CoMission

LEADER BOOK

Groups That Start Groups

Getting to the third generation — and knowing why most people stop at the first.

Print it, write in it, and take it to the group.

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The law underneath everything

REMEMBER

People reproduce only what they've seen done and believe they could do themselves.

THE FOUR STAGES, AND THE LAW UNDER ALL OF THEM

These describe a group's life, not how it studies — that stays Eat → Digest → Grow at every stage.

1. Seed	Protect. Seekers and new believers learning to obey for the first time — do not rush them into an established congregation's rhythms.
2. Seedling	Encourage when invited. Obeying out loud, facilitating a first session. Pastoral care when they ask; not your presence at every meeting.
3. Growing plant	Come alongside. A second and third group appearing, leadership gifts emerging. Advocacy and private strengthening, never management.
4. Fruit-bearing	Partner as equals. Self-sustaining and multiplying. Step down from oversight, then send them back into the rooms you protected them from.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 35 minutes

Before the session Have your own answer to the first exercise ready, out loud. A polished example demonstrates the problem, not the fix.

Watch for

- "Model at the floor" heard as permission to prepare less.
- Anyone conflating the four stages with Eat → Digest → Grow. Say the difference out loud when the panel goes up.

Note

1. They will write their best moment anyway. Push once: "what did you do that you would not have told anyone about?"
2. Almost everyone is stuck at the second gate and will guess the first. The tell is a group that admires its leader and has produced nobody.
3. One name, written down. A room that leaves this blank has agreed with the chapter and committed to nothing.
4. The question is about belief, not enjoyment. "Did you like it?" gets a compliment; "do you think that is yours to try?" gets the truth.

This is the session everyone agrees with and nobody applies, because the law it teaches indicts the most gifted person in the room — who is usually the person teaching it.

Put the whole arc up first, then get out of it

Walk the panel before any teaching, all four stages, quickly.

The rest of the class is those four stages one at a time, and a coach who meets them one at a time never sees the shape. Thirty seconds each is enough. What you are buying is the reader's ability to place every later chapter — and one page they can come back to when a group in front of them does not match the stage they assumed it was in.

While the panel is up, say the guard out loud: **these four describe a group's life, not the way a group studies.** Every stage still runs Eat → Digest → Grow. Coaches who have taught the method for a year will otherwise hear a second, competing set of steps, and start explaining "which stage of the study" a group is in. One correction now costs a sentence; later it costs a class.

The second gate is the one to spend time on

The first gate takes two minutes. Everyone accepts that you cannot reproduce what you only heard described.

The second gate needs the whole session, because it is invisible from the inside. A person can watch you facilitate for a year, admire it completely, and conclude that facilitation is a gift. Nothing about that experience feels like failure to either of you. The group is warm, the discussion is good, people are genuinely helped — and there is no second generation, because the disciple you made cannot pass on what looked like a talent.

Say the cost plainly: this is the disease behind a church that makes disciples and never disciple-makers. One generation, then nothing. And it is usually paid by the most gifted leader in the building, because gifted people model gifted things, and gifted things are by definition the hardest to copy.

Expect the room to resist by lowering the wrong bar

Somebody will hear "model at the floor" as "prepare less," and someone else will hear it as "pretend to know less than you do." Head both off.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Modelling at the floor is a decision about what you *show*, not about how seriously you take the passage — and the thing you show is genuine ignorance, not performed ignorance. A facilitator who actually does not know where a command sits in the text and says so has modelled the whole method. One who knows and pretends not to has taught the group that facilitation involves acting.

The exercise that carries the session

The third and fourth exercises are the point. Everything before them is diagnosis.

A room will happily discuss two gates for forty minutes and write down nobody. Slow down at the name, and do not accept a category — "the young couple" is not a name. Then get the date onto the page. Asking one person whether they believe they could do what they watched you do is a small, slightly awkward conversation that most coaches have never had, and it produces the truest information in this class.

What the passage is doing here

John 13:1-17 is bound in after this — the towel, the basin, and *I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done.*

He took the lowest job in the room, in front of everyone, and then named it as a pattern to copy. Not the hardest thing he could do; the plainest. That is the whole chapter in one act, and it is worth noticing that Peter's objection is exactly the objection a gifted leader makes to modelling at the floor.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Write the plainest, least polished thing you did in front of your group this month. Not your best moment — your most ordinary one.**

2. Two gates have to open: they saw it done, and they believe they could do it. Which one is your group nearer to? Write what makes you say so.

3. Write the name of one person who was in the room when you did that ordinary thing.

4. "I will ask ____ whether they believe they could do what they watched me do, on ____."

John 13:1-17

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What does Jesus do for his disciples, and what does he tell them to do?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What kind of service feels beneath you?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   Who will you serve humbly this week?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who could you teach to serve by your example?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Jesus, you knelt to wash your disciples' feet. Give me a servant's heart to do the same for others, not counting it beneath me.*

This study online

Seed — protect it

REMEMBER

A seed transplanted into a sleepy congregation absorbs complacency before it develops roots.

SARDIS — A REPUTATION FOR BEING ALIVE

Revelation 3:1-2

To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of the one who possesses the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I am aware of your deeds; you have a reputation for being alive, yet you are dead. Be vigilant and strengthen what remains, which is on the verge of dying, for I have found your deeds incomplete in the sight of my God.

The Open Translation Bible (OTB), openbible.uk, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Jesus loved Sardis enough to wake it rather than abandon it. The same love that names sleepiness honestly is the love that keeps a seed from catching it too early. This is quarantine of a culture, never of people.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 40 minutes

Before the session Decide in advance how you will answer "so you think our church is dead?" — in one sentence, without hedging. Somebody will ask it, and how you answer sets whether the rest of the session is heard.

