

THE BALANCE WORKSHEET:

Mission

Social
Interaction

Bible Study

Worship &
Prayer

Date:

Date:

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Date:

Date:

WORSHIP & PRAYER

A vital comment for a core group is focusing on and responding to Christ directly. Worship and prayer allows people this chance to focus on God's attributes and actions, to bring him glory and to enjoy his presence with us. It is the core leader's role to model a heart of worship and to facilitate a variety of creative expressions of worship and prayer within the group.

1. Share about times in your lives where you experienced God in a real way then pray together, thanking the Lord for revealing Himself so clearly and asking Him for more of those experiences.
2. Read a Psalm then write one together or individually using the form of Psalm 136. Read aloud your collective Psalm or share your individual Psalms with each other.
3. Write out prayer needs on small pieces of paper and have people pray in a circle – each one praying for the person on their right.
4. The week before, assign everyone to come to Core with something to share – a song, scripture, encouragement, or whatever God lays on their heart – according to 1 Corinthians 14:26.
5. God Is Like... Gather a number of objects from your home (white out, ruler, pen or pencil, sticky notes, dictionary, food strainer, scissors, glue, remote control, etc – be creative). Put them in a basket, pass them around and have each core member pick one. Explain that what they each need to do is tell the group how God is like the item that they chose. For example: "God is like this white out in that he sees all my mistakes and one by one covers them in forgiveness. Those sins are gone forever, as if they never were." As everyone shares what God is like, have a group time of giving thanks to God for those things.

BIBLE STUDY

Core is a place where we lean to hear from God in the Scriptures and respond to him. The goal of Bible study in core is self-discovery and participation by each member of the core as they read, learn to study, discuss and apply the Scriptures. It is the core leader's responsibility to plan out and facilitate a study time with meaningful questions that help people observe and understand the text and that stimulate the group to move beyond the discussion to a place of obedience.

1. Memorize scripture: Choose a scripture a week to memorize as a core.
2. Develop some discussion questions o of Friday night's sermon.
3. If you are using a narrative story from scripture, have the core members act it out.
4. Read your text in a few different versions and discuss any additional insights this might bring.
5. Have people share a passage of scripture that is meaningful to them and why.

SHARING LIFE

Core is also meant to be a place where people can share openly and honestly about their lives. It takes time to move from being a group of virtual strangers to a place of trusting friendships where self-disclosure can happen. The core facilitator will need to patiently lead the way and help create an atmosphere and provide the opportunities where others feel safe sharing real life and real needs. This includes simply being together and growing in friendship through some fun and casual activities.

1. Share about your past, present, and future. **Past** – where you came from, family relationships, good times & hard times, childhood dreams, significant people, religious story. **Present** – Where you are now, your major, job, hobbies, what concerns you, what you do for fun, what keeps you up at night, where you are with faith in God, how growing spiritually now. **Future** – Where you'd like to be in five years, something fun or scary you'd like to try, what God is saying to you.
2. Spin the Bottle – One person draws a question out of a bag of questions spins the bottle and asks the question to the person to whom it points.
3. Pictionary Sharing – Hand out a Pictionary card to each person and have them tell stories about their life using three of the words on the card.
4. M&M Sharing – Each person takes an M&M. After that you tell them that each color represents a topic. (You decide the topics. Ex: blue – Family, red – Junior High story.) They each share something about their lives from the topic for their color of M&M.
5. Brown Bag History – Leader gathers assortment of old magazines and a brown lunch bag for each member of group. Have each person find, cut, and paste something on their bag that describes each of the categories below. Then have each person share. Possible Categories: (1) – Describes you (2) – Favorite outdoor activity (3) – Color that describes your personality (4) – Describes the part you want to play in making the world a better place (5) – Your favorite time of day (6) – Represents how you feel about God

MISSION

It is important that all of us in Core together grow an outward heart of mission and service. If we don't we will become inward and stagnant. A major vision for our Cores is that they would become places of impacting outreach. To see that vision come to fruition, Core Facilitators need to be regularly encouraging campus or community service projects as well as ways for each member of the group to be active in their witness for Christ.

