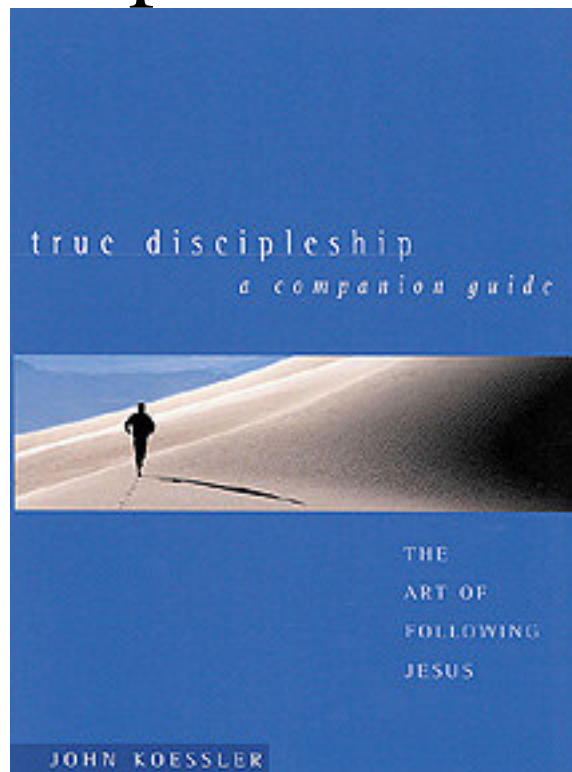


True Discipleship: A Companion Guide



Small Group Leader's Guide

Tips for Leading Your Small Group

What makes a small group successful? There are many factors that contribute to the overall all experience. One of the most important is the role of the leader. During the course of the semester you will be leading your small group in discussing the week's unit from True Discipleship: A Companion Guide. Here are "seven habits" effective leaders of small group use to generate discussion. These principles will help you to guide the discussion for your group.

Principle #1: Remember Your Role

Leading a small group is very different from lecturing. A lecture is often a one way conversation. The one who lectures serves in the role of an expert content provider passing along information to those who are listening. A discussion leader, on the other hand, is a peer whose primary function is to moderate the group discussion. As a discussion leader you do not need to have all the answers.

Principle #2: Take Time to Prepare

While it is true that you do not need to have to be an expert on the subject to lead an effective discussion, you do need to prepare. The better your preparation, the more meaningful the group experience is likely to be for the rest of the participants. Before the group meets it will be important for you to familiarize yourself with the content to that week's unit and leader's guide. Take time to pray for yourself and the members of your group that the Holy Spirit will use your efforts to further their spiritual growth.

Principle #3: Know Where You are Going

A dynamic group leader knows where he or she is headed in the discussion. After you have completed the unit for the week and read through the leader's guide, determine the goals you would like to see accomplished as a result of the discussion. Is there a particular application in the week's unit that you want to underscore? Should the group make a decision of some kind by the end of the discussion? The best group discussion are a journey. Before setting out, choose a "destination."

Principle #4: Formulate Your Questions

The questions provided in the leader's guide provide a general direction for the small group meeting. However, you should not limit yourself to them. After you have completed the unit and familiarized yourself with the questions in the leader's guide you should select questions from the unit's daily lessons and formulate your own additional questions. You will use five basic types of questions during the discussion:

***Launch Questions:** These are open ended questions that you will use to draw the group into the discussion. They often introduce the week's topic by raising a

need. They help the group to “warm up” to the ideas under discussion and to one another.

***Observation Questions:** These are simple questions that require group members to state facts that have been read in the biblical text. The answer to the question is apparent to the reader.

***Interpretation Questions:** This type of question invites the group to draw some conclusion about what has been observed. The answer deals with meaning, definition, cause and implication. The answer is not obvious and group members may disagree. This type of question is at the heart of the discussion.

***Summary Questions:** Summary questions usually come near the end of the discussion and ask the group to synthesize the ideas that have been discussed into a conclusion. These are the questions you will use to point the group to the “destination” you have chosen for the discussion.

***Application Questions:** Questions of application provide the “payoff” for your discussion. They deal with the practical implications of the study for your group. They are the “so what?” and “now what?” questions you will use to spur group members to personally respond to what they have learned.

Principle #5: Provide leadership not control.

