

# CONNECTIONS

FALL 2000

## THE HEART OF THE MATTER

**T**he reality of another busy ministry season looms large. In another short month Coffee Break/Story Hour/Little Lambs will begin. No doubt many of you have already been busy at work preparing.

Preparation is important. Choosing the right studies is important. Getting qualified leaders is important. Training leaders and leading inductively is important. But loving those God leads to us must be our priority.

God *wants us* to model his love.

A letter I received from a Coffee Break attendee of several years summed it up beautifully. "What we as participants of Coffee

Break really need and want from the leaders is love." She noted with gratitude all the preparation and all the details that were taken care of. But in the years she'd been in Coffee Break, the difference she noticed from group to group was "whether the leaders love us." As she put it, "Do they point me to Jesus, or do they tell me the correct answer and the way to behave?"

She continued, "If leaders really knew that we don't expect them to be experts—that it's a blessing for details to be in order, but we forgive them for extraneous circumstances that throw glitches, and we want to be loved and love them—I think it could reduce their stress and burden of responsibility."

There was one group in her Coffee Break program that everyone wanted to be

in because the leader was so good. One snowy day when attendance was down, two groups combined and she watched this master leader at work, analyzing what it was that made her so effective.

"As I purposely evaluated what her 'secret' was, I saw she actually said and did very little—except with her body language. She leaned forward to people as they spoke, her eyes listened and loved. Her responses to questions never said

'You're wrong,' but 'I see the Bible saying this.'

In a nutshell—she loves. And she does not live by the law, but by grace."

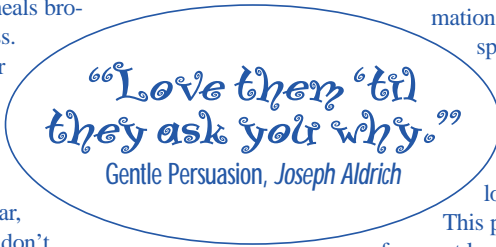
She ended her letter with these words: "My desire is for Coffee Break to be a safe, loving place . . . God wants love; we all do."

Her words have continued to resonate in my spirit. They are consistent with the very character of God: God is love (1 John 4:16). They are consistent with Jesus' words to his disciples: "This is my command: love each other" (John 15:17).

There is brokenness all around us. Love heals brokenness.

In your desire to "do it right" this year, please don't forget to love.

Betty Veldman, Director of Small Group Ministries



## WHAT'S MY MOTIVATION?

**R**ecently, as I was completing the study by Beth Moore, *Breaking Free: Making Liberty in Christ a Reality in Life*, I was taken back by a statement Beth made. In week 10 she wrote, "Our motivations for reaching out and serving others aren't always pure."

My dear friend Kathy Troccoli, who ministers full-time, asked a critical question: "**Am I ministering out of my need or out of the overflow of my own relationship with God?**" We would be wise to ask ourselves the same questions. Do we crave the affirmation of those we serve, and do they help us feel important? Or do we serve because Jesus has so filled our hearts that we must find a place to pour the overflow?

What a reminder that our motivations must be pure before our heavenly Father as we serve and lead in women's ministry. True leadership is not about position, status, or power. It is about service. We must be training our team members to be servant leaders, and we must model that ourselves.

Deuteronomy 6:5 is the key—loving God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind. This is the road to spiritual transformation. We cannot lead others to be spiritually transformed if we ourselves are not. As we spend time with Him in total submission, our ministry will flow out of our love relationship with Him.

This provides a positive example of servant leadership for our team members and all the women in the church.

Chris Adams, WomensMinistry.NET Online



Coffee Break



Small Groups



Story Hour  
Little Lambs

## TEASE YOUR LOCAL REPORTER WITH A STORY IDEA

### GET FREE PUBLICITY

**Y**ou know all about a 15-minute coffee break; have you ever heard of a thirty-YEAR Coffee Break? As you travel around the area in the next week, my challenge to you is to count the number of times you see a sign at a church advertising Coffee Break and Story Hour. Some churches even design a sign in the form of a coffeepot. This dynamic ministry is celebrating thirty years...."

