

## HELP FOR HOSTS

### Top Ten Ideas for New Hosts

**CONGRATULATIONS!** As the host of your small group, you have responded to the call to help shepherd Jesus' flock. Few other tasks in the family of God surpass the contribution you will be making. As you prepare to facilitate your group, whether it is one session or the entire series, here are a few thoughts to keep in mind.

Remember you are not alone. God knows everything about you, and he knew you would be asked to facilitate your group. Even though you may not feel ready, this is common for all good hosts. God promises, "I will never leave you; I will never abandon you" (Hebrews 13:5 TEV). Whether you are facilitating for one evening, several weeks, or a lifetime, you will be blessed as you serve.

## RESOURCES

- Help for HOSTS .....62
- Frequently Asked Questions.....65
- Circles of Life.....67
- Small Group Guidelines.....68
- Small Group Prayer and Praise Report.....70
- Small Group Calendar....71
- Spiritual Health Assessment.....72
- Spiritual Health Plan.....75
- S.H.A.P.E. Profile....76
- Answer Key....81
- Small Group Roster....82

1. **Don't try to do it alone.** Pray right now for God to help you build a healthy team. If you can enlist a cohost to help you shepherd the group, you will find your experience much richer. This is your chance to involve as many people as you can in building a healthy group. All you have to do is ask people to help. You'll be surprised at the response.
2. **Be friendly and be yourself.** God wants to use your unique gifts and temperament. Be sure to greet people at the door with a big smile.... this can set the mood for the whole gathering. Remember, they are taking as big a step to show up at your house as you are to host a small group! Don't try to do things exactly like another host; do them in a way that fits you. Admit when you don't have an answer and apologize when you make a mistake. Your group will love you for it and you'll sleep better at night.
3. **Prepare for your meeting ahead of time.** Preview the session and write down your responses to each question.
4. **Pray for your group members by name.** Before your group arrives, take a few moments to pray for each member by name. You may want to review the Small Group Prayer and Praise Report at least once a week. Ask God to use your time together to touch the heart of each person in your group. Expect God to lead you to whomever he wants you to encourage or challenge in a special way. If you listen, God will surely lead.

## RESOURCES

5. **When you ask a question, be patient.** Someone will eventually respond. Sometimes people need a moment or two of silence to think about the question. If silence doesn't bother you, it won't bother anyone else. After someone responds, affirm the response with a simple "thanks" or "great answer." Then ask, "How about somebody else?" or "Would someone who hasn't shared like to add anything?" Be sensitive to new people or reluctant members who aren't ready to say, pray, or do anything. If you give them a safe setting, they will blossom over time. If someone in your group is a wallflower who sits silently through every session, consider talking them privately and encouraging them to participate. Let them know how important they are to you – that they are loved and appreciated, and that the group would value their input. Remember, still water often runs deep.
6. **Provide transitions between questions.** Ask if anyone would like to read the paragraph or Bible passage. Don't call on anyone, but ask for a volunteer, and then be patient until someone begins. Be sure to thank the person who reads aloud.
7. **Break into smaller groups occasionally.** With a greater opportunity to talk in a small circle, people will connect more with the study, apply more quickly what they're learning, and ultimately get more out of their small group experience. A small circle also encourages a quiet person to participate and tends to minimize the effects of a more vocal or dominant member.
8. **Small circles are also helpful during prayer time.** People who are unaccustomed to praying aloud will feel more comfortable trying it with just two or three others. Also, prayer requests won't take as much time, so circles will have more time to actually pray. When you gather back with the whole group, you can have one person from each circle briefly update everyone on the prayer requests from their subgroups. The other great aspect of sub grouping is that it fosters leadership development. As you ask people in the group to facilitate discussion or to lead a prayer circle, it gives them a small leadership step that can build their confidence.
9. **Rotate facilitators occasionally.** You may be perfectly capable of hosting each time, but you will help others grow in their faith and gifts if you give them opportunities to host the group.
10. **One final challenge (for new or first-time hosts).** Before your first opportunity to lead, look up each of the six passages listed on page 66. Read each one as a devotional exercise to help prepare you with a shepherd's heart. Trust us on this one. If you do this, you will be more than ready for your first meeting.

