



# **Small Group Leader Training Guide**

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## **Video 1: The Role Of A Small Group Leader**

### **The primary role of a small group leader is to make disciples**

- Matthew 28:19-20
  - While re|engage is a marriage ministry, it is *really* a discipleship ministry
  - Our greatest need is a relationship with Christ
  - You are not providing marital therapy
  - You are not running a support group
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### **Expectations for re|engage leaders**

- Shepherd the group (Proverbs 27:23)
  - Point your group to Christ
  - Tend to your own walk with Christ
  - Do the work with your spouse (active participants vs. passive gurus)
  - Clarify the Gospel with each group member at some point (*Scripture About Salvation* in the appendix might be helpful)
  - Have consistent attendance
  - Have an ownership mentality – this is your ministry!
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### **Unhealthy reasons for serving**

- Want to be noticed
  - Desire to be needed
  - Struggling in your own marriage
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### **Wrap-up**

- re|engage is not fundamentally about couples having a better marriage
- It is about couples following Christ and, as a result, their marriage will improve
- It is not about you but about God! (Romans 1:9, 2 Timothy 1:3)

## **Video 2: Ten Characteristics Of Great Leaders**

### **1. Relational and Warm**

- You've got to like people
  - Have a host mentality
  - Show genuine interest in meeting the needs of others
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### **2. Vibrant spiritual life and know and apply God's Word**

- Minister from an overflow of time with God
  - Model a relationship with Christ
  - Correctly use scripture and show couples how to apply it
  - Use the Gospel and example of Christ to explain or call to action
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### **3. Humble**

- Humility draws others in
  - Colossians 3:12
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### **4. Available**

- Not just a weekly class
  - Touch points throughout the week (e.g. calls, text, email, coffee, meal)
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### **5. Able to balance Truth and Grace**

- Ephesians 4:15
  - Think of it like a velvet-covered brick
  - Both truth teller and encourager
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## 6. Good listeners

- 80% listening, 20% talking
- Resist the urge to be profound

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## 7. Have a marriage worth imitating and are authentic about their struggles

- Share the full picture of your marriage
- Show how you move through struggles
- Vulnerability breeds connectedness
- 1 Corinthians 11:1

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## 8. Can manage a group well

- Facilitate conversation, keep the pace moving
- Stay in control of the group
- Awareness of group dynamics

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## 9. Initiate rather than respond

- Take action
- God will use your initiative to bring about change

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## 10. Catalyst for change

- Partnering with God to bring about life change

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## Wrap-up

- God is using you, His people, to do His work!

## **Video 3: Nine Characteristics Of A Great Group**

### **1. Reliance on God's word more than personal opinions**

- Scripture drives conversations / counsel given to couples
  - Hebrews 4:12
  - Couples bring their Bibles
  - Use *Shepherding Verses* in the appendix
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### **2. Safe**

- Warm nurturing place
  - No gossip
  - Nothing shared outside the group except for physical, emotional or spiritual injury
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### **3. Authentic**

- Atmosphere of openness
  - Starts with the leader
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### **4. Everyone gets to share**

- Success is couples talking about their marriage
  - The group itself cares that everyone gets to share
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### **5. People focus on themselves**

- Spouses are not blaming each other
  - Physical reminders might help
  - Be encouraged by "in my circle" language!
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## 6. Encouraging

- The group builds each other up
  - Hebrews 10:25
  - Occurs outside group also
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## 7. Genuine care for each other

- Couples initiate contact with one another
  - Fellowship takes place in between the meetings
  - Friendships build
  - They are praying for each other
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## 8. Conflicts within the group are resolved

- You WILL have conflict
  - Great opportunity for both couples and the group to grow
  - Check out the *Conflict Field Guide* at [MarriageHelp.org/Conflict](http://MarriageHelp.org/Conflict)
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## 9. Everyone is engaged and working hard

- Couples are doing the lessons, even if they miss group time
  - Couples are taking ownership of the group with things like housekeeping tasks
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## Wrap-up

- Don't forget to have fun
- Create an environment where truth can take root and life change can happen!

## **Video 4: How To Plan The Evening In Your Group**

### **Prepare ahead of time with your spouse**

- Do your lesson
- Discuss who will lead each part of the evening
- Identify the key questions to cover
- Pray for the group, by name
- Prior to the first week, contact your couples

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### **First night**

- Likely to be awkward
- Have each person introduce themselves
- Ice-breaker questions can be fun and useful to foster positive conversations
- Remind them you are facilitators whose role is to help the group stay focused
- Read the *Small Group Ground Rules* from the appendix
- Pass out workbooks and review the lesson format
- Note the link in each lesson to online resources
- If time allows, discuss take-aways from Large Group

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# Small Group Leader Training Guide

## Subsequent nights

- Read the room
- Be flexible with your plan
- Open in prayer, perhaps with a focus on today's lesson topic
- Follow-up from last week with any open items
- Ask about take-aways from Large Group
- Solicit observations or epiphanies about the lesson, but don't teach the lesson
- Cover the most important lesson questions, but don't go around the circle
- Build in time for prayer requests
- Allow uncomfortable silences
- No more than one conversation at a time

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## What if the leader couple cannot make it to group one week?

- Look for a strong couple in the group that could lead one week
- Substitute leaders are not a best practice
- If no one is capable of leading, the group comes to Large Group then goes out
- If one leader spouse can make it, proceed like a normal week

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## What if only half the group (or less) can attend a given night?

- Groups with struggling couples should meet, and re-cover the lesson next week
- Keep the couples moving forward through the lessons

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## Wrap-up

- The outcome of your group is not dependent upon you!
- Deuteronomy 31:8
- Trust Him

## **Video 5: Group Culture**

### **Have individuals speak for themselves primarily**

- Primarily have a tone of working on themselves
- Questions to ask might be:
  - “What is your part?”
  - “What could you have done differently?”
  - “What did you contribute?”
  - “What do you need to ask forgiveness for?”
- Write the questions in your book if it helps
- You won't be perfect!

