



**R**

# Community Group Leaders Guide

## Community Group Leaders Guide

© 2011, Redemption Hill Church,  
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in any retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, without the permission of the copyright owner.

First published 2011 by Redemption Hill Church  
291 New Bridge Road, #02-10 Oriental Plaza  
Singapore 088756

Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version,  
Copyright 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers.  
All rights reserved.

# Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Understanding community groups	2
a. Why community groups?	
b. What are community groups?	
c. Our vision for community groups at RHC	
d. How the gospel provides the platform for brilliant community groups and builds biblical community	
Chapter 2: What happens at community groups?	6
a. The material that we cover	
b. The gathering	
c. What we want to cultivate outside of the meeting	
Chapter 3: Community group leaders	15
a. What we are looking for in leaders of community groups	
b. The process of appointing a community group leader	
c. How do we provide oversight, accountability and care for community group leaders?	
c. What responsibilities do community group leaders carry?	
d. Confidentialities within community groups	

# Contents

---

Chapter 4: Multiplication of community groups	19
a. Why do we multiply leaders?	
b. How do we multiply leaders?	
c. Identifying leaders.	
d. Methods that can be used to train leaders.	
e. Training leaders.	
f. Releasing leaders.	
Chapter 5: Practical skills for community groups leaders	21

# Introduction

We are so glad you are finding out more about how community groups work at RHC. We believe they are one of the most crucial components to us becoming a gospel centered community that shakes the world.

This booklet is our attempt to clarify exactly what community groups are at RHC, as well as how they work. Feel free to ask any questions you may have!

We believe that biblical community shouldn't be over planned and must be flexible to the leading of the Holy Spirit. This flexibility is enabled however, when we have principles and plans in place. When our plans are properly established, it is far easier for us to be flexible.

We hope this guide will help to clarify the planned structure of our community groups, so that we can become a biblical community that brings the gospel to the world.

# Chapter 1

## Understanding community groups

---

### Why community groups?

We believe in community groups because we believe that they are vital to the mission of RHC, which is, “to spread a passion for God by discipling nations through the gospel for the glory of God and the joy of all people”.

In Acts 2 we see that the local church gathered together as one large group in the temple, and then in smaller groups in their homes. This is how we believe that the local church maintains a sense of *‘partnering together in the gospel’* (Phil 1.27) as well as being the intimate family of God. At RHC, we have our Sunday services where we gather together to worship God, and our weekly gatherings of believers in the homes to flesh out what the gospel looks like in community with one another.

We believe that both of these aspects are vital to the growth of the believers, as well as the spread of the gospel in our city. Therefore it’s our desire that everyone at RHC is involved in our weekly services as well as community groups. If our weekly services are for corporate worship of God, prayer and hearing the word proclaimed, then our community groups are for deeper relational building, fleshing out the Word in community, and for spurring one another on to love and good deeds (Heb 10.25).

### What is the definition of a community group?

Community groups are ***gatherings of Christians who attend RHC from 3 – 20 people who meet on at least a fortnightly basis for bible study, prayer and mutual encouragement, and have designated leadership who are appointed by RHC elders and who are responsible for the group and accountable to RHC elders for the people in the group.***

**‘Gathering’:** the group must meet together in the same proximity. It can’t be an online forum.

**‘Christians who attend RHC’:** RHC community groups are made up of people from RHC, because they are the ones that constitute the local congregation of RHC, and they are the ones that the leaders of RHC are responsible for.

## *Understanding community groups*

**'3-20 people'**: Groups cannot be less than 3 people and should ideally not exceed 20. Ideal size is from 8 – 14 people. When a group gets to twenty there ideally should be a plan in place to multiply the groups. This is because we believe that if groups get too big they are unable to foster gospel centered vulnerability and deep community.

**'meet on at least a fortnightly basis'**: Groups must meet at least every two weeks. We believe that meeting less regularly than that will not enable deep community to develop.

**'bible study, prayer and mutual encouragement'**: This means that our groups have a clear focus and method of operation. They are not merely social groups, though the group would of course socialise. This will be elaborated on under the section "What happens at a community group meeting?"

**'designated leadership'**: The groups can't be informally organized, there is someone who is responsible for the group.

**'appointed by RHC elders'**: For the group to be an RHC group, it must be recognized by the leaders of RHC.

**'responsible for the group and accountable to RHC'**: For the safety of the group, the leader must take care of the group and be responsible for them, accountable to RHC leaders who provide oversight for the groups.

