

Developing Christian Community

Welcome to ***Developing Christian Community***.

By '***Christian***' we mean simply that we follow Christ. We are His disciples. This means--by His definition--that we obey all His commands. This obedience results in serving one another and the larger community as we form, develop and reproduce *home groups* or *churches*.

By '***community***' we mean that we practice New Testament church body life *within* our own group and *between* groups.

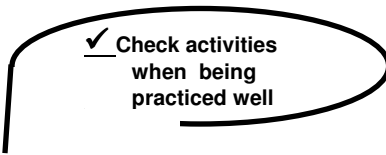
By '***developing***' Christian community we mean that we practice those disciplines that turn a group of individuals into a living, loving, serving ***body*** energized by the Spirit of God.

We simplify this development by clarifying seven ***General Tasks*** under which we list thirty ***Group Activities***. These general tasks and detailed activities may be done in any order, depending on what your group already does and needs. We might start any or all of them at once, according to the spiritual state, gifts and ministry opportunities that our people face.

Consider these group activities as items in a ***menu***; select those which support current needs and ministry opportunities as they arise. *Please* don't simply go through the list in order!

Each activity includes some form of ***discussion*** and ***implementation***. Assign the discussion to someone who can get all to participate. Please avoid simply lecturing. Then, assign the implementation of the activity to a *doer* with the corresponding spiritual gifts. Each activity provides a space at the beginning for the names of those who lead the discussion and, at the end, who implement the work. New leaders often assign too much too fast. Don't push. Follow the pace of the group, even though it seems slow.

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GENERAL TASK I (Group Activities 1-9)

Build all ministries on the Rock Jesus Christ

Group Activity 1: Lay the one foundation by obeying the commands of Jesus before all else

☞ Discussion for this Group Activity assigned to: _____
(names of one or more volunteers)

Read (or simply tell) the parable of the wise and foolish men in Matthew 7:24-27.

Before reading, ask everyone to listen for *how* to build our life and ministry.

Ask: Since *both* men heard Jesus' words, what was the *difference* between them?

Ans. (Let them answer; if they cannot, then explain.) The wise man *obeyed* Jesus' words.

Ask: Who is the Rock? (Let them answer.)

Ans. The rock is Jesus. Our relationship to Him is the foundation for *everything* else.

Ask: How do we build on the Rock Jesus Christ?

Ans. By obeying His commands.

Read: Listen for how we make disciples according to Jesus, in Matthew 28:18-20.

Ask: How do we make disciples Jesus' way?

Ans: By baptizing them and *teaching them to obey all of Jesus' commands.* All discipling begins here; loving, childlike obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ is its *only* foundation. We **become** disciples by obeying all of Jesus' commands. We **make** disciples by teaching others to obey all His commands.

Help everyone **memorize** the seven basic commands of Jesus. He commands over forty things but they all fit under seven general commands. We examined them in detail under Group Activity 3. (Some have written songs to make this memorization easy. Try it if you have creative people!)

Commands of Jesus

Repent, believe and receive the Holy Spirit (transformation)

Be baptized

Break bread

Love God, needy neighbors, fellow disciples, enemies (forgive)

Pray

Give

Make disciples (witness, shepherd, train, send missionaries)

☞ Implementation (help all to learn and obey Jesus' commands) assigned to: _____

A word of caution about implementation: A *teacher* unaccustomed to mobilizing people for *other* ministries should let another with the gift of *leadership* implement what the group plans. Home groups often fail when the gift of teaching eclipses the other gifts and ministries God gives to the body.

Group Activity 2: **Obey, and teach others to obey Jesus' command to Repent, believe and receive the Holy Spirit**

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Read Mark 1:15; John 3:16 and John 20:22 to find three things which one must do to receive Christ and His salvation. Then . . .

Read Romans 6:1-14 to find what God helps us to do to repent, and how He helps us.

Ask: What is the immediate result of repentance?

Ans: New, holy, eternal life in Jesus.

Explain: Repentance is not simply to stop sinning. A toad or a pile of garbage has no sin but is hardly holy. It means to receive the risen Christ's new life, the beginning of an eternal process of transformation. We let God invade our soul. A convert with a bad background may appear to us to be so sinful that we assume he is not converted. But God who sees men's hearts may know that he is trying far harder than any of us to live a holy life. All we ask at first is to see him *try*.

Read (or, preferably, *relate*) Luke 15:1-10 to find and discuss how God feels when we repent.

Read (or, preferably, *relate*) Luke 15:11-32 to discuss what the prodigal son's story would be if he lived today.

Read Romans 8:28-30, then Galatians 5:22-23 to find the *end result* of repentance.

Plan to help seekers in the group or outside of it, to obey this first command. If this is difficult, seek the help of a person from another group with the gift of *evangelism*.

☞ Coordination of what we planned assigned to: _____

Group Activity 3: **Obey, and teach others to obey Jesus' command to confirm conversion with baptism**

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Read Matthew 28:18-20 to find Jesus' command and threefold purpose for baptism.

Ask: What does it mean to be baptized in the name of the *Father*?

Ans: To be baptized in someone's name means to enter into a deep relationship with him. The Israelites were baptized into Moses as they followed Him out of Egypt, 1 Cor. 10:2.

Clarification: Baptism in the name of **God the Father** means beginning a relationship of submission to **loving father authority**, as the *Son* has done throughout eternity. Therefore we come to the Father through Him:

Baptism in the name of **God the Son** means beginning a relationship that transforms us into **the likeness of the living Word of God** more and more throughout eternity as we learn and obey His Word. Therefore the *written* Word also takes on flesh and becomes incarnate in our lives and church when we apply it in the power of the Holy Spirit:

Baptism in the name of **God the Holy Spirit** means beginning a relationship with the Comforter who lives within and gives us power to do ministry.

Just as the three Persons of the Trinity cannot be separated and never work *alone*, the above three aspects of *balanced* discipling--submission to loving authority, application of the Word and Spirit-powered ministry--begin together with a proper relationship with each Person of the Godhead, at baptism.