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### **Manage “Cross talk”**

- Cross-talk: speaking into the issue of someone else
- Early on, either limit or eliminate cross talk to help people focus on themselves
- As the group matures you can relax the rules

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### **Don't assume any previous Bible knowledge**

- Avoid churchy language
- If someone says something churchy, have it clarified
- If necessary, take extra time during group to help individuals find a passage

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### **Not all participants necessarily attend your church**

- Avoid words / phrases culturally bound to your church

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## **Don't take sides between two spouses**

- Proverbs 18:17
  - Make sure to hear both stories before discussing the situation
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## **Affirm people for sharing**

- When they share, thank them for sharing
  - Don't act shocked, or immediately start giving advice, or they will stop sharing
  - Always assume there is more to the story, especially early in the group
  - Use open-ended questions like "What other factors played into that situation?"
  - Follow-up outside of group with more questions, if appropriate
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## **Be prepared for something very sensitive to be shared**

- Either a crisis, or something that they have never shared with anyone before
  - After someone shares could be the most important 30 seconds of their life
  - Thank them for sharing and then ask how you can help
  - If they are emotionally distraught and lacking direction you can help them by:
    - Reminding them of God's love for them
    - Reminding them that the group cares for them
    - Helping them think through the next 24 hours
  - Pray for them that night, with the group
  - Follow up within 24 hours
  - Review *What To Do When Crisis Hits* in the appendix
  - Review *When An Individual Talks About Suicide* in the appendix
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## Ask good follow up questions

- Proverbs 20:5
  - Should always be open-ended, such as
    - “What does that look like in your own marriage?”
    - “What do you think your spouse would say about the issue?”
    - “What does God’s Word say about that?”
    - “What do you think God wants you to do?”
    - “Where do you think God was in that?”
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## Create Community

- Goal is to create a sense of biblical community
  - Hebrews 10:24-25
  - Move the group towards community, but do not force it; be patient
  - Plan group time outside the weekly meeting
    - A dinner and game night, informal coffees, dessert night, picnics, etc.
  - Plan one-on-one time with spouses (guys with guys, gals with gals)
    - Phone calls, coffee, lunch, breakfast, etc.
  - Group emails and texts also keep folks engaged (see *Email Sample* in appendix)
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## Lack of commitment must be addressed

- For example, not doing homework, or not attending, or disengaged during group
  - Address outside group
  - Assume the best about the person
  - Remind them they are cheating themselves, their spouse, and the group
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## Wrap-up

- You are part of God’s “Plan A” in the lives of the people in your group!
- Constantly try to improve your ability to shepherd your group

## **Video 6: Seven Challenging Behaviors in the Group**

### **1. The excessive talker**

- Symptom: Tends to dominate the group by talking too much
  - Stay in control of your group: your group is looking to you for leadership
  - Thank them for sharing; remind them that the group needs to hear from everyone
  - Example: "You have added a lot tonight. Let's make sure we hear from everyone."
  - Be very direct
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### **Always address these behaviors in a Christ-like manner**

- If the issues are not severe:
    - Make a general statement to the group at the start of next week's group
    - Lets the group know that you were aware of the issue and are addressing it
  - If the issues are significant:
    - Address privately outside of group
    - Affirm them
    - Ask for their help and permission to address them if their conduct re-occurs
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### **2. The rambler**

- Symptom: Talks in circles or cannot keep their comments brief
  - Don't be afraid to cut a Rambler off – you can cut them off without shaming them
    - Stop them
    - Paraphrase what you think they are saying ("What I heard you say was...")
    - Address that issue
  - If the problem persists, ask them to think through some of their answers ahead of time and how they could answer succinctly.
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### 3. The mute

- Symptom: Does not speak in the group, and often appears deathly afraid to do so
  - Address this outside of group to see if there is a reason they might not be sharing
  - Ask them if it would be OK for them to start the group time next week with one of the questions they feel comfortable answering
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### 4. The spouse interrupter

- Symptom: Shares their side of the story while the spouse is sharing
  - Ask them to let their spouse finish.
  - If it is a pattern then you want to address it
  - Watch for non-verbal interruptions also
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### 5. The surface level talker

- Symptom: Talks a lot but won't actually reveal much
  - Guide them to be more specific, asking follow up questions such as:
    - "Why do you think or feel that way?"
    - "What are the real issues?"
  - If someone says something like "I struggle with anger", a great follow-up question is:
    - "What does that look like in your marriage?"
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### 6. The "Me Too" member

- Symptom: Frequently follows the comments of another person by saying "Me Too!"
  - People typically do this for one of two reasons:
    - Prideful response to bring attention to themselves
    - Another way to not reveal much about themselves
  - Identifying with someone is helpful occasionally but reveals a focus on self if it happens continually
  - if you see someone nodding or agreeing, ask them "I'd love to hear your thoughts"
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### 7. The Venter

- Symptom: Shares in an angry tone or becomes angry
  - Hurting people say hurtful things
  - As they share stop them
    - Help them de-escalate by talking in a quiet/calm tone
  - In extreme cases, take the Venter outside of group to help them calm down
    - Remind them of a verse like Proverbs 15:1
    - Remind them it is best for themselves and also easier for their spouse to receive if they are not angry
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### Wrap-up

- Couples might shut down when these things are not addressed; this matters
- Help the group see that each individual plays a part in the health of the group

## **Video 7: Pastoral Wisdom**

### **You are part of a royal priesthood**

- 1 Peter 2:9
  - You have a responsibility to shepherd those in your care
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### **Be available but not overly so**

