



8 WEEK

SMALL GROUP

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

—
by

CHARLIE WETZEL

PREFACE

Welcome to *Home Run* as a small group tool for life change. This material has been created by Charlie Wetzal, who is John Maxwell's writer, the wordsmith behind *Home Run*, an elder on the 12Stone Board of directors, and a dear friend. Furthermore, he is a major league player in small groups. From the training videos provided to the small groups guides, Charlie is a gift to the Body of Christ. I am grateful he voluntarily provided all these materials to help pastors and lay people run life by God's game plan.

– Pastor Kevin Myers

THE BEAUTY AND VALUE OF SMALL GROUPS

Leading a small group is one of the most spiritually impacting tasks you can do as a member of the Body of Christ. Not only does it have the potential to change the lives of the people in your group, it also has the potential to change yours. As you accept responsibility for helping to facilitate the spiritual growth of others, you grow closer to God and learn to depend on Him. Out of your own growth, you will be better able to create an environment where the Holy Spirit can help others to grow.

Small groups are the heart of the local church, and they are as old as the Church itself. Jesus' interaction with the disciples looks a lot like our modern small groups. In Jesus' group, people developed relationships, learned from one another, accepted challenges that helped them to grow, cared for one another, reached out to others, and learned to lead effectively.

When a small group is working at its best, it is a full representation of the church to which it belongs. The best small groups do all the same things their larger counterpart does: carry and communicate the vision, share the Gospel, challenge and instruct believers, provide pastoral care, reach out beyond the church to the community, and fulfill the Great Commission. For that reason, there are few ministries in the local church better at preparing a follower of Christ for leadership.

As you lead your small group, your primary goal should be to build positive relationships and create a positive environment where people can be authentic so the Holy Spirit is free to work. If you are able to do that, you have the potential to be a highly effective leader.

WHAT GOOD SMALL GROUP LEADERS DO EACH WEEK

You can be successful at leading a faith-based small group—no matter whether you are a long-time follower of Christ or a new believer, a person experienced in group dynamics or new to it, a highly gifted natural leader or a novice to leadership. To give yourself the best chance at success, do the following things every week:

- 1. Prepare yourself spiritually.** The most important thing you can do is spend time with God during the week. If you remain close to God, you will be more sensitive to the Holy Spirit when your group meets and remain on God's agenda. In addition, pray for each person and ask God where each needs to grow and how you can help.
- 2. Review or read the material in advance of the next meeting.** Preparation and positive group interaction is more important than the selection of material. Any good material can lead to great results through preparation. In contrast, even great material can be a letdown because of poor preparation. Know what you intend to cover during your group time and seek God's guidance as you prepare.
- 3. Know the goal of the meeting and create a lesson plan made of questions.** The desired result for every meeting must be action! Your task each week is to ask questions in such a way that people open up to each other, sense truth from God, see themselves in light of it, and take action to change based on the Holy Spirit's direction. For *Home Run*, much of this part of the preparation has been done for you if you use one of the three plans provided.
- 4. Meet with a developing leader from the group.** Every leader in the Body of Christ should spend time developing another leader. Select someone with the potential to lead from within the group and spend time weekly investing in his or her spiritual development and leadership ability. Discuss the strategy and goals for each week's session, as well as how you can best serve and lead the members of the group.

5. Make sure the setting is conducive to positive interaction. Prior to each meeting, make sure the environment is positive for meeting. Ask yourself some questions: Will everyone be comfortable? Does the setup promote discussion and interaction? Will the group time be free from unwanted interruptions? Can you make food available before or after the meeting? Is there anything in the environment that will detract from the time? Politely and kindly make any necessary adjustments before people arrive.

6. Facilitate the group time well by creating energy and making it fun as well as rewarding. One of the best things you can do as a group leader is create and direct the energy of your group. People who laugh and have a good time are more likely to talk, and a group where everyone talks is easier to lead. When people enjoy their group, they keep coming back. If you can get every person to contribute and no single person to dominate, you'll be doing well as a leader. Always remember, your goal is to encourage others to self-discover where God wants them to change and commit themselves to actions that will help them grow.

7. Meet with people outside of the group time. As a small group leader, your best hope is to create a positive environment where people develop authentic relationships and are open to the Holy Spirit's movement. And God can do some wonderful things within a small group. However, much of the real action happens outside of the group. People are often more willing to open up more and to seek counsel one-on-one. Spend time outside of the group with your people to deepen your relationships with them, challenge them, and serve them.

