

Teach About Jesus

Learn from Jesus First

Start and Stay with Jesus

In the heat of ministry, we can be tempted to center our efforts around something or someone other than Jesus. Our ultimate goal remains: to lead others into a deeper understanding and love for Jesus.

What We Learn from Jesus

Jesus welcomed people from all walks of life. He encouraged questions and welcomed questioners. He taught so that learning would be put into obedient action.

A Healthy Small Group Culture

Healthy Culture	Unhealthy Culture
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New students are regularly checking out our small groups, indicating an openness to newcomers and an effective outreach strategy. 2. The groups consist of Christians and non-Christians, fostering a diverse and inclusive environment where individuals from different faith backgrounds can come together to learn and grow. 3. People are coming to faith or are interested in studying the Bible more to get to know Jesus, reflecting the transformative potential of the small group to spark spiritual curiosity and to lead individuals to deeper engagement with Scripture and faith. 4. People are showing interest in studying the Bible more to get to know Jesus, suggesting a desire for deeper spiritual understanding and personal transformation. 5. Over time, people develop in embodying the character and teachings of Jesus, indicating the transformative effect of the small group experience on participants' character, behavior, and spiritual maturity. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New students rarely attend our small groups, indicating a lack of openness to newcomers and/or an ineffective outreach strategy. 2. The groups are primarily comprised of Christians, with minimal representation from non-Christians, resulting in a homogeneous environment lacking diversity. 3. Few individuals express interest in exploring faith or studying the Bible, suggesting a limited impact in sparking spiritual curiosity or deeper engagement with Scripture. 4. People show little interest in studying the Bible or deepening their understanding of Jesus, reflecting a stagnant spiritual atmosphere within the small group. 5. Over time, there is little observable change in participants' character, behavior, or spiritual maturity, indicating a lack of transformative effect from the small group experience.

Turn up the Hospitality

We Do This in Community

Each person in a community brings a unique perspective, experience set, and questions. As each person interacts with Jesus and shares what they're learning from him, we get to see a richer image of him.

Hospitable Leadership

Hospitality is a spiritual practice that involves creating a shared space for God and people.

Here are some strategies for cultivating a hospitable culture in your small group:

- Preparation is key
- Greet people warmly
- Remember people
- Offer food
- Shape the space
- Guide the meeting
- Get people involved
- Pray

Welcoming Christians and Non-Christians (At the Same Time)

Huddled communities typically:

- Include very few non-Christians
- Prioritize their own needs
- Neglect relationships with outsiders
- Reserve evangelism for professionals and special occasions

Witnessing and conversion communities:

- Welcome non-Christians into the life of the community
- Expect God to draw people to Jesus and are ready to respond
- Engage proactively and lovingly with outsiders
- See themselves as workers in God's kingdom

Suggestions for welcoming non-Christians:

- **Pray for non-Christians** – Ask everyone in your small group to begin regularly praying for people who are not following Jesus
- **Intentionally invite non-Christian friends to the group** – Frame the invitation in an inviting and non-intimidating manner.
- **Create an inclusive atmosphere for non-Christians** – Address potential feelings of intimidation and reassure newcomers that their perspectives are valuable

Contextualizing for Every Corner of Campus

Just as we strive to be mindful of how we extend hospitality to non-Christians, we must also recognize the importance of contextualization. Understanding the unique backgrounds, experiences, and cultural perspectives of individuals allows us to tailor our approach to make the space more inclusive and inviting for everyone.

Barriers to Welcome in Small Group

Problem #1: Non-Christians don't feel welcomed

Tips for making things accessible:

- Don't use Christianese
- Invite into action but don't demand
- Don't single them out
- Bring them up to speed
- Set the expectation

Problem #2: Fear that outreach will take away from intimacy

Tips for breaking through the tension:

- Cast vision
- Acknowledge the tension
- Encourage meet-ups, gatherings, and activities outside of group time

Turn up the Curiosity

Set the Tone for Curiosity

We'll never know everything about Jesus. Continue learning and setting the tone for curiosity by:

- Sharing your own learning as you teach
- Guiding—don't lecture
- Asking open-ended questions
- Choosing relevant texts and topics
- Exploring rather than solve tensions
- Challenging assumptions with firm kindness
- Celebrating curiosity whenever it appears

Safe to Ask Questions

When you invite people into a community where people are teaching about Jesus, you're inviting people to take a risk. Do what you can to make the space safe for them.