Read Acts 2:38-42 to find how the apostles practiced baptism.

Ask: *When* did the apostles baptize the converts? (Let the group respond.)

Ans: *Immediately.* The apostles baptized both Jews and gentiles without delay. They did not use baptism as a graduation ceremony after a Newcomer's Class or Catechism but as the initial confirmation of repentance and faith.

Clarification: The apostles' only *invitation* for one to show his desire to receive Christ was to be baptized. They never offered God's grace through any other *decision*-making ritual (such as raising hands). Their only requirement for baptism was to be *bad* and admit it, and ask forgiveness in Christ's name. Missionaries that baptize without delaying for requirements of man's making report a much higher rate of following through for converts.

For an example of how God demands a demonstration of humble obedience for spiritual healing, read (or relate) 2 Kings 5:1-14 (Naaman the leper) and discuss how it parallels baptism.

For further study on baptism read (or relate) Acts 8:26-40 (the Ethiopian in the desert) and Acts 16:12-40 (Lydia and the Philippian jailer). Use your concordance for additional passages, if desired.

Plans: One or more with the gift of shepherding arranges with our elders, pastor, or someone authorized by our group (according to the policies of our church) to baptize anyone in our families or group who has not obeyed Jesus in this initial step.

☞ Arrangements to carry out plans assigned to: _____

Group Activity 4: **Obey, and teach others to obey Jesus' command to Break bread** (the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion)

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Read (or relate) Matthew 26:17-28 to find and discuss the setting in which Jesus instituted this most sacred ceremony.

Read (or relate) Acts 2:41-47 to find where the members of the first church celebrated Holy Communion.

Ask: *Where* did they serve the Lord's Supper?

Ans: In their homes. Healthy home groups normally celebrate it regularly (Acts 20:1 shows that the normal practice was the first day of the week).

Read 1 Cor. 10:16-17 to find the very essence of communion, then . . .

Read also Leviticus 11:1-6 and compare 1 Cor. 11:26-34 to find how seriously God wants us to worship the way *He* says.

Ask: What did God do to those who did not respect the body of Christ, that paralleled what He did to the disobedient sons of Aaron?

Ans: He zapped them (to say they *sleep* was a euphemism for being zapped).

For further study on the Lord's Supper, read (or relate) its Old Testament origin in Exodus chapters 11-12.

Plans: One or more persons with the gift of shepherding should arrange with your elders, pastor, or someone authorized by your group (according to the policies of your church) to celebrate the Lord's Supper as a home group, if applicable.

☞ Arrangements to carry out plans assigned to: _____

Group Activity 5: **Obey, and teach others to obey Jesus' command to Love God and man in practical ways, including the needy, enemies (forgive)**

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Read (or relate) Matthew 22:36-40, then 1 John 3:14-18 to find and discuss how we know we really love God.

Read John 13:34-35 to find and discuss how people will know that we are Christians. (This aspect of Christian love is developed further, later.)

Read (or relate) Luke 10:25-37 to find, then discuss the importance of showing our love in a *practical* way.

Read (or relate) Matthew 18:21-35 to find and discuss another aspect of love upon which our relationship with God Himself depends.

Plan (1) with one or more who have the gift of *compassion* to arrange for and carry out a 'mercy ministry' for those in need.

☞ Arrangements for this first plan assigned to: _____

Plan (2) with one or more who have the gift of *exhortation* to help anyone who needs to forgive, to seek reconciliation.

☞ Arrangements for this second plan assigned to: _____

Group Activity 6: **Obey, and teach others to obey Jesus' command to Pray**

☞ Discussion assigned to _____

Read John 16:24 and 1 Thess.5:17 to find how Jesus and His apostles command prayer.

Read (or relate) Genesis 18:20-32 to find and discuss the meaning of *intercession*.

Read Matthew 5:44 and 1 Tim. 2:1-4 to find and discuss for whom we should pray and why.

Read Ephesians 6:10 -20 to list and discuss God's disciplines for *spiritual warfare*.

Read Luke 9:37-42 and 10:17-20 to discuss Jesus' practice of casting out demons, and why He gave a gentle rebuke to His disciples after

Read Luke 10:17-20 to discuss why Jesus gave a gentle rebuke to His disciples after they had cast out demons.

Plan for one or more with the gift of faith to organize regular intercession and spiritual warfare by the group.

☞ Arrangements to carry out plans assigned to: _____

Group Activity 7: **Obey, and teach others to obey Jesus' command to Give**

☞ Discussion assigned to _____

Read Luke 6:38 to find and discuss how and why we should give.

Read 2 Cor. 9:6-7 to find and discuss the *New Testament* standard for how much to give.

Read (or relate) Matt. 25:14-30 to find and discuss the rewards of Christian stewardship and punishment of false stewards.

Ask: What is the essence of Christian stewardship?

Ans: A steward manages things owned by another. We are God's stewards; He owns everything. A wise steward makes careful, prayerful use of *time, talent* and *treasure*.

Plan for one or more who have the gift of giving (and maybe a little bit of wisdom) to help others develop a plan for giving and stewardship of their time and talents.

☞ Arrangements for stewardship assigned to: _____

Group Activity 8: **Obey, and teach others to obey Jesus' command to make disciples** (evangelize, shepherd, train leaders, send missionaries)

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Read Matthew 28:18-20 to find and discuss exactly *how* Jesus says to make disciples.

Read (or relate) John 21:15-17 to find and discuss another purpose of discipling.

Read Acts 1:8 to find and discuss *where* we are to witness for Jesus, to start the discipling process.

Ask: What is our *local community* that corresponds to *Jerusalem* in the apostles' case?
 What *nearby communities nearby of the same culture* correspond to *Judea* for our group?
 What is *nearby ethnic group* corresponds to *Samaria* for our group?
 What is *distant people groups* correspond to *the ends of the earth* for our group?
 What *help* does Jesus promise us in Acts 1:8?

Plan: Ask one or more with the apostolic (missionary) gift or vision to arrange for the group's participation in training and sending missionaries that reproduce your group life within a neglected people group.

