

Lesson Plan & Study Guide



Mission Group Process

Part Three: Developing a Covenant

iFOLLOW

Working with Jesus

The iFollow Discipleship Series



About the iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition

Categories

The iFollow Discipleship Series is designed to be used in congregations to assist people in their pursuit of God. This assumes that individuals are in unique places in their journey and there is no perfect set of lessons that everyone must complete to become a disciple—in fact discipleship is an eternal journey. Therefore the iFollow curriculum is a menu of milestones that an individual, small group, or even an entire church can choose from. The lessons can be placed in three general categories: **Meeting with Jesus** (does not assume a commitment to Jesus Christ); **Walking with Jesus** (assumes an acceptance of Jesus Christ); and **Working with Jesus** (assumes a desire to serve Jesus Christ).

Components

Each lesson has a presenter's manuscript which can be read word for word, but will be stronger if the presenter puts it in his/her own words and uses personal illustrations. The graphic slides can be played directly from the Pastor's DVD or customized and played from a computer. There are also several group activities and discussion questions to choose from as well as printable student handouts.

Usage

The lessons are designed to be used in small groups, pastor's Bible classes, prayer meetings, seminars, retreats, training sessions, discussion groups, and some lessons may be appropriate sermon outlines.

Credits

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Mission Group Process, Part Three: Developing a Covenant

This is the third in a series of six units designed to provide the preparation and training necessary to launch a mission group.

Learning Objectives

1. Understand how to build the spiritual foundation necessary to missional activity
2. Define “covenant,” the shared mission and operating rules for a Mission Group
3. Learn what must go into a covenant
4. Help each member find their Spiritual Gifts and role in the group
5. Enable each member to establish a personal set of spiritual practices

Content Outline

- A. The essential linkage between spirituality and mission
- B. The interaction of the spiritual life of the Mission Group and the spiritual disciplines of the individual members
- C. Team building
- D. Identifying the spiritual gifts of each group member

Background Material for the Instructor

The first business for a new Mission Group meeting for the first time is to establish its spiritual foundation. A Mission Group is not a committee conducting the business of a religious bureaucracy. It is not a specialized sub-activity of a congregation such as a Sabbath School class devoted to Bible study or a prayer meeting devoted to prayer. A Mission Group is the church in mission. It must care for the spiritual development of its members or it will, sooner



or later, “run out of gas” and not be able to engage in the mission to which God has called it. It must also have times and places where the spiritual life of the new converts that it encounters in mission is given attention. Unless this spiritual core to the mission is firmly established, the Mission Group will deteriorate into the bureaucratic process of a committee or some limited, specialized function. If this occurs, it will not be able to accomplish its mission.

The spiritual foundation of a Mission Group is expressed in its “covenant.” This is a document which states the mission of the group and then outlines the basic operating rules of the group. These operating rules must focus primarily on how the spirituality of the group will be maintained if it is to be a Christ-centered group with missional activities empowered by the grace of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. All Mission Groups become deeply engaged in the business of their mission and spend much time working to understand and impact the conditions in the secular world that they seek to transform. Considerable attention is given to information and experiences that could be seen as entirely secular in nature. The only way to ensure that the group does not become just another secular enterprise is to adhere firmly to a core set of spiritual practices.



The word “covenant” is used because it is a Biblical term and this is an essentially spiritual document. The covenant document must be the result of mutual agreement by the founding members of the group. It needs to be arrived at through a consensus process with open, honest discussion. This may take several meetings over a period of weeks or even months to work through. The mission is weak if the covenant is hurriedly put together.

The spiritual core of a Mission Group is the primary source of its witness. It is what non-believers see in the life of the group members that is most powerful in attracting them to Christ. “Paul recognized that the Christian life must be *observed* to be understood. (2 Tim. 3:10, NEB) ... The journey inward requires more than teaching and preaching sessions. It will involve a *relationship between believers*.... Spiritually, we shall be exactly as we now are in another five years, except for the people we meet and the books we read. Therefore, the journey inward needs to insert *both* ingredients into the lives of your fellowship.” (Neighbour, p 25)

Following Christ into a mature lifestyle of ministry requires the deep commitment of one’s entire life to Jesus. “Proper preparation for such a life is important. A person needs to move toward such commitment at his or her own pace. He needs the opportunity to experience life in community at various levels. Before making long-range commitments, the prospective member may make short-range, less demanding commitments. One needs understanding concerning the nature of a corporate life in Christ and the opportunity to

taste this life before becoming fully immersed in it.” (Cosby, pp 61-62) These experiences are an important part of the stage of life in a mission group when the group focuses on developing a covenant. This is about developing the level of commitment to one another necessary to go on mission with Jesus into all the demands and risks necessary to a real engagement with the lost.

