



+Essentials

of spiritual growth and multiplication

staff strategy and training guide

excerpts

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With the expansion of the Essentials resource, we have entered into a partnership with BlueFish TV. Our partnership **allows Essentials of Spiritual Growth and Multiplication small group leaders the opportunity to download any 25 of their videos from their library of over 800 at no cost to you.**

The Essentials website: <http://essentials.ccci.org> has a feature where you can suggest videos you discover from the BlueFish TV library (or from anywhere else) to go with specific lessons.

As for directions to download videos from BlueFishTV, its pretty simple. Here's 3 Easy steps:

1. **Find your Video** - Visit www.bluefishtv.com and click on the tab "Video Illustrations – Downloadable" and search over 800 different video illustrations from 80 different topics.
2. **Start Your Account** - Add your favorite videos to your cart and when your finished head to the checkout and start your account
3. **Apply the Code** - On the last page it will ask you if you have a promotional code, fishing license or subscription. Enter CCC and then click apply code. Your account will then be credited with 25 free downloads and you can finish the order. This promotional code will expire July 14, 2010

HOW CAN YOU DECIDE WHETHER TO USE "ESSENTIALS" ON YOUR CAMPUS(ES)?

The following series of questions should help you and your team decide whether "Essentials" is right for you at this time:

1. How well is multiplication going? Are students owning ministry and passing that ownership on to other students? [If "not very well", then "Essentials" might prove especially helpful to you.]
2. How much are each of the following present in your existing ministry:
 - A prayer emphasis?
 - Some strong student leaders?
 - Staff capable of providing training and support for a small-group strategy?
 - Flexibility (openness) among your staff team and student leaders to try something that might be quite different?
 - [If these are present with at least some strength, then you can likely introduce the "Essentials" strategy and materials successfully.]
3. How strong is your desire to penetrate to every part of your campus(es) and reach every student? [If your desire is very strong, you will be able to overcome the inevitable barriers to implementing anything new. "Essentials" is designed to promote the flow of evangelism and discipleship through the natural relational network that already exists on your campus(es). That viral spread can eventually touch every student.]
4. Have you and your staff team prayed and sensed a leading from God to proceed with "Essentials"? [Hopefully God will confirm in your hearts any major emphasis on your campus.]



Looking at it from a little different angle, know that “Essentials” works best when it fits into an overall strategy which includes other ministry/movement elements such as:

1. Specific additional training in ministry skills. “Essentials” is not a substitute, for example, for training on how to prepare a personal testimony, how to use the “Would You Like to Know God Personally?” booklet or how to counsel young Christians in areas of persistent sin. This training function can also be enlarged to train new “Essentials” small group leaders.
2. Momentum events or other activities, such as movement-wide weekly meetings and special outreach emphases (e.g. Freshmen Survival Kits or Surveys).
3. Fall retreats, Christmas conferences, spring-break and summer projects.

In other words, the “Essentials” series does quickly imprint the DNA of Christian life and ministry onto minds and hearts. It does promote transfer of ownership of ministry from one student to another. But it does not substitute for other important elements of movement building.

HOW SHOULD YOU LAUNCH “ESSENTIALS” AS A NEW EMPHASIS?

Sometimes introducing the “Essentials” series has caused some kickback from upperclassmen who have been involved with CCC for a while. Its approach is quite different from the lecture method of leading Bible studies.

Some initial resistance to change isn’t surprising. It is a normal human reaction. But undue resistance can be avoided by “ramping up” to a full engagement with “Essentials”. At UCF we started with just two of the many Bible studies that were meeting at the time. The “Essentials” leaders, though, were well-respected and influential in CCC on campus.

Over a period of two semesters God blessed with significant success. The numbers of students and the numbers of groups grew rapidly. Word spread among the other group leaders. All the while we were improving the series to be more effective.

When the time came to “roll out” the strategy the next fall, the campus director had a special training time for the new group leaders. They were shown exactly how to do this rather different style of group from what they were used to. (Otherwise they may have continued with the existing more lecture-oriented approach.) Also time was given to answer their questions and concerns.

I would recommend using a similar approach in existing campus works:

- a. Introduce it to a few influential group leaders for a semester or more.
- b. Work out the details and differences in how exactly to implement this at your campus during that time.
- c. Let the word spread naturally as the series works in your context.
- d. Launch the comprehensive use of the strategy with good training and opportunity to have questions answered.
- e. Pray throughout that God will supernaturally accomplish His purpose in all of this.



WHAT IF YOUR STUDENTS THINK THIS IS TOO SIMPLE?

As you seek to motivate and align your existing student leaders, recognize that they have probably been exposed to some “advanced concepts” concerning the faith. Also, many entering freshmen who fill out a freshman survey may already be exposed to Christianity through a good church youth group or parachurch high school ministry. So, to the above type people “Essentials” may seem a bit simple—even “beneath” them. In light of that you might find the following helpful in explaining the purpose and value of “Essentials”:

1. Recognize that the “Essentials” series emphasizes application to life versus presentation of intriguing and complex new truths.