- You cannot sacrifice yourself, your marriage or your family to care for others
  - Being overly available may not be good for the couple
    - They can start to see you as the answer to their problems, not Christ
    - Sometimes praying with them and seeing them next week will force them to work on the issues themselves
  - If a crisis hits, a meeting outside of the regular time can be:
    - Incredibly helpful for the couple
    - A great way to disciple the rest of the group by not consuming group time
    - Uncomfortable, so lean hard on Christ for patience and wisdom
  - Outside meetings can be on your schedule
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### **The role of Scripture**

- 2 Timothy 3:16
  - Anchor answers and advice in scripture
  - It's OK to say "I don't know" and come back next week with relevant passages
  - Ask individuals which Scriptures informed their comments
  - Give the group an assignment to look up passages related to a given issue
  - See *Shepherding Verses* in the appendix
  - June Hunt's *Counseling Through Your Bible Handbook* is very helpful
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## Your own marriage

- Do the homework yourselves each week
  - Continue investing in your own marriage
  - Share the successes and failures of your marriage with the group
  - Consider sharing your testimony early on
    - Use the *Life Maps* or *Speaking at re|engage* formats in the appendix
  - Modeling healthy interactions between a husband and wife
  - Maintain a high level of engagement; this sets the tone of the group
  - No one should dominate and no one should be checked out
  - Debrief your performance as a team
  - If you are struggling in your own marriage, let leadership know
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## Opposite Sex relationships

- Never counsel someone alone of the opposite sex, in any medium
  - Be alert for any connections between group members of the opposite sex
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## When you should involve re|engage leadership

- You are trusted, so filling in leadership with every detail of your group is unnecessary
  - 2 Peter 1:3
  - The goal is to help you succeed and grow as a leader
  - Feel free to ask for help on a situation at any point
  - If possible, avoid waiting until an issue blows up before contacting leadership
  - You have not failed if you need to contact leadership!
  - Inform leadership when there has been:
    - Physical abuse, separation, outbursts of anger, threats of suicide, unresolved conflict in the group
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## Wrap-up

- John 15:5
- Your dependence on God is your greatest asset!

## **Video 8: Pastoral Care Frameworks**

### **The purpose of frameworks**

- Impossible to equip you for all situations
  - Frameworks provide you a grid through which to process a situation
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### **The 4 C's**

- Or, the 4 Characteristics Of Couples That Get Well
  - There are 4 things common to couples who see healing in their marriage
  - Use this framework to determine where a couple needs improvement
  - These 4 characteristics are not actions but they are decisions that will lead to action
  - **#1: Christ**
    - They experience a new vitality in their walk with Christ
    - John 15 – Abide in the Lord
    - 1 Corinthians 10:31 – Do everything for the glory of God
  - **#2: Circle**
    - Drawing a circle around yourself and working on everything in the circle
    - They see themselves (not their spouse) as their biggest marriage problem
    - Matthew 7:3-5 – Get the log out of your own eye
  - **#3: Commitment**
    - They ruthlessly commit to their marriage
    - All doors of escape are closed and locked
    - Matthew 19:6 – It is God who joins together
  - **#4: Community**
    - They have an active community around them and are fully known by others
    - They are connected to others in relationship, not isolated.
    - Hebrews 10:24 – Spur one another on toward love and good deeds
    - Life change happens best in the context of community
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## The 5:14 Principle

- This is an application of 1 Thessalonians 5:14, which says "And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all."
  - Use this framework to know how best to speak with a couple
  - This verse is talking about 4 different people, and how you should relate to them
  - **The Idle**
    - Sometimes translated "lazy" or "unruly"
    - They know the truth but refuse to follow it
    - They need an admonition or truth spoken clearly and boldly
  - **The Fainthearted**
    - Sometimes translated "timid"
    - They know what to do and are actually doing it
    - They need your encouragement to keep going
  - **The Weak**
    - Sometimes translated "immature"
    - This is often a new or struggling believer
    - They need you to spend time with them and help build their understanding
  - **Be Patient With All**
    - Don't fret if a couple is not moving forward
    - God is the one who will change their heart
    - There are periods of time when it is appropriate to put in extra effort to help a couple; if it becomes the norm then reassess your approach
    - Grace + Truth + Time = Change
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## Wrap-up

- 2 Timothy 2:15 – Approved Worker
- Philippians 2:13 – if a person has the desire to change, that came from God, and if a person has the ability and does change that came from God also
- 1 Corinthians 3:6 – our job is to plant and water, growth is God's job
- When things don't go well, remember that faithfulness is your job and change is God's
- When things go well, stay humble and remember that you simply watered and planted but God brought the growth!

# APPENDIX

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## **Small Group Ground Rules**

The following characteristics will contribute to a safe and successful re|engage small group experience for couples.

1. Successful small groups have a balance of each person getting to contribute and share without any one person or couple dominating the group's time and attention. So, don't talk too little and don't talk too much.
2. Avoid the temptation to try to fix one another. Safe and successful small groups are characterized by support rather than advice-giving. Trying to "fix" someone else is usually a sign that we don't want to deal with our own stuff.
3. Even though you are at re|engage as a couple, focus on your own individual thoughts and feelings as you share with the group. Please don't use your sharing as an opportunity to harm someone else.
4. Scripture calls us to refrain from gossip. Please operate under the direction of God's Word in the handling of information shared within the group. In order to provide a safe environment for your group, you must commit not to share information about one another outside the group except in the event of the threat of physical, emotional, or spiritual injury and then only under the guidance of a re|engage leader.
5. In re|engage, each person should be allowed to share without interruptions. However, like most other successful conversations, others are free to contribute with comments or observations only to the extent that it is helpful for the person or couple that is sharing.