## HE>ME

### Matthew 9:36-38 (NIV)

*"When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

### John 10:14-15 (NIV)

*"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep."*

### 1 Peter 5:2-4 (NIV)

*"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away."*

### Philippians 2:1-5 (NIV)

*"If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interest of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ."*

### Hebrews 10:23-25 (NIV)

*"Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*

### 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, 11-12 (NIV)

*"... but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the Gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us... For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory."*

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### How long will this group meet?

This study is six sessions long. We encourage your group to add a seventh session for a celebration. In your final session, each group member may decide if he or she desires to continue on for another study. At that time you may also want to do some informal evaluation, discuss your **Small Group Guidelines** (see page 68), and decide which study you want to do next.

#### Who is the host?

The host is the person who coordinates and facilitates your group meetings. In addition to a host, we encourage you to select one or more group members to lead your group discussions. Several other responsibilities can be rotated, including refreshments, prayer requests, worship, or keeping up with those who miss a meeting. Shared ownership in the group helps everybody grow.

#### Where do we find new group members?

Recruiting new members can be a challenge for groups, especially new groups with just a few people, or existing groups that lose a few people along the way. We encourage you to use the **Circles of Life** diagram on page 69 of this study guide to brainstorm a list of people from your workplace, church, school, neighborhood, family, and so on. Then pray for the people on each member's list. Allow each member to invite several people from their list. Some groups fear that newcomers will interrupt the intimacy that members have built over time. However, groups that welcome newcomers generally gain strength with the infusion of new blood. Remember, the next person you add just might become a friend for eternity. Logistically, groups find different ways to add members. Some groups remain permanently open, while others choose to open periodically, such as at the beginning or end of a study. If your group becomes too large for easy, face-to-face conversations, you can subgroup, forming a second discussion group in another room.

#### How do we handle the child-care needs in our group?

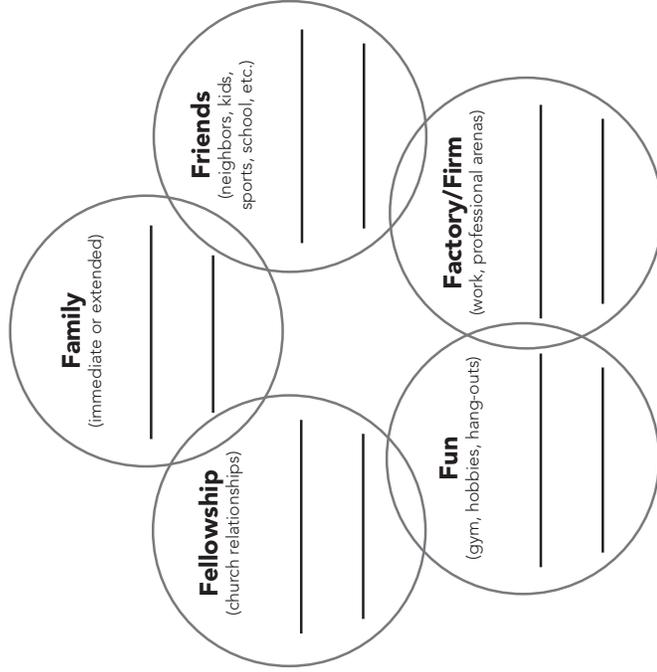
Child-care needs must be handled very carefully. This is a sensitive issue. We suggest you seek creative solutions as a group. One common solution is to have the adults meet in the living room and share the cost of a baby sitter (or two) who can be with the kids in another part of the house. Another popular option is to have one home for the kids and a second home (close by) for the adults. If desired, the adults could rotate the responsibility of providing a lesson for the kids. This last option is great with school-age kids and can be a huge blessing to families.

**Circles of Life**

**Small Group Connections**

**Discover Who You Can Connect in Your Community**

Use this chart to help carry out one of the values in the Group Guidelines, to "Welcome Newcomers."



**Follow this simple three-step process:**

1. List one to two people in each circle.
2. Prayerfully select one person or couple from your list and tell your group about them.
3. Give them a call and invite them to your next meeting. Over fifty percent of those invited to a small group say, "Yes!"

**Small Group Guidelines**

It's a good idea for every group to put words to their shared values, expectation, and commitments. Such guidelines will help you avoid unspoken agendas and unmet expectations. We recommend you discuss your guidelines during Session 1 in order to lay the foundation for a healthy group experience. Feel free to modify anything that does not work for your group.

