

Intro



You've got your group started in the Word, and you're going along smoothly on your Bible study journey. That's great! But where on earth is the finish line? How do you know when your group has achieved success? In this guide, we explore the "Winning Stages" that point Group Drivers toward healthy and rewarding results.

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Stage One

When Purpose is the Goal

End Date

When beginning a new Bible study, sometimes a group starts with an **end date** in mind from the get go. This is great! For example, a group of young moms may decide to meet for a summertime Bible study. When the summer is over, the group ends, too. Or, perhaps a group of men decide to meet for a few weeks for an Advent study. When Christmas rolls around, the group is finished.

Have you ever been a part of a group that had a specific end date?

If so, how did the calendar determine the meetings?

Can you think of other reasons a group might have an end date in mind from the get go?

What might be the drawbacks to this kind of group? The advantages?

Stage One

When Purpose is the Goal



Topic / Book

Sometimes, a group meets with the goal to study a **specific topic or Bible book or passage**. When the group has studied what they set out to study, the group has met their goal. For example, a group of new Believers may decide they want to gather to study the Book of John to learn more about who Jesus is. Or, a group of well-seasoned Christians might want to study Leviticus to explore how Jesus fulfills the Levitical sacrifices. When the topic or passage has been covered, the group has “won.”

Groups like this have advantages and disadvantages. They often accomplish their purpose (studying something specific), but if they let lectures dominate their meeting time, they sometimes fail to develop deep connections among members. The result is that they may never be able to drive themselves well. Also, without those healthy connections, a Driver may choose a topic or passage that isn't the best fit for the group.

Have you ever been a part of a group that met only to study a particular topic or Bible passage?

Did meeting that goal make you feel like you'd “won?”

What other advantages and disadvantages are there for this type of group?

What sorts of topics or Bible passages do you think might be good for a group with this goal? What might be tricky to navigate? (And why?)

Stage One

When Growth is the Goal



Edification

Edification is a biblical word that means growth. When a group meets, **Christian growth is always the goal**. But how can you measure that? When this goal is being met, another stage has been won. It takes time and effort to become the kind of group who shares their spiritual vulnerabilities and victories with one another. But when group members begin to pour into one another, group and individual growth can be seen.

Often, group members genuinely encourage one another in their spiritual walks, pray for one another, sharpen one another's biblical knowledge, practice spiritual disciplines together, and so on. In short, Believers who meet together regularly begin to edify one another. After all, iron sharpens iron. (Proverbs 27:17) Progress, not perfection, is the goal.

If you are a Group Driver, how have you seen spiritual edification within your group or in individual members?

What sort of thing/s prompted this edification? (For example, genuine sharing, a response to the lesson, a step of obedience on the part of a group member, a trial, etc.)

As Group Drivers, we absolutely can *not*— meaning we never-ever can, can't with a capital C-A-N-T— make anyone grow spiritually. This is the work of the Holy Spirit alone. But what we *can do* is teach others to cooperate and be ready for the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. This comes by aligning with the will and ways of God, obedience and submission to Him, and not quenching the work of the Holy Spirit. With that in mind, **how can a Group Driver help group members position themselves for the Holy Spirit's work?**

Stage One

When Growth is the Goal



Edification

If you are setting goals for edification, list three areas of spiritual growth that would be important to you and your group.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Daily Bible reading
- Praying as a group
- Regular church attendance
- Development of spiritual disciplines (fasting, sharing, worship, personal prayer, etc.)
- Fruit of the Spirit
- Using one's spiritual gifts
- Sharing life with one another

Now, look again at your list above and answer these questions:

Why did you choose those things?

How will you measure the progress?

When these group goals are met, celebrate together and set new goals!



Stage Two

Fostering Community

Sharing and Caring

Another expected outcome of small groups is that group members begin to truly **share their lives with and care for one another**. This should bleed right out of the edification happening in Stage One. It doesn't mean that the group becomes reclusive or clique-ish, though. It just means that they truly care about one another and that they are there for spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional support through life.

What might this look like?

The scenarios are limitless. Some common examples are:

- Someone gets sick and group members organize a meal train
- A couple welcomes a new baby and the group buys diapers
- Someone shares a very private prayer request and the group encourages them and prays consistently for them
- A member has an unexpected bill and the group pulls together to help cover it
- Someone needs a legal, medical, or blue collar expert; several people in the group share suggestions or know-how

Stage Two

Fostering Community

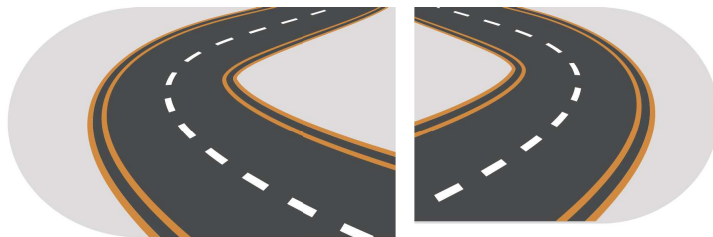
Have you been part of a group that “won” this stage? Did they excel at sharing and caring? If so, what did that look like?