## **Our vision for community groups at RHC:**

The mission of Redemption Hill Church is: *we exist to spread a passion for God by discipling nations through the gospel for the glory of God and the joy of all people.* Our community groups are a key component of this because so much discipling of people happens as we take the Word and flesh it out in our communities.

Our mission means that we want our community groups to be spreading a passion for God, which is a deep love for Jesus and enthusiasm for Him, His purposes and plans, as well as His Lordship, etc. This happens as we disciple people through the gospel – they become more and more like Jesus, with a greater passion to follow Him. The more we see of Him, the more we know of Him! This in turn glorifies God and enables people to maximize their joy in Him.

A passion for God with deep discipleship means that true gospel centered community will happen, deep sharing of lives, vulnerability, support, encouragement, sanctification and outreach. This is what we want, and how we see it happening.

Finally, there is no biblical gospel centered community that is not motivated by the mission of Christ, to make disciples of all nations. That means that these community groups have mission as a core part of their focus. This happens by regularly praying for friends and family who have yet to trust in Christ, and sharing their faith with them.

## How the gospel provides the platform for brilliant community groups and builds biblical community:

The wonder of the gospel is that in it's most simple form it can be understood by a 3 year old and yet it has depths to it that Paul can call "mysteries that angels long to look into". The most succinct way to explain the gospel is that God saves sinners. The implications of this shape us in every way possible by leading us to God, revealing his character and heart, and transforming us into Christ's image by it's power.

Built on the solid foundation of the gospel, our community groups will be enabled to live out biblical community:

**The gospel makes us humble yet confident:** Because we have all individually been assessed in the strongest light (God had to *die* for our sins) we have no pride left in ourselves and are therefore humble, yet at the same time remarkably confident in God because He died for our sins.

**The gospel allows us to be vulnerable about our struggles:** Because the gospel comes to save us from our sins we don't need to put our best foot forward to be accepted by God, or others. This enables us to be real and vulnerable about our struggles with other people. Our identity is found in God, not in our good behaviour.

**The gospel makes us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead:** The gospel shows us that we are not able to save ourselves, and has made us entirely dependant upon God Himself. Therefore we are happy to admit that not only do we need God for our salvation but for our continual life and growth in every area. This makes us a people who live dependant on God Himself.

**The gospel makes us become more like Christ:** Through the gospel we see that sin is not just a 'problem' in this world, we understand that it's the very essence of everything wrong with the world and it's the reason that our Saviour hung on the cross. Therefore sin becomes repulsive and disgusting to us. We would want to deal with anything in our lives that would prevent us from knowing Him. So the gospel helps to sanctify us by helping us to see sin as it really is. Secondly, the gospel leads us to know God and we then are transformed into his image from one degree of glory to another, as we see and know God (2 Cor 3). Finally, the gospel is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes.

**The gospel makes us merciful and compassionate to one another:** Through the gospel we realize the incredible mercy that has been lavished upon us by God himself. We therefore cannot be willing to receive the unmerited mercy of God for ourselves without being able to extend that same mercy and compassion to others. Therefore, Christians who understand the gospel are incredibly merciful and compassionate.

**The gospel makes us full of faith for others:** Because we know that we were saved at God's initiative by His mercy and grace, we can take no credit for what God has done in our lives, and we therefore have hope that He can work in anyone else as well!

**The gospel makes us a people on a mission:** Because we have experienced the love of God and have been led to know and delight in Him, we want others to experience the joy of knowing Him too. We therefore pray for those who do not believe in Christ, and share the message of the gospel with them.

# Chapter 2

## What happens at community groups?

---

### The material that we cover

There are four categories of material that we cover in community groups:

1. **Study notes following the Sunday Sermon** – Study notes that follow the Sunday sermon are published on the RHC website, (<http://www.rhc.org.sg/resources>), and can be used to guide your group to dig deeper, and apply what has been taught on Sunday morning.
2. **Church-wide studies** – During the course of the year, there will be certain blocks of time that the church works through a set study together. During these times all community groups should follow this material, at the same time and pace as the rest of the church. Studies that we have done in this category include the book of Acts, with prepared in-house material, and Tim Keller’s “Gospel in Life”.
3. **Short-listed studies** – A number of studies that reflect the doctrine and values of RHC have been shortlisted. These include DVD based topical studies, and study guides that bring you through a book of the Bible. We have limited copies of these studies in the church office that Community Group Leaders can check out. Group members will however need to get their own study guides, which are easily obtainable at Christian Bookstores in Singapore e.g. SKS, Shalom Christian Media, or through the internet. The studies are as follows:

What happens at community group?