1. Adopt a missionary in your core: pray, write letters, and encourage them regularly.
2. Organize an outreach event in your residence hall or area of campus. Ideas include: taking out trash, a larger event like "Questions and Quesadillas", a regular weekly life discussion group.
3. Bring the "International" or "World" section of the newspaper to core one week and pray through the events.
4. Connect with another local ministry or organization you can volunteer with.
5. Make missionary prayer cards- have them draw a picture of themselves, list their prayer needs, and write the areas or people they are called to minister (like the Residence Halls, Elderly Ministry, friends, family, etc). Check in weekly to see how it's going and pray for each other.

CORE 10 WEEK PLANNER

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5
WORSHIP					
PRAYER					
BIBLE STUDY					
SHARING LIFE					
MISSION					

	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8	WEEK 9	WEEK 10
WORSHIP					
PRAYER					
BIBLE STUDY					
SHARING LIFE					
MISSION					

QUESTIONS: THE HEART OF INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

- I. Questions for a general overview
- A. What kind of literature are you reading?
 - B. Who wrote it? Tell me all you can about the author from the information contained in the book.
 - C. To whom is it written? Tell me all you can about the audience from the information contained in the book.
 - D. What prompted the author to communicate? What is the historical situation? The who, what, & where kind of questions.
 - E. What is the author's goal in communicating?
- II. Questions for looking at paragraphs
- A. The Language Questions: What do the words mean? Do you understand them or do you need to look them up in a dictionary? What kind of style is being used? Is it metaphor, simile, etc.? Is it poetry, narrative, epistle, wisdom, prophetic, etc.?
 - B. The Tactical Question: Why does the author say this thing at this point? Why does the author use the example, metaphor, etc. that he uses at this time? Is there any significance in light of the author's intent?
 - C. The Theological Question: What truths are being taught or brought to remembrance with regard to the nature of God, mankind, sin, love, duty, ethics, Christian lifestyle, etc.?

The goal of the three questions above is to carefully determine what the text says and means to the original listeners.

The goal of the two questions below is to bring these truths into the present reader's world and private life.

- D. The Contemporary Question: How would this text and its concerns apply to our day and society? What does this text say to the political, educational, or religious institutions of your culture? What does the text say concerning the community of Christ to which you belong? (Focus here is on how the text applies generally to the world around you.)
- E. The Personal Question: How does this text apply to my life as a disciple of Jesus Christ? What is the Spirit communicating to me concerning my attitude, conduct, goals, values, and relationships?

TOPICAL BIBLE STUDY

Couple Notes:

- Topical studies take good planning and prep, they may take more than one week
- Be aware of both felt and unfelt needs in your Core and what is best for them overall (not just what they want to talk about every week)
- Topical studies are not necessarily a grab-bag of verses. You can narrow in one one section and still get at your topic
- Not every verse with that key word is helpful to you – do inductive study surrounding each verse to determine if it would suit your Core

How to write a Topical Study:

- 1) Write a Purpose Statement (always have a goal in mind)
 - Assess needs and set goals and then set your Core purpose accordingly
- 2) Look on the Website! No need to re-invent the wheel
- 3) Gather verses.
 - Come up with a couple key words you can look up
 - Use a concordance or online source to find verses that contain those key words.
- 4) Narrow your verses
 - Look up each verse in context and decide if it is relevant to your Core
 - Think “How can this shape, challenge, and/or encourage my Core in this area?”
- 5) Check Point!
 - Does my purpose statement need to change based on what Scripture actually says about this topic?
 - Do the verses I chose work well towards my purpose?
 - You may need to narrow your verses further accordingly.
- 6) Create Questions for your Core – 3 kinds
 - Questions of Observation – get your Core to notice what is going on in each verse
“What do you notice about...?” “Who is talking and who is the audience?”
 - Questions of Interpretation – what did it mean for the original audience?
“Why was it important for the audience to hear?” “What do you think Paul meant by....?”
 - Questions of Application
“So what?” “What does this mean for us?” “How do we apply this in our context?”
- 7) Fill in the rest of your Core plan
 - Get Creative with a related opening activity, prayer and response times, etc.

