

relationships

introduction

FACILITATOR: For the next four meetings, we are looking at relationships. This is useful as we outwork the values of cell, such as community, sacrificial love, honesty & accountability. The 4Ws in the series reflect the theme and over the four week period you should find this helpful in getting to know one another better. You will also learn about how people see themselves, what they like and what they don't like.

These four meetings are fundamental as you develop into a cell that has good, solid relationships with each other. You will experience community – which is much more than just meeting together. You will also see how much influence you can have both individually and as a cell on the world around you as we study relationships.

1: community

FACILITATOR: The aim of this lesson is to see that we do not exist as independent individuals but that we are already living in community with others. Our attitudes and actions affect others. Our community needs to be growing and outwardly-focused as it reaches out to the lost.

Cells reflect the lifestyle of Jesus and we model ourselves on the perfect community - the Trinity. These next meetings help us understand what it means to live as Christians together, moving away from an individualistic mindset to one that looks out for and cares for one another.

welcome

CELL: What is the greatest compliment you have ever received? Why were you impacted so much by it in particular [when compared to other compliments]?

worship

FACILITATOR: Have one person read Philippians 2:5-11 aloud to the group. Have the group keep their eyes closed. As the person reads the scripture slowly, ask everyone to meditate on the verses. You may wish to read it 2 or 3 times. There is no need to rush. Invite Jesus into the meeting. Guide people to be open to encountering God through this meditation even if it is not what they are used to doing.

End the meditation. Ask people what God has spoken to them about. Share this with the group. It would be good to thank everyone for trying what may be a different style of worship and to re-affirm that worship is not only a lifestyle but also a choice. We can choose to worship God in many different ways.

word

FACILITATOR: Ask someone to read Acts 2:41-47.

As the leader, go through this passage highlighting what it tells us about community. Ask at some point, what is community and what are the benefits of it?

Below are some characteristics of cell. Write these on 6 pieces of paper [one characteristic per sheet] and give them out to individuals/pairs depending on the number in the group. Discuss each one, looking at what they mean and how we as a cell, can take on these characteristics:

1. discipleship
2. prayer
3. commitment
4. servanthood
5. vulnerability
6. care

Have the individual/pairs find scripture verses that are relevant to the characteristic they were assigned and write the verse(s) on the sheet of paper. Once everyone is done, regroup and discuss the characteristic with the verses.

As you look at these, steer the discussion so that it is relevant to the cell group's current situation. This may be a good time to move the group forward in deeper community by allowing the members themselves to encourage one another to be more honest – this is always far more effective than the leader 'telling' people to be honest and grow into community! As always, values need to be worked out with practical action. Don't let the discussions become theoretical, abstract or conceptual.

CELL: Based on the discussion and scripture verses, take time as a group to pray and seek God regarding where you are as a cell. Allow the "heart" of your cell to be open before God to be challenged, corrected, and encouraged in each of those characteristics of a cell that you have discussed during this cell time.

witness/what now?

CELL: As we develop community in our cell, we are extending that community to our friends outside. One of the things that would be great to see happening in the cell is that we are getting to know one another's friends and building a good relational network. How far is this happening in your cell? How can the cell be open to new folk coming in? What are the signs of a community which is outwardly-focused and growing?

What can you do this week to meet and get to know others? Make plans with a fellow cell member to hang out this week with each other and perhaps some of each other's friends.

2: teamwork

introduction

FACILITATOR: *The aim of this lesson is to understand that a team is not the same as a group. To identify ways of developing the cell so that it is not a group of individuals but a team of individuals who have common goals and support one another in seeing these realized.*

welcome

FACILITATOR: *Have everyone answer the following:*

This cell group could help me best by (answer 2)...

- Holding me to my commitment
- Listening
- Praying for me
- Really being my friends
- Being open about their struggles
- Joining me in this commitment
- ‘Kicking’ me when I need it
- Doing exactly what they are doing
- Other _____

worship

CELL: *We know that God exists as the Trinity – 3 persons in 1. This is a team, a community. Thank God for His breadth, depth, all-sufficiency. Even though we don’t fully understand how the Trinity works, we can still be amazed by the person that God is. Thank God for the way in which he works with us and how He has allowed us to be part of his team.*

word

FACILITATOR: *Have everyone spend a couple of minutes quietly reading the story of the defeat of the Amalekites in Exodus 17. While they wait for each other to finish, have them think individually about this illustration of Moses, Aaron and Hur working together. Once everyone is done ask the following question and discuss.*

CELL: *Why have a team?*

As a group, make a list of why teamwork is so important for our cells. Feedback by going around the room saying one benefit of teamwork until you have said them all aloud.