One of the differences between group discussion and a lecture is that group discussions tend to be more fluid. One member’s contribute may take the discussion in an entirely new direction, one that you had not anticipated as a leader. While you want to be aware of the danger of unnecessary tangents, do not be afraid to let the Holy Spirit move the direction of the conversation into new areas, as long as what is being discussed is relevant to the topic at hand and grows out of what has been studied. Your job is to provide leadership not control.

Principle #6: Offer feedback when group members respond.

Your feedback will help keep the discussion moving, steer away from tangents, and encourage further response from group members. Here are some of the types of feedback you will need to provide:

***Paraphrase:** Restate the response in your own words. This gives the group time to think about what has been said and helps to clarify the group member’s contribution to the discussion.

***Affirmation:** Compliment group members when they offer a valuable insight or ask a good question. Use affirmation to encourage others to add their perspective.

You might say something like, “That’s a great question. What do the rest of you think?”

***Challenge:** A gentle challenge can draw out alternative viewpoints. This is not the same as simply saying, “You’re wrong!” You may want to challenge someone’s response because you feel that are incorrect by saying: “Are you sure about that? What do the rest of you think?” Or you may want to energize the discussion by playing “devil’s advocate.”

***Summary and Correlation:** After several people have shared their ideas it is good to summarize what they have said in a sentence or two and “connect the dots” when their contributions correlate with one another. In most cases as the discussion proceeds a kind of group consensus will begin to develop. It is often the point that the Holy Spirit is driving home to the group. As you sense this begin to take place put it into words.

Principle #7: Pace the Discussion

If the discussion is a kind of “journey,” you will want to do your best to see that the group arrives at the destination. The progression usually begins with a broad discussion of the need or topic in the warm up, a series of observation questions that enable the group to draw out implications and think about practical applications for themselves. In the leader’s guide below each discussion includes a concluding exercise that is meant to help the group respond to what has been learned. Try not to let the group become bogged down in a single question or sidetracked by tangents. Here are some tips that will help you to keep pace the discussion:

- If someone begins to monopolize the discussion, ask others to share their opinion or summarize what has been said and move on.
- If someone goes off on a tangent, gently point it out by saying, “I think we are a little off subject, why don’t we talk about it later.”
- Estimate how much time you want to take with each portion of the study and watch the clock.

Above all, remember that this is not just a classroom exercise. God will use your preparation and effort to draw the group closer to Christ. Pray, prepare and trust the Holy Spirit to work through you.

Meeting #1:

Introduction to the Group

Introductory Exercise:

1. Have each person in the group take turns stating their name and one important fact about their background. Have each one explain what makes the fact they share so important.
2. Ask each group member to write three personal facts on a 3 x 5 card (be sure to bring enough cards for everyone in the group). Once the cards have been completed, mix them up and give a card to each one in the group. Have each member read the card he or she was given and give three guesses as to which member wrote the card. Once they have done so, have the person who wrote the card identify themselves.

Group Discussion:

3. Identify a color that best describes your experience at Moody up to this point? Why?
4. How would you describe your expectations prior to coming to Moody?
5. What has surprised you the most?
6. Have there been any disappointments? If so, what?
7. What specific change do you hope to see take place in your spiritual life this semester?

Closing Exercise:

Have the members of your group meet briefly with their accountability partner and set a time to meet. Have the pairs pray for each other.

Leader's Notes:

My "destination" (i.e. objective) for this group discussion is:

Questions from the Companion Guide that I plan to use:

Questions of my own that I plan to use:

Ideas for group involvement:

Meeting #2:

Unit 1: The Marks of Discipleship

Introductory Exercise:

1. Divide everyone in the group into two categories: pro and con. Those who are in the “pro” group are to argue in favor of the statements below. Those in the “con” group are to speak against them:

“Baptism is important to the believer’s spiritual life.”

“There are certain “marks” that should characterize every Christian.”

“Christians should show love to other Christians first and foremost.”

Group Discussion:

2. Describe a time when you were surprised to learn that someone was a follower of Christ. What was it about them that made you surprised to learn of their faith?
3. Can you describe a time when you recognized that someone was a follower of Christ before they told you? What was it about them that led you to conclude that they were a Christian?
4. What are the “marks” of a disciple of Jesus Christ? Why? Are some more important than others? Why or why not?
5. Which comes first in the Christian life, discipleship or obedience? Is the order important? Why or why not?
6. One of the primary marks of Christ’s disciples is that they “love one another.” Describe an example of this from your own experience. What made it “Christian” love?

