

# Life Transformation Groups

(Summary of information from book "Cultivating a Life for God"<sup>1</sup>)

A Life Transformation Group<sup>2</sup> is a group of two or three who get together once a week for accountability and disciple-making.

## Life Transformation Groups: Lowering the bar of ministry

Using a simple system of accountability, with intrinsic motivation, disciple-making can be done by all who are in the church. Even the Godhead exists in a community of three!

The mandate given in Matthew 28:18-20 was given for all believers. Life Transformation Groups give all people a chance to actively participate in the Great Commission.

## Criteria for Choosing Participants

- *A recognized need for Christ* - Often pastors will avoid needy people because they can be demanding. But if we don't help the needy, and we only wait for healthy people to focus ministry on, we have missed the point of the church. Life Transformation Groups must begin with people who have a real need for Christ.
- *Faithful to the disciple-making process* - This second point, while not obvious until the group begins, becomes the criterion for continuing the process. If the man or woman who has entered the group is not faithful to the disciple-making process, he or she will usually drop out. The group should not continue if the members are unwilling to continue with the process. This second criterion establishes the balance for the busy pastor who is concerned about being drained by a needy individual who doesn't really want to progress.

## Reasons a group of two or three is the best

- *Community* -- "And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken." (Ecclesiastes 4:12 NASV)
- *Accountability* -- "And if another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others with you . and if the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church " (Matthew 18:15-17 NASV)
- *Confidentiality* -- "Do not disclose another's secrets, or someone who hears you will bring shame upon you " (Prov. 25:9-10 NASV)
- *Flexibility* -- "For where two or three are gathered in My name, I am there among them." (Matthew 18:20 NASV)
- *Reproducibility* -- "And what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well." (2 Timothy 2:2 NASV)

## How the Life Transformation Groups work

- *They meet once a week for approximately one hour.* They can meet almost anywhere. One hour is enough time, although they can go longer if the group desires.
- *They are groups of only two or three.* A fourth person is the beginning of the next group and multiplication is imminent.
- *The groups are not co-ed.* The need for honesty and transparency during the confession of sin requires that the groups not be mixed.
- *There is no curriculum!!!* By design, the LTGs force the participants to discover the Word of God by themselves, with only the Holy Spirit and one another to guide them.
- *There is no leader as such -- only a facilitator.* The system is so simple that it is not leader dependent. He or she may read the accountability questions to the group or choose the next book to read.

## Questions for Life Transformation Groups

The first thing that the men or women do when they get together is ask one another the 10 accountability questions. In an atmosphere of confidentiality, honesty and mutual accountability, they use these questions to confess any sin they have committed in the past week. There is one unalterable question among the accountability questions: "Have you been a verbal testimony this week to the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ?" This question is simple, but it is enough to integrate proclamation of truth with the formation of character. Evangelism for the Christian is not optional. By including it as part of the accountability questions in the LTGs the disciples view it as a normal part of their new life.

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<sup>1</sup> "Cultivating a Life for God" by Neil Cole. Available from <http://ncd-australia.org.au>. Cost approx. \$27 + postage

<sup>2</sup> [Reference:](http://www.churchsmart.com/compucoach/00944.htm) Logan and Cole. *Raising Leaders for the Harvest*. Website: <http://www.churchsmart.com/compucoach/00944.htm>

## Suggested questions for women

- Have you been a verbal testimony this week to the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ?
- Have you fantasized a romantic relationship with someone other than your spouse this past week, or read or seen any sexually alluring material?
- Have you lacked any integrity in your financial dealings? Have you spent money recklessly?
- Have you honored you husband or children?
- Have you said damaging things about another person, either behind their back or face to face?
- Have you succumbed to a personal addiction?
- Have you continued to remain angry toward another?
- Have you secretly wished for another's misfortune so that you might excel?
- Draft a question that would address your specific area of weakness.
- Have you been completely truthful with me/us?

