

SMALL GROUP CURRICULUM EVALUATION TOOL

Note to the Small Group Leader: This sheet is to be used as you browse websites or look through the curriculum we have on hand at the church. The goal is for you to make the best decision regarding what your small group needs to hear at this stage of your journey with God together. As I always say, "Eighty percent of books published probably did not need to be," so it is with great care that we should go about determining which studies we use. While it is impossible to know everything about a curriculum series based on a website, here are some key things to look for: 1) Table of contents; 2) user reviews; 3) overview from the back cover; 4) preview pages; 5) and price. These five things should enable you to make an informed decision.

Curriculum: _____ Author: _____

Website: _____

Scope and Sequence

The goal is that your group would vary the genre of study each time. For example, try not to pick all studies on Seasons of Life, such as marriage, parenting, aging, money, etc.

1. List the previous three studies your group has done and the category they fit into. If your group just started, list as many as you've done.

A. _____

- Intimacy with God
- Community with Insiders
- Influence with Outsiders
- Seasons of Life
- Bible Book Study

B. _____

- Intimacy with God
- Community with Insiders
- Influence with Outsiders
- Seasons of Life
- Bible Book Study

C. _____

- Intimacy with God
- Community with Insiders
- Influence with Outsiders
- Seasons of Life
- Bible Book Study

2. What are some suggestions for topics you have heard from group members, if any? What is your own preference? What is the rationale for choosing this topic or study?

3. Taking these suggestions into account, along with what you know about the spiritual needs of yourself and the people in your group, does this study adequately address those needs? Why or why not?

Rate each of these questions with a number. The higher the number, the closer to a perfect score. For example, giving the first question a 3 out of 3 means you think the curriculum definitely makes God the subject.

Scripture and Theology (10 Points Possible)

The goal with any study is that it would be grounded in Scripture and approach topics from a Wesleyan-Arminian perspective.

- ___/3 God is written about as the subject of the story, not us. The curriculum is not a self-help guide masked with language of God.
- ___/3 Scripture is used authoritatively. Scripture is viewed as God's revelation to us. Scripture is not an add-on to someone's good ideas. It is not proof texted.
- ___/2 The language used to describe God and His creation fits the intended audience. It is theologically accurate while not being too academic or too simplistic.
- ___/2 The curriculum is written in Arminian language. There is nothing overtly Calvinist about it.

- ___/10 Subtotal

The Christian Life and Life Application (11 Points Possible)

The goal is that people are driven toward living out the truth of Scripture in daily life with the real hope of holiness.

- ___/3 Each lesson offers practical suggestions for living out what has been learned. It is not cognitive only. The curriculum balances good discussion of ideas with application of those ideas.
- ___/3 The curriculum assumes that the Christian life is one of growth in grace and that God not only calls us to be holy but the Spirit empowers us to holy living.
- ___/3 People are challenged to develop new ways of thinking, new habits of living, and new ways of willing. The head, hands and heart can all be engaged and changed.

___/2 The context of life application is in both one's personal life and social world, including the local church.

___/11 Subtotal

Format (9 Points Possible)

The goal is that each study is relevant, fits within a group's given timeframe and has built-in tools for facilitating discussion. At the same time, leaders ought not rule out a good book simply because there are no discussion questions provided.

___/3 The curriculum fits within the timeframe of each group gathering, leaving adequate time for discussion.

___/3 If the curriculum is a book, it has chapters that can be discussed within a maximum of ten weeks or so (For example, ten chapters or several shorter chapters that can be combined).

___/2 The curriculum gives adequate space to wrestle with tough questions. It assumes that there are tough questions even for the seasoned believer to ask and answer of God and himself or herself.

___/1 The curriculum is timely, not out-of-date. This does not mean we cannot draw from the classics of the past, but we must discern whether the content has been replaced with more relevant content since its publication.

