

UNCLASSIFIED



Small Group Facilitation

Volunteer Academy

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UNCLASSIFIED



7 Minute Drill

Basics of Small Group Facilitation

Purpose: Equip small group facilitators with practical guidance on creating friendly, efficient, relational group experience leading to individual and community faith formation.

Considerations:

-Virtual and In-Person Small Groups : As restrictions on gatherings imposed by the COVID-19 crisis begin to ease, Chapel and Unit ministry is likely to be found in a both/and reality (a hybrid of virtual and in-person ministry).

-Sustainability: Sustain an enhanced digital presence, while at the same time resume normal patterns of gathering.

-Support: Time to innovate and create teams to support the challenges and opportunities of this new normal.

Tips for a Great Small Group Experience

Pre-Sets (Learning Environment Setting)

1. Use of Curriculum
2. Lead Great Discussions
3. Ask Great Questions
4. Listen
5. Study the material
6. Pray/Thinking together

Meeting Agenda

- Small Group Environment: (Awareness of Participant, Facilitator, and Learning Environment)
- Preparing Small Group Meeting (Use of Curriculum, Discussions, Questions)
- Community Building: Inclusion, Equity, and Relationships
- Practical Considerations





Pre-setting Learning Environment





The Participant (Learner)

✓ **Sponge**

✓ **Blank
Slate**

✓ **Wet
Cement**

✓ **Sheep**

✓ **Plants**

✓ **Seeds**

✓ **Pilgrims**

✓ **Empty Cup**

✓ **Clay**

✓ **Disciple**

Passive Metaphor

Sponge
Blank Slate
Empty cup
Clay
Wet Cement

Active Metaphor

Sheep
Seed or plant
Pilgrims
Disciples

How does our perception of the learner change the way we lead the small group?





The Facilitator (Teacher)

- ✓ **Expert**
- ✓ **Shepherd**
- ✓ **Farmer or Gardener**
- ✓ **Boss**
- ✓ **Authority**
- ✓ **Evaluator**
- ✓ **Funnel holder**
- ✓ **Fellow Pilgrim**
- ✓ **Guide**
- ✓ **Friend**

Passive Metaphor

Expert
 Authority
 Boss
 Evaluator
 Funnel Holder

Active Metaphor

Shepherd
 Farmer or gardner
 Fellow Pilgrim
 Guide
 Friend

How does our perception of the teacher change the way we facilitate?





