

# CONTENTS

Welcome	i
What is a CU?	iii
Why are we here?	v
Notes from <b>e:con</b> main sessions	vii
<b>PART 1 - GENERAL</b>	
Vision	3
Building community	5
Prayer	8
Mission	12
Engaging with the Bible	16
Planning and preparing	20
Pastoral care	22
Evaluate your small group	24
Group dynamics	25
<b>PART 2 – SMALL CU’S</b>	
Leaders of small CUs	29
Calendar	33
Notes from <b>e:con</b> Small Groups/Small CUs stream	34
<b>APPENDIX - RESOURCES</b>	
Recommended resources	37
IFES Ireland Doctrinal Basis	38



## SMALL GROUPS – THE VISION

Small groups provide what large groups cannot – relationship, accountability and application. They have a three-fold core vision:

- ***Love God***  
Groups are God-centred, a place where we meet with and are transformed by him.
- ***Love one another***  
Groups are relationship-based, a place where honest, trusting relationships are modelled and developed.
- ***Love the world***  
Groups are outward-focused, encouraging a lifestyle that reaches out to others, sharing God's heart for the lost.

### **Think**

What would you love your small group to be like next year? This is your chance to dream!

## The key elements of small group life

Look at **Acts 2:42-47**.

There are at least four key elements to a thriving small group:

1. **Loving community** - small groups are a place to build meaningful relationships based on honesty and trust, where we care for and love each other well, where each person feels valued and included.
2. **Prayer** - small groups are a place to pray faithfully with and for each other, and to enjoy and praise God together.
3. **Mission** - small groups are a place to nurture an outward focus, encouraging each other to reach out with God's love and the good news.
4. **Engaging with the Bible** - small groups are a place in which to listen together to God's Word, wrestle with what it means, and apply it specifically and personally to our hearts and lives.

These four elements are not separate but are all interrelated - so you will practice loving community by praying for each other, and good Bible application will lead to an outward missional focus, etc. All four elements will be involved in most of your small group meetings, but some weeks you may focus more on one particular element e.g. by having a prayer night, or a social event to bring your friends to.

Your group may be strong on some of these elements and weaker on others, so evaluate regularly how your group is doing in each area; then you can focus prayer and attention on the weaker elements. Also, be aware of which elements reflect your strengths and passions as a leader and which you may need to work harder on and get more help with.

### Modelling these elements

You can't lead others with authenticity and integrity if these things are not a reality in your own life. Your primary role as a leader is to model these four elements in your own life, providing a living example:

- By loving your group members well.
- By enjoying God and praying faithfully for your group members.
- By seeking to love others and share the good news with them.
- By allowing God's Word to shape your thinking, relating and living.

This is a big responsibility – but don't panic! The vital thing is not that you do these things perfectly but that you are honestly pursuing them and growing in them. You can't do any of these things on your own but only as God's Spirit equips, inspires and strengthens you. So be honest with your group about your own weaknesses and struggles and encourage yourself and them to depend on God's transforming grace.

**"And who is equal to such a task? ... Such confidence we have through Christ before God... He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant - not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."**

[2Cor. 3:16-4:6]

## BUILDING COMMUNITY

### ***Why community?***

Community is God's design for his people. God did not create us to exist in isolation, but rather to be "...*built together* to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit." (Eph 2:22). "*People need people. God's people need God's people in order to know God. Life in Christ is a corporate affair.*" (Tim Stafford)

### ***What is community?***

A group of people seeking to love God and love one another as Christ has loved us. God seeks to see us become more self-less, love others more and help each other apply his Word to our lives. Small groups are ideal places for this to happen.

### ***How is such a community possible?***

Community is created only as we focus on loving God and each other. *Christ himself* is the unifying force who brings all things in heaven and on earth together under one head. This includes the bunch of people in your small group who are uniquely individual and different! *It is impossible to love as Christ loved without relying on his power at work in us.*

### ***Building community within the group context***

Really get to know your group and genuinely care for them as whole people. Part of this includes caring about their past, present, and future. The group needs time to share stories about their past (what has shaped them into the person they are now). As members get to know each other this sharing will decrease and be more focused on thinking about the present and future, which helps us determine what each person's needs are, and helps us to apply God's word and pray very specifically and relevantly into each others lives.

