

# LIFE GROUP COACHING TIP—03.14.10

## Icebreaker: Postage-Stamp Faith

Group members funnel their faith into an image on a postage stamp.

*Tami Rudkin* | posted 12/12/2001

Make a template of an average-sized postage stamp and cut out as many squares or rectangles so that each person in your group will have one. Give one to each member and ask, "If you only had a postage stamp to express your faith, what would you write or draw?" Let the group have a few minutes to design their stamp and then let them share what they did. Assure them that this is for fun and that artistic ability is not the point.

## Article: "Faith-Oriented" Leaders

Values, goals, and feedback drive great leaders and great groups.

*Jon Weiner* | posted 7/12/2003

In Small Group Training, we learn about being a "faith-oriented" leader. The essential element to becoming faith-oriented is leading with the heart. A small group leader must love God, love group members, and love self as well. One of the important keys to being an outstanding leader of a small group is exhibiting a *servant's heart*—a passion for those the Lord has brought around you and your leadership team. So how can you create that kind of passion in the relationships within your small group? This passion is driven by shared values and defined goals.

Everything begins with the leader's values. Kouzes and Posner write, "Commitment flows from personal values." People will not put their heart into things they don't believe in. In fact, people tend to make their greatest commitment to the things they believe in most. Look at how people fill out their NCAA Basketball Tournament Brackets! In Basic Training we stress the importance of sharing your values with your group members. They need to know what motivates the group leader. Are they, the group members, important to the leader? Do they have value in his eyes and heart? The key to effective group leadership is examining and having shared values within a small group. Leaders all stand for something. Leaders may be passionate about Bible knowledge. They may be people who seek to better understand end times. They may be people who love deep and articulate study. Group members need to know where they fit in the picture.

Here is a very important truth—clarity of values is the energy that makes the difference in a group member's commitment to the group. If your group members do not know your heart and passions, they may be unwilling to perform the tasks that all groups need to be successful and effective. They may exhibit sporadic attendance patterns. They may not do assigned homework in the group or show up on time. But research has shown that if a leader will define his or her values and create an understanding of the values with others in the group, the result is a more dynamic group experience whereby the group members feel a sense of commitment to the group *and* the leader! Value setting is more than transparent living, though that is an essential element. By setting values the leader understands the important role he or she plays in establishing an atmosphere where the heart of a leader and a group can grow together!

"Values set the stage for action...goals release the energy." Sharing and setting goals with the entire group is the second part to establishing effective heart-driven leadership. What good is goal setting in a group? Let me share what goals can do for a group.

Goal setting helps the group flow and grow. Group members understand the direction of the small group. They know the purpose for the group and they share the values together.

Goals remind us that we are to *do something*. Whether it is to finish a study in 6 weeks or go on a mission trip, goals remind the group that we have things to do.

Goals help groups overcome distractions. Group distractions range from the mundane phone calls and barking dogs to misunderstandings and poor communication. Goals should be set where truth telling, a value for small groups, is practiced and expected. Minimizing distractions, especially emotionally charged issues is essential to the long term health of a group.

Goals can be both individual and group-oriented. For example, a goal might be for each member to lead a session of the study or a time of prayer. Another example would be the desire for each group member to read through the curriculum or finish all the homework.

Often goals may be perceived as the finish line for the group, but goals are written only as an end point. For example, "At the end of our study..." or "At the end of our group..." Goals can motivate, strengthen, and focus a group. Group leaders should remind the group often of the established goals.

The end result of living out values and focusing on goals is the feedback that the leader gets from group members. This feedback comes both as verbal (affirmation and non-verbal (quality participation and commitment). The payoff for the leader and the group members is huge. Group members emulate what they see. In these groups, members aspire to be like the leader, and leaders aspire to be like Christ. Leadership is a great privilege and opportunity. Make the most of it by establishing values, setting goals, and enjoying feedback.

## Flowers Of Faith

Offer someone flowers so they can smell the fragrance of God.

*Sue Skalicky* | posted 6/09/2003

Showing people God's love can often feel like taking a stab in the dark. Kind gestures are often welcomed with a turned back and mumbled sarcasm. Yet in 2 Corinthians 5:7 (NIV) we are told to boldly, "... live by faith, not by sight." The Message goes on to say, "Do you suppose a few ruts in the road or rocks in the path are going to stop us? When the time comes, we'll be plenty ready to exchange exile for homecoming."

Clearly, God is asking us to live our lives believing He is working in and through us even when we can't see the results. *Cheryl Costello-Forshey* beautifully depicts the power of such living in her poem, *The Most Beautiful Flower*:

*The park bench was deserted as I sat down to read  
Beneath the long, straggly branches of an old willow tree.  
Disillusioned by life with good reason to frown,  
For the world was intent on dragging me down.  
And if that weren't enough to ruin my day,  
A young boy out of breath approached me, all tired from play.  
He stood right before me with his head tilted down  
And said with great excitement, "Look what I found!"*

*In his hand was a flower, and what a pitiful sight,  
With its petals all worn - not enough rain, or too little light.  
Wanting him to take his dead flower and go off to play,  
I faked a small smile and then shifted away.  
But instead of retreating he sat next to my side  
And placed the flower to his nose  
And declared with overacted surprise,  
"It sure smells pretty and it's beautiful, too.  
That's why I picked it; here, it's for you."*

*The weed before me was dying or dead.  
Not vibrant of colors: orange, yellow or red.  
But I knew I must take it, or he might never leave.  
So I reached for the flower, and replied, "Just what I need."*

*But instead of him placing the flower in my hand,  
He held it mid-air without reason or plan.  
It was then that I noticed for the very first time  
That weed-toting boy could not see: he was blind.  
I heard my voice quiver; tears shone in the sun  
As I thanked him for picking the very best one.*

*You're welcome," he smiled, and then ran off to play,  
Unaware of the impact he'd had on my day.  
I sat there and wondered how he managed to see  
A self-pitying woman beneath an old willow tree.  
How did he know of my self-indulged plight?  
Perhaps from his heart, he'd been blessed with true sight.*

*Through the eyes of a blind child, at last I could see  
The problem was not with the world; the problem was me.  
And for all of those times I myself had been blind,  
I vowed to see the beauty in life,  
And appreciate every second that's mine.  
And then I held that wilted flower up to my nose  
And breathed in the fragrance of a beautiful rose  
And smiled as I watched that young boy,  
Another weed in his hand,  
About to change the life of an unsuspecting old man.*

This month, plan a time for your small group to hand out flowers. Form teams of 3 group members and set off to several different locations throughout the city (bowling alley, grocery store, Laundromat, park, or the mall). Each team should hand out single flowers (carnations are pretty and inexpensive) to people who cross their path with a verbal reminder that God loves them. Have all the teams meet together later to share their experiences. End this time by praying for those who received flowers. When we blindly trust God and excitedly thrust forth His love into a discouraged, fearful world, the impact can be immeasurable. A simple flower of faith can change a life forever.

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