EIGHT-WEEK PLAN

This eight-week plan allows you to dig into *Home Run* and go after key life issues. Your goal is to help group members understand God’s pattern for living, recognize how they have been doing life, and make adjustments to better conform to God’s design.

As a leader, do not judge the people in your group or try to push them to grow. Instead, be honest about your own need for growth and the lessons you’ve learned, and allow people to respond to the Holy Spirit’s promptings to change.

OVERVIEW

Here is an overview of how the eight weeks are planned:

(Each participant having a copy of the book would be beneficial, however, it isn’t mandatory. The weekend series teaching has driven the concept. During the small group you can choose to read a paragraph or two from the book as needed.)

WEEK FOCUS

- 1 Meet Together, Get to Know One Another, and Set Expectations for the Group
- 2 “The Life You Want” & “Hopes, Dreams and Delays” (Chapters 1 & 2)
- 3 “God’s Game Plan for Winning at Life” & “Parables, Baseball, and the Home Run Life” (Chapters 3 & 4)
- 4 “Home Plate: How to Win with God” (Chapter 5)
- 5 “First Base: How to Win Within” (Chapter 6)
- 6 “Second Base: How to Win with Others” (Chapter 7)
- 7 “Third Base: How to Win Results” (Chapter 8)
- 8 “Scoring: How to Keep Living and Winning God’s Way” (Chapter 9)

WEEK 1

MEET TOGETHER, GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER, AND SET EXPECTATIONS FOR THE GROUP

FOCUS

This first week you will set the tone for the next seven weeks. Your focus should be on the people in your group. You want to put them at ease, create a positive environment, and make them feel welcome. We strongly suggest that you make food a part of the meeting's activity, even if you don't plan to do it the other weeks. There's something about eating together that breaks down barriers.

GOAL

Make every person feel welcome and help them to get to know one another.

SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS

For someone who is new to church or who has never been part of a small group, coming to the first meeting can be very intimidating. For many people, it's a big risk. Make that risk pay off. By the time people leave, make them glad that they came.

PLAN FOR THE MEETING

1. Facilitate Relationship Building: This meeting's focus is primarily social. As the leader, make an effort to greet every person individually as they arrive and chat with them briefly. Be the host and put them at ease. Introduce people to someone else and help them start a conversation, then move on to someone else. Try to facilitate connection among people. Having food out for people to eat often helps to create a pleasant environment.

2. Bring Everyone Together: After people have had an adequate time to interact, call together everyone to meet in a circle for discussion.

3. Open in Prayer: Pray, but keep it brief. Invite God into the group.

4. Welcome: Thank everyone for coming. Introduce yourself, and explain that the group will be meeting for eight weeks to discuss *Home Run*. Let them know that the main purpose of the night is to get to know one another and that you will start discussing the book next week.

5. Icebreaker: Your goal for an icebreaker is to increase the energy of the group, learn things about each person, and make things fun. After you state the question, be the first to answer it, keeping in mind that your answer sets the tone for those who follow you: **“Tell everyone your name, who you knew in the group before today, and one interesting and little-known fact about yourself.”**

6. Scripture: A short passage from the Bible is included in the plan each week because the Word of God is key to helping people grow spiritually. You can read the passage aloud or ask someone in the group to do so. After it has been read, ask, **“Is there a word in the passage that stands out to you? If so, tell why.”** Someone might say devoted because growth requires commitment or fellowship because of the value of relationships or homes because it reminds them of small groups. This exercise is to help set the tone for the discussion and should be brief.

This session’s passage is **Acts 2:42, 46-47**

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.... Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

7. Questions: Today there is only one question: “**How did you come to be a part of this group, and what do you hope to get out of it by the time we’re finished?**” This will help you better understand everyone’s mindset coming into the group. Encourage everyone to speak freely, tell stories, make jokes, etc.

8. Assignment: Ask everyone to **read the first two chapters of *Home Run: “The Life You Want” & “Hopes, Dreams and Delays.”***

9. Logistics: If you need to settle or communicate any logistics, such as time and place of future meetings, childcare, arrangements for food, etc., do so before the end of the meeting.