In order to win this stage, true community must be fostered. That takes intentionality. It often starts by encouraging real discussion. This happens when the Group Driver is transparent and includes time in the schedule for members to really get to know each other—even doing activities outside of the “classroom.” It often starts with the leader!

So, what intentional steps will you take to foster community within your group?

How can your action steps as a Driver be measured?

Remember: As a Group Driver, your goal is to be observant, looking for what God is doing in the lives of your group members.



Stage Two

Accountability & Application

Accountability

As true community is fostered and group members begin to share real life openly, **the door is open for accountability.** Biblical love and grace are important here, of course. Group Drivers must be willing to set the pace for being honest and transparent. They too must be willing to be held accountable, themselves. Once that is done, group members will usually follow suit. This is great because people usually feel more comfortable with two-way accountability. In other words, it’s “I hold you accountable, but you hold me accountable!”

As members grow in their spiritual walks (Stage One) they are ready to be held accountable for those spiritual things like daily Bible reading, consistent prayer, personal glorification of God, and so on. But oftentimes, a group member also needs accountability for things that don’t (on the surface) seem spiritual—things like controlling anger, not viewing certain websites, not reading certain novels, and so on. Of course, these things *are* spiritual even if they don’t seem like it at first.

Why do you think people often struggle with accountability?

What might make someone feel comfortable with being held accountable?

What can your group do to “win” this stage? (Sometimes it just starts with asking, “Where do you need accountability and how can our group help?”)

Yes, winning happens when group members are successful in doing what they set out to do. However, the honesty and vulnerability in sharing is also a win! Make sure you celebrate it!

Stage Two

Accountability & Application



Application

Accountability and application go hand in hand. In order to succeed with accountability, we must apply what we've learned. This is life-transforming! Application proves understanding and (when done from the right heart) is a sign of submission and obedience to God.

Do your group members understand and apply what they've learned? How would you rate the group on a scale of 1 - 10? Why would you rate them this way?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

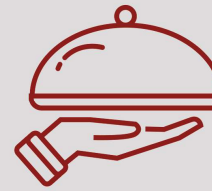
Application can be encouraged. Ultimately, of course, it is up to individual members whether they apply what they've learned... or not. However, when a group collectively helps one another understand and apply, we can encourage one another to genuinely "walk the walk."

Here are some ideas to foster application: let members share their application "God-stories," ask members how they will apply the lesson in the future (check later for follow through), put together service based group opportunities for application (more on this later), and so on.

What will you do to foster application? How will you measure the outcome?

Stage Three

The Ultimate Win: Service & Multiplication



Service: Doing

Stage Three contains the ultimate wins! The first expected outcome here is serving. **A healthy, thriving group will be a serving group.** Whether the group decides to meet for a collective service project, like serving with Feed the Need, or members of the group individually step up to serve in various church ministries, service is definitely a sign of a healthy disciple and therefore, a healthy group!

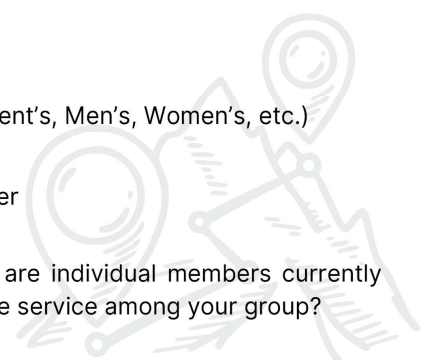
But what do we mean by serving? There are two aspects. First is doing; second is sharing. Let's take a deeper look at what we mean.

There are an abundance of service opportunities in our church, community, and beyond. If their feet and hands are able, encourage your group members to use them. If finances are available, encourage your group to share them. If you have prayer warriors who are devoted to prayer, encourage your group members to serve in that capacity. There is always something to do!

In addition to the ideas above, here are just a few more ideas of things you can do and needs you can meet:

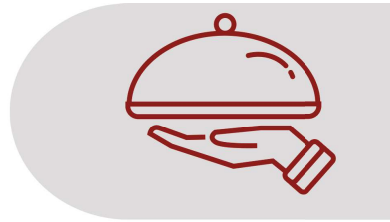
- Feed the Need
- Gobble Kits
- Operation Christmas Child
- Church Ministries (Children's, Student's, Men's, Women's, etc.)
- Area nursing homes
- Bastrop Pregnancy Resource Center

Where will your group serve? Where are individual members currently serving? What will you do to encourage service among your group?