Use the BRAVING inventory (adapted from Dr. Brené Brown) to create safe spaces:

- **Boundaries** – Being clear on what's okay and what's not okay, and why

- **Reliability** – You do what you say you'll do
- **Accountability** – You own your mistakes, apologize, and make amends
- **Vault** – You don't share information/experiences that aren't yours to share
- **Integrity** – Choose what's right over what's fun, practicing your values not just professing them
- **Nonjudgment** – Ask for what you need and encourage your community to ask for what they need
- **Generosity** – Extend the most generous interpretation to intentions, words, and actions of others

Christians and Non-Christians Curious Together

When we foster curiosity in small groups, it becomes a virtuous cycle. As Christians express authentic curiosity, non-Christians joining the community will not only find a safe place to explore God but also contribute their own experiences, questions, and wonderings. This in turn encourages Christians to process their doubts authentically, helping them grow as disciples.

Barriers to Curiosity

Barrier #1: We become afraid of the questions people might ask

- We might not have the answers.
- We might not want the discussion to go there. Listen to where the Holy Spirit is leading you.

Barrier #2: Pride makes it hard to be vulnerable

- It can be vulnerable to admit you don't know something. But if we're not vulnerable, we miss out on deepening understanding and deepening relationship with each other and with God.

Turn up the Transformation

All About Transformation

Spiritual transformation is central to God's purposes. The four stages defined in James Choung's *Real Life* are: from skeptic to seeker, from seeker to follower, from follower to leader, and from leader to world-changer. The journey towards transformation invites us into a deeper relationship with God.

Studying Scripture

Read 2 Tim 3:16-17. God uses Scripture to transform individuals. Jesus is most clearly revealed in Scripture. There is no replacement for the Word. Our suggested method of Bible study is inductive Bible study – observation, interpretation, and application.

Sharing the Gospel

As people are curious, we invite them to respond and take steps to deepen their relationship with Jesus. As you teach about Jesus, make it relevant, don't bait and switch, and communicate clearly.

Make a call to faith by:

1. Preparing the group for the call to faith before you give it.
2. Share the Big Story and make space for their responses.
3. Thank everyone for sharing their thoughts.

Barriers to Sharing the Gospel in Small Groups

Problem #1: Some might see the gospel as "basic"

The gospel is for everyone. Sharing the gospel centers Jesus and remind us of our sin, redemption, and the grace of God.

Problem #2: We fear sharing the gospel

We might fear messing up or rejection. Remember that we just need to share, and that we aren't the ones who save.

Related Resources

Articles

- [Flourishing Communities Bible Study](#)
- [Praying into the Mission: Intro to 2+ Prayer](#)
- [The BRAVING inventory by Dr. Brené Brown](#)
- [Spiritual Practices to Help You Thrive in College \(Large Group Series\)](#)
- [Small Group Invitation to Faith](#)

Small Group Leading Tips

- [Leading a Black Campus Ministries Small Group](#)
- [Leading a Latino Small Group](#)
- [Leading a Mixed Small Group](#)
- [Leading a Native Small Group](#)
- [Leading an Asian American Small Group](#)
- [Leading an International Small Group](#)

Books

- [Breaking the Huddle by Don Everts, Doug Schaupp, and Val Gordon](#)
- [The Master Plan of Evangelism by Robert Coleman](#)
- [Real Life by James Choung](#)

Recommended Courses

- [Inviting Well](#)
- [Ministering Across Cultures](#)
- [Knowing Where Someone is Spiritually](#)
- [Building Your Own Bible Study](#)

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