### Topical Studies

No.	Study	Description	Length
1.	<b>Prodigal God</b> <i>By Tim Keller</i>	A DVD study looking at Jesus' best-known but probably least understood parable, The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). Within the parable, Jesus reveals God's prodigal grace toward both the irreligious and the moralistic. This will challenge both the devout and the skeptic alike.	6 weeks
2.	<b>Soul Christianity Explored</b>	A DVD study looking at a seven-stage journey through the Gospel of Mark. It explores the basics of Christianity, and the Bible's answers to life's big questions. Ideal for groups that want to invite non-Christian friends to explore Christianity, or need a refresher on what the Gospel is.	7 weeks, with an optional weekend away
3.	<b>Forgotten God</b> <i>By Francis Chan</i>	A DVD study that invites you to discover the Holy Spirit's power in your life. The study reminds us of the true source of the church's power, the Holy Spirit, and invites us to understand, embrace and follow the Holy Spirit's direction in our lives.	7 weeks
4.	<b>Gospel in Life</b> <i>By Tim Keller</i>	A DVD study that looks at the gospel and how it is lived out in our hearts, then in the community, and out into the world. This is an excellent primer on Gospel-centered ministry, what it is, and how it can be fleshed out.	8 weeks

5.	<b>Let the Nations be Glad!</b> <i>By John Piper</i>	A DVD study giving a sound theological foundation for missions. Topics include defining missions and defining peoples, the urgency of missions, the goal and fuel of missions, prayer and suffering.	8 weeks
6.	<b>The Blazing Center</b> <i>By John Piper</i>	A DVD study that looks at God, his purposes in the world, saving faith, biblical love and missions. It is an exposition of John Piper's maxim on Christian Hedonism, that "God is most glorified in us, when we are most satisfied in Him". Discover that God is the blazing center of reality that calls you to find supreme delight in Him.	10 weeks
7.	<b>Jesus Christ – Teacher, Servant and Savior</b> <i>By John Stott</i>	A study guide looking at selected passages in the New Testament, helps you explore who Jesus Christ is. You will discover Him as the proper object of worship, witness and hope, the incomparable Christ.	13 weeks

### **Old Testament Book Studies**

No.	Study	Description	Length
1.	<b>Old Testament overview – Full of Promise</b> <i>By Bryson Smith and Phil Campbell</i>	Study guide that takes you through an overview of the Old Testament – creation, the fall, and the history of God's dealings with Israel, and how it points to Jesus, in whom all God's promises are fulfilled	8 weeks

2.	<b>Genesis 1 to 11 – Beyond Eden</b> <i>By Phillip Jensen and Tony Payne</i>	Study guide that gives you an introduction to Genesis, and the message of the whole Bible. It covers the creation of the world, the fall of mankind, the Flood, and their significance for 21st century Christians.	9 weeks
3.	<b>Deuteronomy – The One and Only</b> <i>By Bryson Smith</i>	Study guide that takes you through Deuteronomy. On one hand, Deuteronomy tells the story of a nation—their history, their laws, their way of life, their hopes and dreams. On the other hand, it is the story of their God, Yahweh, the creator of the universe, the One and Only. This study will leave you with a picture of an awesome and wonderful God who has kept his promises, and, in his Son, delivered salvation to his worldwide people.	8 weeks
4.	<b>Judges – The Good, the Bad and the Ugly</b> <i>By Mark Baddeley</i>	Study guide that takes you through Judges. Judges is a dark and gruesome part of the Bible, in which Israel lurches from sin to judgment to salvation and back again with grim regularity. Judges contains strong warnings and encouragements for us as Christians. Learn about God, holiness and sin and judgment, and about the Christ who fulfills all of God's promises.	10 weeks