**We agree to the following values:**

- Clear Purpose**  
To grow healthy spiritual lives by building a healthy small group community
- Group Attendance**  
To give priority to the group meeting (call if I am absent or late)
- Safe Environment**  
To create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved (no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes)
- Be Confidential**  
To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group
- Conflict Resolution**  
To avoid gossip and to immediately resolve any concerns by following the principles of Matthew 18:15-17
- Spiritual Health**  
To give group members permission to speak into my life and help me live a healthy, balanced spiritual life that is pleasing to God
- Limit Our Freedom**  
To limit our freedom by not serving or consuming alcohol during small group meetings or events so as to avoid causing a weaker brother or sister to stumble (1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Romans 14:19-21)
- Welcome Newcomers**  
To invite friends who might benefit from this study and warmly welcome newcomers



## RESOURCES

### Small Group Calendar

Healthy groups share responsibilities and group ownership. It might take some time for this to develop. Shared ownership ensures that responsibility for the group doesn't fall to one person. Use the calendar to keep track of social events, mission projects, birthdays, or days off. Complete this calendar at your first or second meeting. Planning ahead will increase attendance and shared ownership.

DATE	LESSON	LOCATION	FACILITATOR	SNACK OR MEAL
	Session 1			
	Session 2			
	Session 3			
	Session 4			
	Session 5			
	Session 6			

## HE>Me

# Spiritual Health Assessment

### How the Assessment Works

The Spiritual Health Assessment is designed to help you evaluate how well you are balancing the five purposes in your life, and to identify your areas of strength and weakness. The assessment consists of 35 statements that are linked to the five purposes.

### Instructions

1. Rate yourself on each of the statements using a scale from 0 to 5, with zero meaning the statement does not match you and five meaning it is a very strong match for you.
2. After you have rated each statement, tally the results by transferring your ratings from each of the statements to the scoring table on this page. Then add up the number in each column to find your score for each purpose.
3. Turn to the Spiritual Health Plan of page 75 for further instructions.

### My Spiritual Health Assessment

	WORSHIP	FELLOWSHIP	DISCIPLESHIP	MINISTRY	EVANGELISM
1.	___	2. ___	3. ___	4. ___	5. ___
6.	___	7. ___	8. ___	8. ___	10. ___
11.	___	12. ___	13. ___	14. ___	15. ___
16.	___	17. ___	18. ___	19. ___	20. ___
21.	___	22. ___	23. ___	24. ___	25. ___
26.	___	27. ___	28. ___	29. ___	30. ___
31.	___	32. ___	33. ___	34. ___	35. ___
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## RESOURCES



### Spiritual Health Assessment

	Doesn't Match	Partial Match	Strong Match
1. Pleading God with my life is my highest priority.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
2. I am genuinely open and honest about who I am with others.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
3. I quickly confess anything in my character that does not look like Christ.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
4. I often think about how to use my time more wisely to serve God.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
5. I feel personal responsibility to share my faith with those who don't know Jesus.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
6. I am dependent on God for each aspect of my life.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
7. I regularly use my time and resources to care for the needs of others.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
8. How I spend my time and money shows that I think more about God and others than I do about myself.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
9. I am currently serving God for each aspect of my life.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
10. I look for opportunities to build relationships with those who don't know Jesus.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
11. There is nothing in my life that I have not surrendered to (kept back from) God.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
12. I have a deep and meaningful connection with others in the church.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
13. I allow God's Word to guide my thoughts and change my actions.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
14. I regularly reflect on how my life can have an impact for the Kingdom of God.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
15. I regularly pray for those who don't know Christ.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
16. I regularly meditate on God's Word and invite him into my everyday activities.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
17. I have an easy time allowing someone who knows me to speak truth to me.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
18. I am able to praise God during difficult times and see them as opportunities to grow.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
19. I often think about ways to use my God-given S.H.A.P.E. to please God.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
20. I am confident in my ability to share my faith.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
21. I have a deep desire to be in God's presence and spend time with him.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
22. I gather regularly with a group of Christians for fellowship and accountability.....	0	1	2 3 4 5