There is no term of office for membership in a mission group. “One may be in a group for a few months or for fifteen years or longer. Each member is encouraged to be open to God’s call on his life. A deepening understanding of God’s call and a deepening awareness of her gifts may lead the member into new dimensions of mission in her original group. Her call may be of long duration, even for a lifetime. Or the member’s growth may lead him into other areas of mission. If there is an exciting mission group giving itself to this other area of need, he may join that group. His sense of call will be confirmed by his old group as well as the new group. If there is no existing group responding to his new area of interest, he may sound the new call and be the one through whom a new mission group comes into being. The particular missions making up the total ministry of the congregation are determined by the calls of the members. What areas of human need will we be responding to in the future? We do not know.” (Cosby, pp 62-63)

Most church members are not ready to be members of a mission group. “Many people need at the moment a group more limited in its purpose. For example, some people prefer a prayer group, or a Bible study group ... or an action group.” The mission group includes the many dimensions of church. It is comprehensive in its scope. It includes both the inward journey of spiritual growth among the members and the outward journey of mission in the world. “It requires that we be held accountable to Christ and to one another ... If one is not inwardly ready for such a life, the pressures can be destructive. If one is ready, such a group is life-giving. The existence in a church of many types of groups meeting many types of needs relieves some of the pressures upon a person to move into a mission group before he is ready. A mission group is not for everyone. It is for those who sense Christ’s call to belong to such a group.” (Cosby, pp 63-64)

Developing a written covenant or agreement as to the mission and operating rules for a mission group can become the cause of some conflict among interested individuals. But it is essential to the future of the mission. “The possibility of a stormy group identity crisis will be lessened by a thorough understanding and application of the principles described. Especially important is that each new member has a clear understanding of the covenant into which he is entering. There are many forces working to keep the understanding fuzzy, which inevitably cause trouble later on. However, in spite of every attempt at clarity, some will come into the group who have not internalized its real nature. Some will withdraw when they are aware that their inner call and that of the group are different. But there are others who will feel duped and will want to change the character of the group.” (Cosby, p 64)

“The principles and structures for the release of spiritual power into the world are costly ... to embody. ... The heart of the matter is call and obedience to that call. The inward

journey preparing one to recognize his gifts and hear the call is long and arduous. ‘The gate is narrow and the way is hard ... and those who find it are few.’ (Matthew 7:14, RSV)” (Cosby, p 64-65) Central to mission groups is a primary commitment to a shared mission and a shared spiritual life. This involves an intense focus of time and energy on a particular mission and a core group of people involved with that mission. Few people believe that such a commitment is worthwhile. Capable people can see obvious results more quickly and experience more ego satisfaction from individual efforts than from building a team. Yet, only in the witness of a shared spiritual life and shared mission can real transformation occur in the contemporary, secular context.

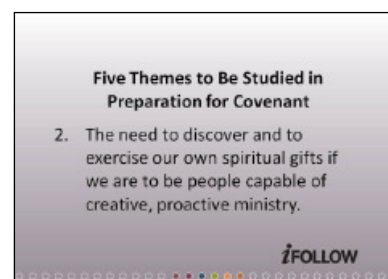
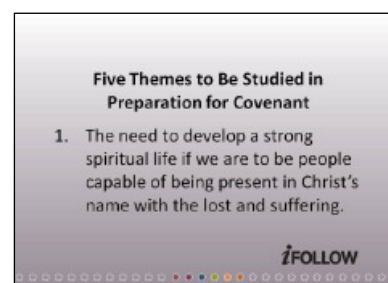
An overly legalistic implementation of the principles taught here can be destructive. “The letter of the law kills; the Spirit gives life. It is possible to understand at a certain level and take seriously all that has been said, and yet for nothing life-giving to occur. The application of the principles can be wooden, legalistic, rigidly applied. A Christian structure exists to free people from their boundness and to provide healing for their wounds. The spirit infusing the preparation for mission and informing the life in a mission group is all-important. It is a spirit of beauty, joy, love, celebration, festivity. This is the opposite of grimness. A free person can be flexible. When a norm is clearly held, exceptions, within limits, can be made without losing the norm.” (Cosby, pp 65-55)