The Curriculum

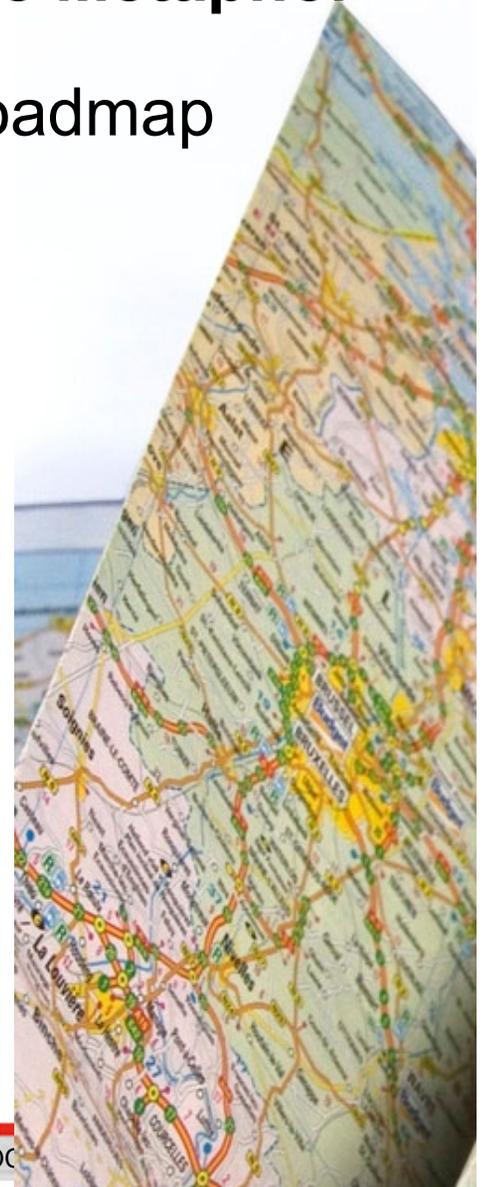
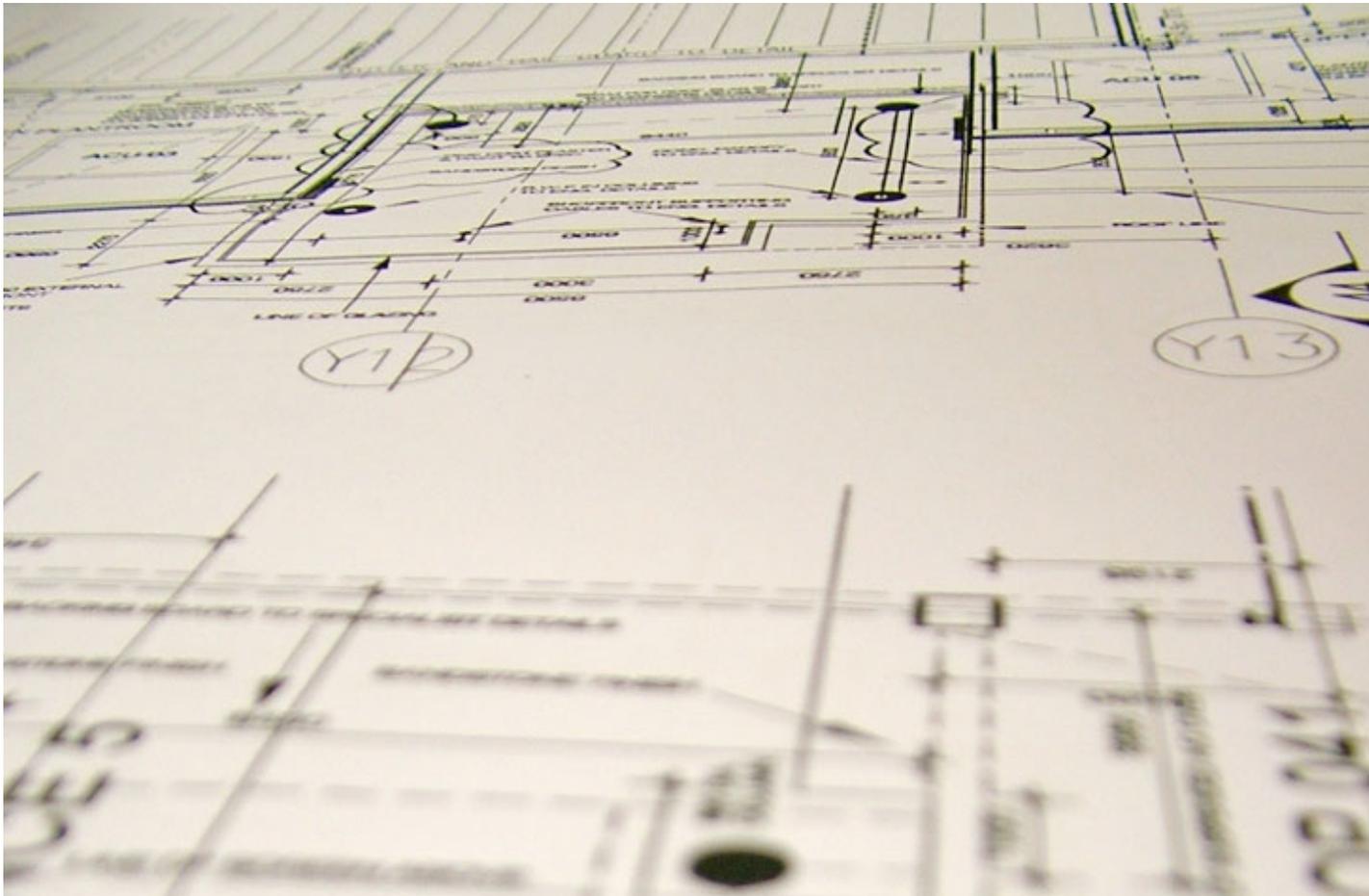
Passive Metaphor Active Metaphor

✓ **Blueprint**

Blueprint

Roadmap

✓ **Roadmap**





Clarify the Role/Purpose of Small Groups

- ✓ Is your chapel a community with groups, of groups or one that is groups?
- ✓ Does the small group organize around content, experiences (affinity), or mission (service)?
- ✓ How will the small group assimilate new people into the community?





Use Curriculum

How to Use Curriculum Well

- ✓ **Little or no homework**
- ✓ **Promotes discussion and encourages participation** – Engagement of participants.
- ✓ **Pray and read through the material** – Consider your participants, discussion, and content.
- ✓ **Rewrite and adapt questions** – Contextualize to the group's needs.
- ✓ **Don't feel forced to complete** – Celebrate the process.





Lead Great Discussions

Keys to Leading a Great Discussion

- ✓ **Know the point** – *Have fun, but remember the big idea.*
- ✓ **Start with an icebreaker** – Start shallow, then go deep.
- ✓ **Create a safe environment** – *Create a place where people can share without being judged; non-competitive; and say what you believe.*
- ✓ **Stay on course, but be flexible** – “rabbit trails,” jokes, and “randomness” are okay.
- ✓ **Involve everyone in the discussion** – What do you think? What would you add?
- ✓ **Use space well** – Comfortable, without distraction, allow for eye contact.





Ask Great Questions

How do you ask great questions?

