

Distinctives for A Healthy Men's Ministry

1. Prayer
 - Christ-centered worship
 - Well-defined base of prayer supporters
 - Commitment for prayer strategy
2. Biblical
 - Helps men apply truth in practical ways
 - Follows the ministry model of Jesus
 - Applies lessons from the ministry model of Paul and others
3. Leadership
 - Supported/Encouraged by the pastor
 - Led by a core team
 - Opportunities for new leaders to participate and develop
 - Demonstrates a servant leader model
 - Leadership team meets regularly for prayer, planning and team building
4. Planning
 - Has mission driven purpose statement
 - Is strategic in nature rather than simply following traditions
 - Purpose statement focuses on ministry
 - Considers men's busy and varying schedules in its planning
 - Sets and communicates clear goals
5. Managing
 - Avoids implementing too much too soon
 - Regular surveying of the men, church and community
 - Well run, but not micro-managed
6. Context
 - Clear focus on men only
 - Creates an environment that is safe for men
 - Offers an environment that allows men to build trusting relationships
7. Relationships
 - Focuses on relationships, not programs
 - Leads men into small groups

- There is a balance between larger events and relationship building groups
 - Build trusting relationships leading to a willingness for accountability
8. Discipleship
- Balanced strategies for mentoring and discipling men (process)
 - Helping men transfer biblical truth into personal application
9. Outreach
- Evangelizes men
 - Offers entry points that are non-threatening to unchurched men
 - Community and mission activities
10. Inclusion
- Men in the ministry are ethnically representative of the community at large
 - Provides separate opportunities for men at various stages of spiritual growth
 - Takes into account during planning such things as age, life-cycles, interests and needs
11. Variety
- Ministry with flexibility and variety
 - Multiple entry points for men of differing interests, needs and availability
12. Training
- Training and equipping seminars in focused areas of need
 - Developing men in Christian walk, life and ministry skills

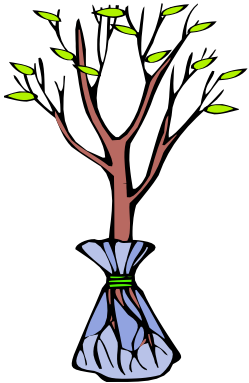
with thanks to the National Coalition of Men's Ministries

Our vision is for every man to become a bold, daring follower of Jesus Christ.

Our mission is, by God's grace, to help congregations build life-changing ministries with men; to strengthen men's faith in relationships for witness and service; to equip followers of Jesus Christ through events, resources and leadership development.

This ministry is about men encountering Jesus Christ and our churchwide expression assisting the local congregation in helping that to happen.

Steps to starting a Men's Ministry



This text is not about building a men's group. It is intended to assist you in developing an effective men's ministry.

In most cases, that will eventually mean a congregational men's ministry with small numbers of men involved in everything from building houses to softball to support groups and Bible study, and yes, the Saturday morning breakfast.

Small congregations can achieve the same results by partnering with other local congregations.

Foundation Blocks

for an effective men's ministry

1. **You.** Chances are you are reading this because you are a man who is concerned not only about your own spiritual life and growth, but also because you are concerned about the men in your congregation and community. You may not think of yourself as a leader, but if you have a desire to see God at work in men's lives, this text will assist you in creating opportunities where that can happen. A strong men's ministry will take time to grow and develop, and you will need support.
2. **Your pastor's support.** The pastor's support is critical to the development and success of your men's ministry. Talk to your pastor about two very important concerns:

Who are two to four other men who may be interested in being a part of your leadership team? Your team might include a visionary- a leader who sees the "big picture" with imagination and creativity; a stakeholder- a man who is an established leader in the congregation; and an activator- a leader who involves others.

Agree on what kind of support you might expect from your pastor. Will that support include the pastor's physical presence at some of your activities? Sunday morning announcements? Announcements in the newsletter and/or bulletin? The pastor personally inviting men to participate? Meeting with you regularly/occasionally? Making men's ministry a part of the congregational budget?

Ask the pastor what areas of the congregation's ministry are lacking a male presence and where she/he would like to see more men involved.