Closing Exercise:

Have the group close by brainstorming some concrete ways to show Christ’s love to the following people:

- A family member or friend
- Someone they don’t know
- Their accountability partner
- A ministry leader

Leader's Notes:

My "destination" (i.e. objective) for this group discussion is:

Questions from the Companion Guide that I plan to use:

Questions of my own that I plan to use:

Ideas for group involvement:

Meeting #3:

Unit 2: The Cost of Discipleship

Introductory Exercise:

1. Choose one or two of the thought starter questions from Unit 2 and discuss them as a group.
2. If salvation through Christ is a free gift of grace, why isn't it a contradiction to speak of the "cost" of being a disciple?

Group Discussion:

3. Read Luke 14:25-33. You may take turns reading or have one person read the entire section. Ask group members to share a personal example where their own experience has reflected the kind of commitment Jesus speaks of in this verse.
4. What do the person building the tower and the king going to war against another king have in common? Does this imply anything about what is required of those who would be followers of Jesus Christ?
5. Is Jesus being unreasonable in expecting this level of commitment from those who are His disciples? Why or why not?
6. What does it mean to "carry the cross?" How does Jesus' use of this phrase differ from what people usually mean when they talk about having a "cross to bear?"
7. Read Romans 7:14-22. What do you think it means to "reckon" yourself to be dead to sin? Is this the same thing as "positive thinking?"

Closing Exercise:

Have accountability partners meet together and share one area where they need prayer to apply the cross to the "old nature." Spend time in prayer together.

Leader's Notes:

My "destination" (i.e. objective) for this group discussion is:

Questions from the Companion Guide that I plan to use:

Questions of my own that I plan to use:

Ideas for group involvement:

Meeting #4:

Unit 3: The Obligations of Discipleship

Introductory Exercise:

1. Ask group members which of the two statements below is a more accurate description of their current spiritual condition.

“My goal is to live my life as Jesus Christ lived His.”

“I am living my life as Jesus Christ lived His.”

2. How would most Christians respond to someone who claimed to be living as Christ did? How would these same people respond to someone who said that they did not think it is possible to live life as Jesus Christ lived His?

Group Discussion:

3. Dallas Willard has stated: “Ordinary people in common surroundings can live from the abundance of God’s kingdom, letting the spirit and the actions of Jesus be the natural outflow from their lives.” What do you think he means by this?

4. Read 1 John 3:2-3. According to these verses, what is the relationship between our future hope and our present behavior?

5. In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus uses the metaphor of a “yoke” to characterize what it means to be His disciple. Why is this an appropriate image?

6. Ask group members to share some of their experiences of the other kinds of “yokes” they have taken upon themselves. How has Christ’s yoke been different?

7. Submission is another obligation of discipleship. Colossians 3:22 and 1 Peter 2:18-25 give some examples of difficult circumstances where New Testament believers were expected to submit. Have group members share some of the areas where they struggle with submission.

8. Have each one describe a time when someone showed them patience and it made difference in their spiritual lives. How is patience related to generosity?

Closing Exercise:

Choose one of obligations of discipleship discussed in this unit. On a piece of paper write out a specific situation where you feel that God is calling you to act upon this obligation. For example, write the name of someone to whom you need to show patience. Describe how you will go about doing so. Have accountability partners check up on each others at their next meeting.

Leader's Notes:

My "destination" (i.e. objective) for this group discussion is:

Questions from the Companion Guide that I plan to use:

Questions of my own that I plan to use:

Ideas for group involvement:

Meeting #5:

Unit 4: The Dynamics of Spiritual Life

Introductory Exercise:

1. Working as a group, formulate an accurate definition (with Scriptural support) for the following:

**Spirituality*

**Spiritual Death*

**Spiritual Life*

Group Discussion:

2. Are Christians the only ones with a spiritual nature? How would you support your answer from Scripture?

3. How does the “spirituality” of the unsaved person differ from the spiritual nature of the believer?

4. In Ephesians 2:1-10 the apostle Paul compares the believer’s condition prior to receiving new life in Christ with our experience of being dead in sin. What differences does he mention?

5. What role does the Holy Spirit play in this change? How does He help the believer live the Christian life?

6. Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 and Galatians 5:16-26. How does the fruit of the Spirit differ from the gifts of the Spirit?