Watch for

- The word "quarantine" landing as a verdict on a congregation. Say "of a culture, not of people" in the same breath, every time, and never let the phrase travel alone out of the room.
- Coaches who hear this as permission to keep a group to themselves. Protection has an end date; possessiveness does not. Ask for the "until" and you will hear which one you have.

Note

1. If somebody names a group that has been meeting three years, do not correct it here. Chapter 6 is about exactly that, and the correction lands better once they have made the mistake themselves.
2. Most answers are genuinely good things — a men's breakfast, a baptism service, a mission trip. That is the point worth making: the danger is never a bad invitation.
3. This is the exercise that does the work, and it will go quiet, because most of the room church leaders the room in question. Do not fill the silence. Let them write their own diagnosis instead of receiving yours.
4. An "until", not a "never". If the until is vague, the wait is really a refusal, and it will be heard as one by everybody it touches.

This chapter asks a coach to say no to something good, on behalf of people who want the opposite. It is the most easily misquoted session in the class, and almost all of the work is in how it is framed.

Name the instinct as right before you redirect it

Start by agreeing with the room.

The urge to welcome a new group into the family is not a fault to be corrected. It is hospitality, and it is the same instinct that made most of these coaches useful in the first place. Say so plainly. If the session opens by treating the instinct as naive, every later sentence sounds like suspicion of the local church, and the coaches who are also church leaders will spend the hour defending rather than deciding.

The instinct is right. It is aimed at the wrong moment. That is the whole correction, and it is small enough to be heard.

Say the sentence in full, every time

Quarantine of a culture, not of people. Both halves, always together.

The first half alone is a verdict on a congregation, and it will be repeated that way to somebody who was not in this room and who will not hear the second half. That has ended real partnerships. A coach who cannot say the whole sentence comfortably should not use the word at all — "give it time before you fold them in" costs nothing and travels safely.

Be equally plain about who the sleepy congregation is: mostly people who love Jesus and drifted, slowly, into treating obedience as optional. It happened to good people. The seed does not yet have the roots to resist drifting the same way, which is a fact about the seed, not an accusation about the room.

The leader sitting in front of you

Assume one is, because usually one is.

He is hearing a stranger tell him that his own church might harm new believers, and he will either accept that at real cost or reject the whole class. Give him the version that is true and survivable: Jesus' own diagnosis of Sardis came with *strengthen what remains* — the aim is

Watch this chapter

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waking, not replacing. And tell him where this ends, which is chapter 5, when the grown group walks back into his congregation as a live coal. Protection is the first move of a plan that returns to him, not a plan that routes around him.

Protecting is not isolating, and the difference is a list

Coaches hear “protect” and go passive. Give them the muscles instead.

A protected seed prays for the sick, tells its own story to neighbours, invites family to read, obeys something out loud every week, and hands the facilitation to somebody new. Those are all things done in a home, on purpose, in phase one. Protection means the group is doing more, not less — just not in a programme.

What the passage is doing here

Mark 4:1-20 is bound in after this — the sower, and the four grounds.

Notice what the parable does not say: no seed in it was defective. One had no root and withered when the sun came; another was choked by what was already growing in that soil. The seed was fine both times. What decided the outcome was where it landed and what else was there — which is this chapter’s argument, spoken by Jesus before anyone made a method out of it.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Name one group you coach that is still in phase one — still discovering, still learning to obey out loud.

2. What have you been tempted to bring them into this month? An invitation, a programme, a meeting. Write it plainly.

3. If that group walked into that room next Sunday, what would they learn about obedience from watching it? Write what you actually expect, not what you hope.

4. "I will wait to introduce ____ to ____ until ____."

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

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The sower and the soils

Mark 4:1-20

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What happens to the seed on each of the four kinds of ground?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   Which of the four soils looks most like your heart right now?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   What thorn — worry, money, or wanting other things — will you pull up this week so the word can grow?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who could you retell this story of the farmer and the four soils to this week?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *God, make my heart the good soil — not the hard path, the rocky ground, or the thorns. Let your word take root in me and bear a harvest of thirty, sixty, a hundred times.*

This study online

Seedling — encourage when invited

REMEMBER

Pastoral care yes, takeover no.

THE FARMER SLEEPS

Mark 4:28-29

The earth produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the crop is ready, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.

The Open Translation Bible (OTB), openbible.uk, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Between planting and harvest the farmer does not stand over the blade coaxing it upward. The growth is real, it is happening, and it is not his to force. Near enough to notice; far enough to let it grow on its own timing.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 35 minutes

Before the session Bring one honest example of a time you inserted yourself into a group that had not asked. The room will not admit to anything until somebody with a title does.

Watch for

- "Encourage when invited" collapsing into "wait to be called". A coach who goes silent has swapped one failure for another; the encouragement is unprompted, only the intervention waits for an invitation.
- Someone treating a facilitator's question as an opening for everything else they had wanted to fix. One question asked is permission for one answer.

Note

1. A person, not a group. This chapter is about a relationship between two people, and the diagnosis stops working the moment it is about "them".
2. Everyone has one and almost nobody has named it. Expect useful things — choosing the passage, texting the reminder, sitting in "just to support".
3. The count is the finding. Three out of three "I decided" is the ordinary result, and it lands harder than any teaching you could give about it.
4. Insist on a specific action, not a compliment. "You did great" teaches nothing; "you let that silence run and Marta answered it" teaches the method.
5. Pair it with the fourth exercise. Stepping back without saying what you saw them do well reads as disappearance, and phase two is where a coach is most easily lost.

Phase two is where most coaching relationships are actually lost, and almost never by neglect. They are lost by a good leader helping too much, for months, with everyone's gratitude.