☞ Arrangements to carry out plans assigned to: _____

Group Activity 9: **Establish the *authority* for our group's work (enthroned Jesus through our obedience in love)**

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Read John 14:15 to find and discuss our *motive* for obeying Jesus.

Ask: Why is obedience to Jesus so important?

Ans (1): Loving obedience is the only way to enthrone our King. We can praise Him with our lips until we are hoarse but without loving, childlike obedience it is empty; He cannot receive it (Isaiah 29:13: 1 Cor. 13:1).

Ans (2): Loving obedience is the foundation for all other teaching and ministry. An obedient discipling body builds *all other ministries and spiritual disciplines that the New Testament requires* on this foundation of obedience. A healthy home group or cell functions as a tiny church within a larger church, giving total pastoral care, not just Bible study.

Ans (3): Loving obedience establishes the authority for our group. As a community committed to obey our Lord Jesus Christ, a home group or house church must settle the question of authority. Putting obedience to the commands of Jesus and His apostles before all other human rules and policies resolves arguments about what to do. Jesus alone has all authority; we simply do as He and His apostles say. Without this Rock foundation home groups lack the sense of authority, purpose and direction needed for lasting results.

Plan: Authorize one or more with the gift of discernment to regularly monitor the progress of the group in obedience by comparing their priorities and plans with the will of God as explicitly expressed through His New Testament commands. Anything not specifically commanded in the New Testament *must* be given lower priority.

☞ Arrangements to carry out plans assigned to: _____

GENERAL TASK II (Group Activities 10-16)

Agree on what we *are* and *do* as a group

Group Activity 10: **Covenant together to carry out our aims**

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Explain: As soon as possible each home group writes its own “*Covenant*.” This makes up a major part of its Bible study during the first few weeks. The group discusses and agrees upon each phrase of its Covenant, defining what the group *is* and *does*.

Read 2 Chronicles 23:16 to find and discuss the concept of covenanting together.

Clarification: We do not seek a ready-made Covenant here; we are to think through the New Testament principles on our own, to compose our own covenant. Keep it brief, to repeat in less than a minute. We might include a pledge to obey Jesus’ commands and a phrase about serving one another with the different spiritual gifts that God has given each one. We might also resolve to train new leaders on the job for new groups. Some groups write their Covenant as a song.

When the Covenant is completed and everyone has signed it (or in some way formally agreed to it) the group ought to **name** itself if it hasn’t done so yet and celebrate. Perhaps a feast!

Discuss: Here are some practical “do’s and don’ts” that you’d probably **not** include in the covenant (keep it general):

- Limit our group to about 7 to 12 adults if possible. Keep it small enough to practice the “one anothers” (discussed below). Few groups maintain the relational body life described in the New Testament if they grow beyond 14 adults. Keep multiplying new groups!
- Business dealings and politics are taboo at our meetings.
- If possible, do not meet in the home of the main leader (folks may think he owns the group and hesitate to take initiative). You might meet in the homes of friends who you hope to bring into the group.
- Don’t always serve a meal, unless you have a hostess who simply loves to clean up afterwards!

- Include the children as much as possible in the activities. Learn to appreciate their presence. When necessary, cooperate with other groups to provide child care.

☞ Carrying out the work on our covenant and group policies assigned to: _____

Group Activity 11: Practice relevant *small group worship*

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Discuss and agree on the essential elements of worship for our meetings:

General: For small group worship we aim at *total participation* rather than perfection in the music and teaching. We do not aim at entertainment, but edification (building up everyone present).

- **Praise:** It may be sung, prayed, read, chanted, set to poetry or danced--God doesn't care as long as it's from the heart. Adapt the style to a small group; make it easy for *all* to participate.
- **Prayer:** Pray for one another; intercede for those who need it. Do not let prayer time be merely a series of medical reports. Pray for new ministries; ask for opportunities to serve; pray for other churches and their leaders, etc.
- **Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness:** Especially before Communion confess in a way that is meaningful for our group, including young believers. Many will have much to confess. You might do it silently, but help new believers to learn to confess to God as 1 John 1:6-10 and 1 Corinthians 12:26-32 instruct us.
- **The Lord's Supper:** the New Testament churches broke bread in *homes*, Acts 2:46.
- **The Word:** We *apply* Scripture to the people, their current activities and the plans of the group. Avoid formal pulpit oratory for small groups; group discussion is better unless new members are shy. Tell stories from the Word that illustrate or give the historical basis for the truths taught. We do not allow the discussion to deal *only* with negative needs (problems). This creates an ingrown, defensive group. We always give *most of the time* to positive things, ministry development and opportunities to serve. Relate teaching to what our people will *do*. (More on this later.)
- **Giving:** We give to God, but don't pass a 'plate' for a small group! You might have a box or large envelope by the door. A cell group might pass the funds through the main church treasurer for tax purposes. However we handle funds, we make sure they are spent on needs or ministries agreed upon by our group or its leaders.
- **Fellowship:** We provide time before, during or after group worship for ample conversation between members. This is often when we make the best plans, pray for people's needs and deal with those who are too shy to talk in front of everybody. We make sure *everyone* has an opportunity to talk with someone who will *listen!*
- **A definite beginning and end** to the formal part of worship: Too much informality keeps us from taking worship seriously. We need to know we are in God's presence, even though meeting in a private living room.

☞ Coordination of worship activities assigned to _____

Group Activity 12: Install our leaders in the biblical way

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Read Acts 13:1-3 to find and discuss why Paul received the laying on of hands.

Read Titus 1:5-9 to find and discuss the ideal character of those we name as shepherds.

Read 1 Tim. 4:14 and 2 Tim. 1:6 to discuss why Timothy received the laying on of hands.

☞ If you have new leaders who lack this anointing, arrange for it and give it the same importance that the church in Antioch did. Assigned to _____

Group Activity 13: **Base our aims on the Word of God**

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Read Ephesians 4:11-16 to find and discuss the aim or result of using the spiritual gift of teaching for its true purpose, then make concrete plans to bring your group's practices into line with it.

