

New D-Group Booklet



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The 4-week Booklet that you hold in your hands is designed to guide you through conversations that are necessary in the development of a sustainable, organized D-Group. This booklet was written to be read aloud with conversational language that will encourage everyone to participate in the decisions being made. There is room at the end of this booklet to write down the decisions that your D-Group makes, so that you can refer back to them in the future.

We encourage you to actually use this feature, as it will help clarify what the D-Group is agreeing to. We are so very excited for you all and would love to answer any questions that may come up. Please don't hesitate to reach out us at tcruz@southwestbible.org

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Week 1: Constructing Our D-Group

Overview

Our goal for tonight is to work out quite a few of the foundational details of our D-Group. Making these decisions at the beginning will help us to ease into our rhythms of D-group life.

Welcome & Introductions (15 minutes)

Let's go around and introduce ourselves.

- What is your name?
- How long have you been at Southwest?
- If it was guaranteed to become a New York Times bestseller, what book would you write?

D-Group Leaders Leader(s) (2 minutes)

D-Group Leaders are the people who give shape to our D-Group's nights together, facilitates the discussion, and is the point of contact for our D-Group with Southwest Leadership.

As of now, _____, is going to facilitate discussion over the next 4 weeks for our D-Group until a Leader(s) is established. Facilitating includes being present each week to guide our D-Group through the New D-Group Booklet, communicate to our group when and where we're meeting, and to be the point of contact with Southwest's Discipleship Team. They may be moving forward in the process of becoming the D-Group Leader(s). Until they get to do the Leader Application & Pathway, they will be serving as our D-Group's facilitator.

If anyone else is interested in learning more about co-Leading, please reach out to tcruz@southwestbible.org to let the Discipleship Team know.

Coordinators & Other Roles (2 minutes)

Another category of leadership is a Coordinator. These folks will help our D-Group stay focused in particular areas to ensure that we aren't missing anything within the values of Family, Mission, & Formation. Typically, D-Groups function with a variety of Coordinators, usually depending on where there is need and where there is gifting. The required coordinators for a D-Group to operate with Southwest are:

- **Family Coordinator: Oversees and plans the monthly family gathering.**
- **Mission Coordinator: Oversees the Community's monthly mission initiative (some D-Group have two people coordinating mission)**

That said, as you know, it takes a village! So even if you are not a D-Group Leader or Coordinator, you should still have a role! Because everyone has something different to offer, most D-Groups have a variety of roles, like: being in charge of making sure everyone's birthday is celebrated, helping plan an outing or trip for the D-Group, making sure no one sits alone at church, planning activities beyond the night you meet, planning holiday themed parties, leading worship, reminding everyone about prayer requests, or anything else you may want to contribute.

We won't pick the Coordinators or other roles now, but we will ask about them over the next few weeks in the correlating sections as they come up.

Night to Meet (5 minutes)

What night of the week does our D-Group want to meet or continue meeting next semester?

Let's start the conversation by working through the following questions:

- **Can anyone not make certain nights of the week work?**
- **Do any of our jobs change the availability of our evenings? If so, how often?**

We are going to pick the night that works for the majority of the D-Group and then the Discipleship Team will help the one or two others for whom it doesn't work find another D-Group. If that's you, please email jbauzon@southwestbible.org

Time To Meet (5 minutes)

What time does our D-Group want to meet each week? Depending on kids' bedtimes and work/school days, most D-Group meet 5:30 – 7:30 PM or 6:30 – 8:30 PM.

Let's start the conversation by working through the following question:

- **Does anyone have a strong preference?**
- **Are there other times that work well?**

Where to Meet (5 minutes)

Next, we need to have a conversation about where we're going to be meeting. If multiple people want to host, we can have a conversation about rotating hosts each week. Also, let's keep in mind that a family with younger kids may prefer to host so they can put their kids to bed at some point during the night.

Let's start the conversation by working through the following questions:

- **Are there any families with kids who would prefer to host for bedtime routine purposes?**
- **Does anyone else want to host?**

Kids (10 minutes)

Next, we need to have a conversation about what we want to do with the kids in our D-Group. Remember that our desire is for kids to feel like this is their D-Group as much as it is ours. While this ideal is really great, it can also be quite tricky to work out. Our goal is to find the balance between including the kids and honoring everyone in the room. Most D-Group have kids present for the front half of the night, as they eat dinner, and then have some sort of situation figured out for them for the second half (e.g. bedtimes, paid babysitters, a rotation of two unrelated adults in the D-Group that parents feel comfortable with to hang out with the kids, etc.).