3. **Start meeting together as a leadership team.** In most congregations, an effective men's ministry will not be limited to one group, but will be comprised of a number of groups under the umbrella of men's ministry. Your leadership team will be the first small group in your men's ministry. In the first weeks and months, take the time to become a (model) group that would be an example of what you hope will happen for other men in your congregation and community.
4. **Develop a plan/strategy.** (We will go into greater detail on this later.)

Your Leadership Team

Commitment

Each member of the team should agree to make men's ministry- and this group- a high priority. Building men's ministry is going to take time and effort, and will require a high level of commitment from each individual.

Men's Events

Attending a synod or churchwide men's event can be a great source of learning and encouragement for a men's ministry leadership team that is just getting started and for all men in established ministries. Call the churchwide office of Lutheran Men in Mission/ELCA for a schedule of events (800) 638-3522.

Team Meetings

Your team should meet regularly for prayer, Bible study, support for each other and planning. If you come together only to plan, team members will miss out on the spiritual development and relationship building you will want to experience and model for others.

You might start with one of the courses in the Master Builders Bible for Men. "*Accountability: Beyond Football and the Weather*", and "*For Men Only: Issues Men Face*" are great courses to start with. The three-year lectionary readings on page 1737 could also be a helpful guide. (Many pastors and laymen have found that a small group study on the lectionary texts is helpful as they prepare for the sermon and listen to it.) You should plan to meet for 90-120 minutes each session, leaving the last third of the meeting for planning and reporting back.

Special Events

Set a date six to 12 months into the future for a special event for men. Many men's leaders find that fall retreats are a great starting event for men's ministry. Set the date early to secure the site. All your activities for the next several months should aim toward this event. See the retreat-planning checklist

For the purposes of our example, we will plan a retreat eight months from the date of the first leadership team meeting. Along with Bible study and prayer, here's what your team needs to do in the months ahead.

Building Relationships

A principal focus of your leadership team in the first few months will be to build relationships with the men in your congregation and community. As you do this, you will hear about the issues and concerns with which men in your congregation and community are dealing.

First, identify those areas in the congregation where men are already involved.

- Does your congregation have a men's sports team?
- Is the property committee comprised primarily (or only) of men?
- Is there a men's breakfast?
- Are there other pockets in your congregation where men are exclusively involved?

Let them know that you are grateful for their ministry. Also, let them know that without asking anymore of them at this time, you consider what they do to be a valuable part of the men's ministry of your congregation. Ask how you might support them. If they don't do it already, encourage them to have a devotional/prayer time before they start or after they finish their activity. Be sure to include them in anything you publish about men's ministry.

Second, ask your pastor and church staff what ministry areas in the congregation need a stronger male presence, then assist them by recruiting men for those areas of ministry.

- How many men are teaching Sunday school or relating to the youth?
- Does the choir need male voices?
- Where are there an unequal number of men and women in leadership and service positions?

At your first or second meeting, ask yourselves the question, "When I think of the men in my life, what would they say are the two or three most critical concerns in their life today." After each group member has had a chance to think about their answer, generate a list of the issues you agree on. Don't talk about what you are going to be doing about these concerns yet, that will come later.

Talk to men who on the "edges" of your congregation. Talk to the men who are not in the most active core of your congregation. Talk to the men whose wives attend church, but they don't.

Then talk to men outside of your congregation. Talk to men of all ages. Find ways to ask them about the question in the last paragraph. "What are the most critical concerns in your life?" Many

men will be pleased that the church is not asking them to do something, but actually asking about what they are experiencing, thinking and feeling.

Before the end of the conversation do not say, “You have mentioned these concerns/issues, how can we help you?” or “You should come to our group...” but rather “You have mentioned these concerns/issues, how could you see us (the men’s ministry) assisting you in addressing these issues?”