## The "one another" commands

Consider the 'one another' commands and think about the kind of community that would be created if we lived like this:

1. As I have loved you, so you must **love one another**. [John 13:34]
2. **Be devoted to one another** in brotherly love. **Honour one another** above yourselves. [Romans 12:10]
3. **Live in harmony with one another**. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. [Romans 12:16]
4. **Accept one another**, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. [Romans 15:7]
5. I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you **agree with one another** so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. [1Cor. 1:10]
6. ...**serve one another in love**. [Gal. 5:13]
7. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, **bearing with one another** in love. [Eph. 4:2]
8. **Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other**, just as in Christ God forgave you. [Eph. 4:32]
9. **Submit to one another** out of reverence for Christ. [Eph. 5:21]
10. **Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another**. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. [Col. 3:13]
11. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you **teach and admonish one another** with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with

- gratitude in your hearts to God. [Col. 3:16]
12. Therefore **encourage one another and build each other up**, just as in fact you are doing. [1Thess. 5:11]
  13. And let us consider how we may **spur one another on toward love and good deeds**. [Hebrews 10:24]
  14. **...love one another deeply**, from the heart. [1Peter 1:22]
  15. Finally, all of you, **live in harmony with one another**; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. [1Peter 3:8]
  16. **Offer hospitality to one another** without grumbling. [1Peter 4:9]
  17. All of you, clothe **yourselves with humility toward one another**, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." [1Peter 5:5]

This kind of community will enhance group prayer, worship, Bible study and mission just as honest times engaged in worship, the Word and thinking about mission will also build community in your group over the course of the year.

At the beginning of the year also make time as a group to share your expectations of meeting together and use those as a basis for agreeing your aims/vision/purpose as a group – this helps people to belong and feel valued. Maybe even choose some values that as a group you will adopt, or Bible verses that describe what you want to achieve in your group.

Evaluate how things are going; take on board people's ideas, and delegate to others.

### ***pray***

Pray that God will grow community in your group, and that members will choose to seek to build it; make it a priority for prayer within your group.

### ***teach***

Talk about community in your group, brainstorm what it means, how it works out, what values are important, look at what the Bible says about how we relate to each other (maybe look at the 'one another' passages), face conflict positively.

### ***model***

As a leader you set the tone for the group and need to lead by example. This will mean you being prepared to show: vulnerability, commitment, care for members outside group time, willingness to share concerns/hopes/fears/what God is doing in your life, responsibility.

### ***socialise***

Make time to get to know one another, take time at the at the beginning of group time each week to share, have tea and coffee, have dinner, go bowling, watch a film together and discuss it. These type of activities allow space for the group to get to know one another and allow for friends to be invited into these activities.

### ***Ideas for get-to-know-you activities***

#### *Facts*

- What is your most satisfying accomplishment?
- What is your happiest memory?
- Describe one of the most significant events in your life.
- What's your favourite food?
- Describe yourself in four words.
- What was the best advice you ever received?
- What animal/colour best describes your personality?
- What was your favourite toy as a child?
- What's the longest phone conversation you have ever had and who was it with?
- What are your favourite clothes?
- What has made you laugh/smile this week?
- What area of your life is God working on at the moment?
- What has been your most challenging experience this week?

#### *Interests*

- What kind of social gathering or party do you like best?
- Name 3 jobs you'd love to do.
- What do you like most about your church?
- What's your favourite time of day and why?
- What do you like to do most in your spare time?
- If you could spend the day with anyone alive who would it be?

#### *Values*

- What would you most like to be or do for the next five years if there were no limitations in terms of family, money, education, health etc.?
- What present would you most like to receive?
- What kinds of things make you irritated or angry?
- What makes you feel anxious or afraid?
- What's the first thing that springs into your mind when you think of God?
- If you had to move and could only take three things, which would they be?
- If you were given a large amount of money what would be the first thing you would do with it?

#### *Social events*

Most of these suggestions are also great ways to open up your group to friends who aren't yet Christians.

Meals – BBQ; fondue night; pancake party; meal crawl (starter at one person's house, dinner at next, dessert at next); formal dinner party.

Home-based – desert island discs (each person plays favourite song and explains why); board games night (more fun than it sounds!); murder mystery evening; video night.

Active – treasure hunt (walking or driving); carol singing; bowling/ice skating; 60's/70's/80's night (music and dress); football/rugby match; pantomime; zoo; social action/service project (blanket drop, gardening, litter sweep etc); video interviews around campus on a certain issue/who Jesus is; concert.

# PRAYER

*Why do we struggle with prayer?*

*What is prayer?*

An honest engagement of our hearts and minds with the living God.

**You...** how do you feel about prayer at the moment? What is your heart for prayer? Are you enjoying keeping company with God?