Let's start the conversation by working through the following questions:

- **Acknowledging that finding a balance is going to probably take some time, what is everyone's preference for integrating kids in our D-Group?**
- **After hearing that, do the parents of the kids in our D-Group have any other ideas to add?** (*Note: If anyone prefers to take a week to think about this, that's ok!*)
- **Is there a compromise between these ideas?**
- **How should we continue to make space to talk about how to integrate kids in our D-Group (especially as they grow)?**

Communication Platform (5 minutes)

Next, we need to talk about how everyone wants to communicate with each other. The most common platforms that D-Groups use are the Southwest Bible Church App, Slack, GroupMe, WhatsApp, and iMessage (if everyone has an iPhone). It is not recommended that folks use email because not everyone checks it frequently enough to be an effective form of group communication.

Let's start the conversation by working through the following questions:

- **Does anyone have a preference for a communication method? Is someone using one now that they would recommend?**
- **Does someone want to volunteer to be the Communication Coordinator and get everyone's contact information into the chosen app tonight before we go?**

Sunday Gatherings (5 minutes)

Now for the extra credit section! It is really fun for D-Groups to be able to sit together at the Sunday gatherings. Have a conversation about which gatherings everyone goes to and whether or not this is something we would like to do.

- **Which gathering does each person go to?**
- **Do those of us who go to the same gatherings want to try and sit together?**

The Next Three Weeks (5 minutes)

Over the next three weeks, we will be getting to know each other better.

For Week 2 (next week), we will work through the Family section of this Booklet. There is homework connected to that, but we'll get there in a second.

For Week 3, we will be working through the Formation section of this Booklet, in which we will explore what is typically known as Listening Prayer.

For Week 4, we will be working through the final section of this Booklet: Mission. During this week, we will use a list provided in this section to start the conversation in selecting a monthly way to live on mission to those around us, in our church, or those on the margins in our city.

Before we talk about the homework, let's reiterate the plans for next week:

- **Next week, where and when are we meeting?**

Homework (2 minutes)

Next week, we will be sharing a little about ourselves with each other. Remembering that vulnerability and trust are grown not expected, we want to share only what we feel ready to share. So next week, we want everyone to come ready to share something about themselves that they want everyone to know – what they do for a living, where they're from, something about their family or a hobby or cool experience they have had. In order to facilitate that, please bring an item that you can use as a jumping off (and focusing) point. This could be a photo or trophy or favorite book or some other item that captures the essence of what you're wanting to share. Each person will have 3 – 5 minutes to share (we'll time it to make sure everyone gets to go). Not only does it not have to be super serious or heavy, we encourage the opposite – keep it light and fun!

Week 2: Family Overview

Tonight, we always want to remember that trust and vulnerability are built over time with consistency and shared experience, so let's be open with and honoring of each other as we get to know each other a little better.

Our goal for tonight is to begin to take some time to share about ourselves through the items that we brought tonight.

(Leaders: Invite everyone to transition into a space where they can comfortably see and hear each other – around a table, circled up in the living room, etc. Once they're comfortable, move forward and read the next section.)

For the remainder of our time tonight, we want to share a bit about ourselves through the items we brought. Before we get going, let's talk about how this is going to work.

- First, let's do a quick calculation: the time we have left ÷ the number of people sharing = the amount of time each person gets to share. Set a timer with this time.
- As people share, try to not interrupt them, but give them space to share what they've planned to share. If someone doesn't use their full time, we will use it to ask questions and get to know them even better.

Ok! That's it! Let's do it.

(Leaders: As you close in prayer, thank God for each person who shared and ask him to bless each of you this week. Before you go, make sure everyone is on the same page about next week's plan for time and hosting.)

