



LEADER
DEVELOPMENT
GROUPS

RETREAT | SESSION 3

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OVERVIEW

The retreat is the most critical experience for the group to connect relationally and encounter authentic community.

Remember your first day at a new school? Remember your first day at your first job? You didn't really know anyone, but you wanted to be known. The same is true when a new group forms. You'll be going through a lot of stuff together over an extended period of time. Remember how it seemed to take forever before you knew everyone at work? And remember how much more comfortable you felt once you did?

That's what this first retreat is all about. In a focused time away together, you and your group will do in a weekend what it usually takes weeks or months to do—really get to know each other.

You'll do some of what normally happens each session, including reviewing a book, reciting Scripture verses, and a homework assignment. But by far the biggest part of the retreat will be spent sharing "faith stories." Once someone shares his story, you and others in the group will ask questions that should challenge the person to share even more about himself. The goal of this time is to help each member become more comfortable being transparent.

Having already told your story, you are in a great position to be able to listen intently. Here are some tips to help you do that:

- Be in prayer for the person before they share, and ask God to help you to focus on the story you're about to hear.
- Take notes during each story.
- Be mindful of key questions:
 - Where is this person coming from? What is his spiritual background?
 - Where is this person right now spiritually?
 - Where God might be leading him?

By the time your group members cook together, clean together, do some fun activities, pray, and share life stories openly, the hope is they'll be ready to help each other take full advantage of the group experience over the next several months. Perhaps, more importantly, they'll begin building a friendship or two that may last the rest of their lives.

Be strategic in terms of who shares when. Pre-select who you are going to ask to go first and second. Pick someone who seems ready to share vulnerably. This person can set the tone for how the rest of the stories are told.

Finally, not only should you take notes, you should ask everyone to do the same. Taking notes demonstrates that the group cares for each person. Also, remind the group that it will be helpful to look them over before their one-on-ones.

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TIPS FOR LEADING THE STORY SHARING TIME

- A best practice is to pre-select someone to share first who you feel can model vulnerability. Remember, many times the first person sets the tone for the rest of the group.
- Let the first volunteer tell his story.
- If he starts to approach 20 minutes, try to gently make eye contact and signal that time is getting short.
- If necessary, interrupt with a question, such as: Hey John, I really appreciate you being so transparent. Since we're running over a little, answer this: If there was one word or phrase that would summarize your story, what word would it be?
- After each person finishes, ask the group if they have any questions they'd like to ask. If you feel like a clarifying question needs to be asked about his personal faith journey, do so. For instance:
 - Tell me a little more about your personal faith. How does your faith come into play in your day-to-day life?
 - When do you feel like your faith became your own, instead of just believing what someone else (perhaps your parents) told you?
 - Is there one word you can think of that describes your relationship with God right now?
- Use this time as an opportunity to gauge where each group member is spiritually, and take notes about what you observe. If you feel the need to talk more about their faith journey than this setting or time allows, follow up during your one-on-ones.

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PLANNING THE RETREAT

PREPARATION

- Delegate responsibilities and touch base with the group members for the logistics, details, costs, etc.
- Clearly communicate with everyone about those details and about preparing their stories.
- Fill out the overview for StrengthsFinder and bring copies for all group members.
- Bring paper and masking tape for the challenge. (See Below)

FOUR GOALS

1. Have an abbreviated meeting with normal meeting components.
2. Have fun.
3. Hear everyone's stories and ask questions.
4. Break up the stories with the StrengthsFinder® Assessment Discussion and Challenge.

STRENGTHSFINDER® ASSESSMENT DISCUSSION AND APPLICATION CHALLENGE

- Bring 60 sheets of paper and two rolls of tape.
- Divide the groups into two teams, each with 30 sheets of paper and a roll of tape.
- Explain the rules:
 1. The goal is to build the tallest object possible.
 2. Teams will have eight minutes to brainstorm and eight minutes to build.
 3. The mentors observe and keep time.
 4. It must be a freestanding structure using only what is given. Using walls, furniture, or any other outside material to support it is not allowed.
- Call time and determine a winner.
- Review the assessment results for each person. After each person shares their results, ask if, after three months and in lieu of the paper tower challenge, the others group members see these strengths in the person.
- Share the summary and process how each person can use these to align their gifts with their roles and/or opportunities.

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AGENDA (OVERNIGHT)

Reminder: Carpooling to the retreat will allow additional connection time.

FRIDAY NIGHT |

Have a typical session. This is intended to be a condensed version to take less time.

1. MONTHLY FOCUS 10 MINUTES

- Share a personal reflection of what you learned or thought regarding the Scripture, prayer, and verse.

3. MONTHLY ASSIGNMENT 25 MINUTES

2. MONTHLY QUESTION 20 MINUTES

- What are you currently passionate about?

4. MONTHLY BOOK 30 MINUTES

- Wild at Heart Questions

5-10 MINUTE BREAK BEFORE STORIES

5. INTRO TO SHARING FAITH STORIES 15 MINUTES

Sample script: Last month, as I shared my story, I tried to emphasize the points in my life that influenced my faith. I can't wait to hear your stories. A couple of reminders before we get started:

- Our group will rise or fall on each person's transparency.
- What is said in this group stays in this group.
- Your target for time is no more than 20 minutes for your story and 10 minutes for questions. We will set a timer for everybody to help keep you on track. If the time starts to get away from you, I'll reel you back in.
- Last thing: take notes during each person's story.
- Does anyone want to go first?

6. SHARING STORIES 1-1.5 HOURS

- Faith Story #1 (30-50 minutes)
- Faith Story #2 (30-50 minutes)

HANGOUT, GAMES, ETC TO END THE NIGHT

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AGENDA (OVERNIGHT)

SATURDAY |

1. BREAKFAST

1 HOUR

- Suggestion: start at 7:30am and mentors cook for all the members

2. HALF HOUR OF FOCUSED TIME

30 MINUTES

- Encourage the group to have some personal time with God.
- Use the time to leverage the Monthly Focus.

3. SHARING STORIES

1 HOUR

- Faith Story #3 (30 minutes)
- Faith Story #4 (30 minutes)

4. BREAK

1 HOUR

5. SHARING STORIES

30 MINUTES

- Faith Story #5 (30 minutes)

6. LUNCH AND BREAK

1.5 - 2 HOURS

- Perhaps have a physical activity afterwards, such as basketball, volleyball, or a walk.

7. SHARING STORIES

30 MINUTES

- Faith Story #6 (30 minutes)

8. STRENGTHSFINDER ASSESSMENT AND CHALLENGE

45 MINUTES

9. SHARING STORIES

1 HOUR

- Faith Story #7 (30 minutes)
- Faith Story #8 (30 minutes)

10. HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

15 MINUTES

- Pass out the homework handout for the selected session and pair growth partners.

PRAY, PACK UP, AND LEAVE