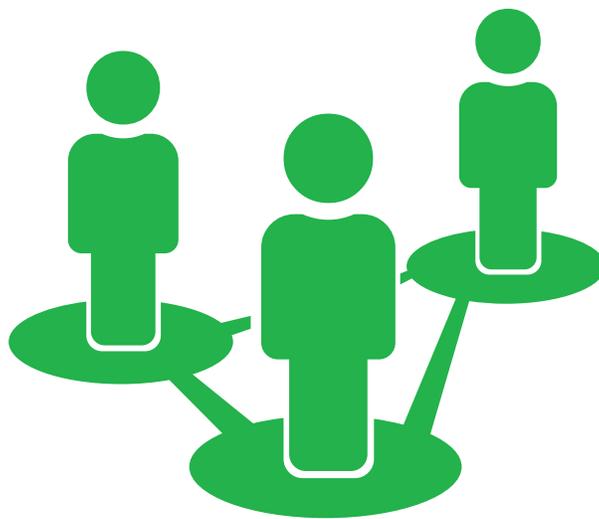




Developing Apprentices for Groups and Ministries



As a group leader, you have no doubt heard about the importance of investing in an apprentice. But you may find yourself wondering, “How, exactly, am I supposed to develop my apprentice?” Or even, “How do I find an apprentice in the first place?” We have created this resource to help you understand:

- Why apprenticing is such a crucial part of our model
- What we mean by apprenticing
- How to identify your apprentice
- How to develop your apprentice

Why Develop Apprentices?

As a church, we value intentional apprenticing for several reasons. We believe that apprenticing is a biblical model of developing the next generation of leaders, and it supports our ministry strategy, both philosophically and organizationally.

It's Biblical

Throughout the Bible we see examples of leaders apprenticing those who would follow in their footsteps. Moses apprenticed Joshua. Elijah apprenticed Elisha. Paul apprenticed Timothy. In fact, one of the most frequently cited scriptures on the subjects of apprenticing and discipleship comes from Paul's second letter to Timothy:

“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” - 2 Timothy 2:2

Perhaps the clearest example of apprenticing is that of Jesus and the twelve disciples (the word “disciple” literally means learner/follower). Jesus never did ministry alone. His disciples were always with him, watching, learning, and listening; he involved them in everything he did. He saw beyond his three years of public ministry and knew that success was not merely doing ministry. Success was handing off the ministry and the responsibility for it to the group coming behind him.

It's Strategic

If you have been around CCW for any length of time, you have heard our mission from Jesus:

‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Matthew 28:18 - 20

If we are to stay true to our mission and follow through with our strategy, then we must create space for more people to experience authentic community and spiritual growth. But the reality is that the biggest limitation to group multiplication is a shortage of qualified group leaders. Where can we find them?

The answer is that we have already found them—they are sitting in our groups as members, waiting to be developed into group leaders. And the best way we've found to transform a group member into a group leader is

through apprenticing.

It's Practical

Apprenticing is our churchwide leader development model. Practically speaking, it's the only effective way to equip leaders in a large-scale, relational, volunteer-driven organization. The beauty of this approach is that we're not limited by the number of experts we have. Andy Stanley, the lead communicator at North Point Community Church, puts it this way:

Apprenticing isn't contingent upon you being an expert at something; it's not contingent upon you knowing enough. It's not contingent upon you knowing all there is to know, and it's not contingent upon you knowing more than everyone else about a particular area. Intentional apprenticing is simply being willing to tell somebody what you do know. "I don't know much, but I'll tell you everything I know. And what I don't know, you'll have to find out from somebody else."

There's another key benefit to this approach. Not only does apprenticing develop the apprentice, it also grows the leader who apprentices. There's nothing like being asked to teach someone everything you know to make you take stock of just what it is that you know. The process gives you incentive to organize your knowledge and put it down on paper, which forces you to solidify it in your mind. As you begin to entrust responsibility to your apprentices and they bring their knowledge, talent, and experience to bear upon what you've shared with them, they will find new and better ways to lead, giving you the opportunity to learn from them and expand your own knowledge and skills. That's what we call a win-win situation.

What is an Apprentice?