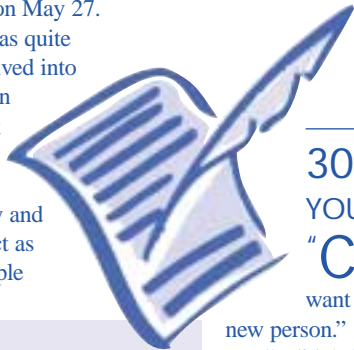
The above email to the religion editor worked for us in Grand Rapids, Michigan, resulting in quite a bit of coverage the weekend before the convention. In Florida, Hudson Reformed's Coffee Break program splashed the front page of the *St. Petersburg Times'* religion section May 27. Their reporter, Angela Miller, was quite impressed with the story she delved into and writes that she's interested in possibly starting a Coffee Break herself someday!

This is an easy year to promote your group—turning thirty and all. And it's not as huge a project as you may think. Start with a simple

announcement: Get on your computer, type a little birthday blurb about Coffee Break and address it to your local press reporter or editor. Be sure to call and get the correct spelling of his or her name.

If an editor decides this Coffee Break story would make good copy, well, you've just got the word out about your fall program to a very large audience. Get ready to add more staff!

Marjo Jordan, Co-Editor

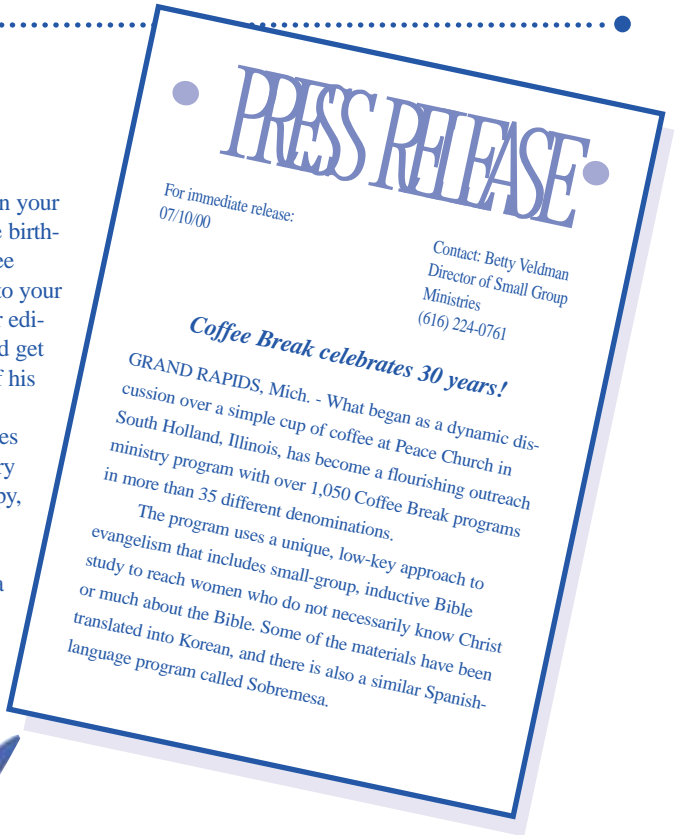


### IOLEEN'S STORY

**L**ong-time Coffee Break member Ioleen Peliwo recently said "Yes" to Jesus publicly and joined Calvin Christian Reformed Church in Oak Lawn, Illinois. Poetry is the vehicle she used to thank her Coffee Break sisters.

The hearts full of love  
Sent from heaven above!  
The smiles and the tears  
I'll remember for years.  
The warm handshakes  
Could not be faked.  
The smiles in their eyes  
As they all filed by.  
I could never believe  
The love I received.  
Pastor Phil stood nearby  
He knew I would cry.  
Coffee Break girls with their treats  
Could never be beat.  
The lovely cards and tokens  
Gave me a warmth that couldn't be spoken.  
My heart is full, I have to say;  
I've been fully received by my  
"Christian family" today!

Ioleen Peliwo



## 30 YEARS OF COFFEE BREAK

### YOUNG'S STORY

"Coffee Break has touched my heart," says Young-Kyo, a beautiful Korean woman with dark hair, dark eyes, and a sensitive soul. "I want to let others know how the power of God's Word made me a new person."

"I didn't know why," she says, "but I was never satisfied. There was always an emptiness. I tried to fill it with many things, but nothing took away the longing inside." Young's need to be fulfilled led her to push herself toward perfection. "But I had only twenty-four hours a day to be perfect."

Then Young was diagnosed with cancer. Suddenly, being perfect was no longer important to her. It was after chemotherapy treatments that a friend invited Young to Coffee Break. That warm April day, the group shared what God had done in their lives through their year of study and discussion. Young was moved by the openness of the sharing. She wanted to share too. In a gesture symbolic of her desire to be rid of pretense, she removed the red cap that covered her bald head—a result of her chemo—vulnerable before her small group and before God.

