



Principles that guide IMPACT Groups:

The following is the principled framework for the ministry of IMPACT Groups. The intention is that this ministry not be reduced to a “program”. The principles of the ministry are far more critical than the “how-tos” of the ministry “program”.

1. The ministry is for the glory to God

Because of Who God is in His Person He is worthy of all worship. God is rightfully jealous of all glory (Isaiah 42:8). The Westminster catechism states, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God.” Our primary calling is from God and it is His glory that we are to magnify. We are accountable first and foremost to Him (2 Corinthians 5:10).

2. The ministry is to be motivated from a love for God

Speaking to volunteers for Christian missionary work, Hudson Taylor said, “The only motive that will enable you to remain true is stated in 2 Corinthians 5:14. Christ’s love constraining you will keep you faithful.” Participation in this ministry must be an expression of a deep and vibrant love for Jesus Christ, a love for Him springing from the well of His great love for us (1 John 4:19).

3. The ministry is to serve the needs of the Church of Jesus Christ

The Church is at the center of God’s activity in the world. The purpose of the Church is to glorify God by developing disciples who reproduce, training leaders who multiply, and deploying equipped ministers into the harvest field, starting with our “Jerusalem” (Matthew 28:19,20). The ministry is to assist in equipping the type of people who serve the church in this purpose.

4. The ministry is to function under the authority and direction of the Word of God

The Holy Bible is the final authority for faith and conduct (2 Tim 3:1-5-17). The Word is to be the authority for the ministry and the manner in which the ministry is conducted. Simply stated, “We are to do God’s work in God’s way”. God’s Word is essential for equipping believers (2 Tim. 3:15-17) and for spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-17).

5. The ministry is dependent on God for fruitfulness

Only the Holy Spirit of God can ultimately change lives and develop the Christ life in people. No program or person can make a disciple. Although we are co-labourers with Him, called to work with diligence and excellence, we are ultimately and entirely dependent on Him for this ministry. Growth takes place in

the arena of spiritual conflict. Therefore, the ministry is a work of faith dependent on the blessing of God. This dependency is demonstrated, to a great degree, by the prayer of God's people. Prayer is to be the atmosphere of the ministry (Ephesians 6:18). The ministry is not ultimately dependent on a person's strength, administrative competency, expertise or any other human factor.

6. The Great Commission is at the heart of the ministry

The heart of God is the heart of Mission. He has commissioned the Church to make disciples in every nation. This ministry is to produce the type of people who are obedient disciples who in turn can reproduce and multiply themselves within whatever setting God will lead them in the world. The ministry's effectiveness is largely reflected by whether it develops Christians who can penetrate their world as salt and light.

7. The ministry is strategically focused on people

God loves the people of the world and it was to seek and save people that the Lord Jesus came. God's will is that all people would be saved and live as obedient disciples. The kind of person God desires is one who glorifies Him by remaining in Him through prayer and the Word, walking in obedience, bearing fruit, possessing joy, and loving others (John 15:1-17).

This strategic focus will be influenced by the following considerations:

- *People are individuals in community*
Each person is an individual created in God's image and for whom He has a special plan. Each Christian is at a unique stage of commitment, faith development, and has a unique life message and ministry design. This identity should not be destroyed or people coerced into a common mold. With this diversity there is not a one-dimensional "cookie-cutter" training process. There must be flexibility for individuals. At the same time, there are common qualities, commitments, and skills that distinguish the disciple of the Lord Jesus that should be true of all Christians. The body of Christ is not individualistic and God has gifted individuals to serve the Body.
- *People are at different stages in their development*
Each person is at a unique stage of commitment and faith development. Genuine discipleship and ministry respects this reality.
- *People are holistic beings*
All of life is to be subject to the Lordship of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:31). Therefore, we have a responsibility for development as complete people - the physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects of our lives. This also calls for integration of all of life in the process of our discipleship.

- *Personal development is not automatic*
 The Christian does not grow automatically or easily. There is no “floating” into maturity. Growth takes place in spiritual battle, trial, suffering and conflict. Intentional decisions and commitments must be made and then we must live in faithfulness to these. We can and should plan to grow in an organized, practical, measurable and accountable way. At the same time we recognize our entire dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit. The authentic Christian is called to passionate deliberate involvement in this process.
- *Personal development is a process*
 Discipleship is primarily a process and not an event. Conversion is the beginning and not the end of spiritual growth. Christians have not arrived at a destination but are on a journey. Although significant and identifiable spiritual events do occur in our lives, at the heart of formation is a relationship with God, which is a life-long journey. We need to be challenged, encouraged, loved and cared for through that journey and equipped for life-long habits of development in this process of discipleship.
- *People are responsible for development*
 Discipleship is not a passive result of what someone else does to you. We develop most when we are actively involved. Opportunities for such involvement will be created and encouraged by leaders of the ministry. However, each individual has the opportunity to choose or reject participation in experiences conducive to growth and development. People will develop most when they are actively involved.
- *Personal development is enhanced by relationship to others*
 The body of Christ is designed so that we need one another to help us in the pilgrimage of obedience as developing disciples. The Holy Spirit is at work in the Body of Christ and thus the Body is the expression of His life. Christians are not only to be part of this body but also to learn the responsibilities of living within such a community. Discipleship is a relational process.