- ✓ **Study the discussion guide**
- ✓ **Ask open-ended questions** – Feel, think, respond
- ✓ **Understand** – What? So What? Now what?
- ✓ **Avoid fishing for right answer**
- ✓ **Don't answer your own question** – Don't be afraid of silence.
- ✓ **You cannot judge someone's answer** – Help people process the response and not judge.





Listen

How do you listen actively?

- ✓ **Make eye contact**
- ✓ **Resist interruption, story-topping, joke making, or finish another's sentence**
- ✓ **Ask Follow-up questions** – “Share more of that . . .”
- ✓ **Restate what was shared** – Bring it inside and bring it outside (seek to understand).
- ✓ **Encourage everyone to stay engaged** – “Hey, this is really important, I want to make sure that everyone hears this . . .”
- ✓ **Thank people for contribution, vulnerability, and depth** – Help create safety and value in sharing.





Study the Bible

Study principles:

- ✓ **God's Word is the final word**
- ✓ **Context of the verse is key**
- ✓ **Know the author and intended audience** – What did the original audience need to hear, know, or do?
- ✓ **Interpret the unclear with the clear** – Exegesis, no eisegesis.
- ✓ **Submit to the teaching** – Explain, Illustrate, and Apply.





Pray Together

Community praying together

- ✓ **Sentence prayers**
- ✓ **Pray in smaller groups**
- ✓ **Write prayer requests down**
- ✓ **Praises only**
- ✓ **Pray through Scripture**



A systematic approach that ties the congregations' religious education program to the pastoral message as expressed by the chaplain during the service, allowing the knowledge and experience gained in that encounter to be built upon throughout the week, and increase the likelihood of it being lived in the work place and home.

This allows for the life to flow from the scripture/sermon, through the congregation, and into the force, and perhaps result in the growth of the congregation and an increase in the overall spiritual resilience of Soldiers and Family members.

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THRIVE ELEMENTS



GATHER – small group communities (8-10 people) from each of the Chapel congregations.



GROW – building community by sharing scripture, fellowship/hospitality, experiences, and serving together.



GO – faith into action and application of Truth into daily life. Sent to serve others.

Each group led by a facilitator. Gatherings held when and where the participants decide (first, second, and third places).

Guiding Values

Desired Outcome

1. We **BLESS** people, both inside and outside the chapel Communities.

2. We **EAT** together, sharing meals with believers and nonbelievers alike.

3. We **LISTEN** to the guidance and direction of the God through Scripture as we engage with those around us.

4. We intimately **LEARN** Christ as our leader and model for making disciples.

5. We see ourselves as **SENT** by God to everywhere life takes us.

RELATIONAL

-Assimilate newcomers into the chapel fellowships

-Create larger, welcoming chapel Community for the Garrison community.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION

-For participants to grow in their faith through inductive dialogical Bible Study and apply deeper truths of Scripture to daily living.

SPIRITUAL RESILIENCE and SERVICE TO OTHERS

-Increased interaction within and between chapel Communities through living and sharing faith experiences.

-Increased extension of service from chapel Communities to the broader Army Community.

ELEMENTS



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*Virtual, In-person,
or Hybrid Groups
(up to 10 people)*

THRIVE COMMUNITY BUILDING Environments

First Places - Homes

Second Places – Work
places

Third Places – Informal
Gathering Spaces (neutral
ground where individuals are free to
come and go as they please, where
rank and status in the workplace or
society at large are of no importance.)

Gatherings in a home can host up to 10 people (e.g., 5 couples, 10 singles, 3 families of 3 and a single, etc.) or 2 Families regardless of size (e.g., 2 Families of 10 are fine).

How to become part of a Thrive Group:

1. **Participate** in the initial Thrive Group orientation.
2. **Participate** in the Foundations Class.
3. **Join** a Thrive Group or start one.
4. **Decide** on the **frequency** of meeting together (once a week, twice a month).
5. **Decide where** to meet (home, work, informal gathering space).
6. **Decide what** to gather around -- content, experiences, and/or mission.
7. **Coordinate** with DRE and Chapel pastors.



GATHER – Bless
and Eat



GROW – Listen
and Learn



GO – Bless and
Send

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Missional Habits

Bless – Generous

Eat – Hospitality

Listen – Spirit and Gospel-Led

Learn – Christlike

Send – Missional



THRIVE



Join RightNow Media. Scan the QR code with phone camera to gain free access to RNM or use the following link:

<https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Account/Invite/USAGWiesbaden>

Resources used to prepare this presentation:

- Frost, Michael. 2016. *Surprise the World! The Five Habits of Highly Missional People*. NavPress.
- Lowin, Clinton. 2011. *Religious Education*. Presentation: Wayland Baptist University.
- Lowin, Clinton. 2018. *Thrive Groups*. Presentation: US Army Garrison Wiesbaden Germany.
- Search, Bill. 2020. *6 Tips for a Great Small Group*. RightNow Media.

- Other great resources for small group ministry and bible study can be found at:
 - RightNow Media
 - Formed