Teach the two halves as one sentence

Say the recite line and then immediately stop the room from hearing only half of it.

Coaches split predictably. The pastoral ones hear "pastoral care yes" and continue exactly as they were. The disciplined ones hear "takeover no" and disappear, then wonder in chapter 4 why the group stopped calling. Neither has the posture. It is one instruction with two edges: be warm and available without being in charge, and let the initiative for intervention sit with them.

The distinction that makes it usable is between *encouragement* and *intervention*. Encouragement never waits for an invitation — you can praise what you saw, unprompted, at any hour. Intervention does: the correction, the visit, the suggestion about how they should have handled it. Give the room that line and the sentence stops being a mood and becomes a rule.

Reading the signal

Spend real time here, because this is the skill.

A facilitator who calls with a specific question — "someone kept bringing up a side topic, what do I do?" — is asking for help. Answer that question. Not the four adjacent things you noticed while you were on the phone. One question asked is permission for one answer, and a coach who returns a list has taught the facilitator that calling is expensive.

A coach who shows up to "just sit in" on a session nobody invited them to is inserting themselves, however good the intention. Say plainly what a coach's presence does to a room: everyone performs, the facilitator watches you rather than the group, and the newest member learns that the real leader is the visitor. That is not a small distortion. It is the difference between a group that can run without you and a group that has only ever run with you watching.

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Do not let the exercise become a confession session

The third exercise produces a number, and the number is usually three out of three.

Let that sit without turning it into shame. These are people who genuinely care about the groups they oversee, and over-help is what caring looks like when nobody has drawn the line. Move quickly to the fourth exercise, which is the repair: name out loud something specific the group did well without you. That one sentence does more for a seedling's confidence than a month of your presence in the room, and it is the concrete thing every coach can do this week.

What the passage is doing here

Matthew 13:24-33 is bound in after this — the wheat and the weeds, then the mustard seed and the leaven.

The servants see the problem early and want to pull the weeds now. The master says no: in uprooting them you would uproot the wheat with them. That is the phase-two error stated by Jesus — a real problem, spotted by people who are right about it, and an intervention that would cost more than the problem does. Let both grow. The sorting has a time, and it is not this one.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Name one facilitator you coach who is in phase two right now.**

2. **Write one thing you have been doing for them that they never actually asked you to do.**

3. Think of your last three contacts with that group. For each one, write whether they invited it, or you decided they needed it.

4. Write one specific thing that group did well without your help — in the words you will actually say to them out loud.

5. "I will step back from ____ with ____, starting ____."

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

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The weeds and the mustard seed

Matthew 13:24-33

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What does the farmer tell his servants to do about the weeds, and what does the mustard seed become?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   Where are you tempted to give up on something of God because it still looks small?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   What small act of faith will you plant this week, trusting God to grow it?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who feeling small or discouraged could you retell the mustard seed story to this week?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Father, thank you that your kingdom starts as small as a mustard seed and still grows into something great. Give me patience like the farmer who waited for the harvest instead of tearing up the field.*

This study online

Growing plant — come alongside

REMEMBER

Alongside, never over.

TAKEN ASIDE, PRIVATELY

Acts 18:26

He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the way of God to him more accurately.

The Open Translation Bible (OTB), openbible.uk, CC BY-SA 4.0.

One conversation, two people, no audience. Barnabas did the same for Saul — advocacy, not absorption: he stood beside him and made his story credible to people who needed convincing. Neither of them folded anyone into a programme.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 40 minutes

Before the session Know one requirement you have added to a group that was doing fine without it, and be ready to name what it did for you rather than for them.

Watch for

- A coach who has quietly stopped being needed hearing this chapter as loss. Name it: being less necessary is what phase three success looks like.
- "Come alongside" used to justify attendance at everything. Barnabas and Priscilla each appear once, briefly, and leave. Presence is not proximity.

Note

1. Some coaches will have none, and that is worth saying out loud: phase three is where most movements stop. They should answer for the group closest to it.
2. The second half is the whole exercise. Nobody has trouble naming the requirement; almost nobody has said out loud what it was going to buy them.
3. Do not soften this and do not let the room turn it into a joke. A coach who answers "my confidence" honestly has done the chapter's work in one line.
4. Watch for someone naming a person they want to correct publicly. The passage rules that out: privately, one conversation, and it strengthened him.
5. An offer, not a plan. If the sentence comes back with what the coach will provide already decided, it is management wearing this chapter's clothes.

This is the chapter coaches agree with and then quietly disobey, because the thing it asks them to give up does not look like control. It looks like responsibility.

Start with what has actually changed

Make the room say what is different about a phase-three group before you teach anything.

They are reproducing. Leaders are emerging who were nobody's project a year ago. And they are asking questions the coach cannot answer immediately, which is the detail that produces the error this chapter is about. A coach who is out of his depth reaches for structure — a form, a report, a standing meeting — because structure feels like a competent answer to a question he cannot answer. It is not. It is a way of staying in charge of something he can no longer teach.

Two pictures, and what each one forbids

Walk both, and name what each rules out. That is what makes them usable.

Barnabas vouched for Saul in a room that did not trust him. He did not fold Saul into a programme and he did not supervise him — he lent him credibility and then got out of the way. Advocacy, not absorption.

Priscilla and Aquila corrected Apollos privately, in one conversation, with no audience, and the man went on preaching more accurately rather than less confidently. Notice the size of it: two people, one exchange, and nothing about it announced from a platform. A coach who cannot correct at that scale will either say nothing for months or say it in front of everyone, and both do damage.

Name the formalizing instinct as an instinct

The exercises will surface a requirement almost every coach in the room has considered adding.