Circle the words that best describe where you're at/what you're heart is at the moment. ☺

Exciting

Tiring

Peaceful

Stressful

Anticipation

Empty

Frustrating

Longing

Tears

Satisfying

Childlike

Discovery

Monotonous

Exuberant

Boring

Challenging

Quick

Joyful

Interesting

Worshipful

New

Passionate

Routine

Questioning

Inspired

Broken

Sad

Strong

Rest

Learning

Guilt

Unremarkable

Creative

Hope

Trust

## Cultivating prayer in your small group

### Ideas for group prayer

- **Use a passage to guide and inspire prayer.** There are many prayers you could use directly from the Bible, e.g. Ephesians 1:15-23, 3:14-21; Philippians 1:9-11, otherwise use verses to guide your words and heart e.g. Colossians 2:6-10; Jeremiah 9:23-24.
- **Spend some time thinking about or saying aloud different names or attributes of God** – use this to remind people who they are praying and listening to! God's names: Faithful and True, Mighty God, Messiah, The Lord, Eternal King, King of Kings and Lord of Lords... Attributes: God is good, faithful, true, eternal, kind, merciful, just, awesome, gracious, our Father, our Comforter, compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in love...
- **Allow times of silence and reflection.**
- **Pray single sentence prayers** – these could be of thanks, request or praise. This really helps in groups where usually only a few people pray. Encourage people that they don't all have to "finish" their prayers in the "proper" way - i.e. not every one has to say "in Jesus name, Amen" at the end of each sentence!
- **Have passages of scripture and pre-written prayers around the room to reflect on.**
- **Confession** – confessing sin in silence, on paper (which you could symbolically burn to demonstrate repentance), aloud, or using appropriate liturgy or Bible passages – Psalm 51/1 John 1:9. Remind each other of the cross and God's amazing grace to us. You could place a cross in the centre of the room as a visual reminder – paper, wood or whatever.

- **Use a song or piece of music to get people praying and meditating on their own** – with a particular theme or passage in mind e.g. Be Thou my Vision – thinking about what the words mean and what areas of our lives we need to be changed in, then praying through these things with the song in the background.
- **Split up into smaller groups (twos or threes)** – again this helps give more opportunities to share and pray than a large group does.
- **Pray a set prayer altogether as a group.** Use the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father, another prayer from the Bible, a prayer book, a hymn, or you could even write something together and then pray it aloud. Do emphasise that we need to focus on the words we’re saying, not rattle them off (and the same goes for any other prayer too!).
- **Ask people to write down how they are really feeling** (in general or about something specific e.g. evangelism) on a piece of paper. Encourage them to write the good or bad or anything in between and then spend some time reminding each other that our identity is in Christ alone. He knows us as we are, good days and bad, successes and failures, and he loves us – as believers and followers of Christ our identity is in Him. Col 3:3, *"For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God;"* Gal 2:20, *"I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."* Finally ask them to draw a cross over it all, saying visually that the cross has covered our sin, but not only that - it has also covered our fears, insecurities and failures, and our successes, high points and boasting. Our identity does not come from these things, it comes from Christ’s work on the cross. Our identity is in Christ.
- **Prayer Triplets.** Get the group into threes and ask them to pray *specifically* for friends who are not Christians. Be strong on this as otherwise our prayers will constantly tend towards ourselves and other Christians! Then encourage them to meet up once a week for 10 or 15 minutes to pray for friends.
- **Go on a prayer walk around your area/college**, praying quietly for it and the people living/studying in each building.
- **Prayer basket/box** – each person places a request in the basket, someone else takes it and prays for it during the week.
- **Keep a group prayer journal** – record things you pray for as a group and revisit the journal every few weeks to see how God is answering those prayers.
- **Have a half or whole night of prayer, or dedicate a whole week of group time to prayer.** N.B. Needs to be creative and varied to keep people going!
- Use IFES Ireland’s **Prayer News** as a resource for praying for other CUs and the CU movement in Ireland.

Finally, a disclaimer: none of these ideas are anything special or magic! They’re only a few ideas to use to get us praying. It doesn’t really matter how we do it, but that our small groups (and our whole lives) would be a place to authentically engage with God, growing in relationship with Him as we pray and listen.

# MISSION

We often assume that small groups are for focusing on fellowship, helping Christians to grow, and that they are not particularly for mission.

## **Imagine...**

...small groups on your campus with a strong outward focus, who pray, who encourage their members in mission amongst their friends and seek to be a mission team together as a group!

Christian communities will be most dynamic and alive when they are outward-looking, while inward-looking groups tend to stagnate. Your group's experience of Bible study, prayer and community will be enriched when there is a strong missional vision and ethos. Think of your small group as a little mission team placed on your campus to share God's love!