## Suggested questions for men

- Have you been a verbal testimony this week to the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ?
- Have you been in a compromising situation with a member of the opposite sex any where this past week, or been exposed to sexually explicit material?
- Have you lacked any integrity in your financial dealings?
- Have you given priority time to your family?
- Have you damaged another person by your words, either behind their back or face to face?
- Have you succumbed to a personal addiction?
- Have you continued to remain angry toward another?
- Have you secretly wished for another's misfortune so that you might excel?
- Draft a question that would address your specific area of weakness.
- Have you just lied to me/us?

## Consider Wesley's questions:

1. Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
2. Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?
3. Do I confidentially pass onto another what was told me in confidence?
4. Am I a slave to dress, friends, work, or habits?
5. Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
6. Did the Bible live in me today?
7. Do I give it time to speak to me everyday?
8. Am I enjoying prayer?
9. When did I last speak to someone about my faith?
10. Do I pray about the money I spend?
11. Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?
12. Do I disobey God in anything?
13. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
14. Am I defeated in any part of my life?
15. Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy or distrustful?
16. How do I spend my spare time?
17. Am I proud?
18. Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisee who despised the publican?
19. Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold resentment toward or disregard? If so, what am I going to do about it?
20. Do I grumble and complain constantly?
21. Is Christ real to me?

## This list, adapted by Phil Helfer, is a simplified list:

1. Have you experienced God in your life this week?
2. What is God teaching you?
3. How are you responding to his prompting?
4. What sin do you need to confess?
5. How did you do with your reading this week?

## Want a really simple list?

1. What is God telling you?
2. What are you doing about it

## Centre for Community Transformation (CCT – Manilla)

1. Have you been faithful in your quiet time, reading of God's word and prayer?
2. How is your relationship with your spouse and children or parents and siblings?
3. Do you really care for the lost? When was the last time you shared the gospel? Went out of your way to do good? Are you discipling or taking steps to disciple other men/women?
4. Have you been struggling with impure thoughts? Have you looked at questionable materials (movies, TV, internet, magazines, etc.), which is not pleasing to the Lord?
5. Have you been alone with a man / woman in any kind of situation where your feelings or actions became inappropriate or where others could have suspected that something inappropriate was going on?

6. Do you honestly handle money and keep honest records? How is your financial situation? Any debts? Have you been faithful in giving your tithes to the Lord?
7. Are you struggling with substance abuse such as drugs, alcohol and cigarettes? Or any other form of addiction such as gambling, computer games, eating, etc?
8. Have you any problems, challenges or stresses in your personal life or ministry? Have you been joyful in spite of these?
9. Have you lied or compromised your answer to any of the above questions?

## Scripture reading in Life Transformation Groups

The group picks a book of the Bible to read during the week. If it is a short book, they read it approximately five times during the week. If it is a longer book, they read it once during the week. In all they read about 30 chapters per week. It is good to stretch the group with the reading. No one is a failure if the reading isn't completed in a week.

Each week ask each other if they finished the reading. If any one of them was unable to complete all the assigned reading, they all

read the same Scripture again for the next week and continue doing so until they all arrive on the same week having finished the reading. They then choose another book and start again. This keeps them reading enough Scripture to stretch them so that they keep reading it a few times. For many, this will be the first time they have really read much Scripture at all!

## Why Life Transformation Groups help multiply disciples

- They plant the seed, not a seed substitute
- They remove the middleman - not clergy dependent
- They introduce evangelism as part of Christian character through the first question
- They form life-long habits of essential spiritual disciplines
- They allow the Holy Spirit to be a primary influence
- They empower common Christians to be life-long disciplers. After only a brief exposure to this system, Christians are equipped to make disciples for the rest of their lives.
- They motivate Christians for ministry in the church
- They release the cell leader and the pastor for focused ministry of the New Testament "one anothers". Many are functioning at the LTG level, which releases the cell leader and pastor from being the chief care giver.
- They release spontaneous multiplication in the church at the grass-roots level.

