

# **HOPE**

## **CHURCH**

# **TRANSFORMATION**

## **GROUPS**

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Have you ever felt like your life as a Christian is missing something? You have started a lot of Bible reading plans, but haven't finished any. Most of your relationships feel superficial, even your friendships at church. You know that you should share your faith but have no idea how to.

Then you look around and see almost everyone else has the same problem. A lot of Christian activity is happening in your church and community, but you don't see many lives being changed in a meaningful way. Not a lot of people are being converted and baptized, and even when they are no one is teaching them how to faithfully walk in the way of Jesus. Then you start reading the gospels and notice how Jesus took a group of 12 men, trained them for 3 years, and eventually sent them on a mission.

These 12 men trained others in a similar way. Others went on to train others. Jesus and His followers began a disciple-making movement that went on to turn the whole world upside down. Do ordinary Christians do that anymore? Then you look at yourself, you realize that no one has ever discipled you, and because of that you have never discipled anyone else. Something is missing.

What if there was a simple way for you and other ordinary Christians go deeper in God's word, deeper in relationships, and to participate together in God's mission? What if there was a way for you to help others become disciples of Jesus who make other disciples of Jesus? Transformation Groups are a way to do just that. Through these groups, ordinary Christians can live out the call of Jesus today. Perhaps what's missing can be found.

### **The Call to Make Disciples**

The New Testament calls disciples of Jesus Christ to make other disciples of Jesus Christ. He gave His church a commission which is summarized very clearly at the end of the Matthew's gospel. After His resurrection, Jesus told His church to go and "make disciples" (Matthew 28:19). He did not tell the church to merely make converts. He told the church to make disciples, and these disciples were called to make other disciples of Jesus Christ.

The early church took their commission seriously. Disciples making disciples is the pattern of the New Testament. Paul wrote to Timothy, "You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men,

who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:1-2). Four generations of discipleship are found in Paul’s statement. First, Paul (1) discipled Timothy (2). Next, Timothy discipled other “faithful men” (3). Finally, those faithful men went on to disciple others (4). Scripture tells God’s people to make disciples who make disciples.

How can the church engage in this important task today? First, the preaching and teaching of God's Word on Sunday morning is important. Next, groups of Christians gathering in classrooms to learn Biblical truth can be an effective way to teach God's people. Finally, small groups of Christians meeting in homes can be a good way to encourage authentic community. All these avenues of spiritual formation have their place. However, we have found that ordinary Christians often absorb a lot of information but are not equipped when it comes to the task of making other disciples.

Many sincere followers of Jesus often grow stagnant and dependent on paid professionals and programs to sustain them spiritually. This dependency hinders their personal growth, and it also hinders the advancement of God's kingdom. Therefore, we encourage people to become involved in Transformation Groups. Through these groups, ordinary Christians can be equipped to make other disciples of Jesus.

### **What is a Transformation Group?**

A Transformation Group consists of 2 to 3 people of the same gender, who meet weekly in a

place and time of their choosing, for the purpose of spiritual growth. The model we advocate is laid out in a book by Neil Cole called *Cultivating a Life for God*.<sup>1</sup> Each group commits to reading Scripture together, asking one-another accountability questions, and praying for the lost. Groups are encouraged to meet for about an hour spending 20 minutes discussing Scripture, 20 minutes in accountability, and 20 minutes in prayer. These groups are no larger than 3, and when a group gets to 4, it multiplies to become 2 groups.

### **Bible Reading – Reading 20+ Chapters a Week**

When a Transformation Group meets, its members will select 20 or more chapters of Scripture to read. Then, the selected portion of Scripture will be discussed at the next meeting. For example, the group may decide to read the book of James 4 times. One can gain a much deeper grasp of Scripture by reading a particular section multiple times. Or the group may choose to read a larger section of Scripture. For example, a group may read the first half of Genesis

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<sup>1</sup> Cole, Neil, 2014. *Cultivating a Life for God*. Signal Hill, CA: CMA Resources.

one week, then go on to read the second half of Genesis the following week. Reading larger portions of Scripture gives members of the group a greater sense of its context and enables them to rightly apply the Bible's principles to their lives.

The group can decide on what to read based on its unique needs. Perhaps a group has a member who is not yet a follower of Christ. The group could read John or one of the other gospels together. Or perhaps a group is comprised of people more mature in their faith who want to gain a deeper understanding of the book of Leviticus. Any section of Scripture is fair game, so long as it includes 20 or more chapters each week.

It is our opinion that the Bible is the best curriculum for this type of group. We know that Scripture is an effective tool when it comes to making, nurturing, and maturing disciples of Jesus. According to Paul, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Many good personal discipleship curriculums have been written, but it is often the case that someone who has led multiple groups through the same curriculum over and over will tire of it. Leaders will aid

others in feeding their souls, but find that their *own* souls are not being fed. Yet, even someone who has been committed to Transformation Groups for years will find their own souls nourished as they go back to the Scriptures week after week.