“The harvest of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law dealing with such things as these.” (Galatians 5:22-23, NEB)

Five Themes to Be Studied in Preparation for Covenant

1. The need to develop a strong spiritual life if we are to be people capable of being present in Christ’s name with the lost and suffering.
2. The need to discover and to exercise our own spiritual gifts if we are to be people capable of creative, proactive ministry.
3. The need to agree on disciplines to make it possible to achieve the full potential of our shared mission.
4. The need to know ourselves in order to continue to grow and be emotionally mature.
5. The need to focus on caring for others; to cross that intangible line to where the emphasis of our life is more on giving than on receiving.

(Based on comments by Myra Flood in *Wellspring*, March



1, 1984)

Spiritual Preparation for Mission

“Do you feel the tug to embark on a new mission for God? Our fulfillment in life is directly related to our willingness to venture out and respond to the promptings and ideas God sends our way. The problem is, so many of us are on autopilot with our unending to-do lists, we seldom have time to hear God’s invitation to adventure through service! A unique kind of joy awaits each one who is ready to accept God’s challenge!

Here are some tips to help you fully hear and follow God’s call:

1. **Be still.** Read Psalm 46:10 and allow it to permeate your heart. Make a list of the things in your life that presently give you a sense of unrest. Conclude your meditation by reading Mark 4:39.

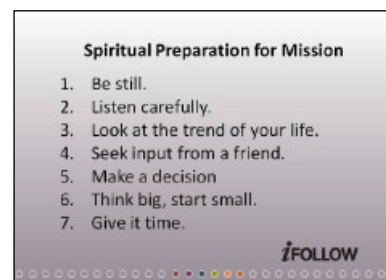
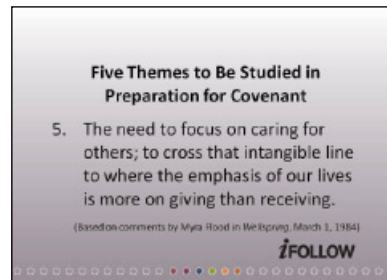
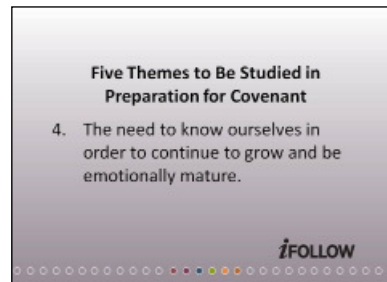
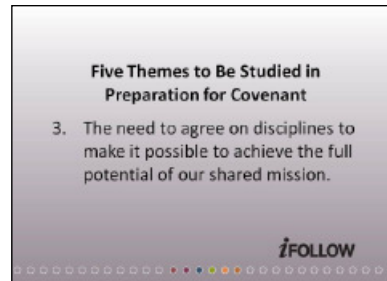
2. **Listen carefully.** Read Luke 9:28-35. Listen for signals from God. For a period of time, avoid television, radio and Internet media outlets so you can clear your mind. As you go through the day, pause to jot down your thoughts. Listen more carefully to the people around you. At the end of your prayer times, be quiet for a while before you finish.

3. **Look at the trend of your life.** What areas of interest do you have? How has God led in your past? Make a list of the things you like to do.

4. **Seek input from a friend.** Ask a friend to give their perspective on your strengths as they relate to starting a new mission.

5. **Make a decision.** Starting a ministry need not be frightening or permanent. Don’t be afraid to experiment. You may go through several ideas before you find one that fits you. You may also want to establish a particular time frame for your efforts.

6. **Think big, start small.** One man decided to start a ministry of encouragement by sending out cards and notes to people in need. Others became aware of this, and an academy chaplain and some students decided to send letters of encouragement to local church



leaders throughout their conference. The ripple effect from small beginnings is unending.

7. Give it time. Whether you're leading a Bible study, sharing your music in a coffeehouse, creating uplifting graphics for a Web page, or visiting prisoners, give it time. Ask yourself, "What am I expecting to get out of this?" Ultimately, ministry is about touching lives to share grace. Bathe your life and ministry in God's grace and give it time to grow.

