



Coaching Life-Changing Small Group Leaders

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How to Use This Tool

This *Conference Classics* process tool is designed to accompany an audio recording of a Willow Creek Association conference session. You can refer to the tool while listening to the session and use it afterward to dig deeper into the content, or you can use the tool to get the highlights without even listening to the session.

This tool consists of three parts:

- The **PREVIEW** section lists the problem the session addresses and the recommendation the speaker makes.
- The **KEY CONCEPTS** section breaks the session down into the core ideas most important for you to understand.
- The **REFLECT** section includes questions to help you practice, apply, and implement what you've learned. Although the questions are geared primarily to individuals, groups can use them as a discussion guide.

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Preview

Problem: Small group coaches often feel like mid-level management and become overwhelmed and frustrated.

Recommendation: Adopt a developmental model of coaching that avoids burnout.

Key Concepts

The Role of a Coach

- In the developmental model, coaches have two priorities:
 - Nurturing the soul of the leader
 - Developing the leader's skills
- The natural temptation in coaching is to view it as mid-level management, focused on ministry growth and skill proficiency in the leaders.
- When coaches are expected to be mid-level managers, it leads to burnout.
- When Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me ..." (John 10:14, NIV), he meant more than knowing how many disciples there were and how many converts they had.
- The first call of a coach is to be a shepherd, and that involves nurturing the leader's soul.
- When Willow Creek small group leaders were surveyed about what they need most from their coaches, 80 percent responded that their number one need is shepherding.
- As you shepherd leaders, they naturally grow more responsive to developing their skills.
- Most leaders and their skills take time to be developed.

Skills Needed

- Coaches need to practice four skills:
 - Modeling
 - Shepherding
 - Envisioning
 - Equipping
- The skills build in progression.
- You don't need to be perfect, just growing in your proficiencies.
- Start with modeling and never leave it.
- Model a God-honoring, Christ-centered life, authentically and realistically.
- After practicing modeling with your leaders, you add shepherding to guide them.
- If you stop modeling, you will slip into managing, and distance will develop in the relationship.
- Continue to model while you shepherd.
- You have to intuit when to move into the next skill level.
- A general guideline in the beginning of the relationship is that your one-hour conversations with leaders should contain about 50 minutes of shepherding and 10 minutes about the group.
- After being well-shepherded, leaders will begin to ask for help with specific issues.
- As the relationship matures, conversations will end up being about one-third shepherding time and two-thirds skill-developing time.

Reflect

1. The natural temptation in coaching is to view it as mid-level management. Whether you are a small group coach or one who leads coaches, how have you typically viewed the coaching role? Are there any changes in expectations that should be made? Write your thoughts below.

2. The primary skill coaches must practice is modeling a Christ-centered life. The three areas of modeling that Greg outlined are listed below. Choose one area that could use improvement and jot down an action step you will take in the next two weeks.

Spiritual fitness

Spirit-led leadership

Life in community