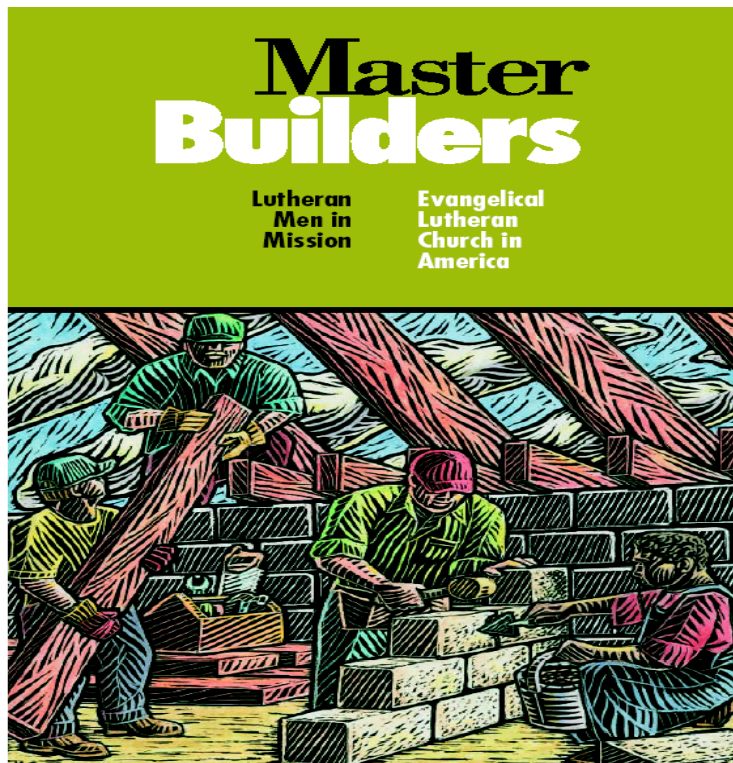
Take note of what he says, and be ready to act on it. Be prepared for the possibility that his response may not reflect a programmatic emphasis. And be ready to deliver on your questions and his answer. The responses you receive will be valuable opportunities to plan for men in the months to come.

Taking a survey

You may want to use the survey in this text, or an adaptation of it. Do not use the survey as a stand-alone piece, expecting a written response to be sent back to you. This is about building relationships. The survey is meant to be a guide to one-on-one conversation. It might also be used in a small group setting.

With the pastor’s permission, you might distribute the survey to selected men (not those most active) before or after worship. Let the men know that you are looking for their honest responses, that they are not committing to anything at this time, and that someone will be at the door to pick them up before they leave worship. When you collect them, ask if they would be willing to spend a few minutes informally over a cup of coffee to elaborate on their written comments.

You will use the responses of all of your conversations and surveys in developing a theme for your first event and the rest of the men’s ministry.



Men's Ministry Survey (SAMPLE)

Name _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____

1. Age: 18-24 25-29 30-39 40-49 50-64 65+

2. Single Married Divorced Number of Children _____

3. Which of these issues are most important to you? (Check the two most important)

<input type="checkbox"/> Family relationships	<input type="checkbox"/> Vocational Issues
<input type="checkbox"/> Male roles and identity	<input type="checkbox"/> Balancing family/work/other interests
<input type="checkbox"/> Health	<input type="checkbox"/> Retirement
<input type="checkbox"/> Reaching other men	<input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual Life
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	

4. When would be the best time to gather with one or more men to address these needs?

<input type="checkbox"/> Early morning	<input type="checkbox"/> Noon
<input type="checkbox"/> Evening	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekend

5. What length of time could or would you be willing to commit to deal with your answer to #3?

<input type="checkbox"/> One weekend	<input type="checkbox"/> Four to six weeks
<input type="checkbox"/> Six months	<input type="checkbox"/> One afternoon or morning
<input type="checkbox"/> Three months	<input type="checkbox"/> Indefinite

6. In one sentence or phrase, describe your greatest concern, question, need or issue in each of these areas of your life:

Spiritual _____

Intellectual _____

Emotional _____

Leisure/Recreational_____

Family/Relational_____

Ministry in Daily Life/Vocational_____

Other_____

7. What could the men's ministry do to assist you in addressing the issue(s) you listed above?

What's Your Purpose?

Does your congregation have a mission statement? If so, write it on a piece of newsprint.

Does your men's ministry have a mission statement? As you consider the mission of your men's ministry, you might consider these and other Scripture passages:

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. (Proverbs 27:17)

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Brothers, if someone is caught up in sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:1-2)

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-14)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

What words jump out at you from these and other verses you have read? List them on a piece of newsprint. What are some of the recurring issues/concerns you have heard as you have communicated with men in your congregation and community? Add them to your list.

As a leadership team use these words and phrases to talk about the mission of your men's ministry. Don't be afraid to take time to do this.

