

Using the “4 W’s” to Build Community in the cell group.

1. Recap the over-all purpose of the 4 W’s:

The 4 W’s serve to provide a skeleton of structure for the cell group that provides:

- A simple and flexible framework for weekly cell meetings.
- A balanced Upward / Inward / Outward / Forward focus.
- A tool that allows the cell leader to focus more on mentoring and relationship building than on meeting preparation and organization.

2. Recap the focus of each of the individual W’s, and guidelines for each.

Welcome: The Welcome Question is meant to be an ice-breaker, that gets the group sharing with each other. It needs to be able to be answered by anyone without requiring a lot of trust or intimacy. It ought to be a simple question that can be answered in 30 seconds or so. The whole Welcome Question should take no more than 15 minutes of the cell group time.

- i.e.
- “Describe your week in terms of a weather forecast,”
 - “What was your favorite past-time as a kid?”
 - “What’s your favorite way to travel and why?”

Worship: The Worship Time is meant to focus the hearts of the group away from themselves and onto God. This is a critical opportunity to help people stop their busy minds and turn inward to what God is wanting to do in them. Worship is a chance for us to reflect on who God is and to speak the truth about Him to each other. Worship can be spend in a wide variety of ways, but there are two rules that keep it focused:

1. The activity needs to be participatory. There needs to be a way that everyone can respond or get involved.
2. The activity needs to be focused on God. This might mean on God’s character, on God’s actions, on statements about God in scripture, or in prayer to God. This is not the time to focus on ourselves. Here we want to turn our hearts wholly toward God.

The whole Worship time should take between 15 - 25 minutes of the cell group time.

- i.e.
- Worship singing as a group of 3 or 4 songs.
 - Listening to a recording of a song, and reflecting on an appropriate scripture, then share what this experience says to you about God.
 - Pass out various pictures portraying Jesus, and have people meditate on what they see while worship music plays in the background.
 - Read a short passage from the Psalms that talks about God, and then have each person re-write it in their own words. Ask a couple people to share theirs, then pray together.

Word: The Word Time is meant to be a conversation focusing on what God is doing now in our lives and how we can respond to that. The Word Guide is a prompter meant to lead into these conversations based on a principle or passage of the previous week’s sermon. The goal is not Bible study or philosophical discussion. The goal is to get people to talk about their real spiritual journey and provide a context where members of the group can minister to each other. It should always end with an opportunity for the members of the group to pray for each other. The Word time should take between 30 - 40 minutes of the cell group time.

Witness: The Witness time is meant to orient our attention outward and provide a point of accountability in our efforts to bless and serve the people around us. The major element here will be the Blessing List, a list of people the group is praying for and actively seeking to bless and serve. But this time can also be spent in a variety of ways, praying for *oikos* people, praying for situations, praying in unique ways like the prayer wall activity, planning bless & serve activities and social gatherings, and discussing personal steps and goals for

blessing and serving. The Witness time should take between 15 - 30 minutes depending on the complexity of the activity.

3. Focusing the W's away from being simply an agenda, to being a way to build community, leadership and interpersonal connection.

Welcome: This is an easy place to include someone and give them ownership. A child or new member can easily handle this role. Because its so easy to be successful, it's a great place to provide encouragement to someone who is uncertain of themselves. Encourage the asking of questions which help people get to know one another.

Worship: Worship is a little more challenging of a W to lead, since it usually involves planning of some kind. The cell leader or intern should lead it regularly for modeling purposes, and other people with gifts in this area can lead it frequently. Don't build the expectation that it has to be something new and creative every week. Try to sing regularly, if you have someone able to lead that. The hardest thing about planning a creative worship activity is keeping it God focused. So many ideas tend toward being about "me" and my ideas, rather than focusing me on God and His ideas. This is a good W for people to work together on. You could ask two members, or a member and a child to work together to plan something. That would require them to be in contact outside of group time which increases community.

Word: Leading the Word time is on the one hand simple (facilitating the discussion by reading the Word Guide is pretty easy) and also very tricky. The goal is to draw people into sharing about themselves and their real spiritual journey. This requires asking good questions, asking for people's response and reflection, and vulnerability on the part of the leader. Leading this should be reserved to people that have demonstrated an ability to facilitate conversation. The cell leader and intern should lead it regularly as a way to model how it works.

Witness: There are lots of different ways that the witness time can proceed and leadership for it should be chosen by the giftedness required for the activity. Leading small break-out groups in prayer is considerably different from planning a Bless-and-Serve Party. Think through what you as the leader want to accomplish and invite people to lead out based on that.

4. Inviting people into these roles:

Asking people "Who wants to lead a W next week?" at the end of cell is the least effective way to draw people into ownership, and the least intentional way of building leadership. This may work from time to time, and may work especially well with other cell responsibilities like hosting, providing snacks or childcare. A much better way is to spend some time *before* cell thinking and praying about the gifts in the group, and then inviting a person to that role one on one. Always call to check in with them before the cell group they are up for. Always ask to hear about their idea, and help them think it through in terms of flow, focus, necessary supplies, and time-frame. You may need to help them fine-tune their idea a bit in order for it to serve the group well, but this is how they will learn how to lead.

Also, always make sure to have a follow-up conversation with each person who leads out. Ask how they think things went. Give feedback for them and encouragement. This is how people will learn, grow and discover their gifts. Assigning the Ws in this way is a great tool to facilitate cell leader-member contact outside of group time.

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Welcome: Simple and easy place to give ownership.

Worship:

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