Closing Exercise:

Daniel B. Wallace has said: “Although sign gifts died in the first century, the Holy Spirit did not. We can affirm this theologically, but pragmatically we act as though the Holy Spirit died with the early church.” What do you think he means? Why does he make this claim?

Leader's Notes:

My "destination" (i.e. objective) for this group discussion is:

Questions from the Companion Guide that I plan to use:

Questions of my own that I plan to use:

Ideas for group involvement:

Meeting #6:

Unit 5: Obstacles to Discipleship

Introductory Exercise:

1. Take an anonymous poll (prepare ballots in advance of the meeting). Ask the members of your group to rate their spiritual growth on a level of 1 (very unsatisfied) to 7 (very satisfied). Compile the answers and ask group members whether they are surprised by the results or not.

Group Discussion:

2. What kinds of obstacles keeps believers from growing spiritually? Does the Moody environment offer more obstacles or fewer?
3. Read Hebrew 5:12-14. Why was the author frustrated with his readers? What should have been true of them? Why wasn't this the case?
4. What was the remedy for their problem, according to Hebrews 6:4-9? What danger did they face in their current condition?
5. Have group members think of someone they know that is "stuck" in their spiritual development. What is the evidence that their spiritual growth is at a stand still? What advice would they give to this person?
6. What role does human effort play in spiritual growth? How does this fit with the Bible's teaching about grace?
7. As a group, make a list of the key ingredients needed for spiritual growth. Where and how can these be obtained by the believer?

Closing Exercise:

Have group members meet in their accountability pairs and pray the words of Colossians 1:9-12 for each other.

Leader's Notes:

My "destination" (i.e. objective) for this group discussion is:

Questions from the Companion Guide that I plan to use:

Questions of my own that I plan to use:

Ideas for group involvement:

Meeting #7:

Unit 6: The Machinery of Holiness

Introductory Exercise:

1. Provide each member of the group with a 3x5 card. Ask them to write one question about this week's unit on the card. When they are finished, shuffle the cards and pass them out so that no member has his or her own card. Each member is to read the card he or she received and respond. Once they have responded, ask for input from the rest of the group. Be sure to remind members that it is o.k. to say, "I don't know the answer to this question."

Group Discussion:

2. Have someone read the Elizabeth Elliot quote on page 124 of the workbook. Ask group members to give possible reasons why believers might fail to "...recognize this living body as having anything to do with worship or holy sacrifice."
3. How does contemporary society view the body? In what ways has the church been affected by such views? Ask the group to give evidence for their answers.
4. The early church went to great pains to emphasize the true humanity of Jesus Christ. What implications does the reality of Christ's physical body have for our own bodies?
5. Read Romans 6:1-14. According to Paul, how should the death and resurrection of Christ affect the way we view our bodies?
6. According to 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7, what is God's purpose for the believer's body? What motive does Paul offer for controlling our bodies "in a way that is holy and honorable?" Why would this motivate the believer who does not expect to experience God's wrath?
7. In lesson five of this week's unit several Scripture passages were mentioned that refer to members of the body. Ask each in the group to share a verse that they found challenging and explain why.

Closing Exercise:

Ask each group member to take out a sheet of paper. Ask them to trace their hand on the paper and in the outline to write five examples of ways they have used their hand to glorify God in the last week. When they are finished, ask for volunteers to share their examples. Finish by asking several in the group to pray a prayer of consecration.

Leader's Notes:

My "destination" (i.e. objective) for this group discussion is:

Questions from the Companion Guide that I plan to use:

Questions of my own that I plan to use:

Ideas for group involvement:

Meeting #8:

Unit 7: God's Gym

Introductory Exercise:

1. Divide your group into three smaller groups. Assign each the task of doing “quick research” on a particular spiritual discipline (fasting, prayer, or meditation). Give them 15 minutes to formulate:
 - a.) A precise definition.
 - b.) Biblical support for the discipline.
 - c.) Some concrete guidelines for its practice.
 - d.) A list of the benefits with Scriptural support

After 15 minutes bring the groups back together and have them report to the rest of the group.