The purpose and mission is what will drive your ministry. A ministry without purpose will easily be driven by events. Why do you have a Saturday morning men's breakfast? An annual retreat? A softball team? We need to ask the question "Is the purpose of events to serve men, or is the purpose of men to serve our events?"

In using this text, we are attempting to build a biblical men's ministry around the issues and concerns (and with the input) of men. The focus is not to have events with a huge attendance, but to engage as many men as possible in ministries dealing with their interests and issues.

A primary purpose for any event you plan should be to provide a safe place for men to develop relationships with other men. Jesus called people into relationship. Sometimes that happened in his one on one and small group conversations, and sometimes the means was through events like the feeding of the 5,000.

Event Planning

When planning your men's ministry's first retreat (or any event), you will want to remember your mission statement and consider what you have learned about the issues men in your congregation and community are dealing with, and build your retreat program around those concerns. As you do this, you will determine if you want an outside speaker/leader.

Consider using courses in the *Master Builders Bible for Men*, and notice which ones match the issues you would like to deal with at the retreat. You might consider using three to six sessions (depending on the length of the retreat) from one of the courses in the Bible.

If you do this, you will want to get the men into groups of 4-6 that they would stay in for each session. You might have one man introduce and then summarize each session before and after you go into small groups.

Scheduling

Over-scheduling is often a temptation when planning men's retreats. Be sure to build in ample time for men to have fellowship, personal quiet time, and opportunity to exercise and enjoy the retreat surroundings. A retreat is an opportunity not so much see how much information can be imparted, but to create an experience where men's relationships to God and each other can grow.

An ideal retreat format is two days, starting with an evening and ending the afternoon of the second day (Friday evening to Sunday noon). This gives retreat participants time to relax and begin to develop a level of trust.

Often the second evening is a time of significant fellowship. However, a full two-day retreat, asking men to commit to an entire weekend is sometimes a "tough sell" the first time out. Many ministries find that a 24-hour retreat works well (Friday evening to Saturday evening).

The retreat is not an end in itself. It is an event that is either the start of your men's ministry or one that will bring it to the next level. Your leadership team can ensure that the wonderful experience will not end when the men go home.

Leadership

You have spent weeks, if not months, gathering information about the concerns and interests of men in your congregation and community. In preparing for the retreat, make sure that you have secured leaders for a variety of small groups and other ministry experiences. A rule of thumb might be no more than one leader for every five or six retreat attendees.

Before the end of the retreat, let the men know that the experience does not have to end at the event. Introduce the new small group leaders along with the issues/activities they will be addressing and encourage the men to commit to one of the new ministries before the retreat is over.

After the event

A worthy goal would be to have as many men as possible become a part of a small group Bible study. The small groups may also entertain the possibility of participating in other activities, such as those listed below.

Service projects and social/interest activities may be an easier “door” for some men to enter into your men’s ministry. In all you do, keep in mind what your ultimate purpose or mission is. These suggestions may or may not fit with your men; they are only listed as suggestions.

Once you have started two or more small groups, two or three large group events a year can serve to celebrate what is happening in your men’s ministry, create fellowship opportunities, and draw other men into your ministry.

Special Events

A men’s retreat can become an annual event to which the men of your congregation look forward. Some other ideas for special, large events are:

- A meal with a respected Christian athlete, businessman or leader sharing why his faith is important to him
- A seminar on “men’s issues”, such as money management, time management, fathering
- A barbecue
- A father-child dinner, bike trip, camp-out
- A couple’s group dinner with special speaker
- A Super Bowl party

At these events, take the opportunity to have each of the ministries share briefly what they have been doing and invite new men to become a part of them. Also, be ready with some new leaders to lead new groups for the new men who will be there.

Like the retreat plan described elsewhere in this section, give yourself plenty of time to plan the large group event so that you can have a quality program and ample time to promote it. Remember, there is no promotion that works as well as the personal contact.

Event Checklist

Checklists are very helpful when planning an event and tracking costs. Use this example to develop your own checklist for planning your event.

Name of Event _____

Purpose of the event _____

8 months before the event:

Person or group responsible _____

Estimated cost/budget _____

- Determine date and start/end times
- Select site*
- Determine program theme
- Develop budget
- Secure main speaker(s) (if desired)*
- Select musician(s)

* These may need to be done as much as 12 months in advance.

