



D Groups

v3.0
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Hosting Notes:
Hints and Helps

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D Groups Overview “Following Jesus Together”

(D Groups adapted from Neil Cole’s Life Transformation Group model “LTG’s”)

D Groups

- Discover Jesus Together
- Go Deeper Together
- Be Disciples Together

What are D Groups?

“Doing together what is hard to do alone.”¹

High Commitment, Meeting weekly with 2-3 people of the same gender to grow in 3 focus areas.

1. Reading Scripture:

Consuming the Word together: Reading daily a bunch of scripture for 3 months. (Completing and maybe repeating whole passages, at least 15 minutes a day)

2. Rejecting Sin:

Following Jesus together: Being serious about joyful obedience to Jesus, and character formation, confession and repentance.

3. Reaching Souls:

Praying for the lost together: Having intentional witness and generous sharing of Jesus

¹ “*Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*” (Ecclesiastes 4:12, NIV)

D Group Member Commitment

- Love God, love each other, love the lost and pray for them.
- Keep a daily facetime with God.
- Do your daily readings every week (if anyone is unable to complete the week, the whole group supportively re-reads together. Repetition is good when it comes to the Word.)
- Make your group meeting a high priority in this season and attend faithfully.
- Come ready to share authentically and willing to support each other.
- Contact each other at least once a week outside the group meeting with phone, text, email, etc.
- Keep things shared in the group confidential to the group.

D Group Host Responsibilities

- Attend the training sessions or make arrangements for make up.
- Attend host training
- Recruit members or receive them.
 - *We would love to have you find your own group members to grow together. Some people have signed up as interested members so we can match you with a member also.*
- Schedule and organize your weekly meet ups.
 - *Once you have your members you can find a weekly time to consistently meet.*
- Host and respond to the movement of the Holy Spirit.
 - *Pray and enjoy!*
- Meet with Support Team once a month.
 - *We want you to feel supported and safe in the process of hosting. We are here to help if you have questions, issues, need prayer, or someone to bounce things off of.*
- Recruit or receive a prayer partner / mentor.
 - *Who can be part of your support team to pray for you and encourage you?*

Meeting Outline: (1 ½ Hour)

Welcome Time (10 minutes)

Reading the Word (20 Minutes)

Hear & Obey²

Share from your notes or journal what you have learned from the chapters you read this past week and from your daily “facetime” with God. [Suggested: Reading for at least 15 minutes a day.]

- What have you heard from God this week in his Word and in your spirit?
- What changes are you making in your life in response to his Word?
- What is most difficult about obeying his Word this week. What is most exciting?

Rejecting Sin (40 Minutes)

Repent & Believe³

Share about your walk with Jesus this week. Where have you struggled with sin? Go through the accountability questions and allow the Holy Spirit to search you and bring light into any dark areas. Be specific about your struggles and look for the deeper heart issues behind any sin behavior.

As you confess any failures, repent of your actions, reject the enemy, and receive the grace of Jesus afresh. Claim His power to move forward into transformation and change.

Reaching Souls (20 Minutes)

Consider & Pray⁴ For Non - Believers

Share about your relationships and spiritual conversations with non - believers. Pray for them by name to come to Jesus as Savior, be reconciled to God and to start following Jesus as Lord. Keep a shared list of the people you are praying for as a group.

- What opportunities have you had to share Jesus with someone this week?
- How can you help this person connect to the community of Christ?
- How can we pray for them, their needs, their spiritual journey towards Jesus?

² “He replied, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.” (Luke 11:28, NIV)

³ ““The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15, NIV)

⁴ “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8, NIV)