Ask: Who is responsibility in our group to see that our teaching, shepherding and discipling equips all our people for ministries? (Ministries required by the New Testament are listed under Task # 6.)

Ans: The Bible places this responsibility on the 'pastors and teachers' but in today's more traditional churches few teachers accept it.

Clarification: In many churches a senior pastor or elder sets the pace, proclaiming what God is doing this *month* and *year*. All our teachers are to continually show from God's Word the *immediate purpose* for our activities. We do not preach simply to download as much information as possible; pedantic exposition paralyzes purposeful action. We clarify from the Bible how God is working *now* and what we will do in the *immediate future*. God is working and so are we. The renewal of the Holy Spirit is *daily* (2 Cor. 4:16).

☞ Name one or more to see that such purposeful teaching takes place regularly.

Assigned to: _____

Group Activity 14: **Balance and blend different ministries**

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Read 1 Cor. 12:4-13 and 13:1-3 to find and **discuss** the meaning of church 'body life.'

Ask: What does the Holy Spirit do for a church that is willing to be a loving, serving *body*?

Ans: He gives us gifts for different ministries and harmonizes them as we love one another.

Clarification: Seldom do churches form strong, reproductive home groups with an *ideological* motive (someone has attended a workshop on cells and comes back stirred, with a sure method to get instant growth). Rather, we form home groups from a motive of love; we desire to provide fellowship, serve and shepherd each other effectively and win more to Jesus. To effectively shepherd the flock God has given us requires groups small enough to give each person and family the attention they need. We also win our friends for Christ easier in small groups.

☞ Name one or more to help coordinate ministries. Find out what people can do and who needs their help. See Tasks 5 and 6 for gift-based ministries.

Assigned to: _____

Group Activity 15: **Look upon the field God has given us to harvest (our larger community)**

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Read (or relate) John 4:1-43 to find and discuss the importance of Jesus' exhortation in verse 35 to 'look at the fields.'

Plan to study the people of our community (what some call 'demographics'). Know who is there, discern ethnic or other trends, find out what they are thinking, why people stay away from (you may be surprised to find the *real* reason is not indifference but the church's irrelevancy--often something that can easily be remedied with loving concern).

☞ This *specific research* assigned to: _____

Group Activity 16: **Keep the vision alive and growing**

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Plan to keep the vision before our people. Help everyone to talk and sing about the vision. Keep talking about what God will do in the *future* (weak churches talk about the *past*).

Ask: Please finish the phrase, “Our group exists to...” (do what?)

Ans: Possible answers (if no one mentions a item and you think it applies, bring it up):

- Win people to Christ
- Proclaim God's Word
- Practice the “one another” relational church body life
- Multiply groups to bring Christ and the Holy Spirit's power to every family in our community
 - Multiply churches so there will be one in every neighborhood in our area.

Ask: What are ways that we can keep our vision before the people?

Ans: Possible answers (if no one mentions a item and you think it applies, bring it up):

- Help everyone to pray regularly for this vision, at home and with the group
- Enable every person in our own group to participate actively.
- Name our group to help us see it as a concrete entity--for example.
 - *Sing* about reproducing our group, recite *poems* or *dramatize* it (ask creative folks to write music or skits for it; let children people participate in it).
 - When groups meet to celebrate together, interview people who have come to Christ, or had personal or family victories, and want to testify about it.

☞ Ask one or more persons with the gift of faith to work with others with the gift of leadership to arrange what our group agrees upon to keep building the vision.

Assigned to _____

GENERAL TASK III (Group Activities 17-20)

Harvest

Group Activity 17: Organize and plan for harvesting

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Ask: If a group is weak in evangelism, what is normally the best way to help it renew this area of obedience to Jesus? (Hint: it usually does not help to seek a new *method*.)

Ans: Before looking for a magic method, find people who are using the gift of evangelism effectively in another group or church. Arrange for them to help you *do* evangelism-- Don't simply plan a workshop. In turn, help their group with a ministry in which your group is strong (perhaps discipling young married couples, mercy ministry or intercession, etc.).

Read (or relate) Acts 10 to find and discuss how to start a new group working through seekers and new believers.

Ask: How did God prepare Peter to do evangelism where he was not in control?

Ask: God used an *exclusive* meeting to bring the people to Christ. Who was there?

Ask: What sort of message did Peter give? What did he emphasize?

Ans: Peter simply related the gospel story. The apostles always told about Jesus' death and resurrection.

Read Luke 24:46-48 to find and discuss the specific things of which we are to be witnesses.

Ask: What two key historical events are we specifically to relate as we witness?

Ask: What two additional things are we to proclaim to those who receive this news (verse 47)?

Ask: For whom is this proclamation (verse 47)?

Read Luke 10:5-7 to find and discuss why, when we penetrate another neighborhood, we seek a *man of peace* (a hospitable person, although not yet converted, who opens doors for us).

Read (or relate) Acts 16:16-34 to find and discuss why it is important to do evangelism through heads of households.

IMPORTANT: Small gatherings for evangelism can be led effectively by *new believers*. We call these *Gathering Groups, Evangelistic Groups or Harvesting Groups*. They differ from most home groups in that they are often led by new believers, sometimes even unconverted seekers such as Cornelius in Acts 10, who called a group together to hear about Christ. Zaccheus, Levi, Lydia and the Philippian jailer also brought others to Christ as new believers. The only requirement to lead such *gathering groups* is to be able to gather unbelievers together to hear the Good News. New believers with unsaved friends can often do this easily. We do not bring many older believers to such meetings or the seekers feel outnumbered, become passive and fail to participate.

These evangelistic groups are short-lived. Some of the people receive Christ, others reject Him and drop out. The group either becomes a regular group or feeds into another group that is able to receive them. If it becomes a regular group led by one of the new believers, this new leader must be disciplined behind the scenes by a more mature believer. If its people join another group, make sure it has the right kind of music and people of an age and disposition that appeals to the new babes in Christ.

Some churches provide a separate service with a more contemporary worship style to penetrate the 'postmodern' culture.