6 Months before the event:

Person or group responsible _____

Estimated cost/budget _____

- Determine registration fees, based on costs, expected attendance and grants
- Design and print brochure/registration
- Start announcing event in church newsletter
- Ask leaders of various congregational ministries/groups to promote event

4 Months before the event:

Person or group responsible _____

Estimated cost/budget _____

- Develop agenda (be sure to build in free time)

3 Months before the event:

Person/Group Responsible _____

Estimated Cost/Budget _____

- Select Registration chair and committee
- Order name badges

2 Months before the event:

Person/Group Responsible _____

Estimated Cost/Budget _____

- Conclude worship planning
- Confirm participation of appointed worship leaders
- Arrange for banners and/or paraments
- Secure copyright permissions
- Arrange for any necessary audio-visual equipment
- Announce event in newsletter/bulletins
- Write detailed agenda
- Develop evaluation form
- Coordinate program to call/invite every man in the congregation

1 Month before the event:

Person/Group Responsible _____

Estimated Cost/Budget _____

- Assign lodging
- Plan set-up for space, furnishings and equipment
- Send room list to lodging site, if necessary
- Prepare name badges
- Finalize arrangements for worship space and furnishings, such as altar, pulpit, paraments, communion ware, and offering plates or baskets
- Confirm arrangements with local group or committee responsible for hospitality

Service Projects

Church Property Ministry

Keeping the church property well kept and in good repair

Handyman Ministry

Find people in your congregation and community in need of basic home repair. (Check your congregation's insurance policy to make sure you are covered for this kind of activity)

Car Ministry

Receive cars that people are no longer using, restore them, and give them to people who need them (single mothers, students...) Some churches even have a special ceremony during which the keys are given to the recipient.

Set aside one Saturday a month to do oil changes, lube jobs, and car inspections for people who may not be able to afford it otherwise.

Garden Ministry

Teach people how to grow a garden on church property (or other property) and assist them in growing their own food.

Food Distribution Ministry

Start a community food bank at your church, or donate to one that already exists.

Habitat for Humanity Ministry

Assist in building a Habitat for Humanity house

Mission Builders

Assist in building church buildings

Mission Projects

International Mission Projects

Support Meals on Wheels

Volunteer to deliver meals for Meals on Wheels

Social/Interest Groups

Sports

Form an exercise group, summer softball, bowling, or basketball team. Play in a community league and host the opposition to an after-game bit to eat a couple of times a year

Organize a golf tournament or run/walk event and donate the proceeds to a special ministry

Group fishing trips, hiking or camping retreats, gourmet cooking, wood-working

Building a Life Changing Men's Ministry

When?	Who?	What?	Resource
Day 1-6 months	Team Leaders	Planning/Prayer	<i>Master Builders Bible for Men</i>
Months 1 - 6	Team Leaders	Bible Study/Prayer	<i>Master Builders Bible for Men</i>
Months 2 - 4	Team Leaders	Interviewing/Surveying	Men's Ministry survey
Months 2 - 4	Team Leaders	1) Assessing where men are already involved 2) Recruiting pastoral event leaders	
Months 1 - 6	Retreat/Team Leaders	Retreat/Event Planning	Event checklist
Months 3 - 6	Team Leaders	Invitation to event Phone calls to all men	Brochures, Church newsletter bulletin, Church directory
Months 3 - 6	Team Leaders	Recruit Post-event small group leaders	
Months 6-8	Team/Retreat Leaders	Retreat or other events	Event checklist
Post-Event	Small Group Leaders	Small groups after event: •Bible studies •Support Groups •Service Groups •Social/Interest Groups	<i>Master Builders Bible for Men</i>

Women gather,

free to chat of impotent husbands and not quite forgotten lovers,

Sharing dreams with old or new friends and confiding desperation,

*Baring souls and unburdening hearts,
Then leave relaxed and laughing,*

*Promising to lunch again soon,
Freed from the pain of no one knowing.*

Men gather,

*free to boast of the money they have made - or will make soon -
or the women,*

*Displaying how strong and controlled they are and unafraid
of competition,*

Sharing triumphs and hiding themselves,

Then leave with a handshake and "See you around,"

Bleeding silently within themselves,

Bearing the pain of no one knowing...