(Adapted from a piece by Rich DuBose on www.churchsupportservices.org and republished in the *Atlantic Union Gleaner*.)

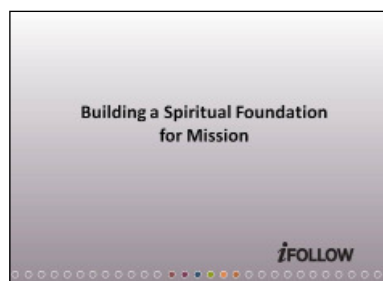
Building a Spiritual Foundation for Mission

As a mission group meets for the first few times, developing a basic covenant that will govern their work together, the key question is this: How can we keep from burning out over the long haul? Mission means a real engagement with the world outside the church. It is demanding, difficult and complex. It is spiritually depleting. The reason why the church has so little real impact on the world today is because most church members never go on mission and most of those who do burn out and either return to the round of internal activities inside the church or slip away into the world. At this stage in the development of a Mission Group, it is essential to help each individual member find a personal answer to the question, how can I keep from burning out over the long haul?

Jackie McMakin, who has spent several years being a part of a Mission Group, published "a summary of what I have learned" in the Summer 2006 issue of *Faith at Work*. Here is a paraphrase of her recommendations:

One essential is meditation. This refers to the mental practice of emptying the mind, quieting the chatter of my thoughts, and entering into mindfulness. I recommend doing it for two periods a day, about 20 minutes in the morning and again in the evening. I sit in an alert manner and concentrate on slowing my breathing. Distractions are noted and let go as I focus on inner quiet.

Another essential is prayer. ... This means speaking with and listening to God. Most of my training and experience falls under this concept. There are many kinds of prayer. For simplicity's sake, there are two major types: talking prayer and listening prayer. One is sharing your thanks, praise, requests, questions, doubts, fears, and needs with God. The other is listening to God speaking to you. Listening happens in a variety of ways—through an inner sense of hearing a voice other than your own, the "still, small voice" which calls you to something deeper, larger, more loving or more just than you think of on your own. I also hear God through Scripture, through devotional reading, music and art, and God's



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Series:
Working
with Jesus

Action Plan
& Presenter
Notes

Mission
Group
Process
Part Three:
Developing a
Covenant

6

“second book,” nature.

A third essential is nourishment. This means any activity, practice or experience that enlivens and strengthens body, mind and spirit. This is the easiest of the three to embrace. Each person is an expert on what nourishes their body, mind and spirit. To access that expertise, remember a time when you felt fully alive and nourished. Where were you? What were you doing? Recall that experience and then ask yourself what made that experience so vitalizing for you? You will become aware of your own wisdom about what works for you.

I have learned over time several patterns that help me practice nourishment, prayer and meditation.

1. Friends can be teachers, especially fellow believers working with me to follow Jesus. I learn from them both through being with them personally and through remembering stories about them. Jesus is my Master Teacher. I sit at His feet learning all that I can from Him. That does not mean that I ignore other teachers, including the writings of notable and wise individuals. In the Mission Group we learn from each other as well as books and other resources, including the Bible.

2. Practice is an essential part of growing and learning. We all know what practice is. We practice to play a musical instrument or become proficient in a sport or profession. Our spiritual life requires the same kind of practice. There is no way around this. Daily practice is essential. Like the habit of brushing our teeth, we have to make that definite decision to engage in spiritual practices daily. It takes a while to establish a new habit pattern, so we need to be patient with ourselves when we fail. Simply re-commit and get going again.

3. Training is useful. Spiritual practices do not come naturally. They have to be learned. Although I believe that each person is created with a spiritual instinct, they also have other instincts which compete for attention and can crowd out the spiritual. So we need to learn new ways of being and experiencing life. Training is available in many forms. Teachers or coaches can be brought into group meetings. The group can go together to training events. Many books, videos or DVDs, and on line resources are available.

4. Solitude is an essential part of growing. We must get away from the barrage of messages, music, news bulletins and advertizing for at least a small time each day and for longer periods on a regular cycle. (Of course, the Sabbath is one element of this.) I need time to look deeper and ask, “Where are you in this, God?” or “What are you teaching me?” Great insights come as we are alone and quiet; wisdom that cannot be gained in any other way.