Group Discussion:

2. List some areas of life where discipline is required and explain why. What are the benefits of such discipline?
3. According to 1 Timothy 4:7-8, what does Paul say is the aim of spiritual training? Why do you think he compares spiritual training to physical exercise? How are they similar? How do they differ?
4. Can effort alone lead to spiritual transformation? What is the difference between an approach to the spiritual disciplines that depends solely upon human effort and one that depends upon grace empowered effort? How can we know which approach we are using?
5. Are there some disciplines that every believer should practice? If so, which ones and why? What kind of disciplines would only some believers practice?
6. In 1 Peter 1:13-16 Peter provides the believer with a motivation for pursuing holiness. What is it? What is this ‘future’ grace to which Peter refers? Why would it motivate the Christian?
8. John Ortberg had defined a spiritual discipline as “any activity that can help me gain power to live life as Jesus taught and modeled it.” In view of this definition, what might be some activities that accomplish this goal that others might be surprised to think of as a spiritual discipline?

Closing Exercise:

Have members of the group share some of their favorite spiritual disciplines. Ask them to explain how they practice the discipline and why it is beneficial to them.

Leader's Notes:

My "destination" (i.e. objective) for this group discussion is:

Questions from the Companion Guide that I plan to use:

Questions of my own that I plan to use:

Ideas for group involvement:

Meeting #9:

Unit 8: Christian Virtues

Introductory Exercise:

Bumper Sticker Virtues:

1. Have group members pair off (*but not with their accountability partner*). Once they have done so, assign each pair one of the virtues studied in this week's unit (mercy, purity, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and self-control). Their task is to create a bumper sticker slogan for that particular virtue. It should be catchy and should focus either on the value of the virtue or the way one acquires it.

Group Discussion:

2. Read Philippians 3:3-9. What did Paul have to "lose" by becoming a follower of Jesus Christ? Ask group members to share some of the "losses" they have experienced because of their commitment to Christ. What have they gained?
3. What are some examples of Christians to whom you have been drawn because of the purity of their lives? In what ways was this purity evident? What made it so attractive?
4. Ask group members to share a time in their lives where they were given an opportunity to demonstrate one of the virtues emphasized in this unit. Ask them to be specific.
5. In Galatians 5:18 the apostle Paul speaks of being "led by the Spirit." What do most people mean when they say they have been "led by the Spirit?" In view of the context (Galatians 5:19-26), what does Paul seem to mean by this phrase?
6. The list of virtues given in this unit is not exhaustive. Ask the group to suggest additional virtues that are important to the Christian life. See if you can come up with 10 additional virtues along with one practical example for each.

Closing Exercise:

Have group members pair off with their accountability partners and memorize Galatians 5:19-26.

Leader's Notes:

My "destination" (i.e. objective) for this group discussion is:

Questions from the Companion Guide that I plan to use:

Questions of my own that I plan to use:

Ideas for group involvement:

Meeting #10:

Unit 9: The Spiritual Journey

Introductory Exercise:

1. Provide each member of your group with a blank piece of paper. Ask them to draw a map of their spiritual journey from birth to the present. Suggest that they use a metaphor of some kind to represent their journey and ask them to mark any important spiritual milestones (they may want to refer to page 205 in the workbook). Give them about 15 to do this. When they are finished break the group into smaller groups of about 3 or 4 and have each one take turns explaining his or her map.

Group Discussion:

2. In what ways is the Christian life like a journey? What are some of the stages in the journey?

3. How has failure played a role in your spiritual development?

4. In 2 Timothy 2:3-7 the apostle Paul describes three examples from ordinary life where endurance is needed and compares these to the believer's spiritual life. What examples does he give? What kind of endurance is needed in each case? What is it about each example that is like the spiritual life of the believer?

5. Read Hebrews 12:3-11. What is divine discipline? How is it like parental discipline? How does it differ? Why would this provide encouragement to us as we experience "bumps in the road" in our spiritual journey?

6. What might be some examples of "divine discipline?" Are all difficult circumstances instances of divine discipline? If not, how does one tell the difference?

7. What surprising command does Paul give slaves in 1 Peter 2:18-23. How should this affect our view of what it means to be "disciplined" by God.

Closing Exercise:

Ask group members to share how their view of their own spiritual journey has changed as a result of today's lesson.

Leader's Notes:

My "destination" (i.e. objective) for this group discussion is:

Questions from the Companion Guide that I plan to use:

Questions of my own that I plan to use:

Ideas for group involvement:

Meeting #11:

Unit 10: The New Testament Model of Discipleship

Introductory Exercise:

1. Break the group into accountability pairs. Have each pair write a “recruiting” ad for becoming a follower of Jesus Christ. The ad should describe both the challenges and the benefits of being a disciple. Have the group vote for the one they think is the catchiest, most appealing, most realistic, and most likely to succeed in attracting disciples.
2. What method did Jesus use to attract disciples? Do you find the results surprising? Why or why not?