FACILITATOR: *God has wired people differently. Some people look at situations from a very different standpoint than others. We need to learn that this apparent paradox or conflict is not a bad thing but is an integral part of being in a body – many parts working together with different functions. They are all vital and necessary.*

FACILITATOR: *As a group read 1Corinthians 12:7-31, Eph 4:11-13, Romans12:4-8.*

Give everybody a piece of paper. Without writing their names on the paper, ask everybody to write on their paper three of their strengths [on the left side] and three of their weaknesses [on the right side] and then give the paper to the facilitator. Making sure that it is kept totally anonymous read out what strengths and weaknesses people have written.

Once everyone is done, read through the list aloud. It will be apparent that, as a group, we compliment each other, with different weaknesses being counterbalanced by other’s strengths. As the leader, keep the section moving forward and highlight the fact that the diversity of the group is a real strength.

In its initial stages a cell is group of people. Over a period of time this group develops into a team, with common goals and an understanding of who we are, how we tick and what we can contribute.

CELL: These are 5 friends of teamwork: COMMITMENT-HARMONY-TRUST-FRIENDSHIP-HONOR. These are enemies of teamwork: DIVISION-COMPETITION-INDEPENDENCE.

FACILITATOR: *Think about how the cell can develop the 5 friends of team work and avoid the enemies. When people have had time to think, ask people to share ways of doing this. Don't forget to include people who don't usually say anything by asking if they would like to say something. If you feel that people are not being honest, or that there is a sense of conflicting views, ask others into the discussion to get the group to own the process.*

CELL: Pray as a group. Decide now that you will work together as a team. Give each other permission to say when this is not happening and pray for God's Holy Spirit to help you.

witness

CELL: Last week we talked about extending our networks and getting to know one another's friends. Did you do what you planned to do? How did it go? Pray for the different people who you met, that God would strengthen your friendship and work in their lives.

what now?

CELL: Take time this week to consider the 'friends' and 'enemies' of a team that were discussed in this cell meeting. Consider where you as part of this team on a personal level. Are you growing or lagging in your commitment to this cell? Are you exemplifying friendship and trust? Pray and ask the Lord to search your heart and then put in to action those things he speaks to you.

Challenge yourself to memorize Romans 12:9-13.

3: discipleship and accountability

introduction

FACILITATOR: *This is a key meeting for building relationships in our cells - relationships which operate on a deeper level and which help us grow in our relationship with Jesus. This series of meetings will give people a clear understanding of how discipleship benefits us and the principles of honesty and accountability.*

Fusion emphasizes relational discipleship as a very important model. The emphasis throughout our lives is summed up in the cell value 'Jesus at the center.' Jesus is the primary focus of all Christian discipleship and with the help of others we can grow into the person God intends us to be.

welcome

CELL: What is your favorite memory of time spent, as a child, with your mother, father or guardian? OR did you have a hero when you were young? Who were they and why did you admire them?

worship

FACILITATOR: *You might like to write a love letter to God without asking him for anything. Ask people voluntarily to read them out and use them as a basis for thanking God for the relationship we have with Him. As you praise God and worship, encourage people to focus on God's character, his attributes and His interaction with us as His children.*

word

FACILITATOR: *Say the word 'discipleship.' Pause and say it again a few times. People will look at you with confusion/expectation but don't react to anyone or respond to any interruptions. Take your time.*

Get each person to write the word 'discipleship' on the top of a piece of paper. Take a few minutes by yourselves to jot down what the word 'discipleship' says to you.

CELL: Do you have any experiences of discipleship? What have they been? Who has influenced your life and how? How have you grown as a Christian so far? Encourage people to note down their first reactions/thoughts.

Read 2 Kings 2:1-14; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 and 2:7-8 together then answer the questions.

- What are some aspects involved in discipleship?
- Why is discipleship such an important part of our cell life?
- What does a cell look like where people are being disciplined?
- What do people's lives look like where there is no discipleship?
- How would this impact the cell?

FACILITATOR: *As a group, take an honest look at whether discipleship is happening, as it could be. If so, great! If not, why not and what can be done to encourage it?*

A suggestion as to how we could apply these things to ourselves is to ask everyone to answer, by themselves, these questions. Have them write down the answers:

- Who are the people I have been accountable to (ex. honest and open in a consistent and deliberate manner) in the last six months?
- Is there anything at the moment I would like to tell them?
- What are the areas I find hard to talk about? (ex. sex, finances, insecurities, etc.)
- In what areas would I like advice or to be understood better?
- Is there anything that I don't particularly want to mention but maybe ought to?

