

## FaithTalk Groups

### Lesson 3: Group Facilitator Preparation Facilitator Traits

The role of a FT group facilitator is a key component to the health of any group. In this lesson we will survey some of the characteristics that need to be evident in the life and ministry of group facilitators.

Please keep in mind group facilitators do not need to be “perfect” or “omni-competent”, but basically demonstrating

- Christian maturity
- Ability to facilitate (lead discussions) more than teach
- A willingness to continue to work their pastor and learn and grow as an effective facilitator

#### Facilitator traits (summary)

- Love
- Humility
- Authenticity
- Inclusive
- Missional & Evangelistic
- Equip & release new leaders
- Basic biblical understanding (Trinitarian theology)
- Conflict manager

#### 1. Love

The most important requirement for somebody who wants to serve as a small-group facilitator is that they hold the Greatest Commandment in their heart: love for God and people (Mark 12:29–31).

There is no better bonding agent than love. When group participants feel loved by a facilitator, they'll be content. They won't want any other facilitator in the world—even if someone else is more confident in leadership or more competent in understanding God's Word. Just as love covers a multitude of sins, so love covers a multitude of misgivings facilitators often have about their own skills. (From Building Small Groups ©2007 Christianity Today Intl. [www.BuildingSmallGroups.com](http://www.BuildingSmallGroups.com))

#### 2. Humility

Humility allows the facilitator to hear from the Lord, receive his wisdom, serve others, and model spiritual intimacy with the Lord. Good facilitators prioritize the needs of others above their own desires and agenda.

Most people can only be themselves when they feel safe, and a safe environment is born out of humble leadership. Truth and trust go hand-in-hand. Humble people have a way of disarming others and helping them be truthful about who they are and where they need spiritual encouragement.

Humility also communicates that all of us are equally in need of God's grace—that no person is better than another or is loved any differently by God.

Humility is a reflection that a person is teachable, which good facilitators need to be if they are going to hear from the Lord and truly partner with others in building biblical community.

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### **3. Authenticity**

People will not tolerate for long a small group where members are not real with each other—they have better things to spend their time doing each week.

Arguably, the greatest influence on the dynamics of a group discussion is how real the facilitator is with the other participants. The health of a small group can be directly linked to how free people feel they can be with one another—especially during group discussions.

People want to go someplace where they are loved for who they are, rather than who they feel they are supposed to be. Demonstrated vulnerability from the facilitator has tremendous “imprinting power” that ensures the health of the group for the life of the group. (From Building Small Groups ©2007 Christianity Today Intl. [www.BuildingSmallGroups.com](http://www.BuildingSmallGroups.com))

### **4. Inclusive**

Effective FT facilitators intentionally draw participants into the discussion, include them in prayer, look for ways to give everybody a voice and a purpose to fulfill within the group. They are constantly drawing new people into the life of a FT group and helping other group members do the same FT facilitators intentionally draw participants into the life and processes of the group because they know this enhances their spiritual growth and builds community. They know that building biblical community takes all of the parts working together.

Small-group facilitators who are inclusive resist the temptation to be guarded about the dynamics within their group. Instead, they trust the Lord with those he wants to gather to himself. They understand that shepherds are to protect their flocks from decreasing because of wolves, not increasing due to more sheep. (From Building Small Groups ©2007 Christianity Today Intl. [www.BuildingSmallGroups.com](http://www.BuildingSmallGroups.com))

### **5. Encouraging**

Encouragement serves as a primary catalyst for calling out people’s gifts within a discussion and prodding them to participate. Encouragement enables people to hear God’s Word for their lives and helps them to see themselves the way God sees them.

Small-group facilitators will most likely use encouragement as a primary catalyst for calling out people’s gifts within a discussion and prodding them to participate. Encouragement enables people to hear God’s Word for their lives and helps them to see themselves the way God sees them. People respond positively to facilitators with positive attitudes. Hope and faith resonate from a facilitator who is encouraging, while a discouraging person dampens the hope and faith of others.