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## **Workbook Lessons Outline**

### **RECOGNIZE your inability to love.**

#### **1. Love**

Main idea: God's standard of love is the way He loves. 1 Cor. 13:4-7 defines love biblically. You cannot meet this standard.

#### **2. Brokenness**

Main idea: Your marriage is broken because it is made up of two broken people. You fall short of God's standard.

### **EMBRACE humility.**

#### **3. Grace**

Main idea: You are in need of God's grace.

#### **4. Humility**

Main idea: Follow the example of Christ until you love yourself less than you love your spouse. You cannot be a godly spouse if you are focusing on yourself.

### **EXTEND grace and forgiveness.**

#### **5. Forgiveness**

Main idea: You have been forgiven everything by God's grace; therefore, you are able to forgive your spouse.

#### **6. Forgiveness in Action**

Main idea: Forgiveness in action is a practical guide to ask for and extend forgiveness.

### **NURTURE truth.**

#### **7. Commitment**

Main idea: God's covenantal love provides an example of the way you are to love your spouse. Marriage is a commitment, not a contract.

#### **8. Truth**

Main idea: You are tempted every day to believe the lies all around you regarding your marriage. You need to identify the lies you are choosing to believe and replace those lies with biblical truth.



## **GIVE yourself away.**

### **9. Communication**

Main idea: The goal of communication is mutual understanding. You have negative communication patterns that you need to identify and change.

### **10. Conflict**

Main idea: Conflict in marriage is normal and a great opportunity to glorify God, grow yourself and grow your spouse. Handling conflict biblically is a great path to oneness.

## **ADORE and respect.**

### **11. Expectations**

Main idea: You have many expectations about your spouse and your marriage that, if unmet and handled incorrectly, will lead to disappointment and anger. You need to be able to articulate and deal with unmet expectations and realize that God is your only true hope.

### **12. Understand**

Main idea: God calls you to live with your spouse in “an understanding way.” This means you will need to become a student of your spouse so that you can best love and celebrate them. Your relationship with your spouse is also tied to your relationship with God.

## **GROW in intimacy.**

### **13. Emotional Intimacy**

Main idea: Intimacy is to “fully know and be known, without the fear of rejection.” Being fully known and accepted by God allows you to be authentic with your spouse.

### **14. Sexual Intimacy**

Main idea: Sex is God’s gift in marriage to experience a unique physical expression of oneness and intimacy.

## **EMBRACE oneness.**

### **15. Completion**

Main idea: Part of God’s design in marriage is to use your spouse to conform you into His image. You need to allow your spouse to partner with you in spiritual growth.

### **16. Diligence**

Main idea: This is a way to live, not a program that you go through. You don’t graduate from this. Success in marriage is not just avoiding divorce, but always moving toward oneness. You will have to fight for everything you have learned.

## **Shepherding Verses**

### **ABORTION**

Exodus 1:17, 20-21  
Deuteronomy 5:17  
2 Samuel 12:23  
Psalm 127:3  
Psalm 113:9  
Psalm 139:13-16  
Isaiah 40:31  
Matthew 6:33

### **AFFECTION NEEDS**

God loves you.  
Psalm 63:3; 86:13; 100:5  
Psalm 145:8-9  
John 3:16  
Romans 5:8; 8:38-39  
I John 3:1; 4:7-10  
I John 4:16, 18-19

### **ALCOHOL**

Proverbs 28:13; 29:25  
I John 1:8-9  
Jeremiah 2:19  
John 4:10; 8:36  
Acts 1:8  
Galatians 5:1, 22-23  
Philippians 3:12-14  
Psalm 103:12  
Isaiah 40:31  
Romans 8:31-37

### **ANGER**

Hostility  
Psalm 103  
Ephesians 1:13-14

### **ANXIETY**

Psalm 121  
Acts 27  
I Peter 5:7  
Matthew 6:24-34  
Philippians 4:6

### **BACKSLIDING**

Isaiah 55:7

Hosea 14:4  
Revelation 2:4-5  
I John 1:9  
Hebrews 7:25  
John 3:17  
I Corinthians 3:3  
Proverbs 14:14

### **BITTERNESS**

Hebrews 12:14-15  
Ephesians 4:31-32  
I Peter 2:23  
Matthew 6:14-15  
Romans 12:14-21

### **CHILD ABUSE**

I Corinthians 9:25-27  
Philippians 4:4-9, 13  
Hebrews 1:14  
Romans 12:2  
James 4:7  
Romans 6

### **CULTS**

Psalm 119:104  
Mark 13:21-23  
2 Corinthians 11:13-15

### **COVETING**

Exodus 20:17  
I Corinthians 12:31; 14:39

### **DEATH**

John 14:1-3  
I Corinthians 13:12  
John 11:25  
Philippians 1:21  
I Kings 14:1, 13  
2 Samuel 12:22-23

### **DEPRESSION**

Psalm 27  
Psalm 40:1-3  
Psalm 121  
Acts 27  
Ephesians 1:13-14

### **DISCIPLINE OF CHILDREN**

Deuteronomy 6:5-7  
Proverbs 22:6; 19:18;  
13:24; 22:15  
Ephesians 6:4  
I Timothy 3:4  
Titus 2:4

### **DISCIPLINE**

2 Corinthians 12:7-10  
Hebrews 12:5-11

### **DIVORCE**

Malachi 2:16  
Matthew 19:1-11  
Matthew 5:31-32  
I Corinthians 7:10-16  
I John 1:9

### **DRUGS**

I Corinthians 6:12  
Ephesians 5:18  
Luke 4:18-21, 36  
Colossians 2:15  
I John 3:8  
Galatians 5:1, 13