10. Closing Prayer: As a leader, you never want to put people on the spot by asking them to pray aloud if you don’t already know they are comfortable doing it. So prior to this first meeting, ask someone you know in the group if he or she would be comfortable praying aloud at the end of the group time. As you close the meeting, communicate that the prayer time is open to anyone who wants to pray, and that the person you’ve previously asked will open the prayer time and you will close it. Then simply give some time to allow anyone who wants to pray to do so before you close. And pay attention to who prays and how they pray because it will give you insight into where they are spiritually.

WEEK 2

“THE LIFE YOU WANT” & “HOPES, DREAMS AND DELAYS”

FOCUS

It may be difficult for people this early in the group process to be open with one another about where their life might not be matching up to their hopes and dreams, so you may not be able to delve too deeply about their present circumstances. However, people are often more willing to talk about their past. That will help everyone get to know one another better and begin opening doors to deeper and more honest conversations.

GOAL

Help people recognize and examine any gap they may be experiencing between God’s invitation to “life to the full” and their current circumstances. Continue building relationships and helping people connect with one another.

SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS

Many people don’t like letting others know about where they are not succeeding. Long-time Christians can be especially reluctant about this. Speak honestly (but appropriately) about where you are trying to improve and change in order to live life to the full, and other people in the group may be more likely to let their guard down and open up.

PLAN FOR THE MEETING

1. Facilitate Relationship Building: We recommend that you continue to have some social component to the meeting. Give people a chance to interact and build friendships. Food is often a great catalyst for positive interaction.

2. Open in Prayer: Get everyone together and pray to signal that it's time to start. Invite God to set the agenda for the meeting.

4. Welcome and Logistics: Go out of your way to make everyone feel welcome. Take care of any logistics at this time.

5. Icebreaker: Remember that the goal for the icebreaker is to increase the energy of the group, help everyone learn more about one another, and make the meeting fun. After you state the question, be the first to answer it, keeping in mind that your answer sets the tone for those who follow you:

“When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up and why?”

6. Scripture: Read **John 10: 9:10**, or ask someone in the group to read it. As you did the previous week, invite people to talk about what stands out to them in the passage.

I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

7. Questions: You will note that the discussion is designed using relatively few questions. It's preferred to get people talking openly and to genuinely process ideas than to cover a lot of information. When you ask a question, be comfortable with silence as you wait for someone to speak. If discussion lags, ask, “What does everyone else think?” In the event that you want to supplement the questions provided, you can always add questions from “John's Application Guide” at the end of the chapters.

a. “What was the most interesting thing to you in the reading you did for this week's session?” This question is to get people talking and to remind them of what they read.

b. “Myers says in chapter two that many Christians' lives fall short of their dreams and of God's desires for them. Do you agree or disagree? Why?” This safe opinion question will allow people to express their views without yet having to reveal personal information that might make them feel uncomfortable. At the same

time, you will gain insight into how people think and what they believe.

- c. **“Have you experienced a delay in a dream, as Myers did? If so, how did you react to it?”** This is more personal, but it is focused on the past, which can feel safer to talk about than the present.
- d. **“Maxwell describes an abundance mindset (p. 10), saying that God’s love and resources never run out. How does this abundance mindset about God compare to yours?”** This question is a little more personal.
- e. **“Myers says that God has more for us. (p. 9). What would ‘more’ look like for you personally? Describe life to the full.”** This final question is the most personal, and it asks people to articulate what they really want out of life.

8. Assignment: Ask everyone to read chapters 3 and 4 of *Home Run: “God’s Game Plan for Winning at Life”* & *“Parables, Baseball, and the Home Run Life.”*

9. Closing Prayer: Communicate again that the prayer time is open to anyone who wants to pray. Open and close the prayer time as you did at the end of the previous meeting.

WEEK 3

“GOD’S GAME PLAN FOR WINNING AT LIFE” & “PARABLES, BASEBALL, AND THE HOME RUN LIFE”

FOCUS

For this meeting, people will have read about the four growth gates for living life God’s way: Winning Dependence, Winning Within, Winning with Others, and Winning Results. Depending on their spiritual maturity and life experience, some people may recognize and connect with these ideas. Most mature believers will readily acknowledge that these four areas are important. The real “aha” for most will be the idea that most of us tend to run the bases backwards.

GOAL

You have three goals for this session: Try to help everyone 1) acknowledge that these four areas are the key to the full life Jesus describes in John 10:10; 2) encourage people to identify how they have been running life’s bases up to now; and 3) invite them to commit to work toward living according to God’s pattern.

SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS

This may be the trickiest session you lead while discussing *Home Run*. There can be sticking points for people in many areas. Some may not recognize that Connection with God, Character, Community, and Competence are the four core areas for success by God’s standard. Some may push back against the idea of running the bases in the right order. Others may have a difficult time recognizing how they have been living life up to now. Invite them to join you in processing this information, but don’t try to force the issue. There is still time in coming weeks for people to understand how they’ve been living and

recognize the changes they need to make.

PLAN FOR THE MEETING

1. Facilitate Relationship Building: Continue finding ways to build relationships. If things are starting to get predictable, be creative. Introduce food to the group, if you haven't already done so, ask members of the group to meet someone they don't know well to learn three things about them, or play a game where people must get answers to questions from one another in order to win.

2. Open in Prayer: Get everyone together and pray to signal that it's time to start. Invite God to set the agenda for the meeting.

4. Welcome and Logistics: Welcome everyone and take care of any logistics at this time.

5. Icebreaker: Some leaders are tempted to stop using icebreakers after a few weeks. Don't give in to that temptation. Icebreakers have high value, even for groups that have met together for months or years. (I've led small groups for over twenty-five years. I've never led a session where I did not start with an ice breaker, and I've had group members for whom the ice breaker was their favorite part of group each week.)

"What kind of athlete were you growing up, and what kind of history do you have with sports? Has it been positive or negative?"

6. Scripture: Read **Romans 12:1-2**, or ask someone in the group to read it. As you did the previous week, invite people to talk about what stands out to them in the passage.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

7. Questions: The questions follow the same pattern as in the previous session.

Encourage everyone to talk and open up, but don't allow any one person to dominate the discussion.

- a. **"What were the four growth gates Myers mentioned in Home Run and what bases represented each of them?"** This question is to get people talking and to remind them of what they read.
- b. **"Why do you think Myers says that dependence is the key to growing in maturity and living life to the full?"** This is a pretty safe opinion question you can use to start the discussion.
- c. **"Do you think any person would be capable of living a home run life (life to the full) while neglecting and failing at one of the four key areas? If so, explain."** This is designed to get everyone thinking about the credibility of the four growth gates.
- d. **"Myers says he relates to Joseph. Which person in the Bible do you relate to most? Why?"** This can start to get personal, but because people will be talking a lot about a biblical figure, it's a fairly safe way to enter the subject.
- e. **"Which of the four bases have you spent the most time working on in your life?"** This is more personal, but most people are willing to talk about their wins.
- f. **"Which of the four bases have you neglected most?"** Ideally you would encourage every person to answer this question, but don't embarrass anyone by pressing too much.
- g. **"If you think you may not have been running the bases God's way, what do you think might change if you started living God's way and going around the bases the way God wants us to?"** This question invites people to declare that they would like to change. The hope is that it will open the door to a commitment for growth.

h. "How willing are you to commit to changing in order to have a better life?"

Invite people to make a commitment.

8. Assignment: Ask everyone to *read chapter 5 of Home Run: "Home Plate: How to Win with God."*

9. Closing Prayer: Communicate again that the prayer time is open to anyone who wants to pray. Open and close the prayer time as you did at the end of the previous meeting. As you pray, ask God to help you and everyone else never put a period where God puts a comma.

WEEK 4

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“HOME PLATE: HOW TO WIN WITH GOD”

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FOCUS

This week’s focus is on connecting with God at Home Plate. Because the people in your group may be at many different stages in the spiritual journey, you need to try to engage people who have different needs from one another. And you will be asking them to reveal things about themselves and their walk with God. Some people will resist being transparent about this. They may not want to admit they are not pursuing God’s purpose with His power. (Or they may not be self-aware enough to know whether they are.) And long-time Christians may be very reluctant to admit that they are at the amateur league level when it comes to connecting with God. For this reason, you may need to reveal your own challenges in this area to open the door for discussion.

GOAL

Your goal this week is to get people to set aside time to slow down and engage with God on whatever level they can based on where they are in the spiritual journey.

SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS

When you talk to most believers about connecting with God, they express a genuine desire to do it, and at the same time most feel guilty because they don’t follow through as much as they would like to. Try to encourage people to let go of their guilt and find a way to take a concrete step forward in connecting with God in the coming week. If you have spiritually unresolved people in your group, some of the discussion about connecting with God may not make sense to them. Ask them to be open to what God may have for them, and encourage them to ask God to reveal Himself to them in some way.