Young is grateful for what she has learned through cancer and through Coffee Break, for together they opened the door to a new self. "In time I accepted cancer as a gift," she says. "It taught me that I needed to make changes in my life. But it was in Coffee Break that I met the Lord. Today my heart is filled with the Lord, and I want

to turn my suffering into service." Young writes beautiful poetry as an expression of that desire to serve.

Adapted from *Coffee Break: Touching Lives with Love*, by Marie Van Antwerpen

Enjoy similar life-changing stories written by Marie Van Antwerpen to commemorate Coffee Break's thirty-year anniversary.

**Coffee Break:  
Touching Lives  
with Love  
#152063CT  
\$9.95<sup>US</sup>/14.30<sup>CDN</sup>**



## THE JOURNEY

This summer our family vacation took us to the ocean, the marine museum, and yes, the amusement park! My three teenagers humored me as I read all of the placards and information at the museum. I watched as

they experienced

all of the roller coasters and thrill-rides at the amusement park.

Then, back at the hotel, I received a frantic phone call from my married daughter who reported that her four-year-old son, Taylor, had just given his three-year-old sister the “not-so-

perfect” haircut. “Mom, you won’t believe it”, Cathy said. “All her curls are gone!”

I smiled as I thought about this journey we call “life.” Sometimes the journey has led us through very hard places, while at other times the way has been smooth and pleasant. Our spiritual journey and our life journey are very closely related if we’re walking with God. There is really no way to separate the two. Some days we wake up praising God from the bottom of our hearts, and other days it’s all we can do to say the words, let alone mean them.

I’m beginning to see that it’s part of the growth process. We’re growing in our relationship with God just as much as the little children we will get to know in the coming ministry year. They are at the

beginning of their journey; we may be in the middle of ours—just different stages in our “growing with God.”

I want to encourage you to expand your knowledge and experience of God. Since our journeys are unique, the way

that you grow spiritually may also be unique. Perhaps it means more quiet in your life, maybe more study. Could it be that God is calling you to minister out of the pain that you’ve experienced; could he be calling you to forgive and let go of old bitterness and anger?

Maybe he is calling you to lead in a new or different way.

Author Gordon MacDonald writes that “we grow properly when we think of enlarging our capacity to see reality through God’s eyes. And we grow when we think of the process as equipping us to be faithful servants to those in our generation. For such purposes beyond ourselves, growth becomes a worthy objective.”

As you extend God’s love to children this year, ask for the capacity to see reality through God’s eyes. And don’t think that the children are the only ones who will grow. Come spring, we’ll all be in a different place on our journey!

Diane Dykgraaf, Story Hour/Little Lambs Specialist



## WHY I LOVE STORY HOUR AND LITTLE LAMBS

I’ve been “doing” Story Hour and Little Lambs for several years now (20 to be exact!). As I think about training new leaders and beginning another season of ministry with children, I get excited all over again. So I asked myself what keeps me keeping on; what do I love about Story Hour and Little Lambs?

♥ I love the evangelistic approach, and the fact that each year the children get a complete overview of the gospel story beginning with creation, old testament stories of God’s faithfulness, the birth of Jesus, his death on the cross, and his awesome resurrection.

♥ I love having the privilege of being the first one (in many cases) to tell Bible stories to these little children in such a fun and exciting way.

♥ I love watching the kids sing and dance without any inhibitions as they move freely with the music.

♥ I love....

I could keep going, but I’d like to hear from you. Would you take a few minutes and share one or more of the reasons you love Story Hour and Little Lambs? This is one way we can celebrate what God is doing in this ministry and also encourage each other.

Please contact me by e-mail at this address: dianedyk@aol.com, or by snail-mail at Diane Dykgraaf, 861 Diane St., SE, Kentwood, MI 49508

Diane Dykgraaf, Story Hour/Little Lambs Specialist

## DUCK EGG BREAKS THE ICE

Janet Baldino from Parklane Christian Reformed Church in Portland, Oregon, sent the following story to Mary Werkhoven, Small Group Rep from the Pacific Northwest.

