



COUNTDOWN

*Launching & Leading
Transformational Groups*

Using **Countdown** to train your church leaders

- 1) This general training plan is provided to facilitate a 2 ½ hour experience based on content in **Countdown**. Use this plan to guide participants from a church to overview each section of the book and start identifying actions for starting new groups. This plan includes handouts and presentation slides to supplement the training experience. Use this plan with leaders and potential leaders in your church's groups ministry. Adapt this experience to facilitate training for leaders of one or more age groups as well as for participants from multiple churches.
- 2) A conversational training plan is also provided (separate). Use this plan with one or more leaders/potential leaders to discuss implications of making disciples through your church. Identify times and locations to have conversations throughout the year to follow up on an overview of the book and identify actions to take to make more disciples through groups.
- 3) These training plans can provide a basis for regular gatherings of leaders of groups. Guide participants to focus on one or more of the ten chapters and conversations during each (monthly) team meeting.
- 4) Lead participants to overview the book in a training setting. Use the overview of the ten points (found in the Addendum). Use Handout 4 ("We are starting a new group!") to plan and to record information about each new group to be started. Use the handout to guide participants to identify highlights from **Countdown** for the purpose of starting new groups.
- 5) Enhance your experiences by merging questions from the conversational training plan into the general training plan.

PREPARE TO COUNTDOWN

- Read *Countdown: Launching and Leading Transformational Groups*.
- Prepare name tags, one for each participant. A master is provided for creating Countdown themed name tags. (Presentation slide 1)
- Provide *Countdown: Launching and Leading Transformational Groups*, one for each participant (available at LifeWay.com/DavidFrancis).
- Make copies of handouts.
- Secure a data projector. If no projector is available, create visuals based on the PowerPoint presentation provided. Use these visuals when the slide is identified in the plans.
- Arrange chairs so participants can interact with each other, with the facilitator, with the visuals (on a focal wall) and with the resource (around tables).
- Secure a team to pray for you and the people who will participate in the training. Encourage them to specifically pray that God will use this time for the church's group leaders to discover ways of strengthening its group ministry.

INTRODUCE URGENCY FOR COUNTDOWN (30 minutes)

1. As participants arrive, call attention to the name tags and direct them to write their first name in large letters followed by their last name. Also direct them to write one word they might use to describe themselves on the bottom half of the name tag (presentation slide 1). Encourage the group to mingle, using the thing they wrote on their name tags as a point of conversation.
2. After most have arrived, call attention to local or national news stories that point to challenges for Christ followers to impact their community for Christ. Reveal the following statements: There is a sense of urgency; There is a need for action. (presentation slide 2). Explain that the training experience will help the group focus on must have conversations if your church is to continue impacting your area of influence.
3. Share: *Jesus modeled the actions and attitudes to disciple individuals. Matthew 8-9 is one example where Jesus encountered a variety of individuals and demonstrated how to intersect followers with the impact of making disciples. Jesus' disciples were observing Jesus throughout this journey. We will keep the following kinds of people in mind as we investigate conversations that need to take place in order to connect people to Christ. We must launch and lead transformational groups that help us impact people like the following:*

1. *Leper (8: 1-4)*
2. *Centurion's servant (8: 5-13)*
3. *Peter's Mother in law (8: 14-15)*
4. *Scribe (8: 18-22)*
5. *Demon-possessed man (8: 28-34)*
6. *Paralytic (9: 1-8)*
7. *Levi (9: 9-13)*
8. *Ruler (18-19, 23-26)*
9. *Woman with issue of blood (9: 20-22)*
10. *Blind man (9: 27-31)*

4. Distribute *Countdown: Launching and Leading Transformational Groups*, one for each participant. Invite participants to write the following statements in the front of their book (presentation slide 3):

We encounter people we must influence as followers of Christ.

We encounter people we must impact as disciple makers.

5. Reveal visual (presentation slide 4) listing four categories of people for whom we must focus. Emphasize that these categories will be reviewed throughout the study:
 1. People around us like those Jesus impacted.
 2. People having connected through one or more ministries through our church.
 3. People who are (or will be) disciple makers.
 4. Pre-Christians in our area of impact.

Briefly overview each of the ten categories in the Table of Contents of *Countdown: Launching and Leading Transformational Groups*. Emphasize the foundation for all groups in any church is #1 (The Bible is the essential book) and #2 (The key words are SMALL and NEW.) Lead in prayer.