Simply put, an apprentice is someone who works with another in order to learn. In the context of small groups, an apprentice is a leader-in-training, and apprenticing is the practice of involving people in ministry for the purpose of training them to take your place. Since the role of the apprentice is derived from the role of the group leader, we must ask the question, "What is a group leader?" First, let's dispel some misconceptions that are commonly held by potential apprentices (and more than a few group leaders), and then we'll briefly look at what a group leader is supposed to be.

- A group leader is NOT a scholar/expert — While many group leaders may have strong backgrounds in biblical knowledge or ministry experience, this is by no means a requirement of the position. And since a know-it-all leader can hamper the group's growth, leaders who have the most knowledge or experience may have to take extra care not to play the role of the scholar/expert.
- A group leader is NOT a teacher or a counselor — Some leaders may have sought the group leader position because they enjoy teaching and/or imparting their wisdom to others, and thought that small groups provided the best opportunity to do so. Since groups are not a teacher-driven environment, but rather an environment where a facilitator encourages all members to participate in discussion, even those who are gifted teachers may find that they have to subjugate a God-given desire to teach others for the good of the group.
- A group leader IS a shepherd — The best group leaders are the ones who understand where the group is **supposed to go, guide and care for the group members, and monitor and protect the health of the group.**
- A group leader IS an investor in people — Groups are about doing life together; a good group leader is

someone who is intentional about building relationships and creating environments where group members experience authentic community and spiritual growth.

With those parameters in mind, we can better understand the role of an apprentice.

- An apprentice is not someone who has it all together.
- An apprentice is not merely an assistant to the group leader.
- An apprentice is someone who has caught the vision of what groups are all about.
- An apprentice is a leader/shepherd-in-training.

The Apprenticeship Process

For the group leader, the apprenticeship process lasts the entire life cycle of the group. Practically speaking, we divide this process into three phases: observation, preparation, and multiplication. These phases and key steps within each phase are identified below. Keep in mind, however, that many of the tactics and strategies are critical elements of good group leadership and shouldn't be limited to a specific phase. For example, modeling receives special focus in the preparation phase, but you should be intentional about modeling good group leadership throughout the life of your group.

If apprenticing is a key element of our multiplication and leader development models, then it follows that we should take a strategic approach to apprentice development. Specifically, we will look at five key steps:

- Identifying
- Recruiting
- Involving
- Connecting
- Releasing

We acknowledge that no two apprenticeships will look exactly the same because of the uniqueness of the personalities involved. There is no magic formula for developing your apprentice, and naturally you will want to tailor your approach to fit your personality and that of your apprentice, but the tips and strategies that follow can guide you through the process.

Phase 1: Observation

During the observation phase, which corresponds roughly with the first third of the group's life cycle, much of your focus will be on creating an environment where your group members experience authentic community. But you will also want to be intentional about observing your group members with an eye for identifying your apprentice. The two key steps within this phase are **Identify** and **Recruit**.

Step ONE: Identify

In looking for a potential apprentice, it is important to remember that you are not looking for someone who can lead a group tomorrow. You are looking for a teachable group member who has the potential to be a great group leader in the future. We have identified five C's that will assist you in prayerfully considering who in your group may be a good apprentice leader. Our five C's are detailed below:

Character

- First and foremost, it is important to determine if your potential apprentice has established a personal relationship with Christ. Can your potential apprentice point to a time when he or she established a relationship with Christ, and has he or she been growing in a relationship with Christ for over two years?
- Recognizing that character is what makes a leader worth following, is your potential apprentice someone worth following?
- Are you comfortable with your potential apprentice's moral authority to model for other group members what it looks like to be in a growing relationship with Christ?

Competence

- Is your potential apprentice someone who is teachable and able to learn the skills necessary to create a predictable environment where authentic community and spiritual growth can occur?
- Does your potential apprentice have the relational skills to effectively lead a group at some point in the future?
- Have you seen your potential apprentice display leadership skills (i.e., facilitating group discussions, planning socials, providing care, etc.) in your group?

Culture

- Is your potential apprentice a member of our church, or will he or she agree to pursue membership?
- Does your potential apprentice recognize the leader's role as a facilitator, not a teacher or counselor?
- Is your potential apprentice committed to the mission and strategy of our church?