5. Having companions equally committed to growth is a great blessing. In every period of my life and in every location where I have lived, friends have been given to me as fellow travelers in my spiritual growth. There are several ingredients that make these relationships helpful. We are committed to each other. We engage in some sort of spiritual practice together. We report successes and failures to each other. I am often asked, “How

do I find such a companion?” My experience is that every time I felt the need for such a companion, I asked God very directly, “I want someone to pray with. Who could it be?” Usually, rather quickly someone comes to mind. Most often it is someone in my Mission Group.

6. A spiritual community helps us stay on the path. There are lots of spiritual groups that turn me off, and other simply do not attract me. All groups are far from perfect, no matter how hard we try. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *Life Together* writes that we tend to want the group to be more perfect or to do what we want it to do more than it is reasonable or possible. But we don't see that. We are just aware of its failures. This is a demoralizing and unproductive state to be in, and it is my responsibility to get out of it when I fall into it.

7. Coaching is also an essential part of spiritual life. This is a very old Christian tradition that is being renewed today. It is very helpful to find someone to provide coaching for your spiritual development and meet with them for an hour or so about once a month to talk privately. For a Mission Group to really succeed it needs a Spiritual Life Coordinator who can supply this need for each of the other members, either themselves or by finding an appropriate coach for each individual.

8. Journaling is a useful tool. Taking the time to write about my spiritual needs and ideas, my questions and goals, elevates my spiritual life to a level of seriousness where much deeper, richer development is possible. It allows me to read back and recognize how God is leading in my life, how He has answered my prayers—not always in the way I initially wanted—and placed challenges before me. It provides a record of the things that I have learned which I find that I often forget.

Team Building

An excellent opener for the first meeting of a Mission Group is to go through the Quaker Questions: (1) Where did you live between the ages of seven and twelve? (2) How did you heat your home? (3) Which person was the warmest person in your life? (4) When did God become more than a word to you?

These questions allow the members to begin to share their spiritual autobiographies at a simple, practical level. If they listen carefully to one another, they begin to understand where the others are coming from—their backgrounds. They begin to see how the others have developed their spiritual commitments



and what needs they may have.

At the second meeting, a good team builder is “Sharing My Hopes and Dreams.” Details are in the Group Activities section of this package. Activities such as this one help the group members to begin to go below the surface in knowing and being known.

By the third meeting it might be a good idea to change the type of activity to something more artistic and fun, such as the Mission Lego game, also found in the Group Exercise section. This encourages involvement from those group members who may be less verbal in their personality and skills, but have practical skills and like to express themselves with hands-on activity. By the third meeting it is also important to have informal fellowship activities as a group. Eat a meal together, or better yet have a potluck where everyone brings their favorite dish, or even better cook a meal together, with everyone pitching in and preparing at least some part of some item on the menu. These informal activities allow group members to get to know each other at a more personal level without the intensity of a structured training exercise.

Another good activity is to take a walking tour of the community or work as a team in doing a Windshield Survey. Or, go together to a restaurant or mall or other location where you can observe together the people group you intend to reach in your mission. A field trip of this kind allows opportunity for informal sharing and expression of views by group members. Activities at this level can accomplish a double goal: they enable the group to continue to get to know one another better, but they also let members begin to relate directly to the mission that has brought the group together.

Many kinds of activities can contribute to team building. The more creative, personal and relevant to the mission of the group the activities are, the better. In deciding whether or not to use activities that may come to mind or be recommended or appear in a book or other resources, ask these questions:

1. Does it exhibit human warmth that helps the members of the group to feel welcome?
2. Does it take into account what you know about the group members so that their personal needs are met?
3. Does it use of language that is understandable and not offensive to group members?
4. Is each group member invited to participate?
5. Is the contribution of each group member is affirmed?
6. Is Christian faith modeled?
7. Is emotional and spiritual security provided?
8. Does it demonstrate active listening skills?
9. Does the leader exhibit transparency about him or herself?

10. Is group prayer encouraged?

11. Are Christlike values such as risk-taking, forgiveness and reconciliation included?

Keys to Team Building Success

In order for team building activities to be successful, they should be related to the mission of the group in some way, states Susan M. Heathfield, a human resources professional. You need to make the good feelings and the outcomes from the team building activity last beyond the team building time into the work on the mission itself. If team building activities are planned and executed well, people feel good about themselves and about each other. Group members get to know each other better and have a common experience to talk about.