5.	<b>Nehemiah – Renovator’s Dream</b> <i>By Phil Campbell &amp; Greg Clarke</i>	Study guide looking at the book of Nehemiah, which brings the record of Israel’s rise and fall to a close. Nehemiah left his position as a high official in the court of the Persian king to return to Israel to rebuild the city walls. You will see the history of Israel through Nehemiah’s eyes, experiencing the many successes, but larger failure, of one leader to restore holy living among his people.	7 weeks
6.	<b>Proverbs – The Beginning of Wisdom</b> <i>By Joshua Ng</i>	Study guide that takes you through 9 chapters of Proverbs. What is the overall message of the book of Proverbs? And how does understanding Proverbs as a whole help us understand and apply each of the individual sayings? In this study, you learn about the wise and foolish life, about what it means to ‘fear’ God, and about how the teaching of Proverbs relates to Jesus and the teaching of the whole Bible.	7 weeks
7.	<b>Isaiah – Two Cities</b> <i>By Andrew Reid &amp; Karen Morris</i>	Study guide looking at the book of Isaiah. It will help you through the strange language, weird descriptions, and complicated historical details. It takes us on a two-way intersection and shows us the road to the city of destruction and the road to the city of God.	9 weeks

8.	<b>Obadiah/ Malachi – Burning Desire</b> <i>By Phillip Jensen and Richard Pulley</i>	Study guide taking you through Obadiah and Malachi. These books are among the briefest in the Bible, but their contents are pure dynamite. Both prophets provide us with portraits of a God who can be passionate, weary with displeasure, possessive and angry. Even a God who hates. And yet this same God keeps his promises, does not change, and throws open the windows of heaven to those who turn to him.	6 weeks
----	---	---	---------

### ***New Testament Book Studies***

No.	Study	Description	Length
1.	<b>Mark – News of the Hour</b> <i>By Peter Bolt and Tony Payne</i>	The long-awaited king of Israel, the Messiah, has finally arrived. He has come wielding the authority of God himself to heal the sick and make the blind to see, to still the raging storm and to plunder Satan's house. In a bizarre twist, however, this Messiah speaks repeatedly of his impending death and humiliation. Could this refer to the growing opposition of the religious authorities? And if he is indeed rejected and killed, where will this leave the kingdom of God he is claiming to bring?	10 weeks
2.	<b>Acts – Seeing the Spirit at Work</b> <i>By John Stott</i>	Study the exciting action of the Spirit in the years following Jesus' life on earth, this study will open your eyes to the Spirit's power in the past and present.	18 weeks

3.	<b>Romans – Encountering the Gospel’s Power</b> <i>By John Stott</i>	Discover the gospel’s power to save and to change the world. In Romans, you will see that the power given to us to be effective witnesses, to overcome sin, to be wholly committed to God, to handle differences in the body of Christ, to understand God’s view on homosexuality, and to be responsible Christian citizens.	10 weeks
4.	<b>Galatians – Experiencing the Grace of Christ</b> <i>By John Stott</i>	Salvation is as a free gift of grace. In that context, explore the requirements that different Christians place on being a follower of Christ, and look at place of the Law in Christian life i.e. how we can live out our faith in both freedom and obedience to God.	12 weeks
5.	<b>Ephesians – Building a Community in Christ</b> <i>By John Stott</i>	We have unity in Christ because of the gospel. Learn how to break down what separates us from God, one ethnic group from another, husband and wife, parent from child, employer and employee, with a vision of the new society that God has planned for His church.	12 weeks
6.	<b>James – The Implanted Word</b> <i>By Phillip Jensen and Kirsten Birkett</i>	James is a book about life in the real world, where the rich and poor struggle to get on, where there is as much suffering and sickness as joy, where Christians quarrel and fight and have a hard time controlling their tongues, and where we find ourselves compromised by becoming too friendly with the world. In a world like this, the key to survival and growth, says James, is to humbly receive the Word which God has planted in us.	8 weeks

7.	<b>Revelation – The Triumph of Christ</b> <i>By John Stott</i>	Need help to understand the somewhat confusing book of Revelation? Let this guide help you through the bizarre imagery, through a sound interpretation of the book that exalts Christ.	12 weeks
----	---	--	----------

4. **Studies selected by Community Group Leaders** – Community Group Leaders may also discern the need for a certain focus in their groups that the other 3 types mentioned above do not cover. In these cases, Community Group Leaders can select their own material, and have it cleared by their CLG Leaders.

## The gathering

When groups meet there are three essential components that must happen. These three are: 1) Bible study, 2) Prayer and 3) Sharing and encouragement.

