

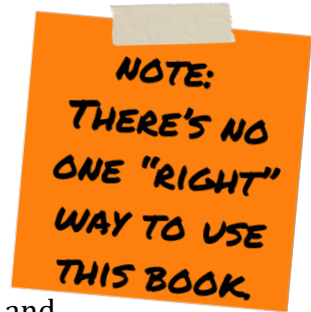


THE TOLSON GROUP

HOW TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE USING THE FOUR PRIORITIES



Clearly, we must *become* disciples and Jesus has commanded us to *make* disciples. The question is “How?” By using *The Four Priorities*, you will help others discover how to make a difference for Christ in the world.



There’s no one “right” way to use this book. There are churches using this book as curriculum in small discipleship groups, in Sunday School, and in life or home groups. Outside the church, men are discipling men, women with women, couples with couples – the possibilities are endless. Fathers are discipling sons home from school during summer months, hometown missionaries are reaching international students, and so on.

What Qualifications Does a Disciple-Maker Need?

Whatever your situation, disciple-makers should be men and women who:

- commit themselves to following Christ by living as He wants in every area of life.
- implement the principles described in *The Four Priorities*
- desire to help others understand and apply *The Four Priorities*
- want to reproduce reproduces by developing other disciple- makers.

Disciple-makers don’t have to be “super Christians” or first become dynamic or charismatic communicators. They just need to be men and women who live for Jesus and want to help others do the same—*someone like you*.

This book and the study works well in small group settings as well as one- on- one or one-on-two personal discipleship relationships.

Do you have a recommended agenda for each weekly meeting?

We recommend that the group members plan on meeting for about an hour or more each week. There are two sample agendas to share with you, but we greatly encourage you to customize your agenda that works for the time, ages, and location for your meetings:

Example #1:

1. Share a brief prayer to open the meeting.
2. Encourage everyone to share observations and comments from *The Four Priorities* chapter studied.
3. Challenge your group members to find at least one application they will live out from each study. Share briefly your schedules (key events) for the week. Briefly share the status of your relationships. Share briefly where you are now (stress points, good points, etc.).
4. Close in prayer. Have one person pray or open it for all to pray (if people are ready). Pray about those matters that people shared in the time you have been together.

Example #2:

1. Warm up with small talk about sports/news/personal matters over a cup of coffee
2. Open in prayer and review the chapter theme for the day.
3. Go over statements in the chapter that created personal interest. Let the group chase a few rabbits (tangible subjects) but rein in the discussion fairly quickly each time. Read appropriate passages from Scripture and discuss how they apply.
4. Review the "Take Action" questions for everyone to process and share their thoughts. If it is obvious participants have not been consistently answering the questions at the end of the chapters, they need to be challenged to get in the game to make the experience worthwhile.
5. Ask for prayer requests. Then pray and wrap up.

Here are some lessons gleaned from the experience of many groups and group leaders:

1. If the men or women know up front that they are expected to start their own groups at some point, they will be far more attentive, take copious notes, and engage more enthusiastically in the discussion. If you have flexibility with the location, look for a room that is easily accessible, has a feeling of warmth, and is comfortable to sit, talk, and pray.
2. If you get questions you can't answer, say that you'll have a response at your next meeting.

3. As the Boy Scouts say, “Be prepared!” Be sure to study the chapter well in advance of your next meeting, reviewing all the Scripture