during the meeting.
  - Group members are expected to remain committed to the group until the group has accomplished its purpose. How this is communicated really depends upon the group. For those groups with members who are just beginning to explore or are new to the

faith, the group leader might ask for group members to stay committed to the group through the completion of the Lordship booklet. Other group leaders might very reasonably ask group members to commit for the entire duration of phase 1 and phase 2.

- Group members are expected to communicate openly, honestly, and respectfully with one another.

## The basic components of a small group meeting

1. **Welcome and catch-up (5-10 minutes).** The first few minutes of every meeting should be spent catching up briefly on each other's lives. Remember, small groups are not just about getting through the material, they are about building relationships.
2. **Reading and discussion (30-40 minutes).** The group leader should read through the chapter ahead of time and plan a few helpful questions, illustrations, or thoughts that can be interspersed throughout the material. The questions in bold at the end of each chapter can often be asked somewhere in the middle of the reading. Plowing straight through the whole chapter without pausing for discussion is not typically the best approach.
3. **Prayer (5-10 minutes).** Because our small groups are small, the whole group can usually pray together. But pairing up for prayer is also helpful on occasion. Pray both for individual needs and for broader church concerns.

## A few pitfalls to avoid

1. **Do not** posture yourself as an authority over the members of your group. Small group leaders are to serve the members of their groups and help facilitate the mission of the group, but are not church officers who have authority to exercise church discipline.
2. **Do not** use the group discussion time to "give a sermon."
3. **Do not** borrow money from the members of your group.



4. **Do not** use the group to promote business interests, engage in private fundraising, or voice political views.
5. If matters of serious sin or safety come to light (adultery, abuse, suicidal thoughts, etc.), engage an appropriate Freedom Church staff member for assistance.

God will help every man or woman who genuinely wants to help others grow closer to Christ. Don't underestimate what God can do in you and through you as you step out in faith to lead a group!

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 6:12-16

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 4:18-22; Luke 5:8-11

# Notes