Chemistry

- Have you been able to connect relationally with your potential apprentice?
- Have you seen your potential apprentice connect with the other members of your group?
- Are you comfortable with your potential apprentice's ability to relate to others?

Catalyst

- Is your potential apprentice excited about the potential to grow and lead?
- Does your potential apprentice look for opportunities to participate and assist in the ministry/group?

- Is your potential apprentice enthusiastic about seeing and being a part of the change that Jesus, the Spirit, and the Church bring into the lives of others?

If you answered “No” to any of the above questions, we suggest considering other group members or discussing your concerns with your Group’s Coach.

Potential Apprentices in my group:

Step TWO: Recruit

How is recruiting part of development? Doesn’t the development process begin after you have identified and recruited your apprentice? On the contrary, how you recruit your apprentice sets the tone for the rest of the development period.

Why did Matthew follow Jesus? Because Jesus invited him. Jesus didn’t ask for volunteers to be his disciples—he picked them. He made a general call for people to believe in and follow him, but he handpicked his successors.

The act of inviting people to leadership—if done well—can communicate that they are valued and respected, a message that creates a solid foundation for their development. Consider the following invitations to leadership:

“The Groups Coach at CCW said I needed to have an apprentice, so I put your name down. You’d be kind of like the assistant group leader. Whaddya think?”

Versus:

“We’ve talked about this group multiplying into two new groups next spring. As I think about that, I can really see you leading one of those groups; you really ‘get’ what groups are about, and I think you bring a lot to the table. So I’d like you to consider being the apprentice leader for the duration of this group, to prepare you to lead your next group.”

We call this an **ICNU conversation**. An ICNU conversation begins with the words, ‘I see in you...’ and goes on to share several key ideas:

- **Affirm their value and leadership skill.** In an ICNU conversation, you are sharing with the possible apprentice the potential that you see in them. You’re casting a vision for what you believe God has designed them for. Share with them why you think their gifts are well suited to the role. Most potential apprentices are going to have some reservations about becoming group leaders; chances are they don’t feel qualified to lead a group. Your invitation is an opportunity to address their concerns, while also building them up.
- **Share the passion you have for your role and why you do what you do.**
- **Cast the vision for both the Group Leader and Apprentice roles.** The ICNU conversation is also your first big opportunity to cast vision for what apprenticing and group leadership are all about. Communicate the expectations for both group leaders and apprentices. To a large degree, their understanding of what group leaders are supposed to be is governed by what they see you doing. If the two of you are gifted in different ways, and they don’t feel like they would be good at the things they see you do well, they may not think they’re well suited for group leadership. This gives you a great opportunity to discuss what a group leader is and is not. Once they understand the role, they may still be a little bit overwhelmed, but at least they will know what is expected of them.

If they have accepted your invitation to leadership, they will be ready to embrace the rest of the development process.

Phase 2: Preparation

Most of the development your apprentice will receive during the group life cycle will happen during the preparation phase. While you should be modeling group leadership and involving others in the group throughout the group's life, during the preparation phase you will shift your focus to specifically involving your apprentice and intentionally modeling specific attitudes and skills. This shift in focus begins with recruiting your apprentice. The two key steps in this phase are **Involve** and **Connect**.

Step THREE: Involve

Involvement is the third step and is also the most intensive. The apprentice's understanding of what group leadership is all about is based largely on what the apprentice sees the leader doing and the opportunities that the apprentice is given to stretch their leadership muscles. This dynamic can be leveraged to build your apprentice's group leadership skills if you are strategic and intentional about the way you lead.

There are four stages to meaningful involvement (adapted from Hero Maker, Daven Ferguson):

1. I do. You watch. We talk.

This stage begins with the apprentice observing what you do as a group leader - the way you lead discussions, how you demonstrate authenticity, how often you interact with group members outside the group meeting. The key to effectively modeling these behaviors is to think through what lesson you want to communicate and act accordingly. For example, it may be your natural tendency to allow the discussion time to run long; but since you want to demonstrate the value of adhering to the guidelines in the Covenant, you make a conscious effort to wrap up the discussion at 8:45, even though there are four discussion questions you didn't get to ask.