Handle it without contempt. The instinct comes from care and from accountability, and the person feeling it is usually answerable to someone else for what these groups do. Then make the distinction anyway: a requirement added so a coach can sleep is a cost paid by a

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movement in order to comfort one person. The Jerusalem council faced the same instinct and named it — do not trouble the Gentiles who are turning to God. The temptation to standardise a growing thing in your own image was already old for the apostles.

What alongside actually looks like in a week

Leave the room with behaviours, not a posture.

Encourage the facilitators by name. Answer counsel when asked, not before. Open your worship spaces without requiring attendance in return. Do joint ministry to the poor as co-workers rather than as host and guest. And resist, on purpose, loading your own church's cultural habits onto a movement God is already growing in its own direction.

What the passage is doing here

1 Peter 5:1-11 is bound in after this — shepherd the flock among you, not domineering, but being examples.

Among, not above. The instruction is given to elders, by an elder, and it rules out exactly the three failures a phase-three coach is prone to: doing it under compulsion, doing it for what it gets you, and doing it by lording it over people. What it puts in their place is the same thing chapter 1 asked for — being an example somebody could copy.

Reflect and Discuss

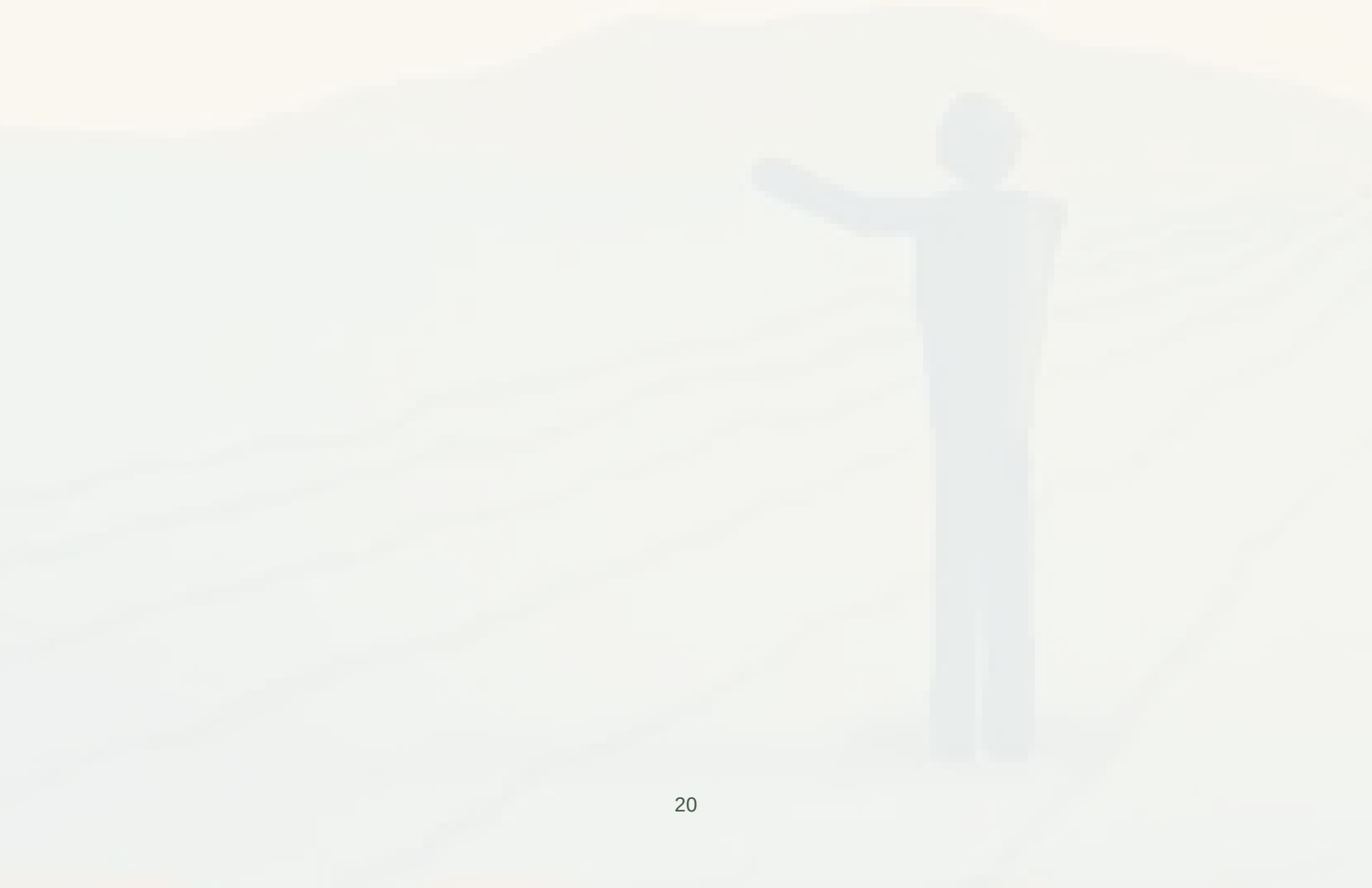
1. Name one group in phase three — already multiplying, already asking you questions you cannot answer off the cuff.

2. What have you thought about asking them for? A requirement, a check-in, a report. Write it, and write what it would do for you.

3. Read that back. Was it for their growth, or for your confidence? Write your honest answer.

4. Who needs a Priscilla-and-Aquila conversation from you — taken aside, privately, strengthening something already strong?

5. "I will offer to walk alongside ____ on ____, and let them decide what they need."



— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

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Shepherd the flock

1 Peter 5:1-11

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   How does Peter tell the elders to shepherd — and how are they not to do it?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What kind of shepherd are you becoming — willing and eager, or pressured and controlling?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   Whom in your group or future plant will you begin developing as a shepherd this week, and what is the first step?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Whom will you tell the names of the future shepherds you are praying over?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Chief Shepherd, the flock is yours, not mine. Make me an example rather than a lord, and raise up shepherds from among the very people we reach.*

This study online

Fruit-bearing — partner as equals

REMEMBER

DBS groups don't just reach the lost; they revive the found.

WHAT A FRUIT-BEARING GROUP DOES BACK IN THE ROOM

A church that receives one obedient, multiplying disciple has received a live coal — a single life obeying out loud in a room that has forgotten what that looks like.

1. Its stories	Members saying plainly, in a Sunday gathering, what they obeyed this week.
2. The question	After the sermon, out loud: how will you obey this? Asked by somebody with no title and no platform.
3. A class	Helps a stale Sunday school class become a discovery group — from inside it, by being in it.
4. More groups	Mobilises other believers to start their own. It needs your welcome now, not your permission.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 35 minutes

Before the session Have one real story of a mature disciple sent back into an ordinary congregation, including what it cost them. A version with no cost in it will not be believed by anyone who has tried it.

Watch for

- The sending heard as a strategy for fixing a church. It is one life obeying out loud in a room, not a plan imposed on a room.
- A coach who cannot let go of the last thread of oversight. Ask what would actually happen if it were dropped on Monday; usually the answer is nothing.

Note

1. If nobody in the room can name one, do not manufacture it. Say plainly that phase four is years of work, and have them name who is closest instead.
2. Expect answers that sound like nothing — being told before they start a group, being copied on messages. Those are the ones that matter here.
3. The cost half is the honest half, and it is the reason this chapter is fifth rather than second. Do not let anybody leave it blank.
4. An invitation, and their choice. A mature partner who is assigned to a room has just been made a project again by the sentence that sent him.

This is the chapter that keeps the whole class from being a strategy for routing around the local church. Everything before it protected a group from a room. This one walks it back in.

Say what step down actually means

The room will agree with “partner as equals” instantly and keep every thread it is holding.

So make it concrete. Being told before they start a group. Being copied on the messages. Being asked which passage they should use next. Being thanked. None of those feels like oversight and all of them are, and a coach who keeps them has a partner in language and a supervisee in practice. The second exercise exists to drag those threads into the light, and the useful follow-up question is: what would happen if you dropped it on Monday? The answer is almost always nothing, which is the answer.

The turn, and why it lands hard

Most coaches do not see this coming, because chapter 2 told them to protect this group from exactly the room chapter 5 sends them into.

Handle the apparent contradiction directly rather than hoping nobody notices. It is the same argument at two different strengths. A seed absorbs the culture it sits in; a mature disciple changes it. What was dangerous at one month is the whole point at three years. The class is not against the sleepy congregation. It is a plan for reaching it that begins by not sacrificing the seed to it.

Guard what gets sent

Be precise, because this is where the idea gets ruined.

What goes back in is a life, not a lecture. The panel is deliberately small: tell your own stories, ask the obedience question after the sermon, help one stale class become a discovery group, encourage one other believer to start one. A disciple who returns to correct a congregation’s ecclesiology will be right and useless. A disciple who returns and quietly obeys out loud where nobody else does is a live coal, and coals do their work by contact.

Watch this chapter

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Name the cost honestly

The third exercise asks what it might cost the person sent, and coaches skip it.

It will cost something. They will be the odd one in the room for a while. Some will be patronised by people who have been members for thirty years. A few will be told they have been in a cult. Sending someone without saying this is sending them unprepared, and it is the single most common way a phase-four disciple ends up quietly back on a pew. Say it, and then say what makes it survivable: they go as a welcomed partner of yours, not as a lone volunteer, and they still have the group they came from.

What the passage is doing here

Mark 5:18-20 is bound in after this — the man begs to go along with Jesus, and is sent home to his own people instead.

He wanted the mission trip. He got the harder assignment: the town that had watched him at his worst, the family that would have opinions, the people who would remember. And the text says he went and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marvelled. That is the whole chapter — the mature one sent back to the room he came from, with nothing to deliver but his own story.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Name one leader or group ready for phase four — ready to walk back into a congregation as a partner, not a project.**

2. **What oversight are you still carrying with them, however gentle? Write it plainly.**

3. Which room would you send them into? Write what that room would gain — and what it might cost them.

4. "I will invite ____ to share their story with ____, on ____."

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

CoMission

“Tell them what the Lord has done”

Mark 5:18-20

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What does the freed man ask for, and what does Jesus send him to do instead?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What has the Lord done for you that your family and friends have never heard?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   Will you write out this week, in a few sentences you can say aloud, what the Lord has done for you?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who in your own home or town will hear it first, and when will you tell them?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Jesus, you have done great things for me and had mercy on me. Send me home to tell my own people, even when I would rather stay with you.*

This study online

Running the arc backward

REMEMBER

> Most damage to young movements comes from running the arc backward.

LOOK FOR THE SIGNS, NOT THE BIRTHDAY

Phase is about maturity, not months. A group of eight months that is reproducing may already be phase three.

1. Obeying?	Are they still learning to obey out loud, or already teaching somebody else to do it?
2. Discerning?	Are they curious about doctrine, or already handling it soundly without you in the room?
3. Reproduced?	A real, distinct new group — not more people in the same one. This is what separates phase two from phase three.
4. Who decides?	Do their leaders look to you before every decision, or occasionally, by choice?

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 45 minutes

Before the session Assess one of your own groups against the four questions before the session and be ready to say where you were wrong. A room diagnoses honestly only after somebody else has.

