

1 Vision Area

1 Group

The Big Picture

Today we will primarily spend time getting to know one another better. We will also begin to think about what we expect or what we define as our purpose for this group.

Biblical Text

Acts 2.42-47 (All scripture quotations taken from the NIV unless otherwise noted.)

Materials Needed

Paper for everyone in the group

Pencils, markers, crayons, or something else to draw with

—OR—

Several sets of Lego or similar blocks (Each set needs to contain the exact same number, color, and size of blocks. Be sure to include enough blocks to build something, but not so many it becomes a ginormous creation. 15-20 should be about enough.)

Preparing for the Lesson

The lesson today is the first of three lessons focused on the area of 1 Group.

We will attempt to do 3 things through these lessons:

1. Build relationships with fellow group members;
2. Communicate the importance of small groups in the life of believers; and
3. Create a “Covenant” or “Agreement” so as to define the purpose of your specific group.

This last item will actually take place over the next three weeks, so do not be concerned if it is only introduced, but not completed, this week.

Also, do not rush through the process of developing a Covenant. (I will call it a Covenant for consistency’s sake, but Agreement would work just as well.) The Covenant will set the foundation for what will happen in the weeks to come as you live out life together as a group. Like the foolish man who built his house upon the sand (Matthew 7.24-27), doing so will create the possibility of an unstable future.

However, this first lesson will simply be a way to get to know one another better through the sharing of a mutual question. There will be a couple of options as to which question to use depending on how well your group knows one another. While we will seek to develop closer relationships in which sharing our spiritual story is done easily, please recognize for people who do not know each other well, this may be a very uncomfortable conversation. Some people may

(Continued on page 2)

Preparing for the Lesson (cont.)

have parts of their spiritual story that they are not comfortable with sharing. For others, anything spiritual is very intimate and so they exercise great caution about being too open with their story.

One way to help reassure people is to remind your group members prior to the discussion that groups are not a spring board for sharing information with others. At the risk of stealing Vegas' slogan, what happens in group, stays in group. Just because someone shares a story in group, that does not give others the right to share it outside of group. Please respect others and the things they say and hold those things in confidence.

If you complete this lesson and have only gotten to know one another better, your group time will have been a great success. It may not "feel" productive, but sometimes that groundwork is merely tilling the soil in which fruit will later grow.

Possible Lesson Outline

Welcome and introductions, especially for new members. Don't assume, however, everyone knows everyone.

If your group shares a meal or snacks, do it first, even if it is not your custom. (This allows people to continue to get to know one another and share over the food.)

Gather your group together and let the group know you are going to spend some time getting to know one another better. Ask everyone to share their name, what they do, and one of the following questions:

If you could have a time machine and tickets to any concert in the world at any location at any time, what concert would it be and why? (This question is really geared for people who do not know each other well. It is fairly risk-free. If the person gives a one word answer, be sure to ask why and include questions like "So what other classic rock groups do you like? or something similar to try to get to know them better. If you have another favorite "getting to know you" question, feel free to substitute it here.)

Tell us how you ended up at South Plains. (This is still for people who do not know each other well, but have enough of a relationship to begin to describe their spiritual story. While this does not completely open up people to tell their entire spiritual journey, some will and those who do not will begin to share bits and pieces of that journey.)

How has the last year been a time of growth for you spiritually? (Obviously, this question is for those who feel comfortable enough to share. It is for people who know each other well and works especially well for people who have been in the same group for a number of years. This avoids spending time telling the same stories that you told at the first group meeting last year. However, remember that if a part of your group has been together for a while, but the other part is new, this still may not be the best question. Those who know each other's story well should still defer to those who are new to the group.)

If your group is large, you might do this over a two meeting period so that people have enough time to share with one another everything they want to share.

Tell the group you are going to share an activity together and then do one of the exercises listed below (Lesson Activities).

I would not spend time in an extended discussion asking all the questions from the text because I think spending time sharing our stories with one another is more important. (There are questions below, however, if you choose to do so.) What I *would* do, however, is read the Acts 2.42-47 passage. I would then ask questions 6 & 7 to help us think about group through the lens of what we see in Scripture.

Ask group members to reread Acts 2.42-47 during the upcoming week and then think about what they imagine your group looking like as you work together as a group this year. Tell group members that during the next week, be thinking

(Continued on page 3)

Possible Lesson Outline (cont.)

about what they see as the purpose of this group and be prepared to come back next week and offer their ideas – and desires – as to a group purpose.

Spend time in prayer to close your meeting.

Lesson Activities

Draw a Flower Garden.