DISCUSSION LEADING: THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHILE FACILITATING

As a leader and facilitator, it is your job to **set the tone**. How you lead will determine how your group interacts. Jump in with confidence (even if you have to fake it at first) and keep in mind these helpful tips:

- I. Guide/steer the discussion with your questions, rather than sitting back and letting the discussion just “happen” (avoid being a passive leader).
- II. Give room for others to chime in and contribute (avoid being a dominant leader).
- III. Actively listen as you lead. It’s ok to change your questions as you listen to what the group is saying.
- IV. Leave plenty of space for people to think. A 10-15 second pause is helpful for people to process and respond (though it will feel awkward to you).
- V. Do your best to help people feel safe to participate. If they think you’re going to criticize them or expect a certain answer, they won’t participate.
- VI. Regulate participation and try to get everyone involved.
 1. If you have a dominator, you may have to talk to them one on one, or say things like “let’s hear from someone who hasn’t shared yet”
 2. If your group is quiet, often it’s because they are processing. Finding creative ways to help them interact with questions (like writing their responses first), could help your group gather their thoughts and prepare to share.

LEADING AN EFFECTIVE DISCUSSION

Basics:

1. People must have time to think.
2. People must feel safe to state their opinion.

Do's

Use discussable questions. For example: “What are the first four books of the New Testament?” is not discussable -there is only one correct answer. “Why do you think four different gospels are included in the Bible?” is discussable. Thinking of good questions will be your most important task in leading inductive Bible Study.

Minimize leader talk. The more you talk, the less they will.

Redirection: Have several people answer the same question. For example:

Corefa: What does Ephesians ~ mean to you?

Gertrude: I didn't get anything out of it.

Corefa: Hmmmm. Harriet? (Didn't repeat question.)

Harriet: Oh, I totally disagree. It has the most lasting truths of our faith.

Corefa: (Nods to Beatrice. Doesn't say anything.)

Beatrice: Well, it made me realize I wasn't very loving to my brother.

Corefa: That's interesting. Did anyone else get a practical application? Sylvia?

Leader picked up on last comment to form new question. Corefa needs to stay in control of discussion, but doesn't have to talk incessantly.

Prompting: If you ask a question no one can answer, scale the question down or give people some direction. For example:

Corefa: How could Isaiah's vision in the temple benefit the modern church?

Core: (Blank looks.)

Corefa: Isaiah had a vision of God as holy and lifted up. Do you think most Christians today are overwhelmed by God's holiness? How would that change our lives?

Ask for Clarification. Have people elaborate on their ideas. For example:

Corefa: What can we learn from Abraham's obedience?

Esmerelda: Discipline.

Corefa: Oh yes, that's good. What can we learn about discipline from Abraham?

Give Positive Reinforcement. “Good idea,” “excellent,” “so true,” frequent smiles or head nods go a long way to encouraging people to feel safe in discussions.

But what if someone is totally off the wall? Try to reinforce as much of the answer as possible. For example:

Corefa: What does Jesus' death on the cross mean to us?

Billy Sue: It means we can get drunk every night and cheat on tests because God will forgive us.

Corefa: Forgiveness! That really is the key issue when we think of the cross. You sure are right in that. But what do you think our response to God's forgiveness should be? ...Earlene?

Call on non-volunteers. After asking a question, pause and look several people in the eye. This will make them think you are going to call on them. About 50% of the time, call on someone to answer. But ALWAYS give people time to think. Don't say "Bob, what is your favorite book of the Bible?" Say, "What is your favorite book of the Bible? ...(pause, look several people in the eye), Bob?"

Don'ts

Don't echo. Don't repeat people's answers. If they can't be heard, ask them to repeat it.