Doesn't Match Partial Match Strong Match

23. I find I am making more choices that cause me to grow when I am tempted to do wrong.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
24. I enjoy meeting the needs of others without expecting anything in return.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
25. My heart is full of passion to share the good news of the gospel with those who have never heard it.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
26. I am the same person at church that I am in private.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
27. There is nothing in my relationships that is currently unresolved.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
28. I have found that prayer has changed how I view and interact with the world.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
29. Those closest to me would say my life is a reflection of giving more than receiving.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
30. I find that my relationship with Jesus comes up frequently in my conversations with those who don't know him.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
31. I have an overwhelming sense of God's awesomeness even when I do not feel his presence.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
32. There is nothing in the way I talk or act concerning others that I would not be willing to share with them in person.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
33. I am consistent in pursuing habits that are helping me model my life after Jesus.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
34. I am open about my weaknesses and see them as opportunities to minister to others.....	0	1	2 3 4 5
35. I am open to going anywhere God calls me in whatever capacity to share my faith.....	0	1	2 3 4 5

# Spiritual Health Plan

After completing the Spiritual Health Assessment, focus on the areas where you feel you need to plan for growth, and complete this Spiritual Health Plan. Fill in the possible ideas for developing your spiritual life in each area, then translate those possibilities into actual steps you plan to take to grow or develop in each purpose.

PURPOSES	POSSIBILITIES	PLANS (Strategic Steps)
<b>WORSHIP</b> How can I live for God's pleasure? • Regular church attendance • Worship tapes and devotionals • Personal health and balance		
<b>FELLOWSHIP</b> How can I deepen my relationships with others? • Family/friends • Relational/emotional development • Small group community		
<b>DISCIPLESHIP</b> How can I grow to be like Christ? • Spiritual disciplines • Financial stewardship • Character development		
<b>MINISTRY</b> How can I serve God and others? • Ministry to the Body • Leadership training • Continuing training		
<b>EVANGELISM</b> How can I share my faith regularly? • Mission to the world • Seeker friends/family, work, neighborhood involvement		

# S.H.A.P.E. Profile

## Spiritual Gifts

The first key factor in discovering your S.H.A.P.E. is to unwrap your spiritual gifts. Review this short list of spiritual gifts from 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and Romans 12. As you read through the list, place a check next to any definitions that describe you.\* (You may have more than one gift, and everyone has at least one.)

- Administration:** The ability to organize and manage people, resources, and time.
- Apostle:** The ability to sense and seize opportunities to start new churches and oversee their development.
- Discernment:** The ability to distinguish between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.
- Encouragement:** The ability to strengthen people in their faith and motivate them to action.
- Evangelism:** The ability to preach the gospel in such a way that hearers respond with repentance unto salvation.
- Faith:** The ability to trust and obey God regardless of circumstances, appearances or risks.
- Giving:** The ability to contribute generously to people in need.
- Healing:** The ability to minister the healing power of Jesus to people who physically, emotionally, psychologically, or spiritually broke.
- Hospitality:** The ability to make people feel welcomed and to foster biblical fellowship.
- Leadership:** The ability to communicate vision and to motivate others to accomplish a goal.
- Mercy:** The ability to manifest compassionate, practical, cheerful love to suffering people.
- Miracles:** The ability to be used by God to perform powerful acts that glorify God and affirm the truth and power of God's Word.
- Pastoring:** The ability to foster spiritual growth in believers and to equip them for ministry.

## RESOURCES

- Preaching/Prophecy:** The ability to declare publicly and persuasively the will of God through the Word of God.
- Service:** The ability to recognize and meet needs cheerfully, practically, and anonymously.
- Teaching:** The ability to explain and apply biblical truth and to train others for ministry.
- Tongues:** The ability to pray in a language that is understood only by God or by one who is given the gift of interpretation at that time.
- Wisdom:** The ability to understand God's perspective on life situations and communicate those insights simply and clearly.

\*Some churches define these gifts differently.

Do you have a sense of what your spiritual gifts might be?

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## Heart

The second key factor in discovering your S.H.A.P.E. is to listen to your heart. Your heart tells you what you are passionate about, and your passions are clues as where you should be serving. What do you have a passion for?

A role (what you like to do) \_\_\_\_\_

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A people group (whom you like to help) \_\_\_\_\_

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A cause (what you would like to see changed or supported) \_\_\_\_\_

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How can you use your God-given passions and interests to serve others effectively?