**Bible Study:** The scriptures need to be opened in order to hear what God is saying through His word and how it affects our lives. We do not gather to simply share opinions or experiences but God’s word must be the foundation for what is discussed.

**Prayer:** Theology must lead to communion with God. Our discussion and study of the Word must lead us to know and love God, and depend on Him. We therefore must have a time of prayer in community groups and we encourage groups to pray for the following things: For each other, for our church, our city and for the world, as well as any other particular circumstances that may require prayer. We want to cultivate prayerfulness in every area of life at RHC, and this is one way that we do it.

**Sharing and encouragement:** Hebrews 10 says that we are to meet up together so that we can spur one another on to love and good deeds. A huge part of community groups is opening up our lives so that we know what is happening in the lives of our friends, that we may encourage one another, and spur one another on. Only in a gospel centered community can this really happen. We want people to open up and share there lives so that we may: recognize our need for Christ, not become proud in our walk, realize that we all need grace, know how to pray for one another, know how to support one another, and celebrate victories together.

## Other things that we would love to see happen in community groups:

**Worship:** If someone in the group can lead the group in a time of musical worship, it is a wonderful way to begin the meeting, focus on God, and allow Him to speak to us individually and to the group through prophetic words or other encouragements.

**The use of spiritual gifts:** Community groups are a wonderful time and place to allow God to speak through the gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14. We should encourage these in the safe environment of community groups.

**Fun and social activities:** Community groups should probably build in a fun social evening every now and again, where relationships can be developed through doing something different together. These times are often wonderful for seeing a different side to people.

**Group projects:** A community group may decide to take on a community project or do some event together. These can be wonderful ways of building community and partnering in the gospel.

# Chapter 3

## Community group leaders

---

### What are we looking for in leaders of community groups

1. They must be members of RHC aligned with our mission and our closed handed doctrinal issues.
2. They are submitted to the leaders of RHC, and engaged in church activities such as prayer meeting, and have been a part of an existing community group.
3. They should have relational warmth, spiritual depth and be both humble and teachable.
4. They have the ability to teach and answer questions in a biblical way.
5. They must have godly character and be able to lead people by example.
6. A sense of victory over sin.
7. Must be able to summarize the gospel well.
8. They tithe faithfully to RHC and give generously.
9. They seek to act in a Christian way in all relationships (dealing with sin, and offense in a biblical way, no gossip, going directly to your brother).

### The process for appointing a community group leader

In order for someone to be appointed as a community group leader at RHC, they should be a good match with the list mentioned above.

Ideally we appoint people who are in an existing community group to the role of community group leader. This is so that they already know and understand how community groups work at RHC, as well as ensuring they are committed to the church and don't just see the opportunity of leading a community group as some kind of personal profiling.

If a community group leader believes that they have someone in their group who could lead a community group in the near to medium term, they should give that person some occasional leadership responsibilities every now and again to see how they do. If they feel that the person could lead a group, they should take the next step.

## *Community group leaders*

The community group leader should mention the person to their CLG leaders, and after prayer and discussion with the CLG leader they should approach the person about the possibility of them growing into a leadership role. Once they have identified the person and shared with them, the CLG leader should share a possible road map with them of how it could work, including any prevalent character or other issues that would need to be resolved before they could lead.

Once this has happened, the person should be trained and given some opportunities to lead in the existing community group.

This entire process should happen in consultation with the CLG leader. Once the community group leader feels that the person is ready to lead, it must be spoken about with the elders who will discuss and finalize that a person is able to start a group.

## How do we provide oversight, accountability and care for community group leaders

All community group leaders are part of a “CLG” (Community Leaders Group) that is led by an elder or other ministry leader at RHC. These CLG’s are made up of 4 – 6 community group leaders and meet every 6 – 9 weeks for feedback, encouragement, pastoral care and oversight.

The CLG leaders shepherd the community group leaders, ensuring they are spiritually strong, give advice for their groups, and ensure that the community groups leaders are shepherding their people.

## What responsibilities do community group leaders carry?

Community group leaders are primarily responsible for the growth and discipleship of the people in their group. They are fulfilling a pastoral role in the life of the church for those under their care. They aim to spread a passion for Jesus by discipling those under their care.

This means that they need to:

**Know where their people are at spiritually:** This happens through personal discussions either at community group or at other times, as well as discernment through prayer.