Stage Three

The Ultimate Win: Service & Multiplication



Service: Sharing

Christian service is about more than humanitarian efforts, although those efforts are very important. Not only are Christians called to help mankind, we are also called to **share the gospel of Jesus Christ** with a spiritually lost world.

Sharing the Good News is a sign of spiritual maturity. When a group is comprised of Christians who share Jesus, the group has “won the race.” They are fulfilling the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19-20.

Service opportunities are great for meeting physical needs, and they also open the door to meeting spiritual needs. The person who serves a meal to fill a hungry body can share Jesus and fill a hungry soul. The group member who comforts a scared, teenaged mom can share the ultimate comfort of the Savior. The children’s worker who helps a child make a craft can share about the best Creator ever! You get the idea.

How would you rate your group on a scale of 1 -10? Why?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How do you plan to encourage your group members to share Jesus?

If you feel that your group needs additional trainings on how to share the gospel, check out our library at CBCFamily.net/library for discipleship resources. Let us know if your group needs them printed.

Another good resource is Zach Lee’s training called *How to Share the Gospel Story*. You can find that on RightNow Media.

Stage Three

The Ultimate Win: Service & Multiplication



Multiplication

Most people don’t like saying goodbye to a good thing.

There are two main reasons why groups don’t multiply. First, the group isn’t as healthy as it looks and so no new leaders have developed. (This can be a harsh but good wake up call!) However, the main reason that *healthy* groups don’t multiply is because no one wants to step away from the good thing they’ve got going. It’s hard; we know. But, there are other people out there, waiting to be a part of something as special as what the “parent” group has!

Get your group ready to multiply! ...But how? Here are a few ideas:

- Emphasize outreach and invitations
 - When members go out and serve, and then invite others, your group will grow too big to stay together
- Rotate leadership
 - Give members the opportunity to flex their leadership muscles by Driving the discussion for a session or even a series
- Look for members who are excited about God and His Word and might consider driving an “End Date” or “Topic” group (pp. 2-3)
 - Look for opportunities to pour into these members; share leadership resources, books, or trainings with them.
 - Need additional ideas? See *6 Tips for a Great Small Group* by Bill Search on RightNow Media.
 - Once a member decides to Drive a new group, keep meeting with them and supporting them whenever you can!

Stage Three

The Ultimate Win: Service & Multiplication



Recap

Let's review the Three Winning Stages for small groups.

Multiplication

The ultimate "win" is multiplication.

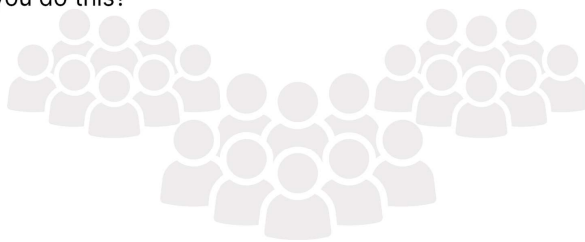
As Group Drivers, we must remember that goal as we go. It turns the goodbyes into beautiful "see-ya-soon's" as we reconnect for support or cross paths here and there.

Are you actively equipping any of your members to become Drivers?

If so, train them to do the same for someone else when they are ready.

If not, begin now. Look for a group member who exhibits signs of readiness and then get started. Who will you equip?

How will you do this?



STAGE 1



Purpose: a group meets successfully for a specified amount of time or for a sepcific purpose (i.e., to study a topic or Bible passage).



Edification: a group sets spiritual growth as its aim and meets that goal by noticing progress (not perfection).

STAGE 2



Community: a group begins to function as a true community, sharing their lives and truly caring about one another.



Accountability & Application: group members start to open up about where they need accountability and apply the things they have learned.

STAGE 3

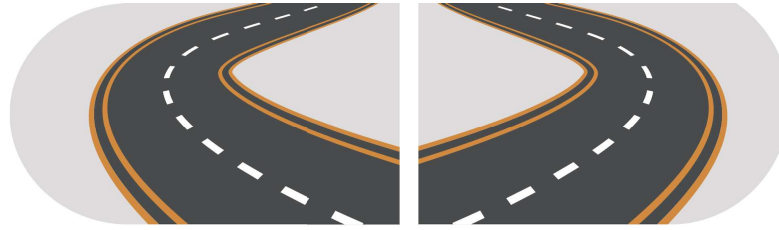


Service (Doing and Sharing): group members (collectively and individually) seek opportunities to serve and commit to doing so; they also commit to sharing Jesus with others.



Multiplication: Group Drivers equip and encourage members to become new Drivers so that the group multiplies into other groups!

Notes:



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