## Frequently asked questions about Life Transformation Groups

### QUESTION 1: How do you keep track of the groups? Keeping track and control of the Life Transformation Groups

Because the groups give birth, multiply and die spontaneously, it would be very difficult to keep track of them. The temptation in trying to do so would be to control them, which would stifle their potential. Keep track of the numbers in worship attendance and the numbers of ministries and cell groups, but allow these groups to be controlled by the Holy Spirit and none other.

There is no reason to control these groups! They pose no threat to the Body, and do better without being policed. If heresy is a concern, these groups, without controls, are ideal! If a heretical person gets in, his or her influence is limited to only two others, who are also reading the Word of God in context.

### QUESTION 2: After you ask the accountability questions, what do you talk about at the meeting? Discussion after the questions in the Life Transformation Groups

There is no agenda or curriculum. The accountability questions can stimulate great interaction. Men and women will find it liberating to talk freely about things that they previously felt ashamed to discuss. Where they once thought they were alone with unique struggles, they suddenly discover that they have common ground, and the group can exchange helpful ideas to

overcome their temptations. There is power in a group of two or three working together as a team to overcome sin! Often the passage being read by the group stimulates discussion. Group members can bring up questions that were raised, applications that came to mind during the week, or inspiring words that meant something special.

### QUESTION 3: What if none of the participants know enough to answer all the questions that are raised from their Bible reading? Answering questions from Bible reading in the Life Transformation Groups

One of the important steps is to grant people permission to say, "I don't know," without feeling ashamed. Only when we are willing to admit that we don't know something are we going to be able to learn something.

One thing that will astound you, is the way that the growing disciples are able to find answers to their own questions when they read the same passage of Scripture repetitively. You may want to make reference tools available that can provide help.

### QUESTION 4: How are the accountability questions worded? Can we change them? Are there questions for women? Singles? Youth? Using the accountability questions in the Life Transformation Groups

There is one unalterable question among the accountability questions: "Have you been a verbal testimony this week to the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ?" This question is simple, but it is enough to integrate proclamation of truth with the formation of character. Evangelism for the Christian is not optional. By including it as part of the accountability questions in the LTGs the disciples view it as a normal part of their new life.

We encourage you to adapt the other questions freely to suit the needs of your people. We have included two samples of accountability questions to demonstrate the subtle yet important differences between those used by married men and married women. Single men and women would adapt them even more, as would youth.

### **QUESTION 5: Do you provide training for the group leader? Providing training for the Life Transformation Group leaders**

No. There is no need for a group leader because the system itself drives the group. After only a few weeks in a LTG, anyone who has been faithful is equipped to facilitate one.

### **QUESTION 6: Can we require less reading than suggested and still be effective? Reading requirements in the Life Transformation Groups**

There is value in stretching Christians in their reading rather than keeping them comfortable. If a group is able to complete the assigned reading every week, they will not get all that they could from the reading, because the value of repetition will be removed from the process. To find a good balance with the amount of reading, experiment until you find an amount that keeps the

group in the same book for about four weeks before moving on. For most, that is about 25 to 30 chapters per week. If a group has a slow or illiterate reader, they can usually keep up with the group by acquiring the Bible on audio tape and listening to the assigned amount with the same repetition as the group.

### **QUESTION 7: How do you recommend we start these groups in our own church? Where do you find people for these groups? Starting the Life Transformation Groups and finding people**

Initiate these groups more organically than organizationally. In other words, don't just start with your elder/deacon board and hope they will trickle their way down to the masses. Start at the grassroots -- you and a new believer, a seeker or a Christian who desperately needs help. Increase the number of groups in two ways: (1) multiply your own groups, and (2) add new groups by showing others how they work.