A frequent expectation from team building activities is that they build trust. Team building activities have little to do with building trust, however, unless group members are involved in planning the activities and they are carefully followed up with application to the mission. Many companies use team building events today and employees have become cynical about this kind of thing. Don't fall into the trap of looking and acting like those events at work! This cynicism is born when the team building events are held outside of the context of the company's normal way of doing business. If, for example, people are sent off to a team building event, but all rewards in the company are based on individual goals and efforts, the team building event will have no lasting impact. People will complain about the time and energy invested in the team building activities.

A team building activity that is not followed up with meaningful activities in the workplace should not be held, Heathfield advises. They harm trust, motivation, employee morale and productivity. You will eventually lose the people you most want to keep. The application of this principle to your Mission Group is to make sure that team building activities are directly related to the work that you need to do as a group—developing a covenant, identifying the spiritual gifts of the members and their roles in the group, and planning for the mission you want to engage in.

Identify the Gifts of the Group Members

Here is an important principle in the development of a Mission Group: "The real responsibility, including determination of strategy, securing of staff, and raising of funds,



must be placed squarely upon the mission group embodying the call. This can be done only by discovering and calling forth the gifts of each group member. When all is said and done, the discovering and nurturing of the gifts of its members remains the primary work of the mission group.” (Cosby, p 60) And, “Nothing will happen in a group or by the group in the world unless there is a gifted person to do it.” That is how God works, according to the New Testament. (See Romans 12, I Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4.)

“Each person confessing Christ as Lord, living within the Body of Christ, is given a gift by the Holy Spirit for the up building of the Body. We can even say that the person himself, as his essence unfolds under the power of the Spirit, *is* a gift. He becomes more fully human, more fully Christian. Functions naturally flowing from this new being are recognized. As these gifts are recognized by the member and confirmed by the other members, they are employed for the enrichment of the group’s life and mission. If every member has discovered the unique treasure of his or her own being and it is being received by the others, there is tremendous fulfillment and power. The unity of the group consists in the faithful use of the variety of gifts. If even one or two members have not identified their gifts, the problem of envy will be a serious one for the group.

“If a member has not identified his gift, that gift is not likely to increase, nor can he be held accountable for its use by his fellow Christians (Matthew 25:14-30). The clear identification and acknowledgment of gifts brings new responsibility and awareness of judgment. We fear change and are loath to see ourselves functioning at a level of freedom new to us. To see is to risk failure. To see is to begin to change.

“It is well for each group to develop its own vocabulary of gifts, beginning with a study of the gifts mentioned in the New Testament. Then, the groups need to develop its own identifying labels. In any group, some of the gifts will be exercised primarily in the deepening of the spiritual life of the group. Other gifts will be exercised primarily in keeping the group faithful to its outward mission. ... Much time may be spent bemoaning what a group lacks. That time could be more profitably spent praying down a gifted person to be and do what the group needs for its mission.” (Cosby, pp 60-61)

The usual practice by which Mission Groups organize themselves is to have a series of meetings in which one meeting is devoted to each of the individuals in the group. The agenda for each meeting is for the individual to share some of their spiritual journey and why they feel called to this particular mission. They should share with the group their own feelings about their gifts, particularly sharing past experiences which reveal to them their abilities and interests. After sufficient time has been given to the individual to talk about their history and gifts, then go around the circle and each of the other members should state the gifts they see in this individual and suggest which roles they think this individual could play in the mission. It is important to encourage everyone, at this stage, to indicate more than one role they think this person is suited for. Opportunity should be given for dialog and disagreement. No decisions should be made at this point—this is sharing time. At the end of each evening time should be spent in prayer, as each group member prays

for the individual and for God to show the group how this person can best be employed in the mission of the group.

Before this series can be launched, it may be necessary for the group to study the concept of spiritual gifts. If everyone has previously studied this topic, it is probably sufficient to simply have a series of brief Bible studies—parallel to the focus discussions about the individual group members—on the key texts such as Romans 12, I Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, etc. If there are group members who have never studied this topic before, then the group ought to delay the focus on individuals and spend several sessions with a curriculum such as *Connections* that includes full study of spiritual gifts and the use of some kind of inventory or similar instrument to help group members get some feedback on their gifts.