I want to share a story that happened during our prayer time this week. We were discussing prayer requests together, and 3-year-old Arthur was sitting quietly by his mom as we got ready to pray. The discussion was about teenagers and our parenting struggles with them. One of the women, a grandmother, sympathized that the worry and concern can seem to go on for a decade! Upon hearing the word “decade”, little Arthur piped up, “I’ve got a duck egg too!” He proceeded to share with us about his precious

duck egg. It was truly a moment from God. We

had been sharing heavy family issues, tears had been shared and this innocent

comment broke through the gray cloud of the moment. We were

all laughing together as we listened to

the 3-year-old’s story of the duck egg. We

feel so blessed to have each other within our Coffee

Break group to share our struggles and to find strength as we pray together.



“You are, you are, you are my child, a marvelous work of God!”

Walter Wangerin, Jr



Story Hour  
Little Lambs

STORY HOUR

# idea share



## Coffee Break

### CHANGE THE PACE FOR FALL

Wondering what to study this fall? What about one of the *Inspire* six-session studies? They're topical and outreach-focused. *Up Close and Personal* looks at who Jesus really is. Other suggestions: *Where Do I Go to Trade In My Hand?*, *Holding Together When It's Falling Apart*, and *Does God Want to Spoil My Fun?*

### LEARN ENGLISH AT CHURCH

What a ministry! Offer to teach English as a second language using the Bible. It's happening. Email me with your stories: [jordanm@crcna.org](mailto:jordanm@crcna.org).

### LABOR DAY PARADE

Depending on the weather, hand out cold pop or hot coffee to adult women along the parade route along with an invitation to Coffee Break.

### B.Y.O. ?

Potato topping, ice cream sundae topping, salad item, fruit for a fruit salad. This is one way to begin that first fall meeting.

### FLOWERING PUMPKIN

A florist in De Motte, Indiana gave a demonstration at 1st CRC's Coffee Break. Director Arla Gabrielse says she arranged fall flowers in a hollowed-out pumpkin.

### TEA TIME

A lovely Victorian tea party was just the right event for Hudson Reformed Church's Coffee Break, especially when leader Ann Bailey offered to cater it!



### NEW RESOURCES

*Coffee Break Postcards* in pads of 25. Use in a neighborhood mailing to advertise your Fall program. Use throughout the year to jot a thank-you, we missed you, glad to meet you, sorry to hear about.... This could become a wonderful promotional tool for Coffee Break leaders.

#152065 **Traditional View**  
\$6.95<sup>US</sup>/10.10<sup>CDN</sup>

#152066 **Contemporary View**  
\$6.95<sup>US</sup>/10.10<sup>CDN</sup>

*Coffee Break Evangelism Manual with Director's Handbook* by Deb Fennema has been updated and combined into one. You'll appreciate the fresh insights and easier-to-read format. This training resource covers all the bases.

#152064 \$7.95<sup>US</sup>/11.55<sup>CDN</sup>

### THE ADVANTAGES OF A CIRCLE

Spending "circle time" together with a small group of children can be a wonderful way to build relationships. Whether you're singing, sharing, doing finger plays, or telling a story, a circle offers the following benefits:

- 1 Eye contact. In a good circle you should be able to see everyone's face. Eye contact and positive interaction such as saying (or singing) each child's name can say, "I value you!"
- 2 A circle minimizes size differences. As adults we are usually much larger than children, but when sitting together in a circle, we are able to get down to their level.
- 3 The circle is a symbol of community. No one is first or last, higher or lower. Everyone is important.
- 4 The attention of everyone in the circle is focused in the same direction, either to the faces and people in the circle, or to the space in the middle of the circle.

To help children form a circle in an open space, have them join hands. Stretch the circle back and sit down for a larger circle, or squeeze in and sit for a small circle. Older preschoolers who would like to

march as they sing can stand and make their circle "turn" like a wheel. For variety make the wheel "turn" the other way, or form a small circle within the larger one, and "turn" opposite ways.



### GIFT IDEA

A meaningful and useful gift for any infant through three years old is *The Baby Bible Storybook*, by Robin Currie, Chariot Victor Publishing. This sturdy board book has very short, attractive stories with suggestions for toddler participation, and a very simple prayer. This is also a great resource to keep in your nursery or Little Lambs room.

### SPOON PEOPLE

#### Materials:

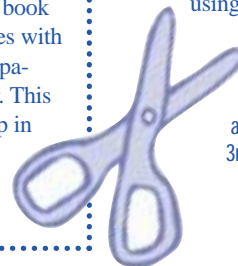
Plastic spoons, cotton balls, pipe cleaners, felt pens, construction or tissue paper, scissors, glue and poster putty.