### **ENDURANCE**

Psalm 40:1-3  
John 11  
Acts 27  
2 Corinthians 12:7-10  
Hebrews 12:5-11

### **ENEMIES**

Exodus 23:4-5  
Proverbs 24:17-18  
Luke 6:27-37  
Romans 12:14, 19-21

### **ENVY-JEALOUSY**

Proverbs 14:30  
I Corinthians 3:3  
Galatians 5:19-21  
James 3:14-16

**FEAR**

Philippians 4:4-9  
Psalm 103  
Psalm 121  
Acts 27

**FORGIVENESS**

Psalm 32; 103  
I John 1:9  
I Peter 1:18-19  
I Peter 2:24  
Hebrews 9:22

**FINANCES**

Matthew 6:33  
Malachi 3:8-10  
Philippians 4:18-19

**GOSSIP**

2 Corinthians 12:20  
Leviticus 19:16  
I Timothy 5:13  
Luke 3  
James 4:11-12  
Matthew 18:15

**GOD'S LOVE & ACCEPTANCE**

Psalm 27  
Psalm 103  
Luke 15  
Acts 27

**GUILT**

Psalm 32  
Psalm 103  
Luke 15

**HOMOSEXUALITY**

Leviticus 20:13  
I Corinthians 6:9  
I Timothy 1:10  
Romans 1:21, 26-27  
Romans 6:11-14, 22

**HOPELESSNESS & DESPAIR**

Psalm 27  
Psalm 40:1-3  
Psalm 103  
Psalm 121  
John 11  
Acts 27

**HOPE**

Psalm 27  
Psalm 40:1-3  
Psalm 119  
Psalm 121  
Acts 27

**HUMILITY**

John 13:1-17  
Ephesians 5:15-21

**JUDGMENTAL**

Matthew 7:1-2  
John 8:7  
Mark 11:24-25  
Luke 6:41  
Romans 14:4  
Ephesians 6:1

**LONELINESS**

Psalm 121  
Luke 15  
John 11  
Acts 27  
Ephesians 1:13-14

**TEMPTATION**

I Corinthians 10:13  
James 1:2-3, 12  
Romans 8:28  
I Thessalonians 5:18

**MARRIAGE**

Restoring Lost Love:  
Revelation 2:1-16

Husbands:  
Ephesians 5:15-6:20

I Peter 3:7-9

Wives  
Ephesians 5:15-6:20  
I Peter 3:1-6

**MENTAL ILLNESS**

2 Timothy 1:7  
Isaiah 26:3  
Philippians 4:8  
Luke 4:18-19  
Romans 12:2

**OCCULT**

Exodus 22:18  
Leviticus 19:31  
Leviticus 20:6, 27  
Deuteronomy 18:10-12  
2 Kings 21:6  
2 Chronicles 33:6  
Isaiah 47:9, 13-15  
Acts 19:17-20

**PEACE**

Psalm 40:1-3  
Psalm 119  
Psalm 121  
John 11

**SELF-IMAGE**

Luke 15  
Ephesians 1:13-14

**SUICIDE**

Psalm 8, 40  
Psalm 42, 43  
John 10:10  
Romans 15:4  
Philippians 4:6-8  
Psalm 73  
Philippians 4:19  
Matthew 6:25-33  
Hebrews 7:25

### **Email Sample: Connecting your Group**

**The following emails are samples of how re|engage leaders David and Denise Renken reach out to their group each week.**

#### **Email #1**

Lesson 15 - While I was reading in Hebrews this morning my thoughts went to our Re|Engage group.

Hebrews 12:1 ... Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

With so many metaphors on racing I wonder if Paul had been a track star of this era? Be that as it may, the comparison is perfect; each of us has a plan that God has laid out for us that only we can carry out. Similar to a racecourse, our path is set up in advance and our lane is assigned. My encouragement to you all is that we finish strong in this group and realize that the course (our life) is still before us.

This week the main principle is Embracing Oneness; with the focus on how a spouse completes, or helps each other on their road to sanctification (to be more Christ-like)

Earlier in our lives, too often I took the Complete and turned it into another C word, Competition. This took several forms but all served to tear down instead of building up; correcting her stories (my memory was perfect), talking about how my salary (versus our income) was growing, commenting on a project she had finished with how my way would have been better, just to name a few examples. In our early years together, Denise struggled with not admonishing (in love and humility) and taking control (pride/leading) versus being patient. Over time, the Holy Spirit changed this. Just an FYI – I did check with Denise to get her thoughts.

This week's lesson has an excellent outline on page 2 of Lesson 15 ways in which in which we can complete our spouses (summary of 1 Thes 5:14). This is also the crux of question 2. We will be looking at questions 1-3 this week, and if any couples would like to share anything on 4 and 5. Please remember to write down your summary of changes that have occurred during Re|Engage (a before and after examination). We will allot some time for sharing.

Blessings to you all,

David & Denise

#### **Email #2**

Lesson 16 – This week us is our last to meet as a small Re|Engage group, but is a beginning for the next steps we take as followers of Christ. Last week we heard from Mike & Laure, Preston & Lauren and Ambilike & Deborah on changes they have seen in their marriage as they have put Christ / God's plan first. It was, and is, encouraging to see such heart change in just five months. Just a word of caution, that just as a garden needs to be tended (daily – even more so during high-stress times); so do your marriages if we are to have all that God has planned for us.

No program or short-term behavioral change will have a lasting impact unless we surrender daily and admit (or confess) to God our reliance on Him (heart change). Denise and I speak from our own experience having tries to have a good marriage our way for a time and with some dependence on Him for a tie, but it wasn't until we surrendered and died to self that our joy was made complete. Know that we prayer is that you will

spend time with Him, if reading His word is not part of your daily schedule – make it so today! If excuses come up (I have used a few) – I remember that I found time to read my email on line and I check my voicemail; the question I then ask myself is whether any of these were more important than spending time with God? Excuse gone.