## **What is our mission?**

Jesus told us that the second greatest commandment after loving God is to love our neighbour.

Our primary call in relating to people who aren't Christians is **to love them**.

We are called to love whole people, not disembodied souls. We are to care for their physical and emotional needs as well as their spiritual needs. We are particularly called to move in love towards those who are our enemies or have wronged us, those who are different to us, and those who are broken or needy.

In the context of these kinds of loving relationships, we are called **to share the good news about Jesus**.

We passionately believe that Jesus is the only one who can bring them into restored relationship with God, and lead them into the free, joyful and fruitful life they were created for. So we long that the people we love would come to believe in Jesus and follow him.

*What are some of the ways in which we can love our fellow students?*

*In a typical week at university or college, what are some of the opportunities you have to love your fellow students and share the good news with them?*

*How would your life need to change to make this more of a priority?*

## **Leading your group towards mission**

*What are some of the ways in which you could encourage an outward missional focus in your small group?*

### Some suggestions:

The important thing is to get to know your group and choose the ideas that will work best for the people in your group and their friends.

- **Pray for your own hearts** – for greater love for others, for genuine friendships, for opportunities to serve and share good news, for boldness and courage.
- **Share stories about your friendships** – do you have friendships with students outside CU? Are you getting opportunities to love and share good news? Provide opportunities to share honestly so that you can encourage each other and be accountable to each other. The purpose is not to impress or shame each other but to help each other.
- **Pray for your friends** – pray for them regularly and by name. You could consider making out prayer cards to remind you.
- **Have a social event for your friends** – do something your friends will actually want to come to! There's great value in a purely social event to build relationships and introduce your friends to other Christians.
- **Have a discussion night for your friends** – choose a topic that will interest them and make sure they know what they are coming to. It usually works best if you have food! This could even develop into a series of discussions or a course like Alpha, Christianity Explored or Glad You Asked.
- **Do some practical service** – on campus or in your local community. Find out what people's needs are and take some action. Join with another society in practical service.
- **Do some creative publicity** – find creative ways to publicise regular or special CU events (e.g. give out free gifts around student houses with an invitation).
- **Do some questionnaires** – to find out what your fellow-students believe, and hopefully engage them in good conversations.
- **Get involved together in some of the CU's evangelism and social action ministries.**
- **1,2,3...GO!** – some CUs find it helpful to use a pattern where every fourth week is a chance to get out of the bubble and do something to engage with the wider world.
- **Talk about you motives and fears in outreach, and ideas for mission** – you could read and discuss a good book (e.g. *The heart of evangelism* or *Out of the saltshaker*) or look at biblical models such as Jesus or Paul.
- **Apply your Bible studies** – ask how what you are studying challenges you to move out in love towards others. Ask what the passage would mean to your friends who aren't Christians.
- **Discuss difficult questions** – find out what questions your friends are asking, and think about them together. Look together for honest and thoughtful responses (not neat and simplistic answers).

## World mission

*How can you encourage your group to think about what God is doing globally?*

### Some suggestions:

- Spend time seeing what the Bible has to say about our part in global mission.
- Read 'Let the Nations be Glad' (or excerpts from it) by John Piper to develop your understanding of our motivation for involvement in world mission.
- Share stories, experiences, challenges and lessons from summer teams at home and abroad.
- As a group go along to events for international students; if your CU runs a café you could help out for a week as a group.
- Use Operation World, IFES worldwide prayer news, Tearfund prayer updates etc. to be informed and pray.
- Get some information from Tearfund about how you can get involved in campaigning for social justice and take action on behalf of the world's poor.
- Adopt a missionary: write to them and get prayer points, support them financially.
- Choose a country or people group to pray for over the year.
- Read a missionary biography and share excerpts with the group.
- Invite a missionary along to your group.
- Pray about countries and current events in the news.

# ENGAGING WITH THE BIBLE

*How do you feel about studying the Bible?*

*What experiences have you had of bad Bible studies?*

*What experiences have you had of good Bible studies?*

## Five qualities of life-changing Bible studies

### 1. It is prayerful

We can't understand God's Word on our own – our hearing is dulled by our sinful hearts and limited minds.

Invite God the Holy Spirit:

- to come and help you [Luke 11:11-13]
- to teach you [John 14:26]
- to reveal God to you [John 17:26]
- to open the eyes of your heart [Eph 1:17-19]
- to help you understand his thoughts [1 Cor. 2:10-12]

## 2. It engages with the Bible

**“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, and who correctly handles the word of truth.”**

[2Timothy 2:15]

If it’s possible to correctly handle God’s message it must also be possible to incorrectly handle it, to misunderstand and misuse it.