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### Abilities

The third key factor in discovering your S.H.A.P.E. is applying your abilities. Here are just a few God-given abilities. See if you can find any of yours in this list. Feel free to add more in the blanks.

conversing	writing	artistic ability	architecture	engineering
mathematics	baking	coaching	administration	quilting
gardening	athletics	inventing	carpentry	brain-storming
sculpting	selling	public speaking	tailoring	debating
recruiting	organizing	motivating	making music	typing
fixing things	hosting	problem-solving	animal care	listening
teaching	acting	making money	floral arranging	cooking
mechanics	negotiating	decorating	linguistics	videography

\_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_ other

God matches your ministry with your capabilities. How might God use your abilities for ministry?

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### Personality

The fourth key factor in discovering your S.H.A.P.E. is your personality. Your personality will affect how and where you use your spiritual gifts and abilities. Here are a few God-given personality traits.

1.....2.....3.....4.....5  
 Introvert (I gain energy from quiet reflection) Extrovert (I gain energy from interaction)

1.....2.....3.....4.....5  
 Prefer routine (I like to do one project at a time) Prefer variety (I like to do several projects at once)

1.....2.....3.....4.....5  
 Thinker (I analyze before deciding) Feeler (I go with my gut instinct)

## RESOURCES

- 1.....2.....3.....4.....5  
Work alone (I prefer individual assignments) Team player (I prefer working with a group)
- 1.....2.....3.....4.....5  
Structured (I read instructions before starting a task) Unstructured (I start a task and read instructions only in an emergency... if I can find them)

How can these personality traits help you discover your area of ministry?

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## Experiences

The fifth key factor in discovering your S.H.A.P.E. is your experiences – both good and bad.

- Family experiences:** What did you learn growing up as part of your family?
- Educational experiences:** What were your favorite subjects in school?
- Vocational experiences:** What jobs have you been most effective in and enjoyed most?
- Ministry experiences:** How have you served God in the past?

What lessons have you learned through your positive life experiences that can direct you to your area of ministry?

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## HE>Me

- Painful experiences: God never wastes a hurt. People are always more encouraged when we share how God's grace helped us in our weakness than when we brag about our strengths. What will you do with what you've been through? What lessons have you learned through problems, hurts, and trials? Don't waste your pain; use it to help others.

How might God use the painful experiences in your life to lead you to your ministry?

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Now that you have completed your S.H.A.P.E. Profile, consider these next two questions:

- One of the best places to start serving in ministry is in your small group. How can you use your S.H.A.P.E. to serve your group?
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- How can you use your S.H.A.P.E. to serve your church? Meet with your church leadership to see what your next step should be in pursuing your area of service to your church.
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# RESOURCES

## Answer Key

### Session One

- God created me to LOVE ME.
- I was made to LAST FOREVER.
- I find my purpose IN GOD.

### Session Two

- Worship is MY RESPONSE to God's love.
- Worship is GIVING BACK to God.
- Worship is eXPRESSING MY AFFECTION to God.
- Worship is FOCUSING MY ATTENTION on God
- Worship is USING MY ABILITIES for God.

### Session Three

- The Fellowship of SHARING together
- Share your EXPERIENCES
- Share your SUPPORT
- The fellowship of BELONGING together
- The Fellowship of SERVING together
- The Fellowship of SUFFERING together

### Session Four

- God uses TROUBLE to teach us to TRUST him.
- Every PROBLEM has a purpose

- God uses TEMPTATION to teach us to OBEY him.
- God uses TRESPASSES to teach us to FORGIVE.
- Remember that GOD HAS FORGIVEN YOU.
- Remember that God IS IN CONTROL.

### Session Five

- My fourth purpose in life is to serve God by SERVING OTHERS.
- Serving like Jesus means being AVAILABLE.
- Serving like Jesus means being GRATEFUL.
- Serving like Jesus means being FAITHFUL.
- Serving like Jesus means being GENEROUS.

### Session Six

- God expects me to BRING people to Jesus.
- God expects me to GO TO people for Jesus.
- We do it because it's our RESPONSIBILITY.
- We do it because we've been given AUTHORITY.
- We do it because of history's INEVITABILITY.

# HE>Me

## Small Group Roster

	NAME	PHONE	EMAIL
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			
12.			
13.			
14.			
15.			