Also I M P O R T A N T: We don't force everyone to do evangelism. Some older Christians have few unsaved friends and relatives (except some who already said a final 'no' to the gospel). It does no good to force them to do evangelism. Let them intercede for those who do, disciple younger believers and serve in other ministries. For a group of such people you might skip the evangelism activities below.

Group Activity 18: Prepare to relate the good news

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Prepare: To help new believers pass on the gospel message, teach them key Bible stories about it that are easy to relate to others in an informal way. Do not try to win converts with a philosophical or highly theological approach. It almost never works. The apostles simply told the gospel story. Start with stories from the Old Testament if the people lack a world view with one all-powerful, Holy and God that relates in love to people.

Stories that reveal the gospel include:

- **Our need to repent:** The Prodigal Son: Luke 15:11-32.
- **Our need to turn from idolatry or other occult practices:** Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel: 1 Kings 18.
- **Our need to forgive and receive God's forgiveness:** The parable of the unforgiving debtor, Matthew 18:21-35.
- **The arrest of Jesus:** Matthew 26:31-58
- **The trial of Jesus:** Mark 14:53 through 15:23
- **The sacrificial death of Jesus:** Luke 23:13-56
- **The resurrection of Jesus:** Luke 24:1-35
- **The final instructions of the risen Christ:** Matt. 28:16-20; Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:6-8
- **The ascension of Jesus into glory:** Luke 24:49-53; Acts 1:9-11
- **The coming of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost):** Acts 2
- **The conversion of Saul:** Acts 9:1-31
- **The conversion of the Ethiopian through reading prophecies of Jesus:** Isaiah 53; Acts 8:26-39
- **The conversion and baptism of the jailer and his family:** Acts 16:16-34
- **The final judgment:** Revelation 20:11 through 21:8

☞ Name one or more with the gift of teaching to help everyone memorize a repertoire of Bible stories that support all major Christian doctrines and duties.

Assigned to: _____

☞ Name one or more with the gift of evangelism to help our group communicate the gospel.

Assigned to: _____

Group Activity 19: Let the good news flow through existing networks of families and friends (don't extract converts from their circle)

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Read Acts 16:13-15 and verse 31 to find and discuss why we should aim for entire families.

Clarification: When possible, we start with the head of a family. Remember, God does not see a person as an isolated individual, but as part of a larger circle of family and friends (Acts 16:31). Do not overemphasize the 'personal' aspect of salvation or faith. Scriptures never mention that aspect; it is a purely human tradition. An unhealthy individualistic approach to evangelism divides families and extracts converts from their 'circle' rather than teaching them from the beginning to love them and seek reconciliation. The apostles witnessed to Lydia, then, immediately reached her entire family (Acts 16:13-15).

For converts to witness at once to their family and friends we must use a method of evangelism that they can imitate at once and pass on. Methods that require electronic equipment, expensive facilities or extensive training always stifle this normal flow. Serious studies in mission fields all over the world show that many more come to Christ when we witness just as Jesus and the apostles did: we simply tell the good news and let it flow as it will. The gospel follows the same channels as gossip. It is good gossip.

☞ Ask one or more who easily build relationships to help others do this.

Assigned to: _____

Group Activity 20: **Balance evangelism with mercy ministry**

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Read: Luke 10:25-37 to find and discuss what Jesus demands that we do for those in our community who are in need.

Ask: What priority did Jesus and the apostles give to loving others in a *practical* way?

Ask: What needs do our friends and relatives have, that we might help them with? Family problems? (Do they simply need a friend to listen to them?) Drug or alcohol abuse? Immigrants who need help to find their way around or learn English? The best way to detect felt needs is to mix with people of the community and *listen* to them. Be creative in finding how to do this. Every community is different. There is no one 'best way.'

☞ Coordination of mercy ministry or development projects assigned to: _____

GENERAL TASK IV (Group Activities 21-24) Serve one another within the family of God

Group Activity 21: **Keep groups small enough for edifying interaction and total participation**

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Read Gal. 5:13 (below) to find the *reciprocal* nature of New Testament Church life and ministry:

For you, dear friends, have been called to live in freedom, not to satisfy your sinful nature, but to serve one another in love.

Notice the words 'one another.' There are many such 'one another' verses in the Bible.

Discuss:

Clarify what true New Testament church *body life* is. We encourage one another, pray for each other, confess faults to one another, etc. We cannot do this in large meetings, so we also organize small group meetings--home groups or cells. *Small groups* allow interaction between all participants (We take care, however, not ask shy newcomers to talk before the group). For

example, we talk to and listen to each other, to deal with those spiritual disciplines that our Lord and His apostles command. With the aid of the Holy Spirit, each participant uses his/her own God-given gifts to help others grow and serve. Organize it in your own way, but build on relationships, so that your people find it easy and joyful.

Clarify the scope of New Testament church body life. It is larger than your church or group. We practice the “one another” dynamics of the New Testament not only *within* groups and churches but *between* them, because a group small enough to do it with all of its members is too small to have a complete gift balance. God gives many spiritual gifts. For example, if your group is weak on evangelism, don’t go seeking another *method*. Look rather for *who* can help you, someone in another group or church who has the gift of evangelism and is willing to assist you, as you in turn aid that group in some other way. God uses this voluntary, loving interaction between groups and churches powerfully to develop ministries.

Discuss: A *small* group allows interaction between all. For example, we talk to and listen to each other to deal with the spiritual disciplines commanded by our Lord and His apostles. Each person, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, uses his/her own God-given gifts to help others grow and serve. **CAUTION:** do not force shy newcomers to talk before the group.

Clarify how we keep groups small enough to practice the ‘one anothers.’ We multiply *new* groups, not by dividing them down the middle but by training new leaders on the job and letting them form their own groups. The leader of the parent group mentors them behind the scenes as long as they need it. This training is dealt with in General Task VII.

Clarify what church body life is. Beginning with the most important command, to love God and man, we practice the “one another” dynamics of the New Testament--not only *within* groups but *between* them. We practice them in groups small enough to allow each person to be heard. Persons encourage one other, pray for each other, confess faults to one another, etc. We cannot do this in large meetings; that is why we also organize small group meetings--home groups or cells.