#### Directions:

To make little people or puppets out of the plastic spoons, separate the cotton balls to use for hair and/or a beard. Twist pipe cleaners around "neck" of spoon to form arms. Use felt pens to draw on facial features. Create clothing from the paper and attach with poster putty or yarn.

For a closing activity to your Story Hour let the children help retell the story using the spoon people. Decorate the inside of a shoebox for a background, and you have a simple puppet theater.

adapted from *365 Days of Creative Play*, 3rd ed., by Sheila Ellison and Judith Gray, Sourcebooks, Inc.



## Story Hour Little Lambs

### CONNECTIONS

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A Small Group and Coffee Break Evangelism Quarterly Newsletter, Betty Veldman, Marjo Jordan, Editors

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# SMALL TALK

## FOR SMALL GROUPS

FALL 2000

### ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE

**Y**ou committed your life to Christ, didn't you?" The words slipped out of my mouth with awe and wonder. Tina smiled and nodded her head. My heart flip-flopped, and I felt the deep, unmistakable joy of God gathering one of his children into the fold.

Tina tilted her head slightly, a twinkle in her eye, and asked, "How many years have you been after me now?" I smiled back, knowing that both of us were remembering when this journey began.

Six—it had been six years. She first came into my home as a despairing, pregnant young woman, planning adoption for her yet-unborn daughter. I wondered what I was getting into by opening my home to this young woman with dark eyes and a tattoo on her forearm. I had no idea then just how God would intertwine our lives.

We were both wounded women and, in a strange way, our circumstances were similar. Each of us was dealing with rejection by a man we thought would always love us and be there for us. Mine was a husband of 24 years, hers was a short-term relationship ending in an unplanned pregnancy. Both of us were facing personal failure, embarrassment and shame.

Just months earlier I had said goodbye to my teenage sons as they moved out-of-state with their dad. It was painful beyond my imagining. Now Tina was unselfishly saying goodbye to the baby she was just beginning to love, surrendering her daughter to parents who could provide a future for her that Tina could not. I understood the pain of letting go. I knew the grieving that lay ahead for her.

But I had one thing Tina did not—a rock-solid faith in Jesus Christ and a sure

knowledge he would never abandon me. I knew he had a perfect plan for my life in spite of my pain and failure. He had a perfect plan for Tina too. Now, after six years of loving her and letting God work in his timing, I was seeing where God would lead—straight into his open arms.

There is no joy like seeing God at work. I have learned I can't rush the process. It is God's work, not mine. I have learned that the most important thing I can do is share God's love by loving—no strings attached. With Tina, sometimes months went by without contact. But God was as work.

Tina was stubborn, she admits. She didn't want to give in. It was scary. "God is pretty persistent," I told her.

She grinned and nodded ruefully. "I noticed," she said.

I noticed too, and it took my breath away. The Holy

Spirit's work was undeniable.

- **First** it was Tina's cautious decision to "try church." I remember her words: "I guess I've put this off long enough. Yeah, I'll go." She'd said *no* so many times before, I could hardly believe what I was hearing!
- **Then** it was her insatiable hunger for God's Word. "It's fascinating," she said. "I just can't put it down."
- **Next** it was the discipline of daily prayer, a hunger to talk to God.
- **Now** it's getting her connected in a small group, a place to build new relationships and grow in her faith. After the anonymity of "trying church," joining a small group is the next

step Tina is willing to take. Hopefully it will happen this week.

God's love is persistent. We need to persistently love too. As you begin this new small-group ministry season, my challenge to you is to intentionally love the people God brings your way. Let it come straight from the heart of God, honest and sure. Love the unlovable as God did when he loved us. Then wait patiently—as God is patient with each of us—and watch him work, in his timing, in his way, with his arms open wide. Then when they fall into his embrace, we can gather them into ours—in a small group, a safe place to grow in God's family.

Betty Veldman, Director of Small Group Ministries

**"To clasp hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world."**

Karl Barth

### HOW ARE YOU OFFENSIVE?

Janice seemed reserved, even cold, when we met for our weekly time together. During Bible study, she was uncharacteristically quiet. After our meeting, she left quickly without saying goodbye. Something was definitely wrong. I wondered, *Have I offended her?*

Our relationships with those we disciple don't always go smoothly. Sometimes the problem is the result of circumstances beyond our control. At other times, the problem is ours; we've unknowingly developed an offensive demeanor. How do

I recognize these troublesome attitudes in my own life?