No doubt assurance, forgiveness, filling, etc. are simple concepts. But, they are absolutely essential truths for living the Christian life. The reason Bill Bright determined they were crucial to emphasize was that Christians, for the most part, did not really understand them, nor did they apply them. For example, he found that many Christians weren’t really sure they would go to heaven if they died. They didn’t feel forgiven by God. They did not know how to appropriate the power of the Holy Spirit to their lives.

In other words, the appearance of being “overly simple” is not new. And, from my observation, the need to apply is still there as well. Christians’ misconceptions seem to surround the concept of “deep”. Seasoned Christians want to go deeper—and that is good. However, the real need for depth is not mainly in terms of higher complexity of truth. The real need for most people is greater depth of penetration of the simple truths into hearts and lives.

2. Therefore, encourage group members from the beginning to look forward to “life change” as a priority over “advanced truths”.

I once heard it said, “It’s not what I don’t know in the Bible that concerns me most. It’s what I do know that I am not applying that concerns me.” So it should become with your group members.

Consider what the Bible says about itself concerning its purpose: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” (2 Timothy 3:16 NIV) Notice that three out of the four elements of its purpose relate to bringing our lives into conformity with Biblical truth. Without apology, call your group members to seek to please God by what they do in response to His Word. “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” (James 1:22 NIV)

3. When discussion on a particular passage of Scripture lags because people think the truths are overly simple, skip to the first question under APPLY.

The idea here is to get the discussion off of the theoretical and down to the practical. So ask, “Why don’t we always apply this simple truth?” In other words, “What are the elements of our circumstances, priorities, etc. that keep us from obeying what God so clearly teaches us.” Those questions should lead your group to a lively, realistic discussion.



4. Consider changing how you describe the “Essentials” series.

As mentioned earlier, having an inaccurate expectation about “Essentials” can cause disappointment. If we use the word “study” that may give the image of “advanced” or “complex”. It might be better to invite people to a “Bible discussion” or “discussion about spiritual things”. Then when they become seriously engaged in discussions about spiritual truth, they should perceive they got exactly what they came for.

5. In addition emphasize that this series will equip them to minister to others—and even multiply spiritually.

Note that in Ephesians 4:11-12 the purpose of ministering Christians (e.g. evangelists and teachers) is to “equip the saints for the work of ministry.” (ESV) The “Essentials” series is designed to help a ministering Christian do just that. Right away all your members are asked to tell others what they are learning. That is the beginning of equipping them for the work of ministry.

HOW CAN YOU HELP START SECOND-GENERATION GROUPS?

By the end of several weeks group leaders are encouraged to challenge group members to lead their own groups. When some say yes, group leaders will have the opportunity to equip them to do that. Group members who really want to be useful to God should find it very exciting to imagine that God can use them to minister to others.

From the experience of several campuses experimenting with “Essentials”, some valuable lessons came to light to increase the success of second-generation groups:

1. Selection and initial support

While we want to encourage group members to multiply, we also want to be alert to their ability to do so. From our experience at UCF, we saw that the major cause of groups not succeeding at first was the leader’s inability to “gather people”. Not everyone finds it easy to invite friends and acquaintances to a spiritual discussion. Possible solutions to that problem are:

- a. Be more selective and pick natural “gatherers”.
- b. Have staff and experienced student leaders help organize groups.
- c. Have group leaders use mini-attraction events to kick off their groups (e.g. involving food and an interesting video segment).

2. Up-front training

A very clear correlation to success in the use of “Essentials” was the presence of up-front training—especially including modeling of the first lesson. Basically, where new group leaders received quality training (including modeling), they had good experiences. Their groups retained students much better and had much more positive feedback on the sessions. Situations where there was not much up-front training tended to fail.



3. Ongoing follow-up and encouragement

Two important activities often didn't happen without ongoing follow-up and encouragement:

- a. Group leaders didn't always encourage their group members to consider taking their own groups.
- b. Group leaders didn't tend to get to the APPLY and TELL sections of the session outline.

In both cases it became important for staff to remind the leaders why we are using the "Essentials" series: to encourage spiritual multiplication. If they don't ask their members to consider forming new groups, multiplication is less likely to occur. If they don't drive their group discussion toward life change and sharing, multiplication is also less likely to occur.

In other words, the "Essentials" series is much more than an alternative set of Bible-study materials. It has built into it the DNA of spiritual multiplication. Especially for first-time leaders, it will probably take repeated explanation and motivation to help them understand that concept.

4. Help in challenging new leaders

At UCF we discovered that it was very helpful for potential new leaders to receive a high-quality vision for what they are about to do. David Pezzoli (the campus director at UCF) hosted a meeting at his house for first-generation group members considering leading a second-generation group.

These thoughts should help you as you start second-generation groups. Of course, only God can cause spiritual movements. So as one final very important thought, let me encourage staff and students alike to unite in prayer that God's Spirit will work in powerful ways in students' hearts and minds. What we all want to see is for Him to take our efforts and multiply them supernaturally. (See page 17 for prayer suggestions.)