You don’t have to be a genius to handle the Bible well – but it does take some time, some hard work, and some patience. Paul doesn’t ask us to be biblical masterminds, but he does ask us to do our best, to use the minds God has given us to engage thoughtfully with his Word. Here are a few top tips for handling the Bible well:

### OBSERVE, INTERPRET, APPLY

There are three vital steps towards understanding the Bible well:

- **observation**                      what does it say?
- **interpretation**                    what does it mean?
- **application**                      what does it mean for us today?

We can be so keen to rush to “real life application” that we don’t really pay close attention to what God’s Word says or what it means. We can almost use the Bible as a useful discussion starter so we can talk about ourselves!

We can end up reading our own ideas and opinions and assumptions into the Bible rather than humbling ourselves to listen to what it really says - “wonderful things in the Bible I see, some put there by you and some put there by me”!

So be patient with the first two steps, and then your application will be rooted in God’s Word and therefore genuinely powerful and life-changing.

### CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT

Pay attention to the context of the verses you are reading. This includes:

- **immediate context** – look at the sections immediately before and after the bit you are studying. How do they help you understand your section? How does it fit into the flow of the wider text?
- **whole book context** – the books that make up our Bible were intended to be heard and understood as whole books, not little paragraphs. What kind of literature is it (story, letter, poetry...)? What is the main message or purpose of the book? How does your current section fit into that bigger theme? What is the author’s intention?
- **whole Bible context** – how does the section you are studying fit into the flow of the biblical story? In particular, how does it point to Jesus who is the centre of the biblical story?
- **cultural context** – these books were written in cultural settings very different from ours. It’s vital that we ask what a passage would have meant to its original hearers (then and there), before we ask what it means for us (here and now).

## RESOURCES

It's a good idea to really wrestle with the passage yourself for a good while before reaching for a commentary. But it can be very helpful to consult a good commentary and compare your understanding with the author's.

*The New Bible Commentary* (IVP) is a great one-volume guide to the whole Bible, worth investing in and having on your shelf.

Some series we would recommend (in ascending order of difficulty, though they are all very accessible):

*Crossway Bible Guides* (IVP)

*New Testament for everyone* by Tom Wright (SPCK)

*The Bible Speaks Today* (IVP)

For general help with understanding the Bible, check out:

*How to read the Bible for All its worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart

*Getting the Message* by Gilbert Lennox

*God's Big Picture* by Vaughan Roberts

## 3. It engages the heart

The purpose of the Bible is not imparting information, but **developing relationship** – a relationship of love between us and our creator.

So our engagement with the Bible should never be simply at an intellectual or academic level. We need to engage with our hearts, and listen to God's heart.

Allow time in your group to pause and be silent, to listen for what God is saying to you by his Spirit and through his Word.

In particular, we need to engage with:

- **humility** – we sit under God's Word as learners and disciples, asking him to shape our hearts, characters and lives. We don't sit over it as experts, wanting to show that we are right and everyone else is wrong.
- **honesty** – sometimes our response to God's Word will be one of confusion or doubt. Sometimes we will be offended. There is nothing to be gained by pretending we find it easy. We can respond honestly and bring our struggle to God.

## 4. It is applied to life

Some Bible studies spend 90% of their time on observation and interpretation, debating and discussing biblical theology. This is important, but we need to remember that the purpose of studying the Bible is not to fill our heads with knowledge, but to **change our lives**.

**“If you work these words into your lives, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock... But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don’t work them into your life, you are like a stupid carpenter who built his house on the sandy beach.”**

[Jesus in Matthew 7, *The Message*]

So make sure you allow plenty of time to:

- discuss application that is down-to-earth, personal and specific.
- make goals and commitments together – what are you going to do in response to what you have read together?
- pray these into each other’s lives.
- hold each other accountable – ask each other when you next meet how you got on.

**“The Bible gets into our hearts through our feet, not our heads.”**

[Eugene Peterson]

## 5. It is creative

**“The book was written with zest, and if possible it should be read that way.”**

Flannery O’Connor said this about one of her novels, but it’s even more true of the Bible. This is God’s good news, and we believe it is liberating and life-giving. So it is a tragedy when we engage with it in dull and predictable ways. Don’t let your Bible study become like an English comprehension!

Find ways to interact with the Bible that are **energetic**, **passionate** and **creative**:

- manuscript study
- act out passages
- silently meditate on a passage
- memorise a passage
- use different translations
- use diagrams, pictures, visual aids, music
- spend time as a whole group, in twos and threes, on your own

You need to pray for the Spirit to give you a *passionate* heart – if you are bored and just going through the motions it will be infectious.

