

Session 10: Becoming a Pastor; Crisis & Care

Many small-group leaders have too narrow an idea of their role, often confining it to what happens during the small-group time each week. The truth is, the small-group leader's role can, and should, be much broader and have a far greater impact.

As we learned in the previous session, the small-group leader is a shepherd. One aspect of being a shepherd is pursuing those who stray from relationship. In this session, we're going to discuss how small-group leaders are also pastors, providing pastoral care to the members of the group. We will end our discussion by talking about how to deal with crisis situations as they arise.

Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." John 21:16

How can the small-group leader be a pastor to the group members outside of the weekly small-group meeting? (Consider meeting the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the group members.)

Scenario: You are the small-group leader/pastor. You just found out that Elizabeth, a single mom in your group, was in an accident. In it she suffered a serious leg fracture that will severely limit her physical activities for the next weeks. She has two young children, ages six and eight. She won't be able to work during her recovery, and she has very little savings. She has been a Christian for years and has been a member of your small group for the past year. None of her extended family or friends/co-workers know the Lord.

- What are the needs to be considered? (Think of specific situations, issues, etc.)
- How do you meet those needs?
- What resources do you connect Elizabeth to and how? (God's word/studies, people, support groups, ministries, community resources, etc.)
- What are some things to be cautious of or wise about when meeting needs?
- How do you help everyone involved (including yourself) have healthy expectations?
- In addressing the above questions, you've already outlined your part, but what does Elizabeth's part look like, and what is God's part in all of this?

	Physical Needs	Emotional Needs	Spiritual Needs
Specific Needs			
Your Part - Leader (How you meet the needs)			

Resources (Inside and outside the church)			
Things to be cautious about			
Setting Healthy Expectations			
Elizabeth's Part (Things she needs to do)			
God's Part (With you, Elizabeth, others)			

- As the small-group leader/pastor how would you intentionally use the opportunity of meeting Elizabeth's needs to:
 - Mentor your small-group apprentice.
 - Call out, develop and utilize the gifts of those in your small group.
 - Give members of your small group opportunities to minister and serve.
 - Model the love of Jesus to people outside your small group (Elizabeth's relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc.).
 - Invite these others into relationship with your and others in the group, or the group itself.
 - Seize opportunities to share Christ with these other people.
 - Deepen the relationship among the members of your small group.
 - Recognize how God is working and celebrate it.

Mentor Apprentice	
Call Out Gifts of Group Members	
Provide Opportunities for Group Members to Serve	
Love the Other People in Elizabeth's Life	
Invite Others into Relationship	

Share Christ with Others	
Deepen Relationships of Group Members	
Celebrate God at Work	

DEALING WITH CRISIS

In any group, you're going to encounter crisis situations with group members. Life is messy, and people go through times of great difficulty. We need to be ready to deal with these when they arise.

- What are some crisis situations you have experienced in a group or ones that could arise in a group?
 - Death, divorce, disease/injury, sin issues and failings, contemplation of sin or destructive actions.
- The following are some basic steps to handling crisis situations effectively:
 - Don't feel like you need to solve anything or have the answer.
 - Ask simple questions to find out where they are with the situation.
 - Fears, concerns, worries, consequences.
 - Be willing to drop the curriculum and focus on them, if appropriate.
 - Be willing to spend the entire group time on them.
 - If they don't want you to do this, find out the reason why. They may not be ready to share deeply, or they may just be trying to be nice—not wanting to be a distraction for the group. If it's the latter, help them understand that what they are going through is more important than that week's lesson.
 - Discover what they need and how the group can come alongside them.
 - Make a plan concerning appropriate care, resources.
 - Lay hands on them and pray.

IMPORTANT: These situations are always difficult and can be a bit scary for the leader. It's normal to think about it later and wish you had handled it differently. However, know this: if the person left knowing that you cared, if they felt well loved by you and the group members, if they know you all want to journey with them through the crisis, and if you prayed for them—**you did a fantastic job!** Don't let the enemy get you believing lies. Do your best and be okay with that.

- What should the group handle and what should be referred to others?
 - Meeting specific needs, care, ministering—by the leader and group members.
 - Referrals to professional counseling, other resources such as benevolence, etc.
- What if the crisis is on-going (comes up at every group meeting)?
 - What is the consequence of allowing the group to become someone's personal counseling session week after week?

- Set proper boundaries. The group can't be their personal counseling session, behavioral concerns, backing up the truck, unloading.
- Set proper expectations—what needs can be met by the group and which cannot—care versus enabling.
- Call or meet with them before each group to see how they are doing and to process issues; this allows them to vent prior to the group meeting. Re-establish boundaries.
- What type of crisis, if any, might necessitate someone having to leave the group?
 - Criminal issues and issues involving children's safety.
 - Dangerous or inappropriate behavior.
 - Issues that can't be managed within the group.
 - Note: If the group decides to allow someone to stay while going through serious issues such as a criminal trial, the group must close its doors to new members.
- When do you involve church leadership and/or seek their advice?
 - It's always a good idea to get wise counsel—even for the small stuff.
 - Some situations will necessitate staff, senior staff, elder involvement.
 - Criminal, major sin issues, mental, serious dysfunction, physical threats, issues of suicide, abuse/neglect, issues involving children, etc.
- Triggers
 - When a crisis comes up in a group, it can be a trigger for others in the group who have had similar experiences. Sometimes this can be a good thing as they can help minister to the person in crisis, but at times it can be a negative thing. It can send them into a depression or spiral where they are also going to need attention. Being aware of how a crisis can affect others in your group will help you be aware of potential issues and problems so you can respond accordingly.
- What might happen if all small-group leaders viewed themselves
- What might happen if all small-group leaders viewed themselves as shepherds and pastors and were intentional in those roles? How would this benefit:
 - Individual group members
 - The entire group
 - The leader
 - Church leadership/senior pastor
 - People outside the group
 - The community
 - The world

Practical Application

- What are some practical ways you can become the pastor of your small group? Make a list and then consider what you need to do in order to make it happen—changes, shift in priorities, being more intentional, etc. Pray and seek God's wisdom and help. What is your part? What is God's part?
 - Do you have a situation in your group right now that you could apply what you learned in today's lesson? Could you use this session as a guide to meet needs, pastor

your people, put your group members into action serving others, and/or reach out to people outside of your group and connect them to God? You could even use this session to brainstorm with your group what you might do when a need arises and be prepared for the future.

- How will you deal with crisis situations as they arise in your group? Although every situation will be different, having a basic plan for how you will respond and a list of resources ready can be helpful. Make a basic plan for how you will deal with a crisis when it arises in your group. Then gather together a list with contact information for various resources you can provide people who are experiencing crisis (ministries, classes, agencies and people—pastors/counselors, both inside and outside of your church).
- Ask yourself the following questions about both you and your group members:
 - Are you able and willing to have meaningful conversations with people outside of your group that will intentionally lead to deeper discussions about God?
 - Do you feel prepared to share Christ with someone?
 - Could you pray with them to receive Christ?
 - What would you tell them about baptism?
 - Would you baptize them?
 - What would it take for you to be willing and able to do these things?

Application Questions:

1. Small group leaders are shepherds, pursuing those who stray from relationship. But they are also pastors, providing pastoral care to the members of the group. What are some practical ways you can pastor your small group – physically, emotionally and spiritually?

2. What is your plan for dealing with crisis situations as they arise in your group?

3. Do you have a situation in your group right now that you could apply what you learned from this session? How will you put this material in to action in your group?