Group Discussion:

3. What did Jesus say was the goal of discipleship in Matthew 10:24-25? What, according to Jesus, would this mean for the apostles?
4. Jesus uses a similar comparison in John 13:12-17. How does His application to the disciples differ?
5. What kind of commitment was required of those who responded to Christ’s call to discipleship? Does Jesus require less commitment today? Explain your answer.
6. Luke 21:31-32 describes Jesus’ warning to Peter that he would deny Him. What steps did Jesus take to protect Peter? What did Jesus not do for Peter?
7. Is it possible to follow Jesus’ example in making disciples today? Why or why not?

Closing Exercise:

Working as a group, formulate a discipleship program for the local church. Be specific. What should the curriculum be like? How often should it meet? Where?

Leader's Notes:

My "destination" (i.e. objective) for this group discussion is:

Questions from the Companion Guide that I plan to use:

Questions of my own that I plan to use:

Ideas for group involvement:

Meeting #12:

Unit 11: The Learner as Teacher

Introductory Exercise:

1. In his book entitled *Leap Over a Wall: Earthy Spirituality for Everyday Christians*, Eugene Peterson describes his experiences duck hunting with Chet Ellingson, his first spiritual mentor. Peterson observes: “*Evidence mounts: most of what I experience and have experienced in the way of help, encouragement, and wisdom in the actual day-by-day believing and praying, loving and hoping, helping and persevering, obeying and sacrificing in the name and for the sake of Jesus comes from people who aren’t considered competent to give it.*” Read this quote to your group and ask the following questions: What do you think he means when he says that such help comes “from people who aren’t considered competent to give it?” Do you find this statement surprising? Has this also been your experience?
2. Who has had the greatest impact on your spiritual life? Did they use formal or informal means to accomplish this?

Group Discussion:

3. Ask members to read the following passages and explain how they provide insight into what a spiritual mentoring relationship might look like:
Philippians 2:22
2 Timothy 1:6-7
Titus 2:3-5
Acts 18:24-28
4. What did Paul’s disciple making strategy have in common with that of Jesus?
5. Is there such a thing as a disciple making “personality type?” Explain your answer.
6. Should we always be farther along in our spiritual lives than those we disciple? Why or why not?
7. If discipling someone is an “investment” of time and energy, how should we calculate our “return on investment?”
8. Read Romans 1:9-12, who besides the Romans did Paul expect would benefit from his efforts?

Closing Exercise:

Make a list of as many types of mentoring relationships (parent, pastor, teacher, best friend, etc.) you can think of and ask for a volunteer to describe one example of an experience involving such a mentor.

Leader's Notes:

My "destination" (i.e. objective) for this group discussion is:

Questions from the Companion Guide that I plan to use:

Questions of my own that I plan to use:

Ideas for group involvement:

Meeting #13:

Unit 12: The Corporate Context of Discipleship

Introductory Exercise:

1. Take a poll of the group to find out how many are satisfied with their experience with church this semester. How hard was it to find a good church? How difficult was it to attend regularly?

Group Discussion:

2. Ask group members to share their impression of their fellow students' feelings about attending church. Do most attend? Why or why not?

3. Why is congregational life important, according to Hebrews 10:19-25?

4. What insight do Matthew 28:18-20, John 20:21, and Ephesians 4:11-16 shed on the church's mission?

5. Do all churches have the same mission? Should all churches use the same methods? What is the difference between these?

6. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 Paul describes two kinds of attitudes that curtail ministry in the Body of Christ. What are they? Ask the group to give concrete examples from their own experience of each extreme.

7. What does God expect from the church, according to 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1? What does the immediate context suggest that the command to "be separate" means?

8. How can being part of a local church help you to obey the command of 2 Corinthians 6:17?

9. Does it matter whether we "like" church? Why or why not?

Closing Exercise:

Describe the following scenario to the group: You discover that your roommate has stopped attending church. When you ask why, your roommate replies: "Being at Moody is like a continual church service. We study the Bible all day, listen to sermons in chapel and pray in the evening. As long as I'm attending here, I don't need the church." Ask the group to formulate a response.

Leader's Notes:

My "destination" (i.e. objective) for this group discussion is:

Questions from the Companion Guide that I plan to use:

Questions of my own that I plan to use:

Ideas for group involvement: