

# 21 Principles

## To Follow In Leading a Small Group

*By Kurt W. Johnson, DMin*

1. There are four parts to a life changing small group:
  - Building Friendships (Sharing)
  - Getting to know God (Bible Study)
  - Talking to God about Life (Prayer)
  - Rallying Cry (our mission/ministry--What Brought Us Together)

***"Church" naturally happens in a small group!***

2. A small group must be outreach centered to be biblical.
  - Decisions are made in a small group.

"The formation of *small companies* as a basis of Christian effort has been presented to me by One who cannot err. If there is a large number in the church let the church members be formed into *small companies* to work not only for the *church members*, but for *unbelievers*. (Evangelism 115)

Work for \_\_\_\_\_.

Work for \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Participation is the KEY to Success:
  - A group leader is a facilitator--a guide--not the authority or teacher.
  - Arrangement of members--where they sit--will make a difference in the way they participate.
  - Don't pressure or put anyone on the "spot" to talk, read, pray or speak.
4. Leadership
  - Leaders must be equipped.
  - Every group member is in training.
  - Everyone in a group is a leader to someone else.
5. Lead in love.

Love, acceptance and forgiveness are a way of life.
6. Respond lovingly, with kindness, ***immediately*** to a need expressed.
  - How do you teach people to share their needs? (James 5:16)
  - Teach people by example.
  - Other ways to respond to a member's needs:

7. The Bible is our authority and guidebook.  
*The Bible is not only for learning but for living.*
8. Encourage everyone in the group.
  - Each person must be made to feel that his/her ideas and questions are important.
  - Dialogue, sharing, prayer, Scripture application is what we are after.
9. Don't allow doctrinal discussion that is divisive or argumentative.
10. Practice life and team building. (Romans 14:19)
11. "Follow up" of members between meetings is essential.
  - Absentees telephoned and encouraged.
  - Visitors/new people telephoned and invited to attend.
  - Regular attendees telephoned and encouraged.
12. New Members being brought into the group will keep it alive and growing.
13. Handle people with difficult emotional needs and counseling issues away from the group on a one-to-one basis.
14. Don't allow anyone to confess anyone else's faults but their own.
15. The leader must take care of their personal spiritual need through personal Bible study, prayer and quiet time with God.
16. Keep learning: Don't have all the answers.
17. Be *relaxed* and maintain a *relaxed* attitude in the group.
18. A good sense of humor is a valuable asset! (Proverbs 17:22)
  - Releases tension.
  - Relaxes our bodies.
  - Rests our spirits.
  - Renews our hearts/energy.
  - Re-orientes our life perspective.
19. When you have a need in your own life, ask your group for help.
20. When you have problems or need help, go to your pastor or leader for assistance.
21. Remember it is Jesus who does the leading--not us.

**Supplemental Material** (source: *Small Group Ministry*, Kurt Johnson, Review and Herald, 2010 or *Small Groups for the End-Time*, order from the Voice of Prophecy, (805) 955-7652.) (During GC Session visit ABC and AdventSource.)

### **Definition of a small group**

There are various definitions of a small group. Here are several examples:

A cell is a small group with an ideal size of eight to fifteen people who meet together on a regular basis for worship, Bible study, outreach, discipleship, and prayer.<sup>1</sup> (“Cell” or “cell group” is a term some use for a small group.)

A small group within the church is a voluntary, intentional gathering of three to twelve people regularly meeting together with the shared goal of mutual Christian edification and fellowship.<sup>2</sup>

A small group is an intentional, face-to-face gathering of three to twelve people, on a regular time schedule with the common purpose of discovering and growing in the abundant life of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

Some of these definitions ignore the important element of outreach. In fact, I have attended nationwide small-group training events in which nurture was seen as the only purpose for small groups, while outreach was ignored. This is a serious error. As we have already seen, Acts 2 specifies outreach as an essential part of the early Christians’ house-to-house activities—followed by new accessions to the faith. Ellen White also states that small groups are for both outreach and nurture:

The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort is a plan that has been presented before me by One who cannot err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members but for unbelievers also.<sup>4</sup>

The following definition is my own. It incorporates all the necessary elements that I believe are involved in a small group:

A small group is an intentional, face-to-face gathering of three to twelve people, meeting on a regular schedule, with the common purpose of developing relationships, meeting felt needs of group members, growing spiritually, and laying plans to lead others to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior of their lives.

## Acts 2 provides your small-group agenda

Thus, Acts 2:41-47 provides the agenda of activities for all of church life. Group life arises from these core elements. Let's apply the principles of Acts 2 to a small-group meeting. The items listed are:

<b>ACTS 2</b>	<b>GROUP FORMAT</b>
Apostles' doctrine	Bible study
Fellowship	Personal sharing, social interaction, friendship
Prayer	Prayer time
Breaking bread together	Worshiping, eating together
All things in common	Meeting personal needs of group members
People baptized	Outreach and mission

## Applying the Acts 2 Principles: The Agenda

### **Fellowship Group**

Sharing—50 minutes  
Bible Study—25 minutes  
Prayer Time—15 minutes

### **Outreach Bible Study Group**

Sharing—20 minutes  
Bible Study—55 minutes  
Prayer Time—15 minutes

Of course, every group must be flexible enough to meet the emergent needs of the group and to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. This structure is only a beginning point; there is no single right way to organize and conduct a group meeting. Still, the group will follow a basic outline, though the sequence and terminology may vary somewhat from group to group. This basic outline will include these four vital ingredients: sharing questions, Bible study, mission, and prayer. Let's look at each of these in turn.

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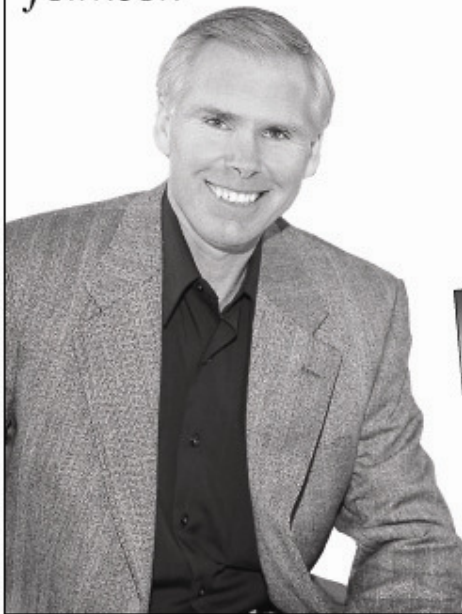
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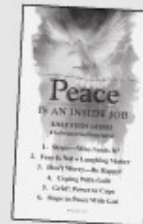
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by Kurt Johnson



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