Clarify how we hold each other accountable. As a family oriented community, our purpose is not limited to accountability among individuals, such as a few men meeting to help each other to grow spiritually. We aim for complete honesty before the group. It may start with a private group just for men, or for women. At first both men and women hesitate to deal with deep personal needs in the presence of the opposite sex and strangers. But in time they graduate from such dependency and keep the family together in normal group.

☞ Name one or more with the gift of leadership or helps to see that our group practices the ‘one anothers.’ They are dealt with in detail in the next three Group Activities.

Assigned to: _____

Group Activity 22: **Build loving fellowship one with another (in and between groups)**

Discussion assigned to: _____

Discuss specifically *how*, and with *whom*, to practice these ‘one anothers.’ Study the ones you need most urgently to practice. Let the group decide which ones to study.

Love:

Love one another:	John 13:34-35; 5:12, 17; Rom. 12:10; 1 Thess. 4:9; 1 John 3:11,14, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 1:5; 1 Peter 1:22
Love one another to fulfill the law:	Rom. 13:8
Increase our love one for another:	2 Thess. 1:3
Abound in love for another:	1 Thess. 3:12
Love each other deeply, to cover a multitude of sins:	1 Peter 4:8

Interact with care:

Have fellowship one with another:	1 John 1:7
Forgive one another:	Eph. 3:13; 4:32; Col. 3:13
Greet one another with a holy kiss (an embrace in some cultures):	Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14
Wait for one another to break bread:	1 Cor. 11:33
Bear one another's sufferings:	1 Cor. 12:26

Helping others to practice this mutual shepherding assigned to: _____

Group Activity 23: **Serve one another** (*in and among* groups)

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Serve:

Serve one another with the gifts each person has received:	1 Peter 4:10
Serve one another in love:	Gal. 5:13
Be kind to each other:	1 Thess. 5:15
Care for one another: 1 Cor. 12:25	
Bear the burdens one for another:	Gal. 6:2
Wash one another's feet as a sign of humble servanthood:	John 13:14
Work with one another:	1 Cor. 3:9; 2Cor. 6:1

Teach :

Teach one another:	Col. 3:16
Instruct one another:	Rom. 5:14

Encourage:

Encourage one another:	Col. 3:16; Heb. 10:25
Exhort one another: Heb. 3:13	
Speak the truth to one another:	Eph. 4:25
Lay down our lives one for another:	1 John 3:16
Spur one another to love and good deeds:	Heb. 10:24

Edify:

Edify (strengthen, build up) one another:	1 Thess. 4:18 & 5:1, 11
Edify one another gathering together each one with a hymn, a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or its interpretation:	1 Cor. 14:26

Give spiritual care:

Confess our sins one to another:	James 5:16
Pray for one another: James 5:16	

Helping others to practice this mutual serving assigned to: _____

Group Activity 24: **Cultivate unity in groups and between them**

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Act with humility:

Honor one another:	Rom. 12:10
Be of one mind one with another:	2 Cor. 13:11; Rom. 12:16; 15:5
Do not criticize one another:	Rom. 14:13
Do not speak bad one of another:	James 4:11; 5:9
Submit to one another:	Eph. 5:21
Be clothed with humility toward one another:	1 Peter 5:5

Live in harmony:

Have patience one with another:	Eph. 4:2
Live in peace one with another:	Matt. 9:50
Receive one another with hospitality:	Rom. 15:7; 1 Peter. 4:9
Glorify God together:	Rom. 15:6

Helping others to practice this mutual fellowship assigned to: _____

GENERAL TASK V (Group Activities 25-27)

Help each person to know and use his gifts

Group Activity 25: Practice gifts listed in Romans 12:6-8

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Relate the biblical *examples* or explanations for gifts that need clarification. Some are too long to read; recount by memory the relevant parts. Mark gifts in the box that need to be developed in our group. You will probably need to arrange for help from *other* groups (and give help to them in areas in which your group is strong).

- Serve**: Samuel, 1 Sam. 1:20-28; 3:1-21; Deacons, Acts 6:1-7; Dorcas, Acts 9:36-41
- Prophecy**--messages from God for strength, consolation and encouragement; 1 Cor. 14:3
- Give**--Abigail, 1 Sam. 25; guidelines: 2 Cor. 9
- Teach**--Ezra: Neh. 8; purpose, Eph. 4:11-16
- Encourage**--exhort: Paul with the Ephesian elders, Acts 20:17-38
- Lead**--servant leader who helps others to minister: Moses, Ex. 18:13-26
- Show mercy**--The sheep and goats, Matt25:31-46; Good Samaritan, Lk10:30-35; David with Saul, 1 Sam. 24

☞ Ask persons with these gifts to help others discover and use them.

Assigned to: _____

Group Activity 26: Practice additional gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, 27-30

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

- Counsel with **wisdom**--Solomon, 1 Kings 3:5-28
- Base decisions on **knowledge** (facts)--Bereans' searching the Word, Acts 17:10-12
- Help**--Aquila and Priscilla, Acts18:1-5, 24-28
- Go, as an **Apostle** (sent one, with itchy feet, a spiritual entrepreneur)--Rom. 5:20-21; Paul and Barnabas, Acts chapters 13-14
- Discern**--Nathan, 2 Sam. Chapters 11-12; Paul, Gal. 2:6-21
- Heal**--Jesus and the paralytic, Mark 2:1-12; Peter and John heal the crippled man, Acts chapters 3-4
- Administrate**--Nehemiah: Neh chapters 2-3
- Do **miracles**--Elijah: 1 Kings 18:16-46; Elisha: 2 Kings chapters 2-5
- Speak in **tongues**--Cornelius' household, Acts 10:44-48. Use this gift with the following:
- Interpret** tongues--see cautions in 1 Cor.14
- Use **faith** (all need it but some stir it in others)--the leper and the centurion, Matt. 8:1-13; Old Testament faithful, Heb. 11

☞ Ask persons with these gifts to help others use them.