Leading creative and passionate studies takes time and some real hard work spent in preparation and prayer.

A great resource for help is *Leading Better Bible Studies* by Karen and Rod Morris.

## PLANNING AND PREPARING

Preparation is key in leading a small group, and that doesn't just mean having the Bible study ready! Other aspects such as location, timing, atmosphere, getting to know each other and prayer times also need to be thought about. But don't be discouraged; lots of this can be done before your small group begins. Here are some questions and pointers to help you plan and prepare well...

### **When and where?**

Deciding when and where to have your group is more important than you may think; these decisions can help create the right kind of atmosphere within your group.

*Where did your group meet last year? What were the advantages and disadvantages?*

*How long did your group meet for – was it long enough/too long?*

*What times are your group free? (This will take some legwork on your part! One way is to print a blank timetable and ask people to mark in when they're free.)*

*What are the advantages and disadvantages of these? When will they be most alert/able to concentrate?*

Try to meet somewhere everyone can see each other, that is warm and comfortable, and where you won't be disturbed. A rushed hour with everyone trying to eat their lunch, do a Bible study and find out what is happening in each others lives in the corner of a cold lecture theatre does not help in making the group something people will want to return to!

### **What happens in group time?**

*What are the essentials that need to be included if you are to create a healthy, growing, Jesus-centred, outward-looking community? (Use these to plan to what an ideal group time might look like.)*

*How can you keep group times creative and fresh without being random?*

*What can you delegate to group members, and how?*

## Preparing as leaders

Make sure you take time to pray for your group as part of your preparation. If there are two group leaders, take time together during the week to evaluate, pray and plan. Delegate responsibility for welcome, prayer, etc. to different group members.

Prepare your Bible studies well; spend time thinking about how they can be creative, passionate, honest and specifically applied to your group's life. Go to SLOBS (if it's available) and make use of the preparation and support you will receive there. Encourage your group to prepare and read the passages before you meet.

## Planning your term

*How many weeks do you have?*

*How long is your group time? What will happen in your group each week?*

*Have you included action weeks where as a group you go and do something together?*

It's helpful to have variety to keep things fresh; also given that people have different learning styles it's good to use different methods of doing Bible study, prayer etc.

The first couple of weeks will need to be spent building relationships and making sure that the group is clear on its purpose, vision and values so that everyone has shared and realistic expectations. Spending time sharing testimonies, doing icebreakers and having dinner/going bowling etc. are all good things to do in this time.

Don't feel that you need to do Bible study every week. God's word is central to group life but we need to have a balance. Set aside a week for prayer. If evangelism is to be central set aside a few weeks to organise various events. People learn best by doing so once a month encourage the group to do something practical together as a group, giving people the chance to apply what they are learning: wash dishes for people in halls; do questionnaires; host a meal with a message for your friends as a group; go to a Habitat for Humanity building site or plug into local projects. Be creative, think what the needs are, what resources you have, what friendships you have, and work from there!

## Resources:

*The big book on small groups*  
*The challenge of cell church*

Jeffrey Arnold, IVP ([www.ivpress.com](http://www.ivpress.com))  
Phil Potter, brf ([www.brf.org.uk](http://www.brf.org.uk))

For more resources visit

[www.ifesireland.org/Leaders.asp](http://www.ifesireland.org/Leaders.asp)

## PASTORAL CARE

Bible study includes looking at how we personally apply what we are learning. Examining such issues in our lives is an amazing opportunity for growth and change but may raise pastoral issues for some group members. As their small group leader they may approach you for advice.

### **A Mixed Bunch...**

Each small group will be made up of people from different backgrounds, with different needs, personalities, fears, hopes and hurts. As well as being a group member, each person is an individual with specific needs. The challenge is to seek to see people with clear, fresh vision, to think outside the box and seek God's perspective.

### **What do we mean by "pastoral care" and what does it involve?**

Leading a small group involves two different gifts:

#### **Teaching:**

The gift of teaching in a small group setting is not "telling", but rather the ability to ask good questions in order to help people understand the passage for themselves and then apply it to their lives.

#### **Pastoral care:**

"Looking after" your group members is also part of leading the group. It involves making an effort outside the Bible study to get to know the group members, and having a genuine concern for the people as individuals.

Most small group leaders will not be equally good at both. Some of you will really enjoy caring for your group; for others it will be a challenge!!