Watch for

- The room hearing this as a chapter about other coaches' mistakes. Every exercise names a group the person in the chair is currently coaching.
- Somebody using "phase four" to justify a group they simply stopped visiting. Absence is not partnership; the fourth question sorts them apart.

Note

1. Ask for the posture they have been giving, not the one they intended. Most people write the intention; the behaviour is in the next exercise anyway.
2. Push for evidence on the third. "They're nearly ready to start one" is a no, and the whole point of the question is that it has a yes or a no.
3. Expect four out of five rooms to find they are too protective, too long. Say so once the writing is done, not before, or you will have written it for them.
4. A date, and preferably a repeating one. A coach who reassesses once has swapped a stale judgment for a fresh one that will go stale on the same schedule.

This is the assessment session, and it is the one that makes the previous four usable. Without it a coach has four postures and no way of knowing which one is in his hand.

Teach both errors, then say which one is in the room

Give both directions equal weight in the teaching and unequal weight in the diagnosis.

Handing a phase-four posture to a month-old group is the more dramatic error and the rarer one. It usually comes from a church that is excited: joint projects, a platform, a place at the next outreach. The seed absorbs whatever surrounds it, and what surrounds a busy church is busyness.

The error that will actually be sitting in your room is the other one. Coaches protect too long. It is comfortable, it feels responsible, and nothing in a group's behaviour ever announces that protection has become a cage. So run the teaching evenly, then let the third exercise show the room its own bias rather than telling them at the start. The finding lands about ten times harder when they wrote it themselves.

Maturity, not months — and where the calendar sneaks back

Everybody agrees with the principle. Almost nobody applies it, because the calendar comes back wearing other clothes.

Watch for it in phrases like "they're still pretty new" and "they've been at this a while now." Both are calendar judgments dressed as discernment. The four questions in the panel exist to replace them with evidence, and the third — have they reproduced — is the one that does most of the work, because it has a yes or a no and cannot be softened into an impression.

Do not let assessment become a verdict

There is a way this chapter goes wrong that is worth heading off.

A coach who leaves with a phase written next to each group's name has turned a diagnosis into a label, and labels stop being re-examined. Phase is a reading of where a group is today, taken to decide what to bring on Tuesday. Ask for a repeating date on the last exercise — a quarter is about right — so the reading stays a habit instead of becoming a file.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What the passage is doing here

Luke 6:43-49 is bound in after this — no good tree bears bad fruit, each tree is known by its own fruit, and then the two builders.

Known by its fruit. Not by its age, not by its reputation, not by how long anybody has been coming. And the second half asks the same question of the hearer: the two houses looked identical until the river hit them, and what separated them was whether the man who built had done what he heard. That is the distinction this chapter is asking a coach to make about a group, and Jesus makes it by what a thing produces rather than by how long it has stood.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Name one group you coach, and write which posture you have actually been giving it.**

2. **Answer the four questions in the panel for that group. Write the answers, not your impression of them.**

3. **Compare the two. If the posture and the phase do not match, write which direction you are off.**

4. **"I will re-assess ____'s phase, honestly, on ____."**

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

CoMission

Fruit and foundations

Luke 6:43-49

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What is the difference between the man who builds on rock and the one who builds without a foundation?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What does the fruit of your words and actions say about what is stored in your heart?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   What one thing Jesus said have you heard but not yet done — and will you do this week?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who do you know whose life is being shaken and needs a foundation on the rock?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Jesus, I don't want to just call you 'Lord, Lord' — I want to dig deep and build my life on your words. Change my heart so that good fruit grows.*

This study online

Six ways a movement dies

REMEMBER

Multiplication dies from good church habits, not from opposition.

THE SIX, AND THE BETTER WAY

1. Experts only	Only church leaders and trained experts may really lead. Better: a format an ordinary person can lead on day one.
2. Teaching only	Studies with no action step. Better: end with a real "what will you do this week".
3. Complication	Buildings, budgets, production. Better: as simple as homes in Acts.
4. Control	Holding on instead of releasing. Better: release as he sent the seventy-two.
5. Outside money	Waiting on foreign funds and direction. Better: use what is already local.
6. No follow-up	Nobody asks what came of the commitment. Better: ask weekly, never with shame.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 45 minutes

Before the session Know which of the six is yours, and name it and the behaviour first. This session is only as honest as its first answer.

Watch for

- The list turning into a critique of somebody's church. It is offered to the person holding the book, about the person holding the book.
- "Every believer is a priest" heard as a case against church leaders. The six oppose a bottleneck, not an office.

Note

1. One, not three. A coach who names all six has named none.
2. "I like to be in control" is unusable. "I pick the passage for all three groups" can be handed to somebody else on Tuesday.
3. The fear is usually reasonable — bad doctrine, a group that fizzles, being blamed. Say so; a fear treated as silly is not named again.
4. One correction, with a date. This chapter produces more insight and less action than any other, and the date is the only defence.

This chapter is the class's most quotable and most misused. It is a list of six things good churches do, and in the wrong mouth it becomes ammunition.

Set the frame before you read the list

Do not skip the opening line, and do not soften it either.

None of the six is a sin. All six are things most people in the room were trained to do, and trained to do with a clear conscience. If the frame is not set first, every coach hears the list as an indictment of the church they came from, and half of them will spend the session defending it and the other half sharpening it into an argument they intend to have on Sunday.

The frame is a medical one. A doctor names something early so it can be treated, and he does it without contempt for the patient. Say that out loud. Then read the six.

Where each one actually shows up

Walk the panel, but spend the time on the two that hide best.

Teaching without obedience is the one nobody in ministry recognises in themselves, because it looks like diligence. A group that studies well and never does anything is the most respectable failure available. The test is not whether the study was good; it is whether anybody was asked what they will do, and whether anybody asked them about it the following week.