Don't answer your own questions. See prompting above.

Don't look for one answer. "That's good, but it's not quite what I'm looking for," will kill a discussion. If you want to make one point - use a lecture or other appropriate method.

Don't tell people they are wrong. Try to avoid saying, "You're wrong," or, "I think you made a mistake, Bettylou." See the example under positive reinforcement for ideas on how to handle this. Don't leave an obvious error unchallenged. Make sure the discussion brings out the right ideas. But you don't have to tell someone in front of a group that they were wrong - they will figure it out.

Don't let one or two people dominate. Use redirection and call on nonvolunteers to try to handle this situation. "Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken up yet." If necessary, talk to the dominating person privately. Look for ministry opportunities - why does this person feel the need to talk so much? How can we help them grow in this area?

What if we're trying to do everything right and our group still won't discuss?

Let people write down ideas first and then call on several volunteers to share what they've written.

Neighbor nudge - have people discuss questions with person sitting next to them and then bring ideas to the whole group.

Ask co-corefa or other mature person in group to take notes on how you lead next discussion and give you some pointers.

Ideas used by permission of Dr. Peter Hovenier, WWU.

HANDLING CURVEBALLS

COMMON SITUATIONS IN DISCUSSION-LEADING:

Curveball #1: Discussion Dominator

Use non-verbal communication. Don't let them sit right across from you but instead maybe next to you. Limit eye contact and when they pause, break in and regain the floor. If necessary, talk to the domineering person privately.

Curveball #2: The Silent Ones

Make frequent eye contact, have them sit across from you. Call on them by name & ask for their opinion. Ex. "Jason, how does that apply to your life?"

Curveball #3: The Blank Looks

If you ask a question no one can answer, scale the question down or give people some direction

Curveball #4: They Only Answer You

When a group member continues to address all his questions and comments to you as the leader rather than the group, use redirecting. "Sarah, what do you think about Katie's last question?" "How would you answer that, Sarah?"

Curveball #5: The Vague Response

When the meaning of what has been said is vague, clarification is needed. Example: "I am not sure what you meant. Could you please restate that?"

Curveball #6: The Totally Off Base Response

It is always important to recognize and affirm the person who is talking. You might say "Thank you for that comment." "That is an interesting point." Be affirming and gentle in offering correction. Affirm the person before you offer criticism & try to pull out one good point from what they shared to redirect the conversation back onto solid ground.

Curveball #7: The How-Did-You-Come-Up-With-That Response

When you're not sure how a person came to a certain conclusion based on the text you're reading, ask them to give reasons for what they said. This should be done in a positive, non-argumentative way. Ex. "Where do you find that in the passage we are studying?"

Curveball #8: The Question You Can't Answer

It's okay to say you don't know! You might invite others in your core to contribute since they may have different knowledge than you do. You might ask the question-asker to do some research and bring back their conclusions next week. Or, you might ask, "Why do you ask that question?" Make sure to NOT let your core draw a conclusion based solely on their own speculation or emotions! (You can also ask your Peer Team leader if they have any insights that you could bring back to your core the following week!)

SOME PRACTICE FOR HANDLING CURVEBALLS

Example of Curveball #3: The Blank Looks

Corefa: How could Isaiah's vision in the temple (Isaiah 6) benefit the modern church?

Core: Blank looks

What would you do?

Example of Curveball #5: The Vague Response

Corefa: What claims is Jesus making about Himself when he says "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)?

Core Member: I think that Jesus is saying that he's in charge.

What would you do?

Example of Curveball #6: The Totally O Base Response

Corefa: What does Jesus' death on the cross mean to us?

Core Member: It means that it doesn't matter what we do because God will forgive us.

What would you do?

Curveball #7: The How-Did-You-Come-Up-With-That Response

Corefa: By using this light/dark imagery (John 1:1-14), what do you think John is trying to tell us about Jesus?

Core Member: I think that John is trying to tell us that Jesus is really gracious to the world.

What would you do?