

Cultivating a Life for God Neil Cole

Chapter One:

Lesson in Lifesaving: Remember the Prime Directive

- Jesus shows us that the workers must come from the harvest itself.

- If we can't *see* them, we won't *love* them (Matt. 9:36).
- If we can't *love* them, we won't *pray* for them (Matt. 9:36-38).
- If we can't *pray* for them, we won't *win* them (Matt. 10:1).
- If we can't *win* them, we won't *send* them (Matt. 10:2-5).

- The only barrier we face to a greater harvest is a lack of compassion that motivates prayer, which releases workers, which yields the harvest.

- In this book, I will first examine some foundational principles for multiplying disciples. I will then share the background behind the discovery of a system that incorporates the principles for multiplication. I will then explain a simple system called Life Transformation Groups.

Chapter Two:

The Need for Life Transforming Power

- There are still 187 million Americans who remain untouched by the gospel.

The Awesome Power of Multiplication

- Henrichsen concludes:
 The reason that the church of Jesus Christ finds it so hard to stay on top of the great commission is that the population of the world is multiplying while the church is merely adding. Addition can never keep pace with multiplication.

We Cannot Cause the Growth, Only Release It

- Mark 4:26-29
- Jesus tells us that the farmer doesn't know what causes growth. We do know, however, how to plant seeds, water them and watch.

Chapter Three: **Principles for Passing the Baton**

- The strengthening of the church: strong disciples make a strong church, growing disciples make a growing church.
 - Bounds once wrote, “Men are looking for better methods, God is looking for better men.”
 - Chuck Colson said, “You cannot export what you do not have.”
- The stimulus of real growth: the carrot works better than the crop.
 - The second principle for multiplying significance has to do with our motivation.
 - There are varieties of ways to motivate a horse: spurs, a bridle, a crop and of course the proverbial “carrot on a stick.” The crop and the carrot will both motivate a horse.
 - The motivation for following Christ and reproducing disciples must be internal rather than external.
- Natural Motivations:
 - A desire to bring pride to those whom you are responsible to.
 - A desire to be the best we can be.
 - A desire to benefit from the results of our efforts.
- Spiritual Motivations:
 - Moved by the love of Christ demonstrated in His sacrifice for our sins.
 - A compassion for the lost and dying souls in this world, who are headed to hell without Christ.
 - Inspiration rooted in the character of God.
- The key to effective disciple making and multiplying is to tap internal motivation.

Chapter Four: **Candidates for the Kingdom: Where do We Start?**

People who desperately need Jesus (Luke 5:30-32)

- There are seven very important reasons that we must start the disciple-making process with people who desperately need Christ.

1. Desperate sinners will hold onto Christ because their lives depend on it.
2. Desperate sinners will see their lives change more readily than those who are already doing “well.”
3. Desperate sinners are more likely to confess their sin because it is more obvious.
4. Desperate sinners will become walking and talking billboards to the power of the gospel to other desperate sinners.
5. Desperate sinners usually have more contact with other desperate sinners who need Jesus.
6. Desperate sinners are the very reason Jesus came and died. He delights to save them. Bring pleasure to your Master – give the gospel to a desperate sinner!
7. Desperate sinners who are transformed by the gospel bring greater glory to God because it makes the miraculous that much more manifest. Only God could do such a miracle!

People who stay faithful to the process (2 Tim. 2:2)

- “these entrust to *faithful* men who will be able to teach others.”

Chapter Five:

Breathing Life into New Disciples: Essential Ingredients to Transform Lives

Exhaling: the confession of sin (2 Tim. 2:19-22)

- The first disciple necessary for a disciple to grow into usefulness is the confession of sin. Unless we are cleansed from sin we will not be useful or honoring to the Lord.

Inhaling: receiving and obeying God’s word (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

- The second discipline needed to be useful to the Master is the regular intake of Scripture.

Chapter Six:

The Best Context for Transforming Lives

- I believe that the best context for life change is a community of two or three.

- Community
Ecclesiastes 4:9 says, “Two are better than one.”
- Accountability
It is difficult to be held accountable to a multitude of people.
- Confidentiality
Confidentiality is much easier to control in a context of two or three.
- Flexibility
Most of us have had the experience of trying to coordinate the calendars of a handful of busy people.
- Reproducibility
Simple things multiply easier than complex things.