In addition to the change stories, Denise and I are interested to hear about your next steps (question 3). Since a few folks may have lost the earlier email, I have reattached the contact list. Also, we took a couple of photos last Wednesday and I have attached them in a lower resolution so as to not crash your email. We will take another group photo this next Wednesday.

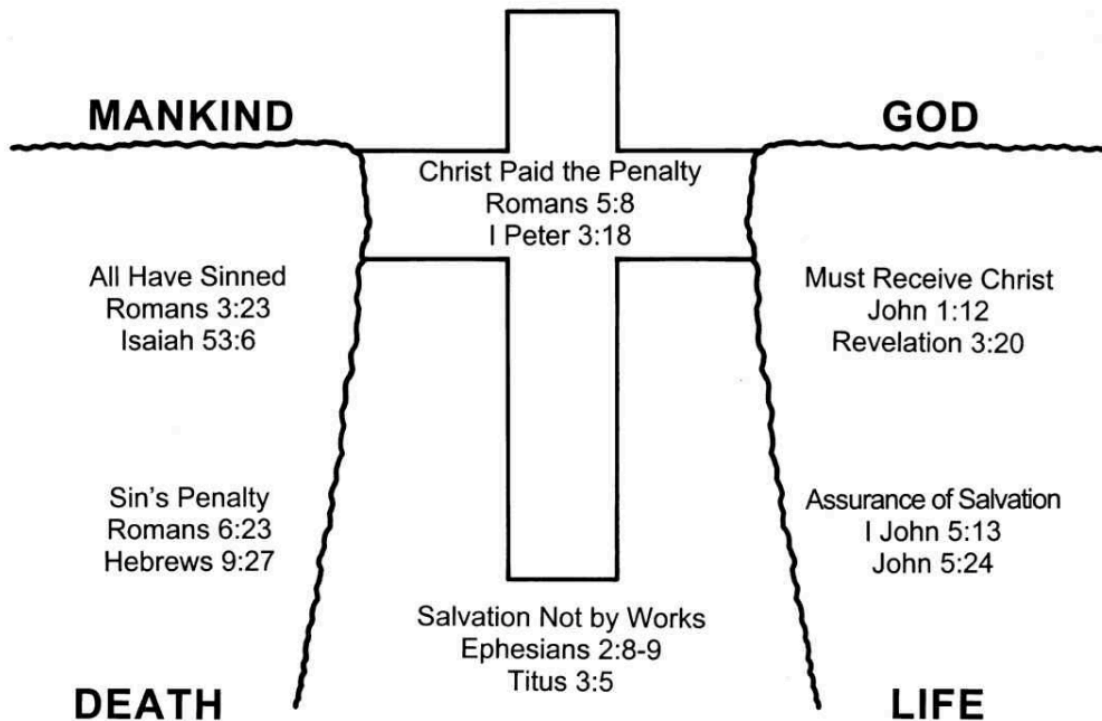
For those who may be following my 4 year read of the Bible (not the fastest I have ever read it, but it does give time to contemplate on each chapter - finished Hebrews and James (all are good, but love James) and am into 1<sup>st</sup> Peter. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:2 (on reading / studying the Word) Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good!

BTW – we have two anniversaries this month – Klinefelter’s on August 16<sup>th</sup> (nine years) & Kidwell’s on August 27<sup>th</sup> (ten years) so let’s be sure to congratulate them! Denise and I celebrated 34 years in July (we ignore the bleeps, lol). It’s great to walk through life with your best friend!

See you all on Wednesday,

Blessings,

David & Denise



## Scripture about Salvation

**Romans 3:23** – For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

**Romans 6:23** – For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord

**Romans 5:8** – But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

**Romans 10:13** – For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

**Romans 10: 9-10** – If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

**Ephesians 2:8-9** – For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.

**Titus 3:5** – He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit

## Diagnostic Questions

1. Will you tell me more about your faith?
2. On a scale of 1 to 10 how sure are you that if you died tonight you would spend eternity in heaven?
3. If you were to stand before Jesus immediately after your death how would you respond to this question? “On what basis should I allow you into heaven?”
4. Have you put your trust in the finished work of Christ on the Cross? If so, how has your life changed since that decision and what is the evidence?
5. What is your greatest challenge today in your walk with Christ?

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## **What To Do When Crisis Hits**

Chances are, at some point during your time as a re|engage facilitator you will encounter a couple who is experiencing a “crisis”. A crisis can take many different forms, but here are some examples of what would be considered a crisis (this list is not exhaustive):

- Infidelity (both physical and emotional)
- Pornography
- Miscarriage / loss of a child / infertility
- Sudden job loss
- Significant financial difficulties
- Repeated inability to resolve conflict and communicate effectively
- Issues surrounding physical intimacy
- Abuse (verbal/emotional, physical, sexual) – both in the past and the present
- Intrusive in-laws

### **HELPFUL DO’S AND DON’TS**

A crisis can be very effective in providing an opening to true community. It has been said that the one minute after someone shares intimate details about their life is quite possibly the most important one minute in life of your group. Therefore, it is essential for the leaders to know how to navigate these situations very carefully.