Once the series of meetings focusing on the spiritual journey and gifts of each individual member is completed, then the group is ready to make some decisions about which role will be confirmed in each individual, how the group will function, etc. A written covenant can be finalized and agreed to by everyone. At this point the spiritual foundation of the Mission Group is constructed and the group can go on to address more directly the mission for which God has called it together.

Handouts in this Package

1. Typical Mission Group Covenant
2. Team Building Resources
3. Sharing My Hopes and Dreams



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Discipleship
Series:
Working
with Jesus

Action Plan
& Presenter
Notes

**Mission
Group
Process**
Part Three:
Developing a
Covenant

12

Additional Resources

Some of these resources are from secular authors and publishers. They are consistent with basic Bible values, although in some details they need modification for your use.

Anthony, Michelle (1998). *The Gigantic Book of Games for Youth Ministry*. Loveland, CO: Group Publishing. This book includes 300 games in three different categories, one of which is team building games.

Blanchard, Ken; Hybels, Bill and Hodges, Phil (1999). *Leadership by the Book: Tools to Transform Your Workplace*. New York: Waterbrook Press.

Cosby, Gordon (1975). *Handbook for Mission Groups*. Waco, TX: Word.

DuBose, Rich (undated). Article at www.churchsupportservices.org.

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Discussion Questions

1. How is this process different from the usual way that new projects get started at your church?
2. Why is it so different?
3. Is it really necessary to have a written covenant for a Mission Group? Will it work just as well to have a general understanding of what the group is about?
4. Could all of the time spent on spiritual practices and personal sharing get in the way of the mission?
5. Is there the danger that some people will drop out of the group because it is spending so much time for spiritual development and team building and does not quickly get down to business on its mission? What do you think about that?
6. As you look at the example of a Mission Group covenant (Handout 1), what comes to mind?

Group Exercise One

Purpose: To get an understanding of the design of the Mission Group process, particularly why it is so important to build a strong spiritual foundation before launching into mission.

Assignment: Ask each person to make a list of reasons why various ministries and mission projects launched by churches where they attended or observed did not get off the ground.

Time: Spend no more than 20 minutes making a list. Then discuss the list: Why do these things get in the way? Why did these projects collapse?

Debriefing: Discuss what was learned from this exercise. How can these problems be avoided?

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with Jesus

Group
Activities

**Mission
Group
Process**
Part Three:
Developing a
Covenant

15

Group Exercise: Sharing My Hopes and Dreams

Purpose: To allow the group members to begin to go below the surface in knowing and understanding each other.

Preparation: Be sure each member of the group gets a copy of Handout 3, Sharing My Hopes and Dreams, at the first meeting. They will consider prayerfully and fill out their papers to bring to the second meeting, at which the group will do this exercise.

Assignment: The members bring their papers to the second meeting and then each person is asked to read their paper just as they wrote it, to the entire group. In fact, it is a good idea to have each person hand their paper to another group member to read for them. This overcomes shyness and prevents side-trips. This exercise generates lots of discussion about the mission and begins to release ideas. The important point is to pull the discussion back to the task of understanding one another and building relationships. Ask: What do these visions tell you about each of the others in the group? Ask each person to name each of the others and share at least one thing they learned about that individual from listening to the statement they wrote.

Time: Give each reader five minutes to read what is written. Go all the way around before moving to discussion. The discussion that follows will take the rest of the group meeting. A scribe could keep track of prayer topics that the discussion brings up. Be sure to save at least 20-30 minutes for fervent prayer.

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Group
Activities

Mission
Group
Process
Part Three:
Developing a
Covenant

16

Team-building Exercise: Mission Lego

Purpose: To give mission group members opportunity to express themselves individually in a non-verbal way about their hopes and dreams for the group's mission; and to help them see the importance of the way they work together as a significant witness in and of itself.

Preparation: You will need several sets of Lego or Tinker Toys or a similar construction toy set. You will need about one set for every two participants in the group exercise. Set up the play area before the meeting starts. Give each person plenty of space on a table to work. At each place put the name of the assigned player on a sheet of paper in large lettering. (Use only first names. Use the "name tents" if you can easily access them.) Also, put a pile of pieces from the game at each place. The key is to put all the same parts out for each person, so that they do not have essential parts necessary to make varied and creative productions. For example, one individual has all wheels, but no connectors or axles or building blocks. Another person has all the connectors, but no wheels or axles or building blocks. And so on. At the beginning of the game, ask for one group member to volunteer as "process observer." They will not build a model like everyone else. They will observe the behavior of the group members and take notes.