Accountability Questions

- Use these questions to allow the Holy Spirit to search your heart, lead you to repentance, and bring restoration and spiritual health.
1. *Have you kept a daily quiet time this week? Are you investing enough in your prime relationships?*
 2. *Have you been trusting Jesus? How has anger, fear, anxiety, or escapism shown up in your life this week? Are you complaining about life or praying over your life. Who are you letting handle your stress?*
 3. *Have you neglected your physical health in any way by failing to take care of your body with proper exercise, healthy eating habits, rest, and sleep patterns?*
 4. *Have you been a slave to dress, friendships, work, media, or technology? Have you procrastinated or misspent any of his time this week?*
 5. *Have you allowed yourself impurity with your thoughts or behavior? Have you lusted, fantasized, viewed inappropriate things, or crossed any boundaries?*
 6. *Have you lacked any integrity in your financial dealings this week, or coveted something that does not belong to you? Are you tithing, saving and spending appropriately?*
 7. *Have you used your tongue to build people up this week? (i.e. not swearing, gossiping, making fun of someone, laughing at inappropriate humor, or speaking truth without love, etc.) Have you damaged another person by your words, either behind their back or face-to-face?*
 8. *Have you lied this week to make yourself look better, to avoid conflict, or avoid consequence?*
 9. *In light of God's love toward you, do you need to reconcile with somebody? Is there any hatred, bitterness, spite, resentment, or unforgiveness in your heart toward another person?*
 10. *Are there any other temptations you faced since our last meeting?*
 11. _____ (Your personalized question)
 12. *Have you hidden anything today as you have shared?*

Reading Plans

Track 1

Luke	[24 Chapters]
Acts	[28 Chapters]
Genesis	[50 Chapters]
Galatians	[6 Chapters]
Exodus A, 1- 20	[20 Chapters]
Ephesian	[6 Chapters]
Philippians	[4 Chapters]
Psalms A, 1-30	[30 Chapters]
1 Timothy	[6 Chapters]
2 Timothy	[4 Chapters]

Track 2

John	[21 Chapters]
Ruth	[4 Chapters]
1 Samuel	[31 Chapters]
Psalms B, 31-60	[30 Chapters]
2 Samuel	[24 Chapters]
Romans	[16 Chapters]
Daniel	[12 Chapters]
Hebrews	[13 Chapters]
James	[5 Chapters]
Proverbs A, 1-10	[10 Chapters]
Nehemiah	[13 Chapters]

Track 3

Matthew	[28 Chapters]
Judges	[21 Chapters]
Psalms C, 61-90	[30 Chapters]
1 Corinthians	[16 Chapters]
2 Corinthians	[13 Chapters]
Job	[42 Chapters]
Proverbs B, 11-20	[10 Chapters]
Jonah	[4 Chapters]
Nahum	[3 Chapters]
Song of Songs	[8 Chapters]
1 John	[5 Chapters]

Track 4

2 chapters a day:

If a member is not able to finish their reading in a week then have the group go back and read from that persons position again so that no one gets too far behind. (The repetition will be very useful to your spirits.)

Who's the Leader...the key to Hosting

Our job as hosts is to create a place for the Holy Spirit to work in us, among us, and through us. As you meet together remember to seek out and trust His movement in each member's life

It is ultimately the Holy Spirit that disciples people. We assist with a heart of love, and attitude of service, and submission to His leadership and guidance.

"But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." (John 14:26, NIV)

"I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith." (Romans 1:11–12, NIV)

"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose." (Philippians 2:12–13, NIV)

"This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, for, "Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:13–16, NIV)

"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better." (Ephesians 1:17, NIV)

Facilitating change from a social work perspective

I am here to listen...not to work miracles.

I am here to help you discover what you are feeling...not to make feelings go away.

I am here to help you identify your options...not to decide for you what you should do

I am here to discuss steps with you...not to take the steps for you.

I am here to help you discover your own strength...not to rescue you and leave you still vulnerable.

I am here to help you discover you can help yourself...not to take responsibility for you.

I am here to help you learn to choose...not to make it unnecessary for you to make difficult choices

I am here to provide support for change.

shared by Teresa Huang, submitted by Linda Whitney-Peterson

Effective Group Hosting

Be Open and Honest

“An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips.” (Proverbs 24:26, NIV)

“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.” (Ephesians 4:15, NIV)

“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:18–19, NIV)

- Set the tone from the beginning by intentionally sharing both struggles and victories of your week.
- Don't be afraid to be transparent in sharing surprising, humbling, or successful aspects of your walk with Jesus
- Let the group know you struggle too. (If everyone just pretends to be okay or hides weaknesses then why do we need to support each other?)
Encourage everyone to be listen with love, seek to understand before being understood and affirm each other's vulnerabilities with support and non judgment.