Chapter Eight:

The Life Transformation Groups System

- The Life Transformation Group (LTG) system is a grass-roots tool for growth.
- An LTG is made up of two to three people, all of the same gender, who meet weekly for personal accountability in the areas of their spiritual growth and development.
- There is no curriculum or training needed for the LTG. A simple bookmark, which stays in the participant’s Bible, is all that is needed.
- The LTG accountability consists of three essential disciplines for personal spiritual growth – a steady diet of Scripture, confession of sin and prayer for others who need Christ.

Sin is Confessed

The ten questions are as follows:

1. Have you been a testimony this week to the greatness of Jesus Christ with both your words and actions?
2. Have you been exposed to sexually alluring material or allowed your mind to entertain inappropriate thoughts about someone who is not your spouse this week?
3. Have you lacked any integrity in your financial dealings this week, or coveted something that does not belong to you?
4. Have you been honoring, understanding and generous in your important relationships this past week?

5. Have you damaged another person by your words, either behind their back or face-to-face?
6. Have you given in to an addictive behavior this week? Explain.
7. Have you continued to remain angry toward another?
8. Have you secretly wished for another's misfortune so that you might excel?
9. Did you finish your reading this week and hear from the Lord? What are you going to do about it?
10. Have you been completely honest with me?

One pastor I know uses similar questions to the following in his LTG's:

- How has God made His presence known to you this week?
- What is God teaching you?
- How are you responding to His prompting?
- Is there someone you need to share Christ with this next week?
- Do you have a need to confess any sin?

Scripture is Planted

- The power of the LTG system lies in the unleashing of God's word into the lives of people.
- Each group agrees on a book of the Bible to be read.
- When the LTG meets the following week they ask one another if the entire reading was completed in time.
- This form of accountability is a breath of fresh air.
- A major weakness of the Western church is the independent and individualistic group approach to spiritual development.

Souls are Strategically Prayed For

- The accountability Questions are printed on a card to be used as a bookmark in the Bible.
- Prayer and the salvation of lost souls:
 1. I pray Lord, that You draw _____ to Yourself (John 6:44).
 2. I pray that _____ seek to know You (Acts 17:27).
 3. I pray that _____ hear and believe the Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13).
 4. I ask You to prevent Satan from blinding _____ to the truth (2 Cor. 4:4; 2 Tim. 2:25-26).

5. Holy Spirit, I ask You to convict _____ of his/her sin and his/her need for Christ's redemption.
6. I ask You to send someone who will share the gospel with _____ (Matt. 9:37-38).
7. I also ask that You give me (and/or my fellow disciple) the opportunity, the courage and the right words to share the truth with _____ (Col. 4:3-6; Eph. 6:19-20).
8. Lord, I pray that _____ turn from his/her sin (Acts 17:30-31; 1 Thess. 1:9-10).
9. Lord, I pray that _____ would put all of his/her trust in Christ (John 1:12; 5:24).
10. Lord, I pray that _____ confess Christ as Lord of his/her life, take root and grow in his/her faith and bear much fruit for Your glory (Rom. 10:9-10; Col. 2:6-7; Luke 8:15).

Chapter Nine: **Advantages of the LTG System**

- Following are many of the advantages to this simple and reproducible system of disciple making:
 - LTG's plant the seed, not a seed substitute.
 - Barna reveals that...
 - 82% of Americans believe that the phrase "God helps those who help themselves" is in the Bible. It isn't.
 - 52% thought that the Book of Jonah was not in the Bible. It is.
 - 52% believed that Jesus committed sins.
 - 58% do not know that Jesus Christ preached the Sermon on the Mount. In all fairness, He was the one who was most selected, but Billy Graham came in a close second and is catching up each year that the survey is conducted!
 - 48% think that the Book of Thomas is in the Bible. What's really scary is that 12% of them indicate that they are actually reading the Book of Thomas in their Bibles!
 - 12% (25 million Americans) actually believed that Noah's wife was Joan of Arc.
 - LTG's remove the middleman
 - A young pastor once challenged me regarding the LTG system. He didn't feel I was being responsible allowing

people to read the Bible without first giving them a sound “hermeneutic”. “Hermeneutic” is a ten-dollar theological term that means the ability to rightly interpret the Bible. He thought it dangerous to actually put the Bible into the hands of the ordinary Christians without first giving them training in how to study it.