Assigned to: _____

Group Activity 27: Practice additional gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

- Announce the Good News (**evangelist**)--Philip; Acts 8:26-40
- Pastor** (shepherd) -- Acts 20:28-34; 1 Peter 5:1-4 (see *Vital Pastoral Duties*, below)

Vital Pastoral Duties

of persons with the pastoral (shepherding) gift

Mobilize

You, more than anyone else, are responsible to see that each member of your group uses his or her gifts in ministry to edify the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16). Review the gifts listed in Group Activities 25-27 regularly and discuss them every few months with those who do not yet know their area of ministry. If you are more of a teacher and not able to do this well, you *must* ask another to share the leadership.

Aim for Balance

Do not over-emphasize any of the gift-based ministries (1 Cor. 12:14-30). A church's greatest weakness is nearly always its strongest ministry taken to *excess*.

Network

Remember: No small group has all the spiritual gifts it needs! New Testament group body life requires interaction **between** groups. *Poor* Christians in Macedonia, for example, had the gift of giving and used it to strengthen the Lord's work in other places (2 Cor. 8:1-5, compared with Acts 18:1-5).

The exhortations in the New Testament to serve each other with different God-given gifts in the body were made to *clusters of home groups*. The 'churches' in Jerusalem and Ephesus, etc., were not single congregations. There was no church building (chapel or temple), historians tell us, to house large congregations for over 275 years after Christ. They met as small groups in homes.

☞ Ask persons with the gifts of apostle or pastor to help others use them.

Assigned to: _____

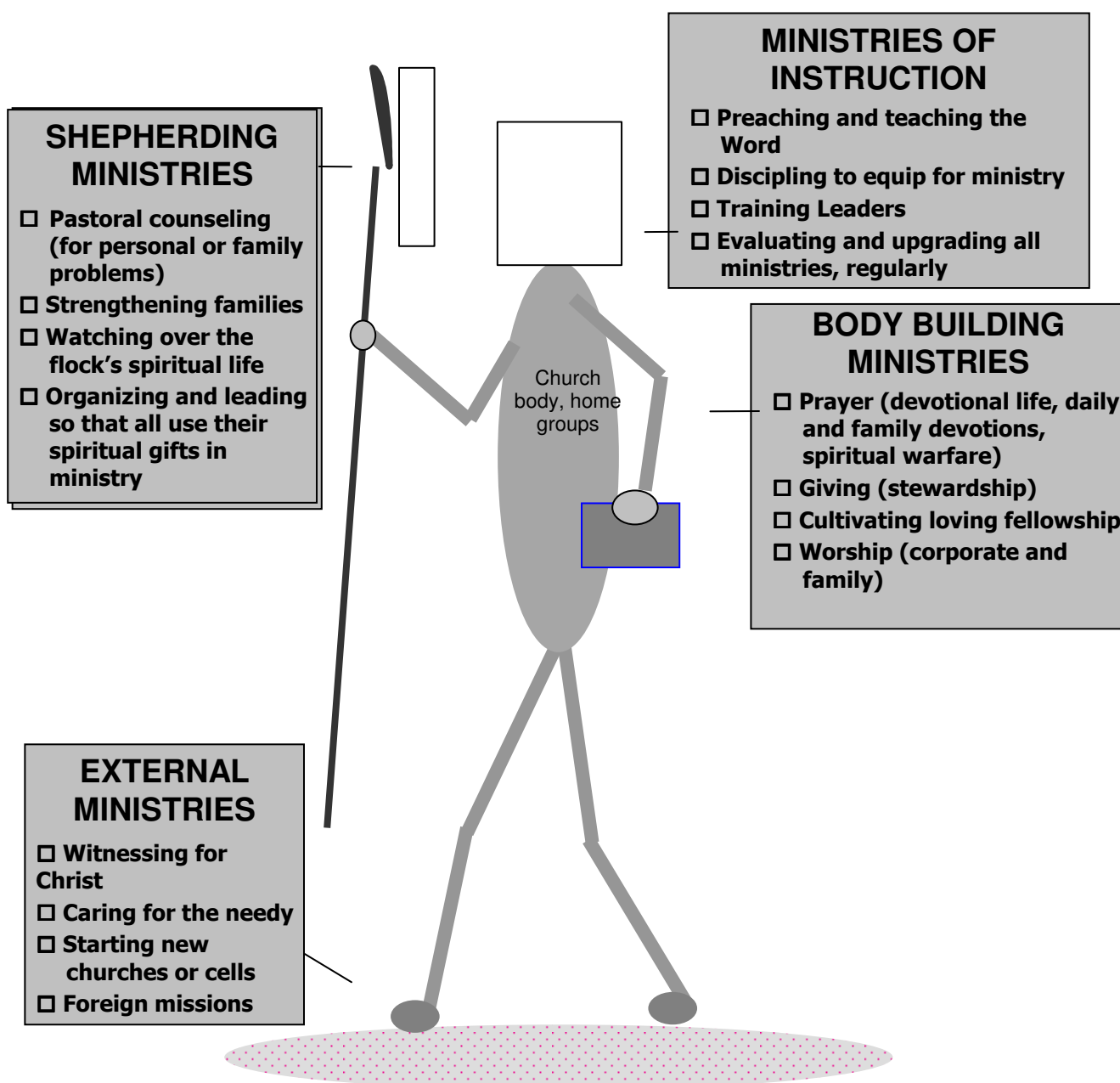
GENERAL TASK VI (Group Activity 28)

Develop all New Testament ministries

Group Activity 28: Review and do all ministries required by the New Testament

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Discuss the following gift-based ministries required by the New Testament. Mark in the box any that need to be developed *now* in our group:



GENERAL TASK VII (Group Activities 29-30)