How to Use Future Family Weeks

- Game Night
- Community Outing (movies, Top Golf, fancy dinner, etc.)
- Men's/Women's Nights
- Picnic at a Park
- Birthday Parties

Week 3: Discipleship

Overview

There are many vital spiritual practices in life of someone of follows Jesus. One of this vital practices in the life of a D-Group is something called Listening Prayer. This section is written out in the format of a Southwest Arena Guide (the format we will use in our Discipleship Rhythm twice per month). Our goal for tonight is to familiarize ourselves with the format of an Arena Guide and to learn more about and practice Listening Prayer together.

The Essence of Prayer

At its essence, prayer is life and communion with God. There are many types of prayer, each of which helps us relate to God in different ways. Listening Prayer, which we'll practice tonight, is when we allow the Holy Spirit to access our imaginations, which he created, and to mingle God's thoughts with ours. The practice is best done with pen, journal, and Bible in hand.

Three Layers of Listening Prayer

A helpful way to think about this is in three layers: **Illumination, Interpretation, & Application.**

- **Illumination — “What do I sense/hear?”**

To clarify, listening for what God is saying to you personally is not another form of “Inspiration” like how the Bible is inspired by God. Listening prayer is allowing God to illuminate something very specific for us in light of what we know from Scripture. You must always remember, God will not say something to you personally that contradicts his truths biblically. Voice never supersedes verse. With that, illumination is the thought, feeling, image, etc. that came to mind for you as you paused in silence. What is God trying to whisper to you as you pause and make space to hear him?

- **Interpretation — “What does it mean?” or “What could it mean?”**

This is you trying to make sense of what you heard. What could God be wanting to say through it?

- **Application — “What do I do with it?”**
This is simply asking, *What is it for? And when is it for?*

Sharing with Humility

Part of keeping personal illumination submitted to biblical inspiration is creating a space where people can humbly share. If, as you listen, you sense the word is to be shared, remember that there is always wisdom to say it with humility. It’s so common to get part of it right, but not all of it right. If something you heard is not in line with with Scripture it’s because you’re learning discernment and growing in the knowledge of Scripture, not because you don’t actually hear God’s voice.

So, when you share, try to stay away from language like “*God told me...*” or “*God says...*” and instead say things like:

- “My sense is that God may want to say...”
- “I wonder if God is saying...”

Saying it in a way that assumes you may not be totally right and allows others speak into it with humility in return.

Practicing in Community

Let’s remember that we grow in this by practicing it in community, not just by ourselves. This isn’t a superpower — we are not playing with God’s power; we are stewarding God’s presence. We practice because we believe that God wants to speak to us more than we want to hear his voice.

SAMPLE ARENA

WEEK 1 (/**/**) – Listening Prayer**

- Read **John 10:27** and **Luke 10:39** out loud
- Key Takeaway: We must learn to lean in to hear a whisper

Gathered Discussion

1. **Notice** - Notice 10 things in each passage. Write them in a journal or note on your phone. share 10 out loud as a group for each passage.
 - Learning to sift through all the “voices” in our head and to discern how God is speaking to us is a key task of discipleship. But learning to hear is just the beginning; learning to obey is the even greater task. Our intention must be to really listen to God, with a heart of loving surrender and trust. We should not expect to hear from God if we know we don’t fully intend to obey.
 2. Have you ever tried to listen for God’s voice before? If not, why not?
 3. What fears or hopes does this type of prayer bring up in your heart?
 4. **Questions to Consider:** How do we know if what we’re hearing is from God? Might this be opening up doors that could lead to spiritual danger? Everyone can use good things to create destruction. Does that mean we throw them out because they have been misused? Of course not. We just need discernment tests (1 Thess. 5:19-21):
 - Scripture Test: Does this contradict anything we know from Scripture?
 - Tone Test: Does this feel forceful or condemning? Does this align with what know of God’s character?
 - Resonance Test: Does this bring peace and conviction or condemnation, confusion, and fear?
 - Fruit Test: Does this bear positive fruit in my life?
 5. **God’s Word for You:** (*Leaders: take a moment to pray and invite the Holy Spirit to speak to each person, and to quiet other voices or distractions that may get in the way of listening well.*) Find somewhere quiet and distraction-free and do the following:
 1. Read John 12:26 slowly and prayerfully. Pay special attention to any words or phrases or ideas that jump out to you.
 2. Reread the passage again, slowly. This time, pause over the word(s) or phrase(s) that were highlighted to you during your first reading. Meditate on them. Turn them over in your mind. Savor them.
 3. Pray your impressions back to God. You can use your own words or simply pray the text directly to God. Ask, “God, what do you want me to do with this passage?” Sit for 1-3 minutes in silence and journal what you believe He may be showing you.
 4. Take a few minutes in silence to breathe deeply and rest in God’s loving word to you.
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The Practice for the Week Ahead

This week, take some time to do this Practice on your own. Read or listen to your daily amount of Bible reading and notice any one verse or story that stands out. Note it either then or later go through the four steps of the “God’s Word for You” section above. Remember, God’s word is not about us but He has and will use it to speak to us.