**Be regularly praying for their people:** Community group leaders should be regularly praying for those in their group.

**Disciple them:** Leaders must disciple people through encouragement, leadership, speaking the truth in love, etc.

**Help connect people to each other:** The church is a body, and each part needs the other parts to function well. Community group leaders help connect people to each who can encourage, mentor, and disciple others.

**Helping them find areas of growth and service:** Because community group leaders want their people to be discipled well, they help them grow in their faith and assist them to find ways to serve God with their lives in the church and outside the 'walls' of the church.

## Confidentialities within community groups.

Community group leaders must make it clear to members of their community groups that their primary responsibility is to shepherd the flock and that any serious pastoral issues will need to be shared with the CLG leader who is responsible for the community group. The reason for this is because ultimately the elders / CLG leaders are responsible for the condition of the flock and need to be aware of major pastoral issues in the life of the church.

The CLG leaders may also have other information about those people and or other experience with dealing with those issues which would help the community group leaders deal with the situation.

Community group leaders will need to share the following information with elders:

1. Any serious sin that someone in their group commits which could lead to church discipline.
2. Any sin that occurs between a person in their group and another person in the church.
3. Any sin that would impact on that person serving in another area of the church.

**Note:** In order for people to understand how confidentiality works in the life of the church, if an elder is aware of specific issues that a person is going through, they may share that information in an elders meeting for pastoral reasons only,

### *Community group leaders*

but will keep the information as vague as possible. No details are shared that are not needed. This information is shared for the purpose of keeping the elders aware of issues in the church for prayer, and also to know who can be used in ministry in different areas.

# Chapter 4

## Multiplication of community groups

---

### Why do we multiply leaders?

At RHC we multiply community groups because we see community groups as one of the best discipling mechanisms in the church, and our mission is to spread a passion for God by making disciples! For this reason, the more healthy community groups we have the better we can make disciples and spread a passion for God.

### How do we multiply groups?

We multiply groups by identifying, training and then releasing community group leaders, who go out (either on their own or with a community group) to start a new community group. We do not split existing community groups in order to start new ones, although if a new leader starts and a number of people from the group want to join him or her, it may result in that group seeming to 'split'. The reason we prefer not to split community groups is that we are trying to develop deep biblical community and we believe that these deepen over time.

### Identifying leaders:

Jesus seems to have identified many people and called them to follow him without giving too much prayer to it although Jesus would undoubtedly have spent much time in prayer and communion with God. The gospels record many occasions where he simply passed people, noticed them and called them to follow him. He was very straight in his call to these people to follow Him. Sometimes we need to be strong with people and challenge them to lay down their lives and follow Christ.

We believe that strong healthy leaders are key to fulfilling the mission that we have at RHC. Therefore the caliber of the people that we release to lead our community groups is highly important.

We are looking for people who have spiritual depth, relational warmth and alignment with the closed handed issues of RHC (see 'what are we looking for in leaders of community groups').

## Training leaders:

Jesus trained his leaders by both formal teaching as well as bringing them along as He did ministry, and letting them learn by watching Him. He would regularly ask them questions, engaging with them, and teaching them this way. Once He was confident with them, he would give them opportunities to minister. *But before Jesus released anyone He was very careful to pray to the Father.* The gospels show that He prayed through the night before appointing his first apostles.

## Methods that leaders can use to raise up leaders:

**Pray for them:** Regularly lift up these people to the Father, asking Him to work in their lives, prepare them for leadership, bring to the light any hidden issues that must be dealt with.

**Share the call of God on them to lead God's people:** You must talk to them about the possibility of God using them to lead. See how they feel and answer any questions they may have.

**Point out any character or other areas that will need adjustment and improvement:** Leadership is about preparing people for what God has for them. Sometimes this shepherding involves speaking the truth in love, correcting, and rebuking. Although community group leaders should do this with all people in their groups, attention must be given to disciple those who will one day lead.

**Start to slowly give them opportunity to lead meetings, teach, and handle situations:** This is one of the best ways to see people's leadership skills as well as let them grow in them. Observe them leading and give them good feedback.

## Releasing leaders:

Leaders are only released by the elders of RHC. It's important to note that although community groups leaders are encouraged to identify and train leaders, it is up to the elders to appoint any community groups leaders in RHC.

Community group leaders should talk to their CLG leader as soon as they have identified a possible community group leader, and in consultation with the CLG leader they should pray for the prospective leader and monitor the process of him or her possibly leading a community group.