OPTION: Invite participants to think of a persons' name (or people groups) they know who need to be impacted by a group. Encourage participants to write names on index card(s), on the inside cover of their book, or on the back of their name tag as a reminder of opportunities to impact them as disciples. Challenge them to remember the name or names throughout the training experience.

COUNTDOWN: 10 ... 9 ... 8 ... 7 (45 minutes)

COUNTDOWN: TEN TERMS

6. Review the ten terms that impact conversations about discipleship (Presentation slide 5). Distribute copies of Handout 1 (Ten Terms). Guide participants (or teams of 2-3 persons) to overview pages 7-14 and identify the definition for at least three of the ten terms. Briefly overview the correct responses. Be prepared to clarify terms as they relate to ways your church grows disciples through groups.

Answers to matching exercise (Handout 1): Discipleship (g); Groups (d); Small groups (c); Sunday School class (i); D (Discipleship) Groups (a); Closed groups (e); Open group (h); Ongoing group (f); Short-term group (j); Groups system (b).

COUNTDOWN: NINE REASONS

7. Lead participants to overview the nine reasons to disciple people through groups (pages 15-22). Distribute copies of Handout 2 (Rate the Reasons). Lead participants to think about opportunities your church provides for making disciples and to impact disciple makers. Challenge them to rate these ministry opportunities based on each statement (presentation slide 6).

Call attention to the categories and questions at the bottom part of Handout 2. Lead participants in teams of 2-3 to evaluate one or two assigned "Reasons" from the perspective of:

- A) A believer who participates in a group through the church.
- B) A prospective leader involved in a group, but not involved as a leader.
- C) A pre-Christian who lives within range of the church.

Highlight the two questions at the bottom of Handout 2. Direct the group to share in pairs their responses to the questions. Challenge them to add actions they discover during this training.

COUNTDOWN: EIGHT CHOICES

8. Call attention to the 8 Big Choices affecting a group's dynamics (pages 23-34). Explain the distinctive of "type and duration" (pages 23-26) of groups. Lead the group to consider how they answer these 8 choices for existing groups and for new groups needing to be started (presentation slide 7). Guide participants to determine the intended type and duration for the group(s) in which they participate. Direct participants to select one of the other "Choices" identified on pages 26-34. Call for them to examine the information about that "Choice," and underline at least one statement that points to the need to start new group(s) through their church that might follow that choice.

COUNTDOWN: SEVEN ELEMENTS

9. Call attention to the 7 elements of transformational churches applied to groups (pages 35-38). Assign each participant (or team) at least two of the elements (presentation slide 8). Lead each team to identify and be prepared to report one statement that best describes how a group demonstrates it is experiencing transformation. Allow for teams to share insights gained.

BREAK

As the break begins, reveal the following statement: We must always be looking to start new groups anywhere and anytime, 24/7! (presentation slide 9) Challenge the group to consider what this statement may mean for them and for others in the groups they lead.

COUNTDOWN: 6 ... 5 ... 4 ... 3 (45 MINUTES)

COUNTDOWN: SIX CHALLENGES

10. Briefly overview the 6 Challenges to conventional thinking about groups (pages 39-44) (presentation slide 10). Ask: *How can the challenges become opportunities?* Remind the group of the statement made prior to break: We can start new groups anywhere and anytime, 24/7! (presentation slide 11)

OPTION: Assign the first 5 of the 6 Challenges each to a team or individual. Assign each team to read the material for their assigned Challenge and briefly report one significant concept about groups important enough to influence how your church makes more disciples. Lead all participants to brainstorm the impact of Challenge 6 (One-yet three unseen Group Members).

COUNTDOWN: FIVE STAGES

11. Briefly overview the five stages (page 45) (presentation slide 12). Explain that these stages strengthen current groups and help start new groups. Distribute copies of Handout 3 (5 Stages). Lead the group to list potential new groups that may need to be considered. Record the list on a large sheet of paper.

Review the categories of people discussed earlier (members of our church not connected through any groups, present and future disciple makers through our church, pre-Christians in our area of influence), making sure every category is represented in the list of potential new groups. Emphasize that we also must be looking for ways to 1) strengthen existing groups to make more disciples and disciple-makers, 2) start new groups to make more disciples and disciple-makers.

Create teams of 2-3 people. Assign one potential new group to each team (you may assign the same group to different teams). Guide teams to use the handout to help the question: If our church will intentionally reach (an assigned people group), what are some specific actions we must take? Call for teams to share their work. As teams report, make sure each "stage" is included.