The acronym **SHARE** is a tool I've used to examine my heart when a discipling relationship seems strained. I prayer-



Small Groups

# SMALL GROUPS



## THE FIRST COUPLE

What do you get when you combine a woman with experience in Coffee Break and Story Hour and a man with a passion for Men's Life who together have a passion for outreach and small group ministries? The answer: A husband and wife team to represent small group ministries in Illinois and Indiana. Welcome to Todd and Cindy Wessels, our first husband-wife, shared-time representatives!

The Wessels provide a wonderful bridge for introducing a male face into our small group rep family while also providing support for Coffee Break. Todd and Cindy, members of New Life Church in New Lenox, Illinois, look forward to combining their gifts in ministry. If you live in Illinois or Indiana and would like to contact Todd and Cindy with questions or comments regarding small groups or Men's Life, Coffee Break, or Story Hour/Little Lambs, you can reach them at 14644 Trumbull, Midlothian, IL 60445, tel. 708-371-4361, tcwessels@juno.com.

## WITH PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

A welcome to someone new usually means good-bye to someone else. After six years of serving Coffee Break/Story Hour/Little Lambs in Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin, Deb Fennema leaves her position as small group rep to focus on her church ministries as well as writing. She is a very gifted woman, and we will miss her very much. God used her delightful sense of humor, her passion for outreach and her down-to-earth application of leadership principles to equip leaders and give them a vision for what he could accomplish through them. Story Hour leaders benefit weekly from Deb's invaluable contribution in co-authoring the new Story Hour curriculum. She leaves behind an incredible legacy of leadership. Please join us in rejoicing in all God has done in and through Deb these past six years. Pray for this transition time as Deb works with Todd and Cindy in turning over the reins for the next chapter in small group ministry for Illinois and Indiana. Deb has paved the way beautifully for them to carry on.

fully consider how my heart measures up in the following areas.  
**S**incerity: As I prayed about Janice, I examined the sincerity of my love for her. Did I treat her as a person loved and valued by God, or did I view her as a projection on the path to successful ministry? Did I love her, or was she simply an item on my agenda?

**H**onesty: Was I vulnerable with Janice, or had I fallen into a "holier than thou" attitude? As I honestly share my struggles and the help I've received in Christ, I become approachable, and the Janices of my world feel safe, trusted, needed, and understood.

**A**vailability: In our busy society, nothing communicates love more than time. Janice's anger with me, I found out later, was the result of my not being available for her during a time of need. Although limits are necessary, our availability and willingness to sacrifice tell seekers and those we disciple that they are important to us and to God.

**R**eliance: I also examine my heart for an attitude of self-reliant manipulation. With Janice, I sometimes relied on my agenda and mistakenly

tried to force her growth. People can sense when we try to push them for our own satisfaction. If I remember that salvation and growth are the work of God, then I can let go of my agenda and rely on the Holy Spirit to complete His work in His time.

**E**ndurance: Was Janice sensing my growing impatience with her? I was frustrated by a lack of measurable progress in Janice's life, and she sensed it. I needed to patiently trust God with His timetable for her growth. I needed to demonstrate endurance in our relationship.

As I examined my attitudes, God quietly convicted me of my lack of availability, my self-reliance, and my impatience with Janice. I confessed, she forgave, and our discipling relationship resulted in solid growth for us both.

Reprinted with author's permission from *SHARE Your Heart*, Discipleship Journal, Issue #115, 1999 by Joan Esherich

**In sharing your faith, use words only when necessary. In other words, the best way you can share your faith is to behave differently as a leader.**

*Leadership by the Book, Ken Blanchard, Bill Hybels and Phil Hodges*



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### WHAT TO DO WHEN

If you're the point person in small groups in your church, you may find it helpful to simply and concisely summarize what your responsibilities in leadership are.

Your roles in the coming season include the following:

1. Visionary - Set the vision and give direction to the entire small group ministry.
2. Interpreter of the Community - What trends do you see? What needs can your small groups meet?
3. Trainer of Small Group Leaders - Equipping leaders is essential for successful small groups.
4. Ambassador for Small Group Ministry - Advocate the small group ministry and negotiate for it.
5. Facilitator or Problem Solver - Small groups are messy; be creative in helping leaders deal with potential conflicts.
6. Living Example - Be in a small group yourself. Apply small group principles and build community.

adapted from *7 Steps to a Successful Small Group Ministry* by David Stark and Patrick Keifert



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