



Leading a Life-Changing Small Group Meeting

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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 that the session addresses and the recommendation that 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 meetings are often boring and ineffective at changing people's lives.
- Recommendation:** Use these proven tips and techniques to make your meetings engaging, relevant, and, most importantly, life-changing!

Key Concepts

Ingredients for Life-Changing Meetings

- Ingredients for life-changing meetings include:
 - Ice breakers
 - Understanding the truth-life continuum
 - Planning for discussion and life-change
- We want to help people think like Jesus, act like Jesus, and be like Jesus.

Ice Breakers

- Ice breakers are the starting point of discipleship and the life-change process, no matter how long a group has been together.
- These tools break walls down and enable people to share who they are.
- They are great diagnostic tools for what's going on with people behind the scenes.
- They set the tone of the meeting, which should be fun!
- All group members are encouraged to participate.
- The leader needs to answer first and set the example for the rest of the group.

Understanding the Truth-Life Continuum

- In *To Know as We Are Known*, Parker Palmer writes, "To teach is to create a space where obedience to truth can be practiced."
- When groups land completely on one end of the continuum (all truth or all life experience), the results can be destructive.
- Create a place where the truth about God intersects with the truth about you.
- The place where truth meets life is called love.
- Groups whose focus is the love of Christ and the love of others will tend to press toward the center of the continuum.
- Teach people what you want them to know, and then discuss how to apply that truth.

Planning for Discussion and Life-Change

- Don't just go from meeting to meeting.
- If you begin to expect God to show up in your small group, He will.
- He is in control of life change, and we have to PLAN for that.
- Elements of the PLAN acronym are:
 - What is the group's Purpose?
 - What Logistics can be changed to make the environment distraction-free?
 - What Activities (tasks, study, prayer, experience, serving) will the group do and for how much time?
 - What Needs exist among group members that require prayer and attention?

2. John used the acronym PLAN to identify four aspects of creating an environment for discussion and life-change. Take this time to evaluate your group in each of the four areas so that you can maximize your group's potential for life-change.

Purpose

Does your group have a clearly defined purpose? Yes No



Write your group's purpose below. When you finish, prayerfully evaluate if you are satisfied with the existing purpose. If you are, great! If not, decide on an action step you will take to reshape your group's purpose.



Take five minutes to brainstorm about what your group's purpose should be. Jot your ideas down below. Then, commit to discussing your group's purpose at your next meeting.

Logistics

Think back to your last group meeting. What logistics do you think need to change to make your meeting environment distraction-free? Commit to an action step you will take before your next meeting to address the issues you identify.