<b>Do:</b>	<b>Do not:</b>
Thank them for sharing	Tell them to "get over it"
Encourage their authenticity and vulnerability	Tell them their issue is "not a big deal"
Affirm any negative emotions they may be experiencing in the midst of this crisis	Try to fix their problem right then and there
Ask them: how can the group best help you tonight (just listen, provide insight, etc)?	Tell them what they are feeling is "wrong"
Share scripture in the hope of encouraging them that God is with them in the midst of struggle (2 Cor 12:8-10, Rom 8:31-35, Psalm 23, etc).	Allow everyone in the group to give their opinion as to how their crisis can be fixed and avoided in the future
	Allow someone else in the group to steal the this spotlight by turning the attention on themselves
Ask them: what do you believe would be the best "next step" given your circumstances?	Feel the need to give perfect answers and resolve all issues/tension that night
Ask them: how can we pray for you?	Be harsh in your communication with the couple
Ask them: how can we help you as you continue going through this circumstance?	
Pray for them and the group	
Follow-up	

If a crisis is communicated to you privately, the same “do and do not” listed above apply. We would however add one more “do”: encourage them to share their crisis with the group. In our experience,



widening the circle of people who are aware of what is going on allows for the best care and encouragement to be provided to the couple.

### **STAFF INVOLVMENT AND PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Generally, it would be a good idea to inform the Director of re|engage about the nature of any crisis encountered in your group. The primary reason for communicating with the staff would be to ensure you, as the re|engage facilitator, do not feel alone and/or overwhelmed. In addition, we believe there is wisdom found in many counselors (see Proverbs 11:14, 15:22, 20:18, 24:6).

Regarding professional counselors, our preference would be to not recommend a couple seek professional counseling until all other options have first been exhausted. Prior to recommending a professional counselor, we (staff) would like the opportunity to meet with the couple experiencing the crisis. We've seen the combination of care from the members of the re|engage group along with some focused conversations (i.e. 2-on-2 between the couple in crisis and the re|engage facilitators or staff) to be very effective at helping couples through very difficult circumstances. This is our preferred "plan A". We are not wholly opposed to couples seeking help from professional counselors, however, we often see couples move in that direction too quickly without allowing God to work through the community that He provided for the couple in crisis.

## **When an Individual Talks About Suicide**

If you are concerned someone is suicidal (i.e. they make a comment like, “life is not worth living,” “I can’t go on,” etc.) or they make a specific suicidal threat (“I am thinking about committing suicide,” “I want to kill myself,” etc.) and you are on the phone, you should first get their name, address and phone number. ASK THESE TWO QUESTIONS:

1. Are you having suicidal thoughts?  
(Do not fear you are planting the idea of suicide in their mind.)  
If they say “YES,” then ask:
2. Do you have a plan to take your life?  
If they say, “NO,” then:
  - Encourage them in the truth of God’s word, pray with them, set up a time for them to come to the office or church (depending on when they call) to meet with you and another staff member. Meanwhile, ask them to commit that they will not harm themselves between now and your meeting time.
  - When you meet, develop a plan to care for them. Your goal is to set up a support system so that they are not solely dependent on you. You want to encourage them to take steps to begin living biblically – being encouraged by scripture, stepping out of isolation, etc. The plan would include:
    - Making a phone list of people for the individual to call in times of struggling with suicidal thoughts.
    - Getting them connected with people to reach out to.
    - Have them make a verbal or written commitment to you that they will:
      - Call 911 if they are in danger or harming themselves
      - Call the list of people when they are not in danger of harming themselves but having thoughts of suicide.

If they say, “YES” to both questions one and two, immediately call 911.

- Tell them that because we care about them, we have to call 911. Not only do we have a legal responsibility to call 911 when someone has a plan to take their life; we don’t want to take a chance with anyone following through with the threat.
- Ask the individual to make a commitment to you NOT to take any harmful action.
- If you’re on the phone: tell them you will hang up, call 911, and call them right back.

If you are physically with them, try to keep them with you until help arrives.

Remember, God is in control. You do not have the power to prevent someone from taking their life. Your role is to:

- Point them or introduce them to Christ
- Help set up a plan of support
- PRAY

“Nothing is impossible WITH GOD.” Luke 1:37

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## Speaking at re|engage

**Thank you** for choosing to share about God's work in your marriage with us at re|engage. Know that we are so grateful for the time, coordination and energy it takes to prepare and to speak. We are excited to see how the Lord will use your specific story to encourage and challenge couples towards oneness with each other, and intimacy with Christ. We are grateful for you!

Remember these two questions as you pray and prepare to speak at re|engage:

### **WHO is your audience? And WHAT is your aim?**

Your audience: couples in varying stages of marriage, married anywhere from 5 months to 40 years, some are 8's on a scale of 1-10 but most are below 5, in fact, many are closer to 1-2.

Your aim: To give hope that no matter where they are in their marriage, they have not crossed a line they can't come back from! And to convey to the listener, "You are not alone." (This is in addition to your own aim, specific to your own story, but this is one aim we'd like you to convey).

### **Testimony Guidelines:**

**\*\* Send a copy of your testimony to the staff at least two weeks before your speaking date.\*\***

- a. First, as you prepare your testimony, pray and ask God for help in your preparation and the words to share.
- b. Your testimony needs to be **written out**. You will have approximately **15 minutes to speak**. A guideline to achieve this time constraint is, roughly, 7- 8 double-spaced pages in 12 pt. font with 1" margins. We will read and edit it with a focus on the audience and aim of the story.
- c. Please include **1 or 2 of your favorite Scriptures**. Avoid religious clichés, and do not mention specific denominations as this can serve as a distraction from the heart of your story. We believe it is God's Word that changes people's hearts and we desire that people would hear it when they come to re|engage.
- d. Tell your story in a way that breaks down misconceptions that you are different from the audience.
- e. Tell a story that is old enough for you to reflect on how the Lord brought comfort in the middle of it, and how He used people to do it. But also, make sure it is fresh and current too.
- f. Each of you should be honest in describing your *individual* struggles and failures. Own **your** part, and be sure to highlight God's grace in your weakness, not your heroic faith. Tell it with humility, admitting your continuing need for grace. (This is not the time to throw your mate under the bus. Let him or her do that themselves )
- g. Be discerning and purposeful, aware of a specific "aim" you want your audience to achieve. Limit the "gory" details. Your focus is not the situation, but the God who met you in the middle of it.

h. Avoid “TMI” – some testimonies contain *too much information* (particularly if they are sexual in nature). If a detail paints a graphic picture in permanent ink in the listener’s head, leave it out. The one thing we want permanently painted on the mind of our listener is the greatness of God.

i. The goal of your story should be to reflect God’s transforming power – not your church, this program, or your own. His. Tell it in a way that makes God the change agent in your story. This is about Him and for His glory.