-James Kavanaugh

Effective

Small Group Ministry for Men

By Paul Lutz

Edited by Doug Hagen

Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. (Acts: 46-47a NRSV)

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:7 NRSV)

And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

And what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well. (2 Timothy 2:2)

What Makes a Great Men's Small Group? *

Small groups are a key part of how your men's ministry will help men become joyful followers of Christ. These groups are a great place to grow spiritually, develop relationships, and deepen friendships. In a culture where most men are busier than ever and often living somewhat independent lives, small groups provide the community and accountability that we all need to live life to the fullest.

What is a small group?

A small group is an intentional gathering of a small number of people who commit themselves to regular meetings for the purpose of becoming better disciples of Jesus Christ.

Why Small Groups for Men?

They:

- Are biblical
- Help us learn and practice Christian principles
- Help us build relationships
- Provide support
- Provide a forum to pray for one another
- Provide an opportunity for accountability
- Form discipleship
- Provide occasions for witnessing
- Offer opportunities for service within and outside the group

* Adopted from *Starting Small Groups and Keeping Them*

How to Begin

- Always make the first session invitational, with each individual being free not to continue
- Make a personal invitation to every man.
- Limit the group to six or seven, or break larger groups into groups of 4 for each session.
- Meet for a specific periods of time in a comfortable place
- Don't assign homework.
- Allow men to discover the message of the Bible for themselves.
- Don't ask men to do something for which they are unprepared.
- As the leader, be the first to respond to a question – modeling for the other participants.

How to have a great small group gathering

Build three parts into every gathering (in the *Master Builders Bible for Men*, these three parts are identified by the cup, book and heart):

- being (life sharing, caring)
- conversational prayer
- learning (Bible application)

Three basic types of small groups (and examples of each)

- Support and Recovery (Parenting, Aging, Life Transitions, Divorce Recovery, Loss and Grief)
- Discipleship (How to Pray, How to Study the Bible, Social Justice Issues, Basic Christian Beliefs)
- Ministry (Helping the Homeless, Prison Ministry, Ministry to AIDS Patients, Sunday School Teachers, Choir)

Four Elements of small groups

1. Bible Study
2. Prayer
3. Group Ministry Task
4. Mutual Support

The amount of time given to each element will be determined by the purpose of your group.

Ten Benefits *of Small Groups*



1. Lives are changed
2. Application of the Bible to daily life
3. Sharing of faith stories
4. Effective one-to-one Christian care
5. Encouragement and learning
6. Opportunity for service
7. Friendship evangelism
8. Nurturing of new members
9. Spiritual growth with accountability
10. Development of strong leadership



Possible Schedule for Men's Small Group Gatherings (60 to 90 minute meeting):

When using the Master Builders Bible for Men:

1. First (cup) section: 10 minutes
2. Second (book) section: 40 minutes
3. Third (heart) section: 30 minutes
4. Gather prayer requests and pray for each other: 10 minutes

Other small groups:

1. Opening: 5-10 minutes
Icebreaker Activity
2. Prayer: 2-5 minutes
3. Biblical Reflections: 10-15 minutes
4. Group focus: 30-35 minutes
Support and recovery or
Discipleship or
Ministry Task
5. Conversational prayer: 5-10 minutes
6. Closing: 3-5 minutes
The Lord's Prayer
Singing (if desired)

Tips for Leading Small Groups

- Begin with icebreaker. (Each study in the *Master Builders Bible for Men* starts with an opportunity to say something about himself.)
- Encourage large groups to break into groups of 3 or 4
- Help participants focus on "I" statements
- Be a role model in terms of honesty and affirmation
- Take the lead in responding to questions
- Make certain everyone who wants to, is able to participate
- Don't be an expert; good leaders are good learners

Group Covenant

The steps this group is willing to take for the growth of its members.

Sample Covenant (complete the statements)

1. The purpose of our group is _____

2. We will be studying _____

3. The materials we will use are _____

4. Our leader will be _____

Or our leadership will be shared by _____

5. We will meet every _____ week for a period of _____ weeks

6. We will meet on _____ (day of the week), beginning at _____ and ending by _____

7. Our meeting will take place at _____

8. Our agreed order of the meeting will be _____

9. At the end of our time together, we will make a decision as a group whether or not to continue. At that time, any individual will be free to leave the group for any reason.