# Chapter 5

## Practical skills for community group leaders

---

### Facilitation skills:

To 'facilitate' means to make easier, to help bring about, to increase the likelihood of. Therefore to facilitate discussion is to help bring about discussion, to make discussion easier and, to help create discussion and deep sharing. The fact that we often speak of having to facilitate discussion or sharing suggests that meaningful discussion and deep sharing is not something that comes naturally.

### Why might people find it difficult to share in a group?

- people feel afraid to make themselves vulnerable
- fear that they may be the only person that feels that way
- people may feel that their view is not important
- people may be shy and not like speaking in bigger groups
- a few dominant people may be hogging the conversation and they don't feel there is an opportunity for them to jump in and contribute
- they may not be clear what the question is
- they may be tired or lazy to think and reflect
- they may be afraid that their answer is wrong

### How can we make it easier?

Firstly, by encouraging thinking and focused reflection: We should ask open-ended BUT focused and clear questions. We want to ask open-ended questions that illicit more than just 'yes' or 'no'. But more importantly, we want to be clear and focused in what we are asking, so that we help facilitate our members' thinking.

For example, when looking at Matthew 6:31-35, which is a better question: "Can anyone relate to this verse?" or "What are some of things you find yourself most anxious about?" or "In v33, Jesus exhorts us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to us. Has anyone had a recent experience of this?"

## *Practical skills of community group leaders*

In this example, which is better: “Does anyone have anything they want to share from last week’s sermon?” or “What is one thing that challenged you the most from last week’s sermon?”

We should also wait and enjoy the silence (most of the time, it means people are thinking): We often forget that it takes people time to think, and when we don’t see people immediately raising their hands and fighting to speak, we get anxious and want to change our question, or feel the need to repeat or re-explain our question. If we have asked a clear and well-crafted question, we really shouldn’t have to explain our question much more, so just wait. If after waiting awhile, people appear puzzled, perhaps you do need to rephrase. Sometimes, call on someone who looks like they might have something to say to get the ball rolling.

Secondly, by creating a safe and comfortable environment: Active listening is a big component of this. We should listen to feelings behind what a person is saying and respond to those as well as just what they are saying with their words. Eye contact and body language are crucial (show in your body and your posture that you’re interested and keen to understand what the person is saying). Finally, paraphrase and repeat to show understanding, or elaborate briefly with some other examples. This not only shows that you have been listening closely and understanding, but often also helps the person consolidate what he/she has said.

Affirmation and encouragement is a big key tool. Find something specific to affirm. Don’t just say ‘thanks for sharing’, but ‘thanks for reminding us of such an important lesson’, or ‘thanks for sharing so openly with us’.

Even if it’s something you may disagree with, it’s good to still affirm the person, and chat to him/her later. You don’t want to shame the person publically. Although sometimes you may need to clarify or correct matters of truth or fact, be careful not to shame, especially when a person is honestly mistaken. “Thanks for sharing how you feel about this situation” or “Thanks for sharing from your personal experience”.

Humour, when done in a sensitive way can be a powerful tool as well. It’s often easier to make jokes with people you know will be fine with it. Be careful not to offend, and definitely avoid using humour to cloak a snide comment.

Remember that people feed off your energy or your lack of it. If you are tired and down in the dumps, people will sense it.

The physical environment also needs to be comfortable for people as well. Pets that make people feel uncomfortable or that are constantly intruding do not allow people to relax and feel ready to share, for example.

Finally, appropriate self-disclosure is a great tool as well. Knowing that you have fears and struggles will make people more comfortable with sharing their own fears and struggles. Just don't monopolize, as the discussion shouldn't be about you.

Thirdly, actively invite participation: Ask follow-up questions (to get deeper), or paraphrase and redirect (for more responses). A common way of doing this is called 'inviting and intervening'. Inviting is when you invite feedback from different people to draw them into the discussion, and intervening is when you have to prevent a hogger from taking all the time. How to intervene? Always make the person feel listened to, then redirect to someone else. "So you feel that.... Does anyone else feel the same way?"

Call on specific people (watch out for people who look like they may have something to say), but make them feel comfortable if they're generally struggling or if they say they don't know – "that's okay, does someone else have a possible answer?" or "don't worry we can come back to you later."

Finally, be conscious of different levels of comfort of sharing, especially in multi-cultural groups like Singapore!



Printed on January 2012