Dependence on outside money or models hides because it usually arrives as generosity. Somebody offers to fund the materials, and a movement that could have run on borrowed Bibles and a kitchen table acquires a budget line and, with it, a date on which it stops. The question to ask is not whether the gift is good but whether the group could carry on if it ended tomorrow.

Name control without making it a character flaw

The root of the six is control, and the third exercise is where the session either goes deep or goes polite.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Ask what they are afraid would happen if they stopped the behaviour they named. The fears are usually reasonable: bad doctrine going uncorrected, a group fizzling out, being held responsible by someone above them for something they did not supervise. Treat those as real. A fear that gets laughed at does not get named again, and this chapter is worth nothing without it.

Then say the true thing about the fear: every one of those outcomes is survivable and reversible, and the outcome of the control is not. A movement that stops at one generation cannot be repaired later by trying harder.

The date is the deliverable

More than any other session in this class, this one produces agreement that goes nowhere.

Everybody leaves able to name the six. Almost nobody changes a behaviour. Hold the room to the last exercise: one correction, in their own leadership, with a date. If a coach cannot name one, they have read a list rather than taken a diagnosis.

What the passage is doing here

Luke 10:1-11 is bound in after this — the seventy-two, sent out in pairs with almost nothing.

Notice what he does not give them: no purse, no bag, no sandals, no supplies, no supervisor, no requirement to report before acting. He released people he was not going to be standing next to, into towns he named, and what came back was joy. Set that against the six and every one of them is an addition to a list Jesus kept deliberately short.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Read the six again, slowly. Which one are you most tempted toward yourself? Write it.**

2. Where does it show up in your own leadership? Write the specific behaviour, not the tendency.

3. Underneath most of the six is control. Write what you are actually afraid would happen if you stopped that behaviour.

4. "I will correct ____ in my own leadership, starting ____."

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

CoMission

Sent out two by two: the person of peace

Luke 10:1-11

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   How does Jesus send the seventy-two, and what kind of person are they to look for in each town?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What fears keep you from going out like a lamb among wolves?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   Who will you pair up with this week, and which home or place will you visit together?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who might be your person of peace — someone who welcomes you — and how will you find out this week?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Jesus, you still send workers ahead of you. Send me out, and lead me to the person of peace you have already prepared.*

This study online

The same six, one living room at a time

REMEMBER

> The habits that kill a movement are practiced or prevented one living-room circle at a time.

THE MOVEMENT KILLER, IN ONE LIVING ROOM

Correct by asking, never by telling. "What did the group obey last week?" opens the door gently, and puts the diagnosis in their hands.

1. Teaching	Professionalising, in miniature — the facilitator turns the study into a mini-sermon, because that is what leading well was modelled to look like.
2. Materials	Over-complication, in miniature — a commentary added "just to help", a devotional slipped in alongside the passage.
3. The chair	Controlling leadership, in miniature — one person leading every week, because handing it off feels risky.
4. No reproduction	A group that has met faithfully for a year, loves each other deeply, and has never once helped a member start something new.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 40 minutes

Before the session Have a real question you have used that worked, and a real correction you gave that closed somebody down. The second one teaches more than the first.

Watch for

- Questions that are accusations with a question mark. Read a few aloud; the room hears the difference immediately, which is why this is done out loud.
- Coaches deciding the small version is not urgent. Say what it costs: this group's habits are the DNA of every group it ever starts.

Note

1. Most rooms name teaching instead of facilitating, and most of them are right. It is the one every facilitator was trained into before they ever met us.
2. This exercise looks like a joke and is not. Getting the sharp version onto paper is what stops it arriving, half-disguised, in the real conversation.
3. Check that it ends in a question mark and that the answer is not already obvious. "Don't you think you might be teaching too much?" is the sharp version wearing a question mark.
4. Have two or three read theirs out. Hearing somebody else's question is the fastest way for the room to learn the difference between asking and telling.

Chapter 7 gave the room a diagnosis it can apply to institutions. This one hands it back at the only scale where a coach can actually act, and then makes them practise the conversation.

Make the mapping explicit before the drill

Put the two lists side by side on purpose.

A coach who has only met the six at movement scale will look for them in structures — budgets, boards, buildings — and conclude they have none of the problems, because they have none of the structures. The mapping is the correction: professionalising arrives in a living room as a ten-minute explanation after the passage; over-complication arrives as a commentary somebody brought to help; controlling leadership arrives as the same person facilitating for the eleventh week running. None of those has a budget line. All three are the disease.

Then say the thing that makes it urgent rather than merely interesting: this group's habits become the DNA of every group it ever starts. A correction made here costs one conversation. The same correction made three generations later has to be made in four living rooms at once, by people who learned it from somebody they trust.

Run the drill in the room, not as homework

The three middle exercises are one exercise in three moves, and they only work if the room actually does them in order.

Name the killer. Write the sharp version — the sentence you would say if there were no consequences. Then write the question you will really ask. Coaches want to skip the middle move because it feels petty. Do not let them. The sharp sentence exists whether or not it is written, and a coach who has not seen his own in writing tends to deliver it later in a softened form that everybody hears correctly anyway.

Teach what makes a question a real question

This is the skill, and most of the room does not have it.

A real question has an answer the coach does not already know. *What did the group obey last week?* is real; the coach cannot predict the answer, and the answer does the diagnosing. *Don't you think you might be explaining too much?* is not a question at all — it is the correction with a

Watch this chapter

NOTES

question mark stapled on, and the facilitator hears it exactly as it was meant.

Have three or four read theirs aloud. The room will hear the difference before you can explain it, and that is worth more than the explanation.