Don't Fear Silence

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.” (1 Corinthians 13:4, NIV)

- People often benefit more from silent introspection than constant chatter.
- Be patient; let others begin to feel comfortable through silences, especially after asking a probing question.
- Give people time to process deep questions or new concepts

Let Each Person Set Their Own Personal Goals.

“I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but not everything is constructive. No one should seek their own good, but the good of others. Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, for, “The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.” If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, both for the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience. I am referring to the other person's conscience, not yours. For why is my freedom being judged by another's conscience?” (1 Corinthians 10:23–29, NIV)

- Each keep accountable to each personal standards.
- Each keep accountable to Biblical standards. 1 Cor. 10:23-29

Keep Prayer an Active Ingredient

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.” (Ephesians 6:18, NIV)

- Begin and end each meeting with prayer.
- Actively pray for each other during the week.
- Be flexible to allow the group to spend considerable amounts of time in prayer during especially difficult times.

Postures for Active Listening =)

Stop any activity and turn fully to the person sharing

Look the other person in the eye

Listen with both ears from the edge of your seat

How to Give Affirming Responses to Difficult Situations

- Don’t argue with feelings.
- Don’t be threatened by ambivalent attitudes or strong feelings.
- Discern the difference between accepting a person and approving his or her behavior.
- Always communicate respect.
- Reply with caring to sensitive subjects.
- Overlook irritating and unfavorable behavior when people are tired or under stress.
- Say no only when it is the best and only response and stick to it.
- Ask for forgiveness as often as necessary.

Support Each Other During Week

- Help each member realize the importance of growing and encouraging each other.
- Contact each other by phone when one is going through an especially difficult time.
- Connect via phone, text, email, notes, visits etc.
- Emphasize group responsibility to keep each other accountable during the week.

Confidentiality

“Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.” (Proverbs 17:9, NIV)

- Things shared in group remain in the group, except in cases of imminent harm to self or others.
- Emphasize the importance of respecting other’s vulnerability and not breaking trust.
- Unless permitted, don’t share personal details outside of the group.

As a D-Group host you may hear things shared that are very private and personal. If you feel that something should be brought to the attention of a pastor please get permission from that person to share first. You can also encourage that person to talk to a pastor directly. (You can offer to go with them to meet with the pastor if that would be more comfortable) If you begin to sense you are hearing more serious content that might need outside help you may want to let them know, gently but firmly, that in some cases, you may need to share some of this information with one of the church staff.

Outside help should be sought when a person⁵:

- Talks about suicide or doing bodily harm to another person
- Needs medical help
- Is being physically, mentally, or sexually abused
- Seems emotionally unstable
- Requests professional help
- Needs legal assistance

⁵ Adapted from Sturkie and Tan, *Peer Counseling in Youth Groups* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992) 138

Potential Hosting pitfalls (less than best practices) 😊

When Asking Questions

- Not making the questions sound conversational. Even though you are asking questions, which may be written down and prepared, it is possible to ask them in a conversational tone. Use your own vocabulary.
- Being afraid of silence after asking a question. Don't be impatient or nervous. You must give people time to think.
- Combining two questions into one. Be careful to ask only one question at a time.
- Asking too complex a question. State the question simply and clearly.
- Immediately answering a question directed to you, the host. Don't answer the question right away; kick it back out to the group. Ask, "What does someone think?" Once the group members have tried to answer, you either affirm their response, or handle the question yourself.

When Thinking about Role in Group

- Limiting yourself to asking questions and feeding others. The host is also a participant in the group. You may share your answers and observations, but don't dominate the study.
- Not participating when you feel the group may be wandering. The host needs to be a participant and completely involved, even in the tangents. Obviously, don't let it go too far. Asking a question, which can be answered "yes," or "no." These questions hinder discussion. and "Why" questions are excellent. "Who," "What," "Where," and "When" questions can also stimulate discussion.