___/9 Subtotal

Small Group Leader (8 Points Possible)

The goal is for leaders to feel like preparation is possible because the curriculum does not necessitate too much time and gives enough tools for both teaching and facilitating discussion.

___/3 The expectations for a leader's preparation are feasible for the average week (i.e., no more than one to two hours).

___/3 The curriculum allows the small group leader to facilitate discussion. Teaching is included but does not dominate the group's time. Everyone is able to process information together.

___/2 The curriculum provides suggested Scripture passages to read and/or discussion questions. The leader guide is sufficient to at least begin meaningful conversation.

___/8 Subtotal

Small Group Members and Learning (8 Points Possible)

The goal is that curriculum has an easily understandable purpose that fits with the discipleship plan of the church. If participants take part in reading or homework during the week, it is feasible.

___/3 If participants are expected to read at home or do homework during the week, the amount is doable.

___/3 The long-term goals of the curriculum are in line with our church's plan of discipleship.

___/2 The curriculum has stated objectives of what participants will learn and do as evidence of their discipleship. Objectives may be stated in a book's preface or a DVD series' leader guide.

___/8 Subtotal

Cost (4 Points Possible)

The goal is that each study is cost effective. While cost should not prevent a group from using an otherwise excellent study, it must be considered.

___/2 The cost per person is affordable. \$2-\$3 per session, calculated by dividing the total cost of a participant's guide or book by the number of weeks. For example, an \$18 book being used for 8 weeks costs \$2.25 per session.

___/2 The cost being paid by the church for leader guides, book, and/or DVD is affordable. \$5-\$10 per session. For example, a \$25 DVD, \$18 book and \$11 leader guide being used for 6 weeks costs \$9 per session.

___/4 Subtotal

___/50 Total

Scale	
45-50	Excellent: Go for it!
40-44	Probably a good choice.
<39	Probably another option out there that is

APPENDIX: STARTING POINT FOR FINDING POTENTIAL CURRICULUM

Authors

This list of authors is not meant to be exhaustive. Feel free to look at studies written by authors outside of this list. I do. Start here if you're uncertain of where to go next.

Alcorn, Randy	Groeschel, Craig	Powell, Kara
Anderson, Neil	Hamilton, Adam	Seamands, Stephen
Barton, Ruth Haley	Hirsch, Alan	Sleeth, Matthew
Batterson, Mark	Hybels, Bill	Smith, James Bryan
Blackaby, Henry	Ingram, Chip	Stanley, Andy
Bonhoeffer, Dietrich	Keller, Timothy	Stearns, Richard
Calhoun, Adele	Kimball, Dan	Thomas, Gary
Caliguire, Mindy	Kinnaman, David	Townsend, John
Chan, Francis	Lewis, C.S.	Tozer, A.W.
Clark, Chap	Lucado, Max	Vander Laan, Ray
Cloud, Henry	Manning, Brennan	White, James Emery
DeNeff, Steve	McGrath, Alister	Willard, Dallas
Dobson, Ed	McKnight, Scot	Winner, Lauren
Drury, David	McNeal, Reggie	Witherington, Ben
Drury, Keith	Miller, Donald	Wright, N.T.
Eldredge, John	Nieuwhof, Carey	Yancey, Philip
Feinberg, Margaret	Nouwen, Henri	Zacharias, Ravi
Foster, Richard	Ortberg, John	
Frazee, Randy	Peterson, Eugene	

Websites

Start at these websites to find curriculum.

1. www.cbd.com. Christian Book Distributors is a great place to enter an author's name for a search. Or search by topic or name of the study.
2. www.amazon.com. This is where we actually buy most of our curriculum. Use this site for determining the cost.
3. www.seedbed.com. Seedbed publishes from a Wesleyan perspective.
4. www.renovare.us. An excellent group dedicated to spiritual formation in Christ.
5. www.zondevan.com. A trusted publishing house.
6. www.bakerpublishinggroup.com. A trusted publishing house.
7. www.ivpress.com. A trusted publishing house.