This step wraps up with a debriefing. For example, if you want to model a sensitive response to tough questions, you may want to say to your apprentice, "Tomorrow night's discussion is probably going to provoke some emotional response from Kelly, since she recently lost her stepmom who wasn't a Christian. I'd like you to listen to how I respond to her comments and questions, and you and I can talk later about why I responded like I did." This helps the apprentice pay particular attention not only to what you do, but also to your method or approach, and it allows you to focus attention on the specific skill or principle that you are modeling. And by making it a priority to talk about what was or will be modeled, you create opportunities for the apprentice to ask questions or provide feedback. This time of debriefing needs to continue through the next five phases.

In order to put the demonstration/explanation strategy into practice, you'll need to know what it is you want to model. We encourage you to model the habits of a healthy group, which include:

- **Stay Rooted:** A group's primary purpose is to help people grow to be more like Jesus Christ. All other purposes and habits are secondary. As a result, groups will find ways to grow towards Jesus together: studying the Bible, prayer, communion, and worship.

- **Grow Real Relationships:** Real relationships are transparent, authentic, and motivated by love. They are the soil that allows growth to occur; the intersection at which truth and love meet. A healthy group makes it a priority to grow real relationships.
- **Serve Together:** God designed His people to be His hands and feet in this world. In a healthy group, people find opportunities to serve, both those who are a part of the group and those who are outside of the group. Needs are met and, as a result, grace is encountered.
- **Promote Participation:** A group is not a study. In a healthy group, every person has something to offer. As a result, groups value participation and make sure that everyone is a part of what is going on.
- **Engage Life Together:** There are many hours outside of the few hours a group meets every week. A healthy group takes advantage of this fact by doing life together. The people in the group are a part of each others victories and defeats, find times to eat together, and recreationally spend time with one another.
- **Replace Yourself:** A healthy group leader is equipping an Apprentice to lead the group in their stead. The group leader recognizes that the group's win is tied to the fact that it is growing leaders for Jesus' Kingdom.
- **End Well:** A healthy group builds natural times to rest and to multiply into it's calendar. A healthy group will quickly grow beyond the size where participation and real relationships are still viable and will know that their choices are multiplication or stagnation. We recommend that you aim to multiply on a yearly basis.
- **Stay Connected:** A healthy group recognizes that it's a part of the Church community and will stay connected by aligning it's purpose and values with CCW. Group leaders will stay connected by being a part of ongoing training and coaching experiences.

2. I do. You help. We talk.

Simply observing is not enough to prepare your apprentices for group leadership. In order to build both their competence and their confidence, they will need to practice leading a group. They will need opportunities to put into practice what they have learned through observation. And the best way to prepare them is to actively involve them in the leadership of your group. Begin by starting small. You can start by asking them to take the lead of a specific area or project, such as: planning a social, leading a discussion, or leading the prayer time. As they show they're ready, invite them to play an increased role in leading the group. You might give them the chance to run the entire group meeting instead of just one part. Present them with the opportunity to direct the group through a key discussion or transition, such as reviewing the group guidelines, selecting the next curriculum, or discussing next steps toward group multiplication. Involve them in major decisions or conflict resolution, as appropriate.

Again, the small group meeting should be followed up with a one-on-one debrief between leader and apprentice. As they take on responsibility, give them feedback on how they're doing (make sure that you give them more affirmation than criticism). Just as important, invite them to give you feedback. Ask them how you did; what went well, and how you could have done it better.

3. You do. I help. We talk.

At some point, it will be time to shift the majority of the group's leadership responsibilities to the apprentice. Start with a single session in which you, as the group leader, offer to lead smaller aspects of the meeting (perhaps the icebreaker or prayer time) while the apprentice leads the core of the session. Expand from there, allowing the apprentice to lead more and more often while you take the back seat.

As always, spend time debriefing afterwards.

4. You do. I watch. We talk.

Eventually you should have the apprentice lead the entire session while you take the backseat. After they've grown in leadership confidence, you're ready to have a Release conversation (see step five).

For many group leaders, involving their apprentices is the most challenging part of the apprenticing process, because they feel a tremendous sense of ownership of and responsibility for their groups, and they are hesitant to entrust that responsibility to someone else. The key is to remember that success is not just a job well done or more people under your care; success is another competent leader who is ready to take your place.