OPTION: Suggest a strategic target group which you identified prior to the training for whom your church needs to start a new group. Guide participants to identify actions for each stage regarding the new group to be started.

Discuss challenges and opportunities for each stage in order to disciple the groups of people your church needs to impact.

COUNTDOWN: FOUR STARTING POINTS

12. Briefly overview the four Starting Points for approaching group Bible study (pages 49-50) (presentation slide 13).

Life: the starting point is real-life everyday issues

Text: the starting point is Book by Book studies

Theology: the starting point is the Gospel of Jesus in all Scriptures

Your church: the starting point is customized Bible study

Lead participants to discuss how group(s) in their church relate to one or more of the starting points. Remind participants that we are seeking to make disciples by encountering God through His Word.

COUNTDOWN: THREE PURPOSES

13. Say: *Groups cannot do everything. They can probably do three things. What is the primary purpose of our group(s)?* (presentation slide 14) Overview the three purposes identified in **Countdown** (formation, connection, mission). Guide participants to overview the chart on page 52 and review the variety of words that relate to the three purposes. Lead participants to:

- 1) Underline a key word or phrase to describe three primary purposes for a group already existing through your church.
- 2) Circle a key word or phrase to describe the primary purpose(s) for new group(s) needed through your church.

Be prepared to explain the words/phrases reported. Also be prepared to clarify things that leaders and members of new groups need to do.

Lead participants to read the section at the top of page 53 and circle the sentence that is the most significant from their perspective. Lead participants to discuss responses to the following questions: *What kind of giftedness do I use in impacting the group where I serve?; How can we help leaders influence how groups grow disciples?* (presentation slide 15)

14. Remind participants of the need and opportunity for starting new group(s) to impact believers, disciple-makers, and pre-Christians (presentation slide 16). Distribute copies of Handout 4 (We are Starting). Use the information on the Handout to review concepts from the book. Encourage the group to use Handout 4 as a worksheet for starting a new group in the future.

OPTION: Suggest a target group for which your church plans to start a new group. Guide participants to review the book to decide about and record the information requested on Handout 4.

LAUNCH! (30 minutes)

COUNTDOWN: TWO KEY WORDS

15. Review the 2 Key words that will determine any ministry's destiny: Small and New.

Ask: *Why small? Why new?* (Presentation slide 17). Invite participants to review opportunities for making more disciples by emphasizing "small" and "new."

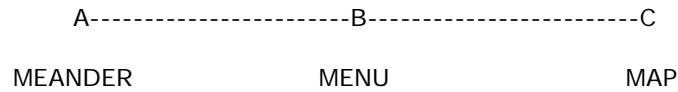
Invite participants to review the list of potential groups created earlier. Guide them to identify the groups on the list that your church will seek to start during the coming months. Review benefits for starting these new groups.

Remind participants that your church joins other churches in making disciples and in making disciple-makers. Explain that for every new healthy group started, most churches experience an increase of ten persons through the ministry of the church. Call attention to groupsmatter.com (Presentation slide 18). Designate someone in the group to visit the website and record the number of new groups your church will seek to start.

COUNTDOWN: ONE ESSENTIAL BOOK

16. Lead participants to underline the phrase (top of page 57) "Bible Study: The non-negotiable essential." Ask: *If the Bible is our non-negotiable essential, what must we do to strengthen our emphasis on this as we start new groups?*

Overview pages 57-62 and lead participants to identify challenges and results of each of the following approaches:



Lead participants to discuss implications to the following: *How can we help provide a map or menu for making disciples through groups in our church? We must start new groups anywhere and anytime, 24/7!* (presentation slide 19)

Review the Table of Contents from **Countdown** as a reminder of conversations and decisions to be addressed. Lead participants to place a check mark beside three categories they anticipate will provide the most healthy conversations (a) with members of your church, (b) with current or future leaders of groups in your church. Reemphasize the importance of #2 (New and Small) and #1 (the Bible is the essential Book for our strategy).

Say: *There is urgency...time is running* (presentation slide 20 -- Note: when you advance to this slide, a countdown will begin with the hands of the stopwatch). Direct volunteers to call out the first name of a person they know who needs to be involved in a group. State: *We must make disciples; We must impact more disciple-makers*. Close with a time of prayer, committing to do whatever it takes to disciple our community for Christ.