- I said, “Our hermeneutic is actually a man-made system we have developed to help us understand the word of God.”
 - The key is in the timing of such training. I train proper interpretation techniques to those who are responsible for teaching others.
- LTG’s integrate evangelism with the spiritual formation process
 - John Wesley used to preach to crowds of up to twenty thousand people; however, he did not rely upon these crusades as the means for lost people to be saved. Rather, he would gather the people into small groups of people where they encountered holiness in accountability. He said, “Preach in as many places as you can. Start as many classes as you can. Do not preach without starting new classes.”
 - (Wesley) observed that awakening people without folding them into redemptive cells does more harm than good! In a journal entry of 1743 he declares, “The devil himself desires nothing more than this, that the people of any place should be half-awakened and then left to themselves to fall asleep again. Therefore, I determine by the grace of God not to strike one stroke in any place where I cannot follow the blow.”
 - 40% of born-again Christians, according to the Barna Research Group, do not have a clue what the word “gospel” means.
 - 53% did not know what “John 3:16” means.
 - 81% (4:5) of born-again Christians do not know what the phrase “Great Commission” means.
 - LTG’s allow the Holy Spirit His rightful place in spiritual formation
 - LTG’s empower common Christians to obey the Great Commission for the rest of their lives!
 - LTG’s provide tangible evidence of an emerging leader

While the LTG system does not produce leaders in and of itself, it does provide a deep well in which to discover emerging leaders

It tests the real fortitude of the potential leader.

I can have confidence that my leadership team are in vital relationships of accountability and are reading the word of God regularly.

This also provides me with an opportunity to see if leadership candidates can be faithful before I entrust them with weightier responsibilities.

I am assured that those who actually emerge as leaders do indeed know how to make and multiply disciples.

- LTG's release the cell leader and pastor for more focused ministry
People feel connected, cared for and helped by one another; so there is less demand on the pastor to fill this need.
- LTG's tap the internal motivation of the disciples
LTG's utilize a form of sanctified peer pressure.
- LTG's release the spontaneous multiplication into the church at the grass-roots level

Chapter Ten: Common Objectives to the LTG System

- They are out of control!
- The questions are too personal to expect new believers to answer.
- The amount of suggested reading is too much for a busy person to do.
The amount of reading required for an LTG is comparable to watching a half-hour sitcom on TV.
- The groups are too legalistic; they'll make the Bible a chore to read.
- The groups will allow heresy to run rampant in the church!
Heresies develop when: (a) the congregation is ignorant of truth, not feeding on the word of God, (b) the Scriptures are taken out of context, and (c) controlling individuals want to influence large numbers of naive people.

Chapter Eleven: **Common Questions to the LTG System**

- Can I reduce the reading and still be effective?
We have discovered that when the reading is reduced, the disciple's growth and the LTG's multiplication is dramatically stunted.
- Can I change the accountability questions?
We encourage you to adapt the questions freely to suit the needs of your people.
- How do they answer the questions that arise from the reading?
Grant people permission to say, "I don't know."
Inter Varsity Press has a series of books called the *Hard sayings of... the Old Testament; Jesus; Paul*.
Gleason Archer has written a book called, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*. This is one volume and very helpful.
- What do they talk about at a typical LTG meeting?
The accountability questions can stimulate great interaction.
Often the passage being read by the group stimulates discussion.
- How do I get these groups started in my church?
The place to start is at the grass roots – you and a new believer.
Then you can increase the number of groups in two ways: (1) by multiplying your own groups, and (2) adding new groups by giving people copies of this book and telling others how they work.
- How long will these groups last?
It is more frequent to see multiplication occur sooner than later!
If a group does not multiply in the first year, the chances are that it will not.

Chapter Twelve: **Troubleshooting Unproductive Groups**

- Reduce scripture intake syndrome.
- Poor disciple selection syndrome.
It is very important to find desperate sinners.

- Leadership intrusion syndrome.
A third area where the system is often compromised is in the addition of supplemental material or a more defined leadership role.
- Programmatic implementation syndrome.
They are implemented as a program instead of a grass roots system.