End in Prayer

(Leader: Close in prayer, thanking God for your time together tonight.)

How to Use Future Discipleship Weeks

Continue following the D-Group Arenas for each Rhythm. If a week lacks a guide, revisit past Arena’s.

Week 4: Mission Overview

Tonight, we'll explore our third and final of the Rhythms of D-Group Life: Mission. Once a month, as a way of taking spiritual responsibility for Austin, our D-Group will be actively engaged in a mission initiative.

Our goal for tonight is to choose and work out the details of an initiative that moves us to pour ourselves out for others, our church, and those on the margins in our city.

The purpose of this Rhythm is to push us outside of our comfortable living rooms and into giving ourselves away for the sake of others. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. The redemption story was not for his benefit but for ours and Jesus said, "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40). He gave Himself away for the sake of others and we want to as well. At some point in the future, our D-Group will pick a monthly mission initiative based on group discernment and prayer, but to start, we are going to pick based on our D-Group's limitations. We just want to start somewhere and the quickest way to make this decision is based on what works best for most people. So our guide for picking an initiative tonight is going to be our D-Group's limitations (e.g. ages of kids, day and time that works, etc.).

There are 5 areas of mission in which Southwest is involved: _____, _____, _____, _____, _____

Because some of these take more time to get involved in and require a long term relationship, we are going to start off with initiatives that don't require organizational partnerships. Let's read through the list below, have a conversation about our limitations, and pick one that best fits our D-Group:

- **Neighborhood Clean-Up:** Adopting a few block radius in your part of the city that could use some cleaning up, that you will continue to visit and clean up each month. The goal is not simply to clean up, but to build relationships with those on the margin in that neighborhood. (Be sure to not clean up anything that may belong to someone.)

- **Adopt a Vulnerable Individual or Family in Your Network:** Within your own circle, identify an individual or family who could use some extra love and support in this season. This can include things like tangible needs that you or your D-Group can meet (e.g. clothing, food, toys, yard care, home

maintenance, dog walking, childcare, etc.) and building relationship by doing life together.

- **Brown Bag Meal Creation & Distribution:** Put together a number of sack lunches containing prepackaged food items for those experiencing houselessness. Then, adopt a few block radius that you will return to each month, distributing the meals and getting to know those to whom you're giving them.
- **Evangelism Training and Execution:** Watch a teaching on why and how to invite others into reading the Gospel of John together for 4 weeks. Use mission rhythm nights as 1 of the 4 weeks you read the gospel of John with someone from the community.
- **(For parents of young kids)** Instead of having a D-Group night during the mission rhythm week you just serve one service at church in an area of greatest need and attend the second.
- **(For parents of young kids)** Choose to meet at a park with the kids and make goals of each person engaging with and having conversation with 1-3 people they don't know.

Lastly for tonight, who wants to be the Mission Coordinator(s), who helps oversee the details and structure of our Mission Rhythm?

How to Use Future Mission Weeks

- Do your monthly mission
- Pray for your part of the city
- Consider giving financially to an organization

Our D-Group Plan

Use the following chart and fill out all the decisions your D-Group made over the last month. When this form is completed, please type it up or take a picture and send it to the Discipleship Team at jbauzon@southwestbible.org

Day: _____ **Time:** _____ **Location:** _____

of Adults: _____ **# of Kids:** _____ **Plan to Integrate Kids:**

Communication Platform: Slack / GroupMe / WhatsApp / iMessage

D-Group Leader(s):

Coordinators:

Mission:

Family:

Other Roles:

Mission: Neighborhood Clean-Up / Vulnerable Family Adoption / Brown Bag Distribution / Other: _____