PLAN FOR THE MEETING

1. Facilitate Relationship Building: Continue finding ways to build relationships. If things are starting to get predictable, be creative.

2. Open in Prayer: Get everyone together and pray to signal that it's time to start. Invite God to set the agenda for the meeting.

4. Welcome and Logistics: Welcome everyone and take care of any logistics at this time.

5. Icebreaker: "What is one of your favorite childhood memories with you dad, mom, or other adult relative? Tell the story and why it's one of your favorites."

6. Scripture: Read **John 15:4-5**, or ask someone in the group to read it. As you did the previous week, invite people to talk about what stands out to them in the passage.

Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

7. Questions: The questions follow the same pattern as in the previous session. Encourage everyone to talk and open up, but don't allow any one person to dominate the discussion.

a. "Do you think most people today have a strong sense of purpose which they are striving toward, or are they just trying to get by and do the best they can? Why?" Most people will probably be willing to share an opinion based on their observations.

b. "Which brother do you identify with more, Jacob who sometimes forced things to get that he wanted, or Esau who was more passive and tended to wait? Explain." This question requires a bit more openness.

c. "Ernie Johnson had cancer. Jacob feared that his brother would kill him. Do you think a person has to experience a crisis to learn how to depend on God? Explain." This question goes back to opinion, but it reveals a person's point of view and experience.

d. **“In the chapter, Myers described four ways to live:**

- **Our Purpose with Our Power – The Empty Life,**
- **Our Purpose with God’s Power – The Unfulfilled Life,**
- **God’s Purpose with Our Power – The Frustrated Life, or**
- **God’s Purpose with God’s Power – The Full Life;**

Which best describes how you feel about your current situation? Why?” The emphasis in the question is on where people are now. Seasons of life change and how people feel now may be different from how they felt in the past. There’s a risk that people won’t open up, but now that you’re in the fourth week, it’s time to give them a chance to do so.

e. **“In baseball, everyone starts out in Little League, but for some reason when it comes to spiritual leagues of play, people have a hard time believing they should start as an amateur. But there is no shame in starting small. Where are you when it comes to your spiritual level of play:**

- **Amateur League – Learning God’s Principles and Obeying,**
- **Minor League – Leaning into God’s Prompts, or**
- **Major League – Leaning Upon God’s Favor?**

Explain why you are where you think you are.” With this question, you’re asking people to assess where they are spiritually and to acknowledge it publically. This may be very difficult for some people. They may be encouraged if you speak first about your experiences. If you are currently a major leaguer, then talk about when you were an amateur and a minor leaguer.

f. **“What is the thing in your current ‘league’ that you would most like to win during this season, and is there a way anyone in the group could help you?”**

This gets people thinking about where they want to grow and hopefully encourages them to ask for help.

8. Assignment:

a. Ask everyone to **read chapter 6 of Home Run: "First Base: How to Win Within."**

b. **In addition, ask everyone to spend a block of time with God this week based on their current "league of play."** If they've never done this before, they may want to spend eight minutes doing ACTS. Others may want to engage in an extended prayer time or take a day off from work to connect with God. Tell them that the main thing is to commit to it, schedule it, and follow through.

9. Closing Prayer: Challenge everyone in the group to pray aloud, even if it's only one sentence. Acknowledge how uncomfortable and scary it is when you're not used to it, but ask everyone to pray as a step of growth. However, challenge and encourage them, but do not force everyone to pray or go in order around the circle. If there are people who don't pray, allow some awkward silence. Then announce that you are about to close out the prayer time and you want to give anyone who hasn't prayed yet another minute to do so. Then close in prayer.

WEEK 5

“FIRST BASE: HOW TO WIN WITHIN”

FOCUS

Character is often the most neglected base for people. In many Christian circles, it is assumed that people work on it. However, many believers neglect character as much as their non-believing counterparts do. The hope is that in this fifth week of the study, you have built strong relationships among group members and developed enough trust so that people will be willing to talk about their character issues.

GOAL

Your goal for this session is to give people a safe environment in which to talk about their character struggles without being judged or rejected, so that they will get help from God and support from other members of the group.

SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS

If the people in your group have not built good relationships or they don't feel safe, they may not talk openly about their struggles. However, if they do, you may be talking about some difficult subjects in this session. Do not be quick to give advice or to try to solve people's problems on the spot. Character issues require dependence on God and time. Try to come along side people to help them, but encourage them to take ownership of their own issues.