What the passage is doing here

Acts 2:42-47 is bound in after this — devoted to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, to prayer.

Four things, in homes, day by day. There is no structure in the list that a living room could not reproduce by Tuesday, and that is the point: what the smallest room devotes itself to becomes the DNA of everything that room reproduces. The passage is not a description of a programme they ran. It is a description of habits they kept, and the growth in verse forty-seven follows the habits rather than the other way round.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Think of one group you are close to right now. Which of the small-scale killers is quietly present in it?

2. Write the sharp correction you are tempted to say in your head — the one you would never say out loud.

3. Now write the question you will ask instead. Not a softer statement — an actual question.

4. **"I will ask ____ this question — not tell them this fix — on ____."**

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

CoMission

The fellowship of believers

Acts 2:42-47

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What four things did the first believers devote themselves to, and what did God do among them?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   Which mark of that first community do you long for most in your own group?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   What will you share with your group this week — time, food, possessions, prayer?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who could you invite into this fellowship so they can see what God is doing?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *God, thank you for the first believers, who devoted themselves to the teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. Make our group a family like that, and add to us those who are being saved.*

This study online

Counting generations

REMEMBER

> Churches produce what they measure. Measure generations.

THE FOUR NUMBERS, AND WHICH ONE IS NEW

Report them publicly, with the same seriousness your church already gives attendance.

1. In a group	How many people are in a discovery group. You already know how to count this one — it looks like attendance.
2. Facilitating	How many are facilitating a group. Also familiar, and still a first-generation number.
3. Groups from groups	The one almost nobody tracks, and the one that changes everything. A church can have dozens of healthy groups and one generation.
4. Shared this month	Asked week over week, of every facilitator you coach. A different kind of asking than the first two require.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Time 40 minutes

Before the session Know your own third number for the last twelve months and be ready to say it, whatever it is. A room will not write a zero that the person teaching would not.

Watch for

- The zero being treated as failure. Nine chapters exist because getting past one generation is genuinely hard; the number is a starting point, not a grade.
- "Publicly" quietly downgraded to "with the leadership team". That is the difference between changing a report and changing what a church counts as success.

Note

1. Have someone read their list aloud. Hearing "attendance and offering" said out loud, with nothing after it, does the teaching for you.
2. Expect zero from most of the room, and do not rescue it. Zero is the finding this whole class exists to produce, and it is not a verdict on their effort.
3. A person and a place, not an intention. A number nobody owns and nowhere to report it is a number that will be counted once.
4. Publicly is the load-bearing word. A number kept in a coach's notebook changes the coach; a number on the board changes what a church expects.

This is the last session and the only one that changes anything a church can see from the outside. Everything before it changed how one coach behaves. This one puts a number on the board.

Start with what is already counted

Do not open with the four numbers. Open with theirs.

Ask the room to write what their church reports on a Sunday, and have one or two read the list out. It is short, and it is almost always attendance and money. Neither is wrong. Both measure gathering — how many came and how well the room was paid for — and a church can grow both for ten years without a single disciple reaching anyone else. Letting the room hear its own list said out loud does more than any argument you could make about it.

The third number is the session

Two of the four numbers they already know how to count, because they look like attendance. One is a habit of asking. The third is the one that changes what a church is.

Ask for it directly, over twelve months, with names. Most of the room will write zero, and the temptation will be to soften that immediately. Do not. Let the zero sit long enough to be felt, then say the true thing about it: nine chapters exist because getting past one generation is genuinely hard, and a zero is where nearly everyone starts. It is a starting point, not a grade on their ministry.

Then make it concrete — a real group, a real name, a real conversation to have this month with whoever in it is closest to starting something.

Hold the line on “publicly”

This is where the chapter is usually lost, and it is lost quietly.

“Publicly” gets downgraded to “with the leadership team”, then to “in my own notes”, and the number goes on being true and changing nothing. A number kept in a coach’s notebook changes the coach. A number said out loud on a Sunday changes what the whole room understands success to be, which is the entire mechanism this chapter runs on: churches produce what they measure, and measuring in private produces nothing.

Get a person and a place onto the page in the third exercise. Without an owner and a venue, the number is counted once and never again.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

The celebration, and why your absence is the point

Teach them how to announce it when it happens.

When a group starts a group, say so as loudly as a baptism. And name the thing that makes this celebration different from every other one a church gives: the leader was not in the room. The group did it alone, because somewhere earlier somebody modelled something copyable and then had the discipline to step back. That absence is the proof, and a coach who cannot celebrate an event he was absent from has not finished chapter 1.

What the passage is doing here

2 Timothy 2:1-7 is bound in after this — entrust what you have heard to reliable people who will be able to teach others also.

The verse is the scoreboard, and the surrounding paragraph is why it is hard: the soldier who does not get entangled, the athlete who competes by the rules, the hardworking farmer who ought to get the first share of the crops. Three pictures of a long, unglamorous effort, wrapped around the one sentence in Scripture that counts four generations deep. Count them: Paul, Timothy, reliable people, others.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Write what your church currently reports on a Sunday. All of it.**

2. **Over the last twelve months, how many groups you coach have started another group? Write the number, and the names.**

3. Who will track the third number, and where will it be reported? Write the person and the place.

4. "I will start counting ____ generations, publicly, starting ____."

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

CoMission

Four generations

2 Timothy 2:1-7

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   Count the generations in verse 2 — who passes the message to whom?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   Which generation are you in right now, and who is your Timothy?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   Which faithful person will you begin entrusting what you have learned to this week?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   How will you train that person not just to learn, but to teach others also?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Father, let what I have received not stop with me. Help me entrust it to faithful people who will teach others also — four generations in one verse.*

This study online

CoMission
comission.cc