Step FOUR: Connect

Because the group leader is a key position, connecting the apprentice with church staff is crucial to the apprentice's preparation for group leadership. Two key aspects of this step are ongoing training and applying:

Ongoing Training: As soon as you have recruited your apprentice (which would ideally happen by the end of the first third of your group's life cycle), notify your Discipleship Minister so the apprentice can be invited to Foundations 3 and other training events. Make sure your apprentices are invited to training events and encourage them to attend with you. Encourage them to attend Foundations 3. Not only will this provide them with practical training and a vision for group leadership, but it will also reassure them that the church is committed to supporting them with training and development.

Applying: The Discipleship Minister is responsible for guiding your apprentices through the application process, and you can help ensure a smooth transition by introducing them to each other. There are several hurdles to cross in approving a group leader, including:

- Confirming that the apprentice is a member of the church;
- Completing a group leader application;
- Interviewing the prospective group leader; and
- Approving the applicant.

Since some of these steps can take extensive time, the earlier you can connect the apprentice with the Discipleship Minister, the better. Toward the end of the second third of your group's life cycle, invite your apprentice to a one-on-one appointment with your Discipleship Minister, or make the introduction at a training event.

Finally, as your group moves into the final third of its life and your multiplication date approaches, follow up with both the Discipleship Minister and your apprentice. Confirm that he is taking the necessary steps to move the apprentice toward group leadership, and ask if there's any way you can help.

Phase 3: Multiplication

The final phase of the apprenticeship process is the multiplication phase. The last third of the group life cycle is a significant time in the life of your group because successful multiplication requires some advanced planning and intentionality. It's particularly significant for your apprentices because that's the time when the idea of leading their next group begins to solidify in their minds. Since planning for multiplication means planning for two or more future groups, your apprentices will need to be on board and intimately involved with that planning. But before we get too far down that road, there is one more critical step that needs to happen in the apprenticeship process: Release.

Step FIVE: Release

Once the apprentice has completed both step three (Involve) and step four (Connect), it's time to prepare to release them. The release is where the process of multiplication comes full circle as the apprentice takes on their own group and you both begin the apprenticeship of other people. This step is not as simple as it sounds and requires some intentional planning. To ensure a healthy release:

- **Do a confidence check.** It's easy to jump to the conclusion that your apprentice is ready to multiply before they decide they are! Start with a release conversation where you recast the vision you set during the ICNU conversation and then say, 'I think you are ready for leadership; do you think you are ready?' Be patient. They may not feel that they're ready just yet. If they're not, revisit this conversation on a monthly basis until they're ready to move forward.
- **Decide on the path forward.** Together, you will have to decide how your group will multiply. Three common options:
 - The apprentice takes over the current group while you go on to start a new group.
 - The group multiplies into two (or more) new groups with both you and the apprentice leading one for the newly formed groups.
 - The apprentice starts a completely new group.

In all scenarios, both the apprentice and yourself should immediately begin this process again with a new apprentice.

- **Inform the discipleship team.** Let both your discipleship coach and the discipleship minister know about the upcoming multiplication.
- **Keep meeting.** A release is not an end to a relationship. If anything, multiplication can strengthen the relationship as you both move forward in building God's Kingdom as peers. Continue to meet together. It might not be every week, but certainly on a monthly or quarterly basis. Use this time to encourage one another and to hold one another accountable to the standard that God has set for your life and ministry.

By making a commitment to identifying and developing an apprentice—in effect, replacing yourself—you are playing a significant part in raising up the next generation of leaders and ensuring that there will always be a place for those who want to connect in a community.

Developing an Apprenticeship Overview

Phase	Steps
Observation	<p>Identify: Identify a possible apprentice through the five c's: character, competence, culture, chemistry, and catalyst.</p> <p>Recruit: Recruit the apprentice that you've identified with an ICNU conversation.</p>
Preparation	<p>Involve: Equip your apprentice for leading through the four stages of involvement. Train them in the habits of a healthy group.</p> <p>Connect: Connect the apprentice to the church staff for ongoing training.</p>
Multiplication	<p>Release: Work with your apprentice to decide on a release strategy as you both go on to multiply new disciples.</p>