Note: If you have not previously talked about confidentiality rules for the group, you may need to go over some. We suggest that whatever anyone else says in the group stays in the group, but that the leader reserves the right to consult the pastor on any issue that he or she has questions about.

PLAN FOR THE MEETING

- 1. Facilitate Relationship Building:** Continue finding ways to build relationships.
- 2. Open in Prayer:** Get everyone together and pray to signal that it's time to start. Invite God to set the agenda for the meeting.
- 4. Welcome and Logistics:** Welcome everyone and take care of any logistics at this time.
- 5. Icebreaker:** "Who is your favorite hero from movies or fiction? Why?"
- 6. Scripture:** Read **2 Timothy 3:16-17**, or ask someone in the group to read it. As you did the previous week, invite people to talk about what stands out to them in the passage.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

7. Questions: The questions follow the same pattern as in the previous session. Encourage everyone to talk and open up, but don't allow any one person to dominate the discussion.

- a. **"How much of a problem do you think underlying character issues are in our culture? Explain."** This is a safe observation question that will show people's attitude regarding character.
- b. **"Do you find it easy to identify with Samson's struggles, or do you have a hard time understanding how someone God picked for a purpose would waste his gifts? Explain."** Though people will be talking about someone else, their empathy for Samson or lack of it will reveal their attitudes toward the character issue.
- c. **"Myers discussed solid lines versus dotted lines to describe the boundaries God has drawn for his followers. What kind of analogy, if any, have you used in the past to think about or describe what God does not want you to do?"**
Some people may have given this a lot of thought, and their comments will help you understand their maturity and theology.

People who have not considered this in the past will be prompted to think about where God may be asking them to grow in character.

d. “To use Myers’ language, where has God drawn a dotted line in your life, and how did you come to recognize it?” This question asks people to get personal, but to talk about the past, which feels safer to them than talking about the present.

e. “Which of the four practices mentioned in the chapter do you find most difficult to do and why:

- **Pay then Play,**
- **Win Three-Second Windows,**
- **Have No Secret World, or**
- **Put Purity Over Passion?**

This question invites people to be honest, but it doesn’t require them to be too specific if they don’t want to be. However, someone may really open up; you need to be ready to appropriately encourage the person or manage the dynamics of the group if the subject area is a difficult one.

f. “Where in life do you wish you could have a second chance?” This asks people to be very vulnerable.

g. “In what area of life do you find yourself having to fight the hardest when it comes to character? How do you want to change?” This is very personal and may be the single most important question you ask during the Home Run study. Don’t allow others in the group to judge people’s issues to try to solve their problems. Do let people know that you are going to have time at the end of the session to pray for these issues.

8. Assignment: Ask everyone to read chapter 7 of Home Run: “Second Base: How to Win With Others.”

9. Closing Prayer: This prayer time is going to be different from previous weeks. You are going to **invite people to make specific prayer requests for themselves related to**

character struggles. As people speak their requests, make a note for yourself on a piece of paper with the name of the person making the request along with a word or two to remind you of what they asked people to pray for. Take requests from everyone who desires to make one. You may want to make a request for yourself.

At this point, you have some choices about how to pray:

- a. Invite Others to Pray for Individuals:** Ask, “**Who would like to pray for [person’s name] about [person’s issue]?**” When someone volunteers, thank them and then ask who will pray for the next person. Do that for the entire list. If no one offers to pray for any of the prayer requests, you volunteer to pray for that person.
- b. Pray for Everyone Yourself:** If your group has been reluctant to pray aloud, you can ask people to pray for one or more people in the coming week on their own. Meanwhile, you pray for everyone on the list.

This may lead to a long prayer time, so please make sure you preserve time for it. Don’t rush the group and miss the power of praying for one another and inviting God to help people.

WEEK 6

“SECOND BASE: HOW TO WIN WITH OTHERS”

FOCUS.

“Home Run lists four essentials for training in relational health and fitness. In this current season, which would you most like to focus on improving and why:

- Valuing Others More than Yourself,
- Giving More Than You Take,
- Forgiving What You Can't Forget, or
- Letting God Change People?”

This is personal, but it may feel a little bit less heavy than the character questions asked last week.

Relationships impact every area of our lives. The place we feel the impact most acutely is in family—as children, parents, and spouses. This week's session looks primarily at family of origin in setting the tone for people relationally and invites people to grow at second base without focusing in on one particular type of relationship

GOAL

Your goal for this session is to help people identify where they most need to grow relationally and take action to improve in that area.

SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS

We live in a culture of broken relationships. A startling number of people come from broken homes, as Kevin Myers did. To many of them, dysfunction and brokenness seem normal. You can help people by showing them that God desires whole relationships and encouraging them to take responsibility for repairing relationships and loving people.

PLAN FOR THE MEETING

- 1. Facilitate Relationship Building:** Continue finding ways to build relationships.
- 2. Open in Prayer:** Get everyone together and pray to signal that it's time to start. Invite God to set the agenda for the meeting.
- 3. Welcome and Logistics:** Welcome everyone and take care of any logistics at this time.
- 4. Icebreaker:** "What is one of your favorite childhood memories? Tell the story." This can be a lot of fun and set the tone for the session which will later ask people to open up about relationships.
- 5. Scripture:** Read **1 John 4: 19-21**, or ask someone in the group to read it. As you did the previous week, invite people to talk about what stands out to them in the passage.

We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

- 6. Questions:** As always, encourage everyone to talk and open up.
 - a. "Do you have any healthy role models you know personally when it comes to relationships? If so, describe what you admire about them."** Most people can identify someone who models this, and they are usually glad to talk about people they admire.
 - b. "Is your background more like that of Kevin Myers or John Maxwell? Explain."** People's history and perception of themselves in the area of community strongly influences how they interact with other people.
 - c. "If there was an elephant in the room in your family of origin, are you willing to tell what it was and how you think it impacted you? Does it ever cause you to overreact to others the way Myers described in the story about his injured finger?"** This is getting to very personal question quickly in this session. The hope is that people feel comfortable after six weeks in the group

together.

d. "Myers says that Jacob's family started to get over their dysfunction when Joseph got healthy and started living according to God's guidelines. What would it take for you to become that person for your family?" This question is targeted more toward the people with the greatest difficulties in relationships. It offers hope for change and provides a chance for them to commit to taking personal responsibility for growth in this area.

e. "Home Run lists four essentials for training in relational health and fitness. In this current season, which would you most like to focus on improving and why:

- **Valuing Others More than Yourself,**
- **Giving More Than You Take,**
- **Forgiving What You Can't Forget, or**
- **Letting God Change People?"**

This is personal, but it may feel a little bit less heavy than the character questions asked last week.

f. "What specific action are you willing to commit to doing in the coming week to improve or change in the area you just identified?" The key to change is following through. Encourage people to take action. During the next session, you will ask them about how they did.

8. Assignment: Ask everyone to **read chapter 8 of Home Run: "Third Base: How to Win Results."**

9. Closing Prayer: Open the floor for **prayer requests** as you did in the last session, asking for people to pray for one another. In addition, **offer to pray for people in the group who feel they do not possess a heart for people.** As you close the prayer time, pray for each of those people by name asking God to increase their love for others.

WEEK 7

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“THIRD BASE: HOW TO WIN RESULTS”

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FOCUS

There is a disconnect in our culture. On the one hand, teams give out trophies to kids just for showing up. On the other hand, many people in the work world believe results are everything. Neither aligns with God’s perspective. Results matter, and third base is important to God, but He wants us to win results after dependence, character, and relationships.

GOAL

Your goal for this session is to help people identify where their perspective about work and career may be off base. Some people aren’t giving their best; others are sacrificing too much. Encourage people to commit to changing so they can live God’s way.

SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS

You may have a broad spectrum of attitudes toward work in your group, from classic workaholic executives, to get-ahead workers with multiple jobs, to slackers who simply show up for a check, to stay at home moms or dads. It may be difficult to include every type of person with every question, but do your best to engage everyone and encourage each person to make appropriate adjustments to run the bases God’s way.

Plan for the Meeting

1. Facilitate Relationship Building: Continue finding ways to build relationships.

2. Open in Prayer: Get everyone together and pray to signal that it’s time to start. Invite God to set the agenda for the meeting.

4. Welcome and Logistics: Welcome everyone and take care of any logistics at this time.

5. Icebreaker: “What was your first job? Describe it and tell how you did at it.” This can lead to a lot of great stories and be a lot of fun for the group.

6. Scripture: Read **Matthew 6:31-33**, or ask someone in the group to read it. As you did the previous week, invite people to talk about what stands out to them in the passage.