### **The Four Parts of Your Story**

#### **1st – The Old Me/Us**

- a. You can include some family background, but try to keep this as brief as possible (1/2 page maximum). The key is to talk about your marriage, challenges you have faced, and how God brought restoration and healing.
- b. How you met or something about the early days of your relationship.
- c. How your marriage story progressed/regressed.
- d. What are some of the circumstances that others could relate to? Also, what is unique/different about your story?
- e. What was your relationship with God like?

#### **2nd – The Transition**

- a. What was the turning point in your marriage?
- b. How has your growing relationship with Jesus Christ influenced your marriage? Be specific.

#### **3rd – The New Me**

- a. What changes has God made in your relationship?
- b. What unhealthy ways of approaching your marriage are gone and how have they changed?
- c. How has each of your individual walks with God changed?

#### **4th – Outreach**

- a. What encouragement can you give? Any tips?
- b. Leave the listener with **hope**. They want to believe that their marriage will improve. Remind them that with God nothing is impossible.

If you have any questions, please contact us. We are sincerely grateful for your willingness to serve us in this way, and are excited to see how the Lord uses the story of His work in your lives to draw others closer to each other, and closer to Him.

## Sharing Life Maps: Instructions for Leaders

**Plan either an extended time to meet to share your Life Maps as a group or schedule out several times for each person to share theirs.**

1. In advance, set a recommended time limit to share your Life Maps, about 20 minutes each. Re-affirm that everything that is shared is confidential, and won't be shared outside the group. This gives freedom for complete honesty.
2. As the leader, take the lead by sharing your story first. It's as important the people in the group know you as it is for you to know them. Be honest, as you will set the tone for the level of authenticity and honesty. All of our lives have messy parts.
3. Encourage the group not to "check out" when someone is sharing but give the person sharing their undivided attention. There's nothing more de-motivating or discouraging than to be ignored when sharing something significant. Put away the phones.
4. Affirm each person who shares for their honesty. Some people may have never experienced an environment of acceptance when sharing potentially hard things.
5. Follow up with praying for each person, thanking God for the people He's brought into their life, acknowledging His hand, even in times where it could not be seen, and for the person's worth. Be specific about details they mentioned in their story.
6. Optionally, write a note to each person after the life story sharing time, affirming their vulnerability and identifying specific ways that his/her story encouraged you.

## Developing Your Life Map

Romans 8:28, NLT “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, and to those who are called according to His purpose.”

Have you considered how God has used significant experiences, people or events to form and develop His people? A Life Map is a visual representation of your life from birth to present. It highlights events God has used to mold and shape your character. The insights you gain through the Life Map process help you answer the questions, “Who am I, and where is the Lord leading me?” It can also help your group get to know and understand you better.

Consider the life of Abraham. His journey took him through both the lows and highs of life. They also brought him in contact with all sorts of people and places. Most importantly, you can see how these experiences helped shape his relationship with God. All of Abraham’s experiences – decisions, people, places, events, etc. - helped form and develop him.

These four steps will help you develop your Life Map so you can share it with others:

Step 1: Reflection	Prayerfully consider people, places and events that have marked your life. Make a list. Be sure to use the Life Map worksheet to help you categorize your thoughts. The terms on the worksheet identify categories you should include. Ask yourself the following questions for each category:			
<b>HERITAGE</b> How have your family relationships influenced your life? What ethnic or geographical influences shaped your life?	<b>HEROES</b> What relationships significantly influenced your character or shaped your direction (positively & negatively) How? Why?	<b>HIGH POINTS</b> What experiences have you especially enjoyed? Why?	<b>HARD TIMES</b> What experiences were especially difficult or painful? Why?	<b>HAND OF GOD</b> When & how have you seen God’s sovereign hand at work in your life? List specific events that illustrate His work in your life.
Step 2: Analysis	Now that you have reflected over your life up to today and have a list of your heroes, heritage, high points, hard times and “hand of God” moments, it’s time to analyze which of these you want to put in your Life Map. While it would be nice to share everything, focus on the most significant influences and experiences in your life. Spend some time praying through what you have listed. What you choose is totally up to you. You should not plan to spend any longer than 20-25 minutes sharing your Life Map with your group.			
Step 3: Organization	You are now ready to synthesize this information into a logical flow of thought. How do these people, places and events fit together?			
Step 4: Presentation	This is where you exercise your creative powers. How will you deliver your story? What medium fits your style of communication? You could draw your map like an ancient sea journey with battles, treasures and tropical islands. You could also use a narrative story, graph, photographs or music. Be as creative as you can be to depict your life story. If you are presenting this to your group, remember to make it large enough for everyone to see and read easily.			

Name:	Age/Lifestage	Location	Age/Lifestage	Location	Age/Lifestage	Location
<b>HERITAGE:</b> How have your family relationships, ethnic or geographical influences shaped your life?						
<b>HEROES:</b> What relationships influenced your character/shaped your direction (positively & negatively)? How? Why?						
<b>HIGH POINTS:</b> What experiences have you especially enjoyed? Why?						
<b>HARD TIMES:</b> What experiences were especially difficult or painful? Why?						
<b>HAND OF GOD:</b> When/how have you seen God' s hand at work in your life? List specific events that illustrate His work in your life.						