When Facilitating Sharing

- Trying to maintain too much control. If the group "takes off," don't worry as long as it is in a direction you want to go. You may need to step in from time to time to nudge the direction.
- Not explaining what you expect the group to do. You are in charge. Do not hesitate to bring the discussion back if it gets too far off the topic.
- Tending to stress your own personal application. You should not expect the rest of the group to be impressed deeply with the same things that impress you.
- Not finishing on time. If people voluntarily stay around and fellowship, that's fine, but end the group lesson at the previously agreed ending time.
- Launching into a lecture as soon as the discussion wanes. Don't start a sermon just because the silence is uncomfortable during a lull in the dialogue. Be patient. It will come alive again. Give it time. Keep asking questions.

- Allowing doctrinal discussion that is divisive or argumentative. Two things that will polarize a group right down the middle are doctrinal disputes and political debates. If someone brings up a doctrinal dispute that divides people, as the host you should make the statement that this is not a matter to be discussed in this context. Tell the person you'd be glad to talk privately with them after the meeting.

When Feeling Weak

- Being afraid to admit to the group that you don't know the answer. Don't hesitate to say, "that's a good question; I don't know." It doesn't make you less of a host; it just shows that you're honest. Tell the person you'll do your best to find the answer and give it to them next week.
- Being afraid to show weakness. As a host, you are setting an example for the group, but that doesn't mean you're perfect. Admit a weakness. Share a sin. Admit a lack of understanding. The people in your group won't think less of you.

Remembering the bigger picture?

- Being too concerned with getting through the D-Group material. There will be some nights when you need to put down aside the questions and minister to someone in the group. The relationships are more important than being on the right time table or finishing content by a certain date..

Much of the preceding material was adapted from a Navigator's book entitled, "How to Lead Small Group Bible Studies."

Listening Skills: What does it mean to listen well?

By Kim Graham, NLA. (excerpted from APU, D- Group Leader Manual)

Love is the basis for all transformations in the Kingdom of God. And love comes in many forms: sacrifice, generosity, redemption, forgiveness, kindness, grace, affection, acceptance, etc. One unique way that we can give and receive love is through 'witness'- being with someone just as they are. This is a gift of Love that God gives to us through the presence of his Holy Spirit. God is with us. He is able to hold us- and our emotions, whatever they are- in love. A key way that we express 'witness' to one another is to LISTEN WELL. The following are guidelines that may seem fairly obvious. But as you try to actively listen, you will discover that listening well requires a power beyond what we can create on our own. We need the Holy Spirit to help us truly listen well, to love.

I. Listening is a Whole Person Process.

Our internal world, external world, and for believers in particular, the spiritual world all play a part in listening. Consider the following questions as you think of listening well to another:

- My Internal World
 - *How still is my internal world, my soul?*
 - *We all bring our own issues, pains, experiences, to another when we listen to them. But how able am I to set the issues in my heart aside in order to be with another? Am I the person who should listen? Or do I need someone to listen to me?*
 - *How safe am I? Do I have the capacity to sit with another and be with them? How often do I evaluate, judge, or find myself critical?*
 - *In this moment, what is my capacity to love? Is there a place where I am receiving love? How dependent am I on the Holy Spirit to empower me to love others?*
- My External World
 - *How distracted am I by the environment around me?*
 - *Am I able to focus on the person to whom I am listening?*
 - *What does my body language say to the other person about my ability to listen to them? What does their body language say about how they feel?*
- My Spiritual World
 - *To what degree am I able to discern the truth of what is going on? Do I need to consult another? Do I need to ask a follow-up question?*
 - *What might God be doing in the life of the person to whom you are listening?*
 - *How is what is going on in their life affecting their ability to be with God?*

- *Am I able to be slow to speak, quick to listen, and allow the Holy Spirit to work in the life of the person to whom I am listening? Or do I feel the need to fix them? Give them advice?*

II. Active Listening.

Listening requires us to act. The part we play involves attending, genuineness, and empathy.