8. The ministry is an intentional strategy of developing disciples

The development of disciples is a purposeful strategy as initiated by the Lord Jesus and then applied by the apostles and the early Church. The developing and deploying of disciples is an intentional strategic plan to reach the world for Christ. The principles of this strategy should be reproducible and transferable in order those believers can use this strategy to make disciples in whatever location the Lord will place them in the world.

9. The ministry is to function with the methodology of multiplication

Spiritual multiplication is winning people to Christ and then discipling the faithful ones in such a way as to win, build and send others, spiritual generation after spiritual generation. As a strategy and process, multiplication is the key to world evangelization. Disciple making develops the character and the skills to equip Christians to reproduce themselves. Discipling leads to reproduction and finally multiplication, which are God's design and method to reach the world. Obedience to the Great Commission demands the equipping and mobilizing of those who will reproduce and multiply the ministry of disciple making.

10. The ministry will provide accountability as a catalyst to obedience

Accountability is defined as helping one another keep our commitments to God and to each other. A person cannot be a disciple without obedience and obedience requires accountability. This accountability to one another functions most effectively in the context of loving relationships. The ministry will be most effective when there is genuine submission to authority and to one another for accountability in our obedience.

11. The ministry will assume and expect every believer is to be involved in service

Every Christian is called to and gifted for ministry. Christians are called from being spectators to active participation in serving Christ. As each member does his/her work the body of Christ grows to maturity. In the context of serving, Christians should identify their spiritual gifts and be challenged to develop and use these in making disciples.

12. The ministry will develop leadership in an Assistant model

The development of Shepherds is essential to the multiplication process. "If spiritual multiplication is to take place, converts must mature into established disciples who must then ripen into equipped labourers. These labourers in turn need to be able to nurture and train other disciples through this same growth process. The Great Commission hinges on this very process" (Bill Hull, *Jesus Christ Disciple Maker*). Leadership is not a matter of control, charisma or power. Leadership is defined as serving others by facilitating their growth and development. J. Oswald Sanders "True greatness, true leadership, is achieved not by reducing men to one's service but in giving oneself in selfless service to them. And this is never done without cost...The true spiritual Shepherd is concerned infinitely more with the service he can render God and his fellowman than with the benefits and pleasures he can extract from life." (Pg.13 of *Spiritual Leadership*)

The ministry will provide opportunity to learn leadership while involved in an actual ministry of developing disciples. Modelling and mentorship will be the primary means of developing Shepherds.

13. The ministry is committed to community

The body of believers at Prairie is one expression of the body of Christ. This community is a dynamic expression of Christ's body and effects development that is possible in no other way. We do not want to control but rather facilitate the dynamics of this community. The following principles form the philosophy of community:

- *The community should be a model of Prairie's core values*
A community climate that promotes and models principles will be most effective in imparting attitudes and values. The community should be a living experience of the historical core values of Prairie (i.e. Life Changing Power of God's Word, The Triune Person of God, The Importance of the People of God, The Worldwide Purposes of God).
- *The community should be an expression of unity within diversity*
Denominational, racial, cultural, gender, age, academic, career and socio-economic diversity provide opportunities for believers to appreciate the richness of the Christian community and to understand diversity as strength rather than a problem or weakness. Within this diversity Christians can develop significant relationships and learn the attitudes of maintaining the unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:2-6). It is in this context that the real love of brothers and sisters in Christ can be learned and demonstrated.
- *The community should be a dynamic community*
The Holy Spirit is at work in the Body. The body of Christ is never stagnant. The body is a context for discerning as well as learning leadership. It is a place for exercising and discerning gifts. The body can be a place for healing and for helping. It is a place of caring and forgiving. Christians are not only to be part of this body but also to learn the responsibilities of living within such a community. This community should be an expression of His life.
- *The community should be a disciplined community*
The Prairie community is a community of faith and of disciples. It is a community of people in a process of growth and maturing into the image of our Master. In that process we anticipate and plan for mistakes, wrong choices, and sin. These times can provide significant teaching opportunities for shaping people's hearts, minds and character for God's glory. As His community, we have responsibility for both instructional and corrective discipline for the purposes of restoration, wholeness of the body and of the individual, and for extending an invitation to submit to the life of discipleship.

14. The ministry is to be characterized by servanthood

Servanthood is the result of an unqualified surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ and identification with Him in His death as well as His resurrection life (Romans 6:1-11). To be a servant is not merely a method of ministry (e.g. style of leadership) but who we are in Christ (Mt 20:25-28, Phil 2:3-9,13). The manner in which this ministry is to be carried out is understood in the biblical concept of a "servant" (Mt 20:25-28; Phil 2:3-9, 13; 1 Pet. 5:2-4). The work is not a job but a ministry. That service is both a privilege and a responsibility. It is a privilege to be called to be a co-labourer with God and seeing Him work in your life and through your life. It is a responsibility in which we are to be found faithful in our accountability to the Lord and to others. As servants, we are not to seek personal agenda or glory, but rather to minister to others as an expression of our genuine love for Christ. This labour of love is a ministry in which we are delighted to share not only the gospel but also our own lives (I Thessalonians 2:1-16). The most significant credential we carry is a yielded life that will serve as an instrument for the Lord.