 **Tips for Phase 2 & Phase 3**

**Facilitators**

**Setting up the class**

1. Print out the Phase 2 Leader Guide in the Leader Resources section of the website.
2. Meeting time: 2 hours but no less than 1 ½ hours.
3. Generally Phase 2 is a combination of all the Phase 1 groups.
4. When possible have people stay together from their Phase 1 group. People are used to the intimacy of Phase 1, so do whatever you can to promote that environment. If keeping them together is not possible, then mix participants from a few groups together.
5. Go back over The Ultimate Journey Support Group Covenant (pgs. 11-13) and remind participants that it is still in effect for Phase 2 and 3.
6. At the first class have everyone as a large group go around and share about how Phase 1 impacted them, including yourself. This will help you get a feel for where each one is at and let them get to know each other better.
7. At the first class talk about the difference between Phase 1 and Phase 2
   1. Phase 1 was all about them, but Phase 2 is going to be all about God. If we learned to believe lies about ourselves, doesn’t it make sense that we probably also learned to believe lies about God? We may learn to realize that how we learned to interact with Him in the past needs to change as we come to a greater understanding of who He really is and the covenant love He has for us.
   2. It is important to continue allying yourself throughout Phase 2 and onward. Allying is a skill that needs to be incorporated the rest of your life on a regular basis.
8. Each week participants will read a lesson from the Phase 2 Book: Abandoning Self-Reliance and do the corresponding homework in their Study Guide.

**Structure of the Class**

1. Open meeting with Prayer.
2. Ask the general question: “What stood out to you from your reading this week? Or, “What did you read that had the most impact on you? ”Encourage each person to share something.
3. Put in the 30-minute teaching DVD for the week.
4. Throw out the question: “What do think about what you heard?” Or, “What point meant the most to you?”
5. Go to the Study Guide for the lesson and select the content questions that are more discussion oriented. You do not need to read through all the questions.
6. Leave at least 45 minutes for small group time. During this time the groups will be broken up into about 4 people. These can be people from the same Phase 1 or mixed up. It is nice for Phase 2 to try to keep the group together when possible. The first part of the small group time have them read the affirmations to each other. The second half is to be spent with participants sharing with each other their answers to the Personal Reflection questions from the Study Guide.

**Strategies for Good Facilitation**

The most important part of leading is following God’s Holy Spirit! This takes a willing heart, open ears, and lots of practice. We are all allowing Him to teach us this skill, but remember that this doesn’t depend on our performance, it depends on Him! There will be times when we listen better than others, and some discussions will go better than others. That is okay. He will use it all as raw material to reveal more of Himself to us, in us, and through us. We are all learning together. Just remember to ally yourself: “It’s okay!” “It’s okay to make mistakes.” “They are just opportunities to grow.” “It’s okay if everything doesn’t go the way I planned. God is in control.”

1. Follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and allow God to speak through you.
2. Smile and be approachable.
3. Be authentic and sincere in communication.
4. Be transparent. Let the group know how the material is impacting you, and if appropriate, share when you are struggling.
5. Emphasize the necessity of doing the homework each week.
6. Stick to the materials and expectations of the class.
7. Keep the discussion focused on the material.
8. If the group gets off track, you can say, “In light of the time we have left, let’s move on to the next question.”
9. Keep track of the time so everyone gets to share.
10. Encourage sharing from everyone.
11. Ask open-ended questions.
12. Remember there is not always a “right answer.”
13. Avoid answering your own questions as this could cause the group to become passive.
14. Don’t be afraid of silence.
15. Try to notice when someone may be holding back.
16. Don’t always be content with one answer. Ask, “What do others think?”
17. Periodically summarize what has been said.
18. Acknowledge all contributions and try to be affirming when possible. If answer seems off-base, ask “What does everyone else think?”
19. Meet participants where they are. Do not assume they are at the same place in their journey.
20. Don’t just give them the answers. Try to help the participants discover them. Admit when you don’t know an answer.
21. Don’t try to fix, give advice to or preach to participants. Feelings are for feeling, not for fixing.

**Group Dynamics**

All groups function differently. The following are examples of different dynamics that can impact the group and some strategies for addressing them. These are not all-inclusive. The ultimate advice is to pray and allow the Holy Spirit to live through you and work in the lives of each of the participants.

**The Dominant Member**

* Affirm them, yet at the same time encourage others to share.
* Do not sit across from them or make eye contact. Rather, sit next to them.
* Say, “Thank you for sharing. Let’s hear from others as well.” Or, “What do the rest of you think?” Or, “I know you have a lot to share, and I hate to interrupt, but we need to move on for the sake of time.”
* Look directly at and gesture toward the other group members.
* Politely interrupt if necessary.
* If necessary, talk to them privately. Remind them that we are all here to travel this journey with God and ask them to help you give everyone a chance to share what is happening along their journey.

**The Quiet Member**

* Ask them directly, but with an easy, open-ended question.
* Make use of a comment or question to have them elaborate further.
* Affirm them and their contributions.
* If they are quiet, say, “What can we do to make it safer for you to be able to open up and work with us as a group member?”
* If they are belligerent, say, “I’m confused. You’re investing all this time in the group but neither you, nor the others in the group will be able to benefit, unless you join the others in sharing.

### **The Interrupting Member**

* Say, “We need to let her finish. You’ll get a turn.”
* If they yank the focus to their own issues when someone else is sharing, say, “We want to hear more, but let’s do it when it’s your turn to share.”