Group leaders constantly train new leaders

Group Activity 29: Practice the 2 Timothy 2:2 training chain reaction

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

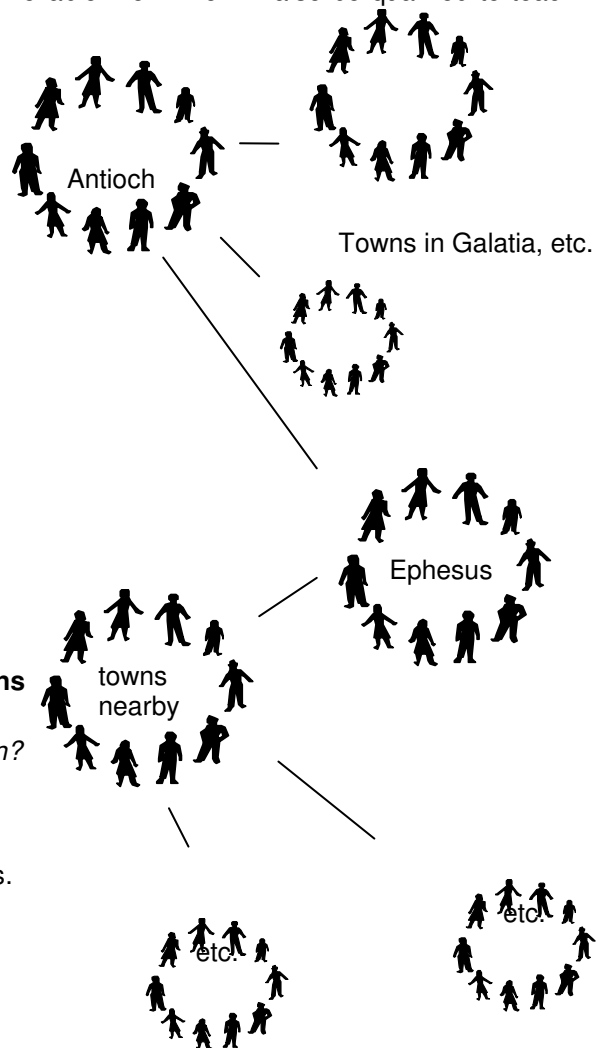
Read 2 Tim. 2:2 to find and discuss the steps of reproduction, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” Then review the four steps:

- 1** “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses ...”
(It began with Paul and other witnesses from **Antioch**.)
With whom does it begin for your group?

- 2** “entrust...”
(**Timothy** was to entrust the teaching to able shepherds in **Ephesus**.)
Who should our leader train to assist now and start a new group later?

- 3** “...to reliable men who will also be qualified...”
(The chain passed from Ephesus to many **towns nearby**.)
Who else can our present trainees train later on?

- 4** “...to teach **others**.” From the towns near Ephesus it spread to many, many other places. Paul started a similar chain reaction with Titus who named and prepared elders to shepherd new churches in Crete, Titus 1:5-9.
Where might we start an entirely new church or chain reaction?



Plan now to keep groups reproducing by helping new leaders to disciple other leaders of newer groups. Each leader continually prepares his own *Timothies* (apprentice leaders) in his own group, to share the leadership and form new groups.

☞ Coordination of this reproductive pastoral training assigned to: _____

Group Activity 30: Practice trouble-shooting for new groups

☞ Discussion assigned to: _____

Clarify and assign the job of correcting any of the following problems that need solving:

- **Children fuss, make mothers nervous:** Form a child-friendly group or work with other groups to share common child care. Help kids participate! ☞ Assigned to: _____
- **Someone in chronic crisis usurps the group's attention:** If one seems to enjoy being the victim and getting attention, do not feed this perverted bent. It will take up too much of your time and only makes them worse. Arrange for a practiced pastoral counselor to help them get their attention off themselves, to minister to others. ☞ Assigned to: _____
- **Some smugly criticize others who are not in home groups or house churches:** Challenge them firmly to obey Matthew 7:1-5 which forbids us to judge our brothers.

☞ Assigned to: _____

- **Petty rules frustrate participants:** Build organization on relationships, not structures, policies or forms imported from other churches. Do not force groups to divide in order to multiply. Rather, let potential leaders form their own new groups with whomever cares to accompany them. Give maximum freedom. If other leaders force rules upon you that hinder the group development, pray and try to explain patiently the principles outlined in these seven tasks. Bear down hard on the fact that you are obeying the commands of Jesus. You might ask power hungry, legalistic persons, 'Do you prefer that we obey *you* instead?' (Smile when you say it!) ☞ Assigned to: _____
- **Materials fail to stimulate, hold interest or yield needed ministries:** Before locking into specific materials, use the Scriptures listed under these 30 Group Activities. Discuss the commands of Jesus, the One Anothers, spiritual gifts and the ministries required by the New Testament. Equip leaders with tools to mine the Word on their own. Relying too much on *materials* creates passive students rather than active disciples. ☞ Assigned to: _____
- **Groups become mere Bible studies:** A good home group is a tiny *church*--keep it doing *everything* a church should do! For new churches, do not start mere 'preaching points.' They almost never meet people's needs and seldom reproduce. ☞ Assigned to: _____
- **Building programs or other temporary projects lure attention away from God's purposes as stated in His Word:** Discern our God-given priorities: start with His *commands and ministries required by the New Testament*. Keep other emphases strictly secondary. Excessive emphasis on building programs kills the excitement about what God is doing in the smaller discipling communities. ☞ Assigned to: _____
- **Visitors don't return:** Befriend them. Visit them. Listen to them. Offer to do things with and for them. Invest *time* in the Lord's work. If your group is not the best one for them, help them join another group. ☞ Assigned to: _____
- **Converts backslide:** They are babes in Christ--spiritual babies. Babies dirty their diapers. Be patient. Don't demand instant perfection. Make sure you deal with repentance and baptize them without undue delay. Overwhelm them with love and acceptance. Assure them of God's forgiveness and grace. Help them love their family and friends. Help them to forgive, love and become reconciled with anyone that they are having a hard time with. Help them to ask forgiveness. ☞ Assigned to: _____
- **People don't want home groups; they just want to go to church and be passive hearers:** Invite them cordially; if they still don't respond, let them lie in still pastures. Go seek the other sheep 'who are not of this fold.' You will only frustrate the passive sheep and yourself, if you keep prodding. Work with someone who has the gift of evangelism to start a group totally among new folks. ☞ Assigned to: _____