Humor is obviously very helpful. This doesn’t require wit, or the ability to tell a good joke, as much as an ability to look optimistically at life and its challenges. (From Building Small Groups ©2007 Christianity Today Intl. [www.BuildingSmallGroups.com](http://www.BuildingSmallGroups.com))

### **6. Missional & Evangelistic**

In their union with Jesus, Christians are to be engaged in the mission of the Father, Son and Spirit to the world.

- Great Commandment
  - Upward
  - Inward
- Great Commission
  - Outward
  - Forward

*“Through our **union** with Christ we share in his **communion** with the Father and in his mission from the Father to bring others into that **communion**. The mission of the church is the **gift of participating** through the Holy Spirit in the Son’s mission from the Father to the world.”*

*- James Torrance, **Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace***

**Missional:** Actively involved in Jesus’ mission – engaging and serving non-Christians within a focus group or community. Developing relationships and making friends with non-Christians.

**Evangelistic:** Evangelistic (include unchurched and non-Christian people) from the beginning and throughout. Groups must be evangelistic from the start or they will likely not become evangelistic, i.e. they will likely not reach new people and make new disciples. Group facilitators need to set the example to other group members of bringing new people into the group.

***Note:** This does not require a strong “gift of evangelism.” But it does require doing the work of an evangelist – making non-Christian friends, serving people, sharing the gospel, inviting people into a group to help them on their journey with Jesus, etc. (More will be discussed about groups being missional in the next lesson.)*

**Personal Activity:** *Leaders of Faith Talk groups that reach new people need to be personally and actively developing relationships with unchurched and non-Christian people.*

- ▶ *Why are you interested in leading a small group?*
- ▶ *How many unchurched friends do you have a significant relationship with?*
- ▶ *How many of these friends are non-Christians?*
- ▶ *How many ways are you involved in your community – serving, developing relationships, sharing God’s love in deed and word?*

## **7. Equip and release new leaders**

A Key objective of FT groups is to identify, develop and release new ministry leaders.

- For service within the group
- For service within the “mother” congregation
- For starting new groups
- For pastoring churches
- For planting churches

Group facilitators need to constantly look for people who can assume leadership roles (to be discussed in more detail in a future lesson).

- Hosts
- Apprentice group leaders
- Worship leaders
- Youth ministry leaders
- Outreach leaders
- Disciplers

Some of these new leaders may develop into

- New group leaders
- Church planters
- Pastors of established GCI congregations

## 8. Understand basic Christian doctrine

FT facilitators do not need to be “Bible experts” but they need a basic but solid grasp of

- Trinitarian theology
- GCI core beliefs

Facilitators do not need to be theologian types (this will probably be a disadvantage). Rather they need to be familiar with (and in general agreement with) GCI doctrine and basic principles of Trinitarian theology.

### Resources:

- *GCI Statement of Beliefs*
- *The God Revealed in Jesus Christ*

## 9. Conflict manager

FT facilitators need to be able to manage “low-level” conflict with discernment and grace.

Conflict manager: Facilitators should only be capable of dealing with “low-level” interpersonal conflict. Major conflict issues should be referred to the senior pastor. Facilitators mainly need to know that they can rely on their church pastor to assist with major conflict issues that develop between group members. Discernment is a key factor in knowing when to refer conflict issues to the pastor.

## 10. Final Encouragement

Facilitators need not feel that they should be “omni-competent”.

- Start your group with a couple (only a couple) mature Christians who may be strong in some of the above characteristics.
- Look for others within the group to assist in areas you may not be gifted.
- Be willing to learn and grow as a facilitator.
- Remember: Jesus is the leader of the group. Trust him to work through the Spirit within the group.

### Exercise:

Answer the following questions and discuss your answers with a good friend.

1. In which of the above characteristics do you think you are the most gifted? Which characteristics do you need the most help with?
2. In what ways are you “missional”?
3. In what ways are you evangelistic?
4. List the names of your unchurched and non-Christians friends (friends, not just acquaintances).
5. If you plan to start a FT group, who will be your apprentice? Your hosts?
6. In the past, how have you equipped and released other people for ministry and/or ministry leadership? List the names of those you have equipped and released for ministry.
7. Read *GCI Statement of Beliefs* and *The God Revealed in Jesus Christ* (available at <http://www.gci.org/participate/free-lit>).