Whenever a person who needs spiritual growth comes along, introduce them to another Christian and explain how you recommend that they help one another using this simple system. Follow up with them in three to four weeks and inquire as to how they are implementing the system. In these kinds of groups, this is especially important because the group members never had any experience of their own in the LTG process to orient themselves, so more directive instruction is usually needed.

### **QUESTION 8: Can non-Christians be in these groups? Non-Christians in the Life Transformation Groups**

The LTGs can be a great means for winning new souls to Christ! Friends, neighbors, co-workers or family members who want help can meet the Savior in a context of hearing directly from God in the Scriptures and coming to terms with their own sin in a confidential relationship of accountability.

It is very refreshing for seekers to find Christians who aren't perfect . . . and know it! The LTGs are a quest for righteousness in a context of mutual love and support. There is hardly a better place to introduce new Christians into the kingdom!

### **QUESTION 9: How many groups can someone be a part of at any one time? Being a part of more than one Life Transformation Group**

We recommend two groups at a time for a busy leader, which means up to six disciples. Three or four groups are possible. The way that you handle the Bible reading of multiple groups is to always read the book of the group that is ahead. Whenever a group finishes a book and moves on to another, you move on as well. This keeps you acquainted with the reading in both groups.

When you are asked by the group that is still in a previous book if you've finished the reading for the week, answer them according to the reading you are currently on with the group that is ahead (even though it is actually another book). This is one way that some have been able to be a part of multiple groups. The other option is to read extensively-not a bad option either!

### **QUESTION 10: Where do these groups meet? Location for Life Transformation Group meetings**

The groups are flexible enough to meet almost anywhere. Some meet in restaurants, parks, homes, work places, in carpools, church classrooms/offices, school campuses, workout spas or

even on walks around the block. Some groups have even maintained their meeting schedule with phone appointments while one member is out of town.

### **QUESTION 11: How do you incorporate prayer into these groups? Incorporating prayer into Life Transformation Group**

Prayer is as vital to the spiritual life of a Christian as air is to their physical life. Prayer, however, is not an intentional part of these groups, though there is hardly a group in which it does not occur. In the LTG's, prayer is not regimented but occurs more naturally and spontaneously as a result of sharing needs in the group meetings.

In our own experience, prayer has taken on a much more vital role in the life of the cell groups and in the strategic ministry of the congregation as a whole, especially when disciples grow in their spiritual life through the LTGs.

## **QUESTION 12: How long do these groups last? Then what? Longevity of the Life Transformation Groups**

A typical meeting is about an hour in length, though they can go longer or shorter than that.

The LTGs are living things that have their own life span. Some have lasted as long as three years, others have multiplied in as few as three months! Believe it or not, the latter is more frequent than the former! Because these groups implant the true seed, rather than a seed substitute, multiplication does not need to be

forced, coerced, or manipulated. In fact, our experience has shown that it often doesn't need to be mentioned at all!

It is good to cast vision for multiplication, but the real impetus for it comes from the seed itself, germinated in good soil.

A group will end in one of two ways: it will give birth to one or two other groups, or it will die. Both will happen, both are to be expected -- read the parable of the sower again!

### **Checklist for starting Life Transformation Groups**

- Select two potential disciples of the same gender that can begin meeting weekly.
- Groups are structured in such a way to not be leader-dependent.
- Groups integrate accountability for the confession of sin and Bible reading.
- Disciples read entire books of the Bible repeatedly (approximately 25 to 30 chapters per week in volume) to ensure maximum comprehension and application of truth.
- Evangelism woven through the group with identification of new members (pre-Christians and Christians).
- Groups spontaneously multiply when a fourth person is present.
- People fruitful in multiplication are identified as potential cell group leaders.

### **Note for pastors about Life Transformation Groups**

These groups are not just a good idea for your church, but also for you! Church leaders need accountability as much as anyone. This strategy may be new to you. Many people who have begun the process are convinced that they will continue to use this method for the rest of their lives. The benefits are numerous and extensive. Like ripples in a pond, these groups can influence your entire church.