- **Attending**
 - *Giving the gift of true presence to another. Making note of what happens within the conversation and interaction: be attentive. This is 'witness'- knowing the person in particular situation exactly where they are. Our own journeys of self-awareness will make us more able to be aware of others.*
- **Genuineness**
 - *Presenting ourselves to another in a way that is honestly reflective of how we feel and our genuine intent. The call is to come to another with integrity; being yourself and consistent with what is going on inside of you. This may be vulnerable at times, but we minister best out of the truth of who we are. –*
- **Empathy**
 - *This is the feeling with the person the emotion they are expressing. This is an expression of compassion wherein you allow yourself to identify with the feelings of the person to whom you are listening.*

III. The Practice of Listening.

There are two main skills in listening. They are ways to practice listening well: Compassion statements and Concrete questions

- **Compassion Statements**
 - These statements start by asking yourself, "What is this person feeling?" The point of compassion statements is to bring feeling and content together. These statements always come from the content of what the person has just said and are best communicated tentatively and generally follow the following formula: "Tentative phrase + feeling word+ content of feeling."
 - *For example: (Tentative) "It sounds like you felt really... + (feeling) disappointed.. (content) when you didn't get to go to the game."*
- **Concrete Questions**
 - This type of question draws people deeper into the truth of what they are experiencing. These questions represent the who, What, where, when, and how. "Why" becomes less important because the purpose of listening is to know the person, not to explain causes for a particular situation.
 - *For example: "When did you first start feeling this way?"*
 - *"Where were you when that happened?"*

- *"Who would be a safe person for you right now?"*

IV. The Point of Listening is to Know and to Love Our Neighbor.

This is an invaluable gift to both give and receive. As we learn to listen to one another well, we further the Kingdom of God and give others a tangible experience of what it means for God to be with us.

Group Member Issues / Areas of Potential Group Conflict

The Needy Member:

"I need this group to fulfill all my needs"

- Neediness becomes a problem to address when it manifests in unhealthy ways, such as:
 - Taking up too much group time
 - Constant crises that never get resolved emotional dependency the group cannot meet
 - Inability to be confronted
 - Not taking group advice
 - Seeing the group as "not enough."

The Passive Member:

"I don't have anything to contribute to the group conversation"

- Passivity is not inability. Passivity is bad for the person and the group. The D Group can be a place where members open up, take risks, fail, learn from their failure, internalize grace and wisdom, and translate all that to their outside lives and relationships. Help each other overcome passivity by doing the following:
 - See it as a problem: Say, "When you don't open up with us, it cuts us off from you."
 - Help the passive member with their language: Move from passive to active language.
 - Remind and internalize: Say, "Why don't we call on you when you are withdrawing? We'll check with you so you can safely tell us how you are doing. And after a while, we'll see if you can volunteer on your own without our nudging."

The Aggressive Member —

"I am always right."

- An aggressive member is one who is aggressive or pushy; asserts his or her opinions all the time and tends to run over people and control the group process. People might be afraid to talk around this person for fear of what he or she might say or how they might out someone off.
 - o *Confront in Private.*
 - o *Restate the purpose of being mutually supporting and loving, patient, kind, gentle in our interactions*
 - o *Help them to recognize what is happening and how it might affect others.*

"The Talkative Member" –

"I want to be heard over others"

- A group member's excessive talking can dominate or interrupt the processing of the group. Do not be afraid of confronting the talkative member with grace and truth. Here are some ways to help the talkative group member:
 - Begin with the event, not the issue:
 - o *"Beth, hold on, I want to hear what Katie is saying."*
 - o *"Jeff, let's let someone else have the floor now."*
 - Help him or her become aware
 - o *"I didn't know if you're aware of it, Jen, but a couple of times tonight you've cut Kellie off and she sort of withdrew. Can we explore that with you?"*
 - o *"Keith, sometimes it's hard for people to connect with you when you talk a lot.*
 - o *Let's address what is going on with this." Bring the group in*
 - o *Member's responses can help the talker, which is deeper and more powerful*
 - o *"Brian, you look like you went away when Matt started talking' What went on?"*
 - o *"Stephanie, I wonder if you have any feelings about what happened when Melanie changed the subject to herself."*

Know When to Talk and When to Listen

- It is important to understand when to talk and when to listen. Although members probably think they are being caring, they often jump in too soon.

(Adapted from Cloud, H. Townsend, J. (2003) Making Small Groups Work, Grand Rapids: Zondervan.)