Assignment: Build a model of the mission that you hope we develop over the next few years. Create an ideal model that we should work toward.

Rules of the Game: No talking to the others. Use as much material as you can.

Time: Allow 30 minutes or so for construction. Then bring the group together and walk around to each model and ask the person who created it to briefly explain it to the whole group. Ask group members if they have questions for the creator of each model. This will take five to ten minutes per participant.

Process Observer: At the end of the game, allow at least 20 minutes debriefing time for this person to give a report on what they observed and for general discussion of what was learned from the game. A key question: To what extent was the actual behavior of the participants in line with the values, hopes and dreams they espoused?

Handout 1

Typical Mission Group Covenant

1. God has called us to a shared mission and faithfulness to this mission is central to our faithfulness to God: [*Insert mission statement.*]
2. Mission group members are members in regular standing of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
3. Mission group members take on the following minimum spiritual disciplines:
 - A. A set time for prayer each day
 - B. Daily reading of the Scripture
 - C. Weekly worship—normally with the _____ SDA Church
 - D. Giving proportionately, beginning at a tithe of one's gross income
4. In addition, the group will practice those disciplines that are agreed on by the group members from time to time, including some form of accountability.* The group will adopt those disciplines essential for the accomplishment of its mission.
5. The group will meet [*weekly, twice monthly or monthly*], usually on [*insert time formula, such as "second Sunday morning of the month"*]. Attendance at the regular meetings of the mission group will be a serious responsibility of group members, never missed unless ill or with prior agreement by telephone or Email.
6. Authority will be given to those in the group who have discovered their gifts on behalf of the mission. Some of these gifts are:

A. Chairman	E. Administrator
B. Spiritual Life Coordinator	F. Activist
C. Bible Worker	G. Teacher
D. Community Organizer	H. Counselor
7. Key decisions about adopting goals, raising funds, hiring staff , major expenditures, contracts and other legal arrangements will be made by the group as a whole and in consultation with the appropriate local church and denominational authorities.

*For example, some groups spend some time at each of their regular meetings during which they report to one another about their practice of the spiritual disciplines.

Other groups practice journaling and share their journals at each meeting with one individual in the group who is recognized as the spiritual life coordinator.

Handout 2

Team-Building Resources

Some of these resources are from secular authors and publishers. They are consistent with basic Bible values, although in some details they need modification for your use.

Ken Blanchard, Bill Hybels and Phil Hodges, *Leadership by the Book: Tools to Transform Your Workplace* (1999, Waterbrook Press, New York)

Jack Gordon (editor), *The Pfeiffer Handbook of Structured Experiences: Learning Activities for Intact Teams and Workgroups* (2004, Pfeiffer/Wiley, San Francisco)

Group Publishing, *Over the Top Games* — This book includes 35 games that provide new challenges that get kids strategizing with other players while teaching valuable team-building skills.

Group Publishing, *The Gigantic Book of Games for Youth Ministry* — This book includes 300 games in three different categories. Team building games, Bible-learning games and energy-burning games.

Brian P. Hall and Maury Smith, *Value Clarification as Learning Process: A Handbook for Christian Educators* (1973, Paulist Press, New York)

Donald E. Miller, Graydon F. Snyder and Robert W. Neff, *Using Biblical Simulations, Volume 1* (1972, Judson Press, Valley Forge)

Donald E. Miller, Graydon F. Snyder and Robert W. Neff, *Using Biblical Simulations, Volume 2* (1975, Judson Press, Valley Forge)

Mel Silverman, *101 Ways to Make Meetings Active* (1999, Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, San Francisco)

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Mission
Group
Process
Part Three:
Developing a
Covenant

Handout 3

Sharing My Hopes and Dreams

Write out a description of your hopes and dreams for our mission. Imagine that you could step into a time machine and go five years in the future. Put yourself in [year] and describe what you would hope to see, hear and sense. It is fine to put everything on one page, but do not write more than one page for each of the three categories, a total of three pages. Be as specific and concrete as you can.

Begin by writing, "It is _____. We have done much to achieve our mission,

I see

I hear

I feel

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**Mission
Group
Process**
Part Three:
Developing a
Covenant