So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

7. Questions: As always, encourage everyone to talk and open up.

a. “How would you describe how you have handled the pace of progress in your career up to now?” Most people will be honest about this, whether positive or negative.

b. “In general would you say that you tend to give too much time and attention to your work or too little? Explain.” This is a pretty personal question, but most people are usually willing to talk about this subject pretty openly.

c. Which of the four lessons from John Maxwell do you have the most difficult time practicing:

- **Bring Your Talent to the Table,**
- **Don’t Let Your Failure Be Final,**
- **Earn Your Keep Every Day, or**
- **Have a Funeral and Get a New Dream?**

The four choices will probably include people who are envious of others’ jobs, are discouraged in their career, are not motivated to work hard, and need to change course. It may not include people who work too much. Try to include those people in the next question.

- d. "How would you need to change in order to put third base in its appropriate place in your life—after winning with God at home plate, winning within at first base, and winning with others at second base?"** This may be tough for people to answer because they may still have a hard time defining the "appropriate place" for work. For some it may mean giving less time to work. For others it may mean being willing to learn the ropes. And for others it may mean trading a sling for a sword.
- e. "What specific action are you willing to commit to doing in the coming week to improve to put the bases in the right order?"** The key to change is following through. Encourage people to take action. During the next session, you will ask them about how they did.

8. Assignment: Ask everyone to **read chapter 9 of *Home Run: "Scoring: How to Keep Living and Winning God's Way."***

9. Closing Prayer: Open the floor for **prayer requests** as you did in the last session, asking for people to pray for one another.

WEEK 8

“SCORING: HOW TO KEEP LIVING AND WINNING GOD’S WAY”

FOCUS

This week’s session is likely to create more questions than it answers for most people in the group. The question of purpose for one’s life is no small thing, and it takes time to discover and unfold. Try to help people to think about whether the life they are living is rooted in eternity and is serving God or themselves.

GOAL

Your goal for this session is to help people to start thinking about aligning their purpose with God’s purpose for them if they haven’t already started on it. Try to get a commitment from every person to seek God’s direction in this.

SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS

Once again, you may have quite a cross section of perspectives and experiences in your group. Encourage the people to talk who’ve given this a lot of thought and who have made adjustments in their life to live for God. Encourage others to explore, not out of guilt, but out of the desire for a greater calling and a stronger sense of fulfillment.

PLAN FOR THE MEETING

1. Open in Prayer: Get everyone together and pray to signal that it’s time to start. Invite God to set the agenda for the meeting.

2. Acknowledge the Relational Bonds that Have Been Built: Acknowledge and celebrate the relationships that have been built in the group over the eight weeks.

3. Logistics: If you plan to continue the group or stay in touch in the future, talk about those things at this time.

4. Icebreaker: “Who is the person you admire most in the world and why?”

5. Scripture: There are two passages this week:

Mark 12:29-31

“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

1 Corinthians 10:31

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Read them or ask someone in the group to do so. Then invite people to talk about what stands out to them from the passages.

6. Questions: As always, encourage everyone to talk and open up.

a. **“Do you think it would be possible for people to run the bases the right way and still get stuck at third base and miss the greater purpose for their life? Explain.”** Though this asks people to describe others, it still may help someone who is not living for God to recognize that fact.

b. **“Why do you think it’s such a struggle for most people to focus on storing up treasure in heaven instead of trying possess treasures on earth?”** This question asks for people’s observations, but will likely get them thinking about their own actions.

c. **“Of the four things Myers says we must do for God’s glory in order to lead to a home run in life, which do you think God is currently asking you to focus on:**

- **Do what you were created to do,**
- **Give yourself away,**
- **Invite others into the faith journey, or**
- **Help others discover what they were created to do?**

Most people will probably not have figured out what they were created to do for God's glory. Try to help them do that.

- d. "How do you figure out how to use your gifts and experience in the service of God?"** Let this question generate a good long discussion. If there are people in the group who have wrestled through this issue, ask them to share their experiences. Encourage others to ask questions. People may not settle this issue quickly, but if you can help them get started in figuring it out, you will help them greatly.
- e. "What specifically do you think you must change for you to live a home run life according to God's standard and His definition of success? What step are you willing to take today in that direction?"** Encourage people to commit to whatever changes God asks of them.

7. Assignment: Ask everyone to **spend some time with God seeking His will for their lives and asking that He reveal their purpose.**

8. Closing Prayer: Open the floor for **prayer requests** as you did in the last session, asking for people to pray for one another. When you close in prayer, **ask God to help everyone find and fulfill their purpose.**