Give all of your group members a piece of paper and something(s) to draw with. Ask group members to “Draw a flower garden.” Do not give any additional instructions, such as how many flowers, what kinds of flowers, or what else to include in the garden.

After group members have had an opportunity to draw, have everyone share their drawings with the group.

Ask the group to discuss why they chose the garden they did? How are everyone’s flowers different? How are they the same? Why doesn’t everyone have the exact same flower or garden?

The point of this exercise is to show that when we talk about something (in this case, a flower garden), everyone has different ideas come to mind. This does not mean some people are right and some are wrong, it simply means that our own experiences shape how we imagine or think of things.

The same is true with a small group. Each one of us think of something specific and each one of us have our own goals and expectations of our time together in small group. If we are not careful to spend time defining those expectations and group goals, we may be frustrated.

Let people know that over the next couple of weeks, you will all share your goals and expectations and then use those to shape a Group Covenant, which will allow everyone to know what the expectations and goals are for your group.

Build It.

Give everyone (or you may give a family or a couple of people, depending on the number of block kits you have) a package of Lego blocks. Each package needs to have the same number of blocks (15-20) and each package needs to have the same size and color of blocks. In other words, everyone needs to begin with identical pieces.

Ask group members to use their blocks to build something.

After a few minutes of building time, have everyone share their creations.

Ask the group to discuss why they chose the creation they did? How are everyone’s creations different? How are they the same? Why doesn’t everyone have the exact creation?

The point of this exercise is to show that when we talk about something (in this case, a creation made of Lego blocks), everyone has different ideas come to mind. This does not mean some people are right and some are wrong, it simply means that our own experiences shape how we imagine or think of things.

The same is true with a small group. Each one of us think of something specific and each one of us have our own goals and expectations of our time together in small group. If we are not careful to spend time defining those expectations and group goals, we may be frustrated.

Let people know that over the next couple of weeks, you will all share your goals and expectations and then use those to shape a Group Covenant, which will allow everyone to know what the expectations and goals are for your group.

For the Kids

Children enjoy hearing the stories of their parents, so my recommendation is to bring everyone together and share

(Continued on page 4)

For the Kids (cont.)

around the circle with them as a part of the group. You might want to go around the circle first and have everyone under 18 share questions specifically for them, then go around again with the adults. This way, you are not trying to remember which individual gets asked which question.

When it comes to the children, ask them more “Getting to know you” questions, depending on how old they are. Younger children can describe what they like to do, their favorite subject in school, what kind of music they like, or where they might want to go on vacation. Older children are beginning to be able to articulate their faith stories, so their questions may be who or what sort of events help you know God better?

You can include the children in the drawing/building exercises (perhaps have the parents draw and the children build). Look at their pictures/creations first and ask a lot of questions: Why did you pick the color purple? What does this piece off to the side do? Then ask the children to compare their drawings/creations to the other children. They feel like they are a part and are not having to compare to someone who is a more talented artist.

For Next Week

During the group meeting time, you will have asked group members to be thinking about their goals and expectations for the group. They will come next week prepared to share those with the other members as you craft a unified purpose.

Prayer Ideas

When you pray this week, perhaps it would be a good opportunity for you as a leader of the group to pray for the entire group. Pray that God will work through your time together as a group and that each of you would grow in Him not only individually, but collectively as a group as well.

If you can, pray for each group member/family by name, thanking God for them taking part in the group and requesting that God would bless their lives this week.

NOTE: If you are not doing so already, be sure to get a list of your group members and put it somewhere you will see it often to be reminded to pray for the group members regularly by name.

Discussion Questions

1. The events described in Acts 2.42-47 follow the amazing event of receiving the Holy Spirit and 3,000 being added to the church’s number at Pentecost. What sort of things do you think the believers did to keep up this excitement or energy?
2. Why is it sometimes difficult for us to live in an environment where we practice having “everything in common” (v. 44)? What risks are associated with living this way? How can we reduce those risks?
3. Why do we hesitate to give to “anyone who [has] need” (v. 45)? How does Matthew 5.42 impact your thoughts on this idea?
4. Does meeting together every day seem a little over the top? How would our own lives as disciples look if we were to meet together on a daily basis? What are some practical ways we could do this?
5. Why does Luke (the author of Acts) want us to know the believers enjoyed “the favor of all the people” (v. 47)? In what ways can the same be said of us?
6. Is Acts 2.42-47 descriptive or prescriptive? Why do think this is the case?
7. In what ways can we make this passage a description of our life together as a group?

What's Next

You will continue to craft a Covenant, sharing the ideas you had during this week. You will also look at the emphasis in Scripture on living life with “one another.”