Group Ground Rules

- Everything discussed is confidential
- We will use “I” statements when speaking (We will talk about ourselves when speaking, not others)
- We will listen and support, but offer no advice
- Each person’s opinion will be respected
- We will pray for each other
- We will attend each meeting

Prayer in Small Groups

Some methods to use:

- Prayers that are read
- The facilitator’s prayers
- Silent prayer
- Written prayers
- Circle prayers
- Prayer requests
- Popcorn prayer
- Sentence prayer
- Spontaneous prayer
- Prayer journal
- Conversation prayer
- Intercessory prayer

Practical tips for Small Groups

- create a comfortable relaxed atmosphere
- start and end on time
- focus on relationships
- don’t get into too much routine, yet be consistent
- if at all possible, sing together
- incorporate an attitude of outreach and ministry
- don’t lecture or give long readings
- major in life stories and faith stories
- learn to be comfortable with silence

Small Group Roles

Members - those who agree upon purpose for gathering and commit themselves to accomplish that purpose.

Facilitator - an individual responsible for helping members identify their purpose for meeting and to guide members toward accomplishing the agreed upon goals. The facilitator ensures that everyone who wants to has a chance to participate while keeping the group on track to reach its goal and on time. The facilitator reviews, set goals, plans, prays, guides, debriefs, and follows up. When using the *Master Builders Bible for Men* and some other resources, a different person may assume this role in each session.

Host - an individual who shares the gift of hospitality. The host may offer his home as a meeting location or provide for the comfort of group members at another location.

Empty chair - a reminder that Christ is with us and as a reminder of our purpose to reach out. When the time comes for this group to end, we may start new groups for new men.

Resources

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Not Just an Average Joe...

Joe faithfully attended church with his wife on Easter, Mother's Day and Christmas. Although his wife and children attended every Sunday, Joe failed to see how what the pastor was talking about on Sunday had much to do with his life during the week. Besides, most of the guys Joe knew who attended church were good guys- guys who did not seem to have the same questions and struggles he had.

Life was all right, but it was not what Joe had imagined it might be at this stage of his life. He wondered if he was a good enough husband and father, and often assumed he was not. The messages he was getting at work assured him that he was not measuring up. Joe had been in his job in middle management about ten years. If there ever was any joy in it, it was long gone. He was being paid for 40 hours a week, but usually worked fifty or more.

Joe remembered the friends he had as a kid, friends that he played with, laughed with, and told his deepest secrets to. Most of his friends today were "work" friends, guys he knew only because they worked together. But they knew only a piece of Joe, and not the whole piece at that.

He once heard someone ask, "If you died today, who would your pallbearers be?" It was a sobering thought as Joe could not think of six friends.

Joe's family Christmas letters were filled with accounts of as many activities as could be crowded on a calendar. Why then was there this gnawing feeling that there should be more to life?

Joe loved sports so he did join his wife's church's softball team. He enjoyed playing first base and pizza with the guys after the game. It was nice to see some familiar faces in that strange place the two or three times a year he attended worship services.

He saw something about a men's retreat in a newsletter mailed to his wife, but figured it was not for him. It was for churchmen - good guys. But after the last softball game of the season, John and some of the other guys on the team invited him to come to the retreat with them. He finally agreed to go because saying yes was less awkward than saying no.

In the days and weeks that followed, he cringed every time he thought about going the retreat. He didn't know what to expect. He thought about finding an excuse not to go, but he had said yes, and the guys would be coming to pick him up.

Joe had not been in a place with only men since he was a kid. The speaker and music were fine, but it was really the time spent with other guys that made an impression on Joe. These men were dealing with some of the same doubts and questions with which Joe was dealing. They were good guys, but not perfect guys. They were men who knew they were not alone; together they were on a journey with Christ. Joe saw these men in a new light and wanted what he saw in them for himself. Before he left the retreat, he became a part of a small group Bible study that was going to focus on vocational issues.

That was six months ago. Joe's wife and kids are beginning to see a new Joe. With the encouragement of other men, he began to accept himself because he knows that God has accepted him first. His new friends have given him helpful support in his challenges at work and encouragement as a family man.

Joe is still not perfect. Joe still has questions. He still has doubts. He still has secrets, although less of them. But he also has six guys, Christian brothers in a small group, who accept him and encourage him to be all that God has designed him to be: not just an average Joe, but one who is living in God's grace, "freed from the pain of no one knowing".