Take time to pray with one another. Encourage everyone to make decisions, write them down and to act on what they have written down.

witness

CELL: Discuss how open and honest we are with our friends who don't go to church. How do we handle the fact that we need to share our lives with people openly for them to be saved but that sometimes they wouldn't understand, or what we are going through may not help them on their journey to get to know God?

Does anyone have an example of how they were open & honest with someone in an area of weakness which actually got the respect of the other person? How much do we like to appear to have all the answers and how often do we feel that a different approach would work [saying 'I don't know' or 'that puzzles me too']?

what now?

CELL: This week, take time to review the answers you wrote down from the earlier questions on discipleship. If you are not accountable to anyone, pray and ask the Lord for direction in this particular area. If you are already accountable to someone, are you meeting with that person on a consistent basis? Are there things you are hesitating to discuss? Don't wait...take action this week to move ahead.

In the area of discipleship within our Christian walk, it is important to have mentors in our life who are mature in the Lord and are able to teach, challenge, correct, and encourage us. It is also important to have peers that can pray with us, keep us accountable and encourage us in our walk. And finally, we also need those in our life who are newer in the Lord and we are encouraging and praying with them. Identify people in your life who would fall into each of these areas.

4: good friendships

introduction

FACILITATOR: *The purpose of this meeting is to encourage friendships - through all the talk of accountability, teamwork and community; it is friendship which will provide the foundation for the cell.*

welcome

FACILITATOR: *Take time to review from last week's "what now?" section. Where is the cell as a whole in the area of discipleship/accountability? Encourage everyone to aim for these types of relationships within their lives.*

If time permits...

Go around the group naming a good friend. Share what are the three qualities in them that you admire the most.

worship

FACILITATOR: *Have someone read Proverbs 18:24 aloud.*

Let the focus of the worship time be on Jesus as a friend who sticks by us in every circumstance and who is closer than even a brother. Use relevant music to support this time of thanks, praise and devotion to God.

If you feel it is appropriate for your cell, you could ask people to thank God for the friendships they have, saying what they enjoy about them and why they are so important to them.

You could also extend this to include un-churched friends. Thank God for them, speak out their good traits and why you appreciate them as a friend.

word

FACILITATOR: *We're looking at LOYALTY, UNITY & CONFLICT. Read through the following scripture passages as a group and discuss the questions.*

CELL: Read Ruth 1:1-18; John 6:66-69 together.

Who has inspired loyalty in you? What was it about that person that drew you to them? How can we inspire loyalty in others? Why is loyalty important for building the cell?

FACILITATOR: *Get people to feedback to the group. Make sure that one person doesn't dominate and that you draw out contributions from every member.*

CELL: Read Romans 15:5-7 together.

What do you understand unity to be? Why is it so important that we are united? What barriers are there to unity? How can we encourage unity in the cell? What is it to be united in spirit, intent on one purpose [Phil 2:2]? How does the unity/diversity paradox work out from your point of view?

FACILITATOR: *We are bound to face conflicts in the cell life cycle- it's an inevitability of being with other humans! Often the issue is not whether you have conflicts, but how they are resolved when they occur.*

CELL: Read Matthew 5:21-24 together.

What sort of things could there be conflict over in a cell? Who do you become when you get into conflict? How do you feel? What ways do you try to close the situation down and not let the conflict be worked out as it needs to be? (i.e. I get angry and loud, I get withdrawn and say nothing, etc.)

FACILITATOR: *The following questions do not need to be answered aloud, but rather encourage people to think hard about this. Take a few moments for some self evaluation!
It is just possible that you as an individual may, at some point, be the source of a conflict in the cell! If this is so, you may need to understand how you are wired, how the other person is wired and where your apparent differences come from. The challenge is to make a decision now that you will be open to this - how will you respond? How can we learn to be accepting of others' points of view? Where do our own beliefs about how people ought to be come from? [Parents, education church background]*

CELL: Get into pairs and share as openly as you feel able. Pray into this. Identify the main areas in which you need God's help to change and ask Him for his help. You probably have a pretty good idea of your perspective of the world. What we need is God's perspective; ask him for this.

witness

CELL: Jesus said that "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

How much do the people in your relational networks get to see the love you have for one another? Be honest – brainstorm ideas together. If you don't feel that your commitment to one another is seen by the world, how could it be more visual?

what now?

CELL: This week commit to memory John 13:35. Be intentional to pray that God will bring His love to people through you as an individual and through the love you display as a cell group.