*How do you feel about this part of your role as a small group leader?*

*What excites you?*

*What scares you?*

### **Your attitude...**

Your past experience of being part of a small group and your relationship with the group leader will affect how you view your role in relation to pastoral care of your group.

*Think of individuals you know who have pastoral gifts... What is it about them that you notice?*

You may not always feel like caring about the other people in the group - you may not even like them!

**Read** Mark 6:30-34. What was Jesus' response to the needs of the people?

### **You cannot give what you haven't got!**

Caring for others is costly. We need to receive before we can give. Know God's love and care for **you**, and **then** you can share that with those you meet/your group members.

### **Working it out - practical suggestions and ideas...**

Try to meet each person 1-2-1 or 2-2-1 outside of the Bible study. Chat, find out how they are, learn from them, discover what makes them "tick", and share your life with them (1 Thessalonians 2:8).

- Remember that we are all forgiven sinners. It's important that we as leaders are prepared to admit this to ourselves in order that we might model openness, sharing our difficulties and failings (but don't crush them with all your worries!!).
- Be interested in them as people, not just as CU members/small group members.
- PRAY for them, PRAY for them, PRAY for them! You could make a list of all your group members and stick it by your bed, desk, or wherever you'll see it! Then decide to pray for one or two members of your group each day, working your way through the list.
- Learn to listen.

### **Know your limits...**

So one of your group has approached you for advice. Responding to such a situation may simply be a case of listening and then praying together but if you feel that they need more help and time it might be better to refer them to someone who is qualified to deal with the particular problem - a doctor, church leader, counsellor etc.

Be sensitive to the person: Your conversations with the group members individually should *generally* be confidential, although there may be times you have to talk to someone else about it.

Recognise when you are getting out of your depth and refer them on to others. You need to help the person understand that you are not trained to handle certain situations. Make it clear that you are not a counsellor. Know your limits!

### **Look to the Future...**

As you lead your groups this year, you will learn skills and develop gifts which can be used in the workplace and your local church context.

### **Resources:**

- *What Could I Say?* – Peter Hicks (IVP)
- *What Could I Do?* – Peter Hicks (IVP)
- *Love Walked Among Us* – Paul E. Miller (Navpress)

## EVALUATE YOUR SMALL GROUP

### How is your group doing in the areas of:

- *Building community?*
- *Prayer?*
- *Engaging with the Bible?*
- *Mission?*

### Carry out a SWOT analysis: What are its....

- *Strengths?*
- *Weaknesses?*
- *Opportunities?*
- *Threats?*

What gifts do people bring?

How can I draw those out?

Do I have a vision for each person in my group i.e. an idea of the person they could become in Christ?

Are there particular people in the group I need to pursue/to talk to in order to correct/to affirm? How and when am I going to do this?

Whom can I ask for help?

## GROUP DYNAMICS

### ***Case study 1***

Simon and John are two group members who continually dominate the group meetings with their constant talking. They love to give their opinion and seem to think they are experts on every topic, but don't appear to be very good at listening to others and can be prone to ramble. On one occasion they reduced the Bible study to an argument over whose theology was right.

*If the group continues this way, what are the likely results/how will it affect the other group members?*

*Why do you think Simon and John behave this way and what might be the results for them if they continue this way?*

*What are some of the things you could do to address the situation?*

### ***Case study 2***

Sarah is quite withdrawn and shy, she is a Christian but appears to struggle to talk about her faith and is easily embarrassed. During the group she is very quiet and doesn't contribute to the discussion or prayer times.

*What might be some of the reasons for Sarah being quiet? Are there any other reasons why group members may be quiet?*

*What are some of the things you need to be careful about in handling this situation?*

*What are some of the things you could do?*

**Case study 3**

You have a time of prayer for your whole group at the end of your time together. Only you and one other person pray each week.

*What might some of the reasons for people not praying be?*

*How can you encourage the groups's prayer life, and encourage the individuals to pray?*

**Case study 4**

Your group meets over lunchtime – people arrive, chat and eat lunch then you do the Bible study, but with people having to go to class you never get it finished or have enough time to pray at the end so it always spreads over two weeks and people don't contribute much. You seem to have a fairly diverse group of people who wouldn't normally socialise together and after a few weeks the group feels as if it is stagnating.

*What are some of the main problems in this group and how would you address each one?*

**Case study 5**

You are having a discussion on what the Bible says about relationships, sex and marriage. Lynne is usually a regular contributor but doesn't say much in this discussion and looks a little upset; when one of the group asks her if her boyfriend is a Christian she gets defensive and replies that its none of their business. Her attendance at the group starts to wane.