Transformation Groups also allow the Bible to be read in community. Not only do members gain their own insight into the Scriptures they share their insights with one-another. Group members also hold one-another accountable in their Bible reading. When the group meets weekly, each member will be asked if they completed their reading that week. If one member says no, then the whole group takes up the same reading assignment the following week.

This puts a healthy pressure on group members to complete their reading, and it allows those who completed the reading to go deeper with that same passage gaining fresh applications and insights. No one is ever shamed for not completing their reading assignment. Instead, the assignment is taken up again and all members are encouraged to complete the reading that week.



## **Accountability – Growing in Relationships**

James 5:16 says, "...confess your sins to one another...". The discipline of confession is an important part of the Christian life. Accountability is best done in an environment where all involved can be open about many types of struggles. Therefore, groups should consist of members of the same gender. Each group will agree on a list of accountability questions that they ask each other every week. These questions help to foster a culture of transparency and vulnerability. Here is a good list to begin with:

- How have you been a testimony this week to the greatness of Jesus Christ in both word and action?
- How have you experienced God in your life this week?
- How are you responding to His promptings?
- Do you have a need to confess any sin?
- How did you do with reading last week?

Each group can add accountability questions that are in line with members' personal needs, struggles, or stages in life. For example, if a member of the group is a Father, the other members can ask him each week how he has faithfully loved and served his family.

Here are a few more accountability questions that groups have found helpful:

- Have you been exposed to sexually alluring material or allowed your mind to entertain inappropriate sexual thoughts about another person this week?
- Have you lacked any integrity in your financial dealings this week, or coveted something that does not belong to you?
- Have you been honoring, understanding, and generous in your important relationships this past week?
- Have you damaged another person by your words, either behind his/her back or face-to-face?
- Have you given in to an addictive behavior this week? Explain.
- Have you continued to remain angry toward another?
- Have you secretly wished for another's misfortune so that you might excel?

When considering accountability questions, it is important to be flexible and to avoid a legal "checklist" mentality. The goal of the accountability time is to

cultivate a culture of transparency where sin can be confessed, those struggling can be encouraged, and group members can give wise counsel to one another.

### **Praying – For new believers/group members**

Transformation Groups are always seeking to multiply by adding new members and starting new groups. This system is not only a discipleship strategy it's an evangelism strategy as well. Each group member is encouraged to identify two people who don't know Christ. Members of the group are encouraged to pray for these individuals throughout the week.

Here are a few prayer prompts along with supporting Scripture:

- Draw them to You, God (John 6:44)
- May they seek You (Acts 17:27)
- Send someone to share with them  
(Matthew 9:37-38)
- May they hear and believe the Word of God  
(1 Thessalonians 2:13)
- Help them turn from sin and follow You  
(1 Thessalonians 1:9-10)
- Lead them to confess Christ as Lord  
(Romans 10:9-10)
- Help them multiply disciples (Matthew 28:16-20)

A healthy Transformation Group will not stay stagnant but will continue to multiply. Each group member remains on the lookout for new people each week. When a group gets to 4 people it becomes “pregnant” and it’s time for a new group to be formed. One member of the group will start a new group with the new member and the other two individuals will remain together. In this way, Transformation groups will continue to multiply.

Group members are also encouraged to pray for one-another when they meet each week. One group

member will share their prayer requests and another group member will pray for them individually. Then another group member will share and be prayed for individually, and so on. When a group commits to prayer for the lost and for one-another everyone is encouraged and the kingdom of God advances.

## **Summary**

- Only three tasks are to be accomplished
  1. Sin is confessed to one another.
  2. Scripture is read repetitively.
  3. Souls are prayed for strategically.
- Groups are not coed.
- No leader is needed in the group.
- No curriculum, workbook or training is used.
- Group meets once a week for approximately an hour to discuss Scripture reading, to ask on another accountability questions, and to pray for the lost.
- The group will select 20+ chapters of Scripture to read each week.
- If one group member does not read all the Scripture assigned the previous week, the same reading assignment is taken up the next week.

- Once all group members finish the reading in the same week, a new section of Scripture is agreed upon for the next week.
- Accountability questions may be adjusted to fit the needs of the group.
- Each group member will pick two non-Christians that the entire group will pray for when the group meets and throughout the week.
- Groups are of two or three (the fourth person is the beginning of a second group and multiplication is imminent).

Transformation Groups are a simple way that old and new believers alike can grow as disciples and make new disciples of Jesus Christ. You may not feel like an expert. You may not feel qualified when it comes to the task of making disciples. Here's the good news: Transformation groups don't require official leaders or experts. In fact, often those who know they are not experts become the best, most willing, and most effective Transformation Group members. Starting a Transformation group is not difficult. No formal training is required. Only two people are needed who have copies of God's Word and a genuine desire

to grow spiritually. You can start or join an existing Transformation Group today!