### **The Argumentative Member**

* You might say, “We don’t all have to agree or see things the same way. Let’s keep it safe for people to be where they’re at.”
* When there is conflict amongst group members, these cases require gentle, patient, ongoing communication, good listening skills and a willingness to work together through various issues. Group members do not need to agree on everything, but can agree to disagree and respect the feelings and beliefs of other brothers and sisters in Christ. As growing, maturing disciples, each one of us is in a different place in our journey. It is good to accept and learn from others. With teamwork the group can arrive at true wisdom, harmony, accurate understanding and healthy bonding as the Body of Christ. Consider doing the Small Group Tune-Up at the end of this guide.
* While differences in opinion are accepted, it is not acceptable to argue or go off on tangents to try to prove a theological point that has already been debatable for centuries (i.e. “once saved always saved vs. you can lose your salvation).

**The Critical Member**

* Beware of someone that continually criticizes the material or the process. It is okay to differ or ask for clarification, but consistent arguing or criticism makes the group unsafe and should not be tolerated. The facilitator should privately meet with this person. If the person chooses not to cooperate, they should be dismissed from the group in private.

**The Off-topic Group**

* Keep just one conversation going at a time.
* Focus attention on the topic at hand.
* Address topics that are raised, but don’t stay off the topic too long.
* Continue to have fun and don’t clamp down too hard. Aim to ensure a degree of helpful discussion and information.
* Know what topics are coming up so that you can let members know if something will be covered later on.
* Ask yourself, “Is this discussion helping people to connect with Christ?” If it is, then you may let it go temporarily. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s leading.

**The Quiet Group**

* Ask provocative questions.
* Consider having an icebreaker to get people to know one another better.
* Don’t be afraid of silences.
* Don’t fill space with your talk as it will keep them quiet.
* Ask if your questions make sense.
* Avoid right/wrong or threatening questions.
* Ask questions to which you do not know the answer.

### **The “Head Knowledge” Christian**

* This member may have lots of knowledge but may not have real spiritual connection.
* Do not be satisfied with pat answers.
* Remind this person that we are not here to preach to or fix others.
* If necessary, talk to them privately. Remind them that we are all here to travel this journey with God and that while the Bible is the source of Truth, it is important to apply that truth in a way that it can best be received. Sometimes what people really need is validation and understanding and acceptance for where they are at.

### **The Member Who Can Become a Group Project**

* This person is in perpetual crisis and dumps it all in group every week. The group is not a dumpster and the group time cannot revolve around this person.
* Affirm this person. Be interested in what they are sharing and pray for them out-loud right at that moment as it can calm them and allow you to continue on with the meeting.
* Limit the time members have to share and when that time is up, move on to the next person.
* If necessary, talk with them privately. Discuss allying and find out if this person is being their own adult ally throughout the week. Possibly ask them to journal their feelings, thoughts and emotions about themselves every day. Then, have them read affirmations aloud to themselves as well. As you know, it can take a while for affirmations to really sink in and to believe they are true. This person is often in desperate need of affirmation by him/herself. To move beyond their crisis, members must ally themselves regularly.
* This person may need to be encouraged to go through Phase 1 again. Make sure they understand that doing so again would not be a failure on their part. Some of us just have more pain to process than may get dealt with going through Phase 1 one time.

### **Issues That May Arise**

The following addresses issues that occasionally arise within groups. It is important that you and demonstrate the oneness of the body of Christ whenever you encounter any issues. On The Ultimate Journey issues and situations are never avoided or magnified. They are always dealt with in Christ’s love, truth and grace. If you are in doubt about any issue, consult Christ-Life Ministries. Remember, we are here to help you.

### **Breaking Confidentiality**

* The Ultimate Journey Support Group Covenant is still in effect.
* Address the covenant with the person.
* The person may need to ask for forgiveness from the other group members.
* Depending on how damaging this was to the group, it may be necessary for the offender to stop participating in the group.

### **Missing Meetings**

* It is helpful for the facilitator to give participants a phone call or send an email letting them know they were missed.
* Group members are encouraged to let their facilitator know if they are going to be gone.
* Participants are responsible to keep up with the reading and questions for the week they missed.
* It is not unusual if group members have a time conflict once or twice. Each group member should take his commitment to the other group members seriously and avoid missing if at all possible. Group trust is not enhanced when people bounce in and out as they please. If a group member is not able to be consistent in their attendance consideration should be given to dismissing them from the group. This may not apply if someone is absent due to unforeseen sickness or job requirements or family situations etc…

### **Not Completing Weekly Homework**

* Say something like, “Can you share with me what is preventing you from doing your homework?” If they are too busy, you may want to suggest that they wait and take the class when they have time to do the assignments.
* They may need further explanation of the assignments due to lack of understanding and fear to ask.
* They may not want to face something that is coming up. Listen for the response. You may say, “I’m confused. You’ve invested a lot of time in this journey and yet, you aren’t doing your homework. Help me understand.”

**Personality Clashes and In-Group Friction**

* If people clash, it may be that one reminds the other of someone from the past. If that’s the case, explore the root source. Say, “There’s obviously something between you and \_\_\_\_\_.” Do you know what that’s all about?” The facilitator needs to prayerfully consider when and how this is to be addressed and if it needs to be done inside or outside the group.