*Why might she have been upset?*

*How do Christians often handle these situations badly?*

*How can you love and care for Lynne in this situation?*

**Case study 6**

You are having a Bible study. There appear to be two conflicting views on the meaning of the passage and how we interpret it.

*How do you handle it, and what do you do?*

**Case study 7**

James isn't a Christian and begins coming along to your group.

*How do you react?*

He doesn't understand a lot of the "Christian jargon" but wants to be part of the group. He has lots of questions, which you think maybe aren't always relevant to the rest of the group which means the group can go on for a long time.

*What are the key issues here?*

*What can you do in this situation?*



## LEADERS OF SMALL CUs

Leading a small CU is no mean feat. There are unique challenges and difficulties but there are also unique opportunities and joys! We want to take this opportunity to recognise and encourage you in your role as a leader of a small CU. Your CU is significant and valuable in the family of IFES Ireland Christian Unions.

So what is your role as a CU leader? The basic twin components of leadership are *vision* and *action*. Vision is about having a picture or a dream of what your CU could be under God. The first step in forming a vision for your CU is evaluating where you are at now (hopefully the questionnaire below will help you to do this). Secondly you need to think about where you would like to see your CU going – what do you long for your CU to be like in a year's time? Finally, action is needed if any part of that vision is to be made real!

Our prayer is that small CUs, and you, their leaders, will grasp a vision of what you could be under God – not feeling like the only way to be effective is to do the things a bigger CU does but finding that God wants to use you, as you are, as his effective witness on your campus. May he encourage, inspire and equip you through this conference and over the coming year.

### ***Group discussion...***

...some space for thoughts, notes, interesting ideas, encouragement etc!

## EVALUATE YOUR CAMPUS AND CU

- What size is it (student population)?
- Are there many other societies or clubs? How active are they?
- Does much happen in the evenings on campus?
- What kind of entertainment happens on the campus (e.g. in the college bar etc.)?
- How supportive are the Chaplaincy and the SU?
- Has the CU been recognised?  
Do you get a grant?
- Is the college geared more towards the arts or the sciences?
- Are there many international students?
- Do you have a college paper? Would you consider writing articles for it?
- Where does the CU currently meet?
- How would you describe the atmosphere created by your venue – cosy, intimate, impersonal, inviting, cold?
- How central is it? How visible?

- When does the CU meet? Do you find this a good day and time?
- How well known is the CU on campus?
- How would you say the CU is perceived in your college? How would you describe its "image"?
- Do you put up posters? Have you ever had any feedback on them from class friends?
- Are CU members active in other societies?
- Do you have friends who are influential in other societies – debating society, One World, international student society...?
- What do you usually do in the CU meeting each week?  
What would you say is the main focus of your CU?
- Would you describe the CU as welcoming and friendly to new people?
- What do you feel are the biggest challenges for your CU?
- Are there areas where the CU has developed in the last year?
- Are there opportunities for the CU to develop further this year?



## CALENDAR 2007-08

### April – May

- Get together with others for planning – look at term 1, speakers, Bible study series, the style of the meetings.
- Talks on being a Christian in the workplace, guidance etc.
- Have a big meal/event to finish.
- Give final years a good send-off/thank you.
- Investigate grant possibilities with the Students' Union and what is needed for their recognition.
- Try to work out the dates of term 1, and when the Clubs and Societies' Day happens.

### June – August

- Get involved in a summer team – here or abroad.
- Read, spend time alone with God.
- Pray for the CU, your college, and your college friends by name.
- Send CU members a letter or email at the end of August with the start up dates.
- Work on your CU website.

### September

- Check speakers have been booked.
- Plan Clubs and Societies' Day – rope in members from last year.
- Organise a stall – put together a flyer advertising your CU; organise events like football, a Barbeque, an international students evening.
- Spend the first evening getting to know the new people.
- Have a talk on "What is the CU?"

### October – November

- Find ways to integrate and get to know new members.
- Send thank you notes to speakers.
- 2-4th November: Joint Colleges weekend (ROI).
- Plan an evangelistic event for Christmas.
- Meet regularly as a committee/leadership team.
- Think about running an evangelistic Bible study in the next term.

### December – January

- Run the Christmas event.
- Have an end-of-term meal out together.
- Plan your involvement in Student Sunday at local churches.
- Begin thinking about new leaders.
- IFES Ireland Christian mind conference.

### February – March

- Student Sunday – second Sunday in February.
- Run evangelistic Bible studies.
- Plan an Easter evangelistic event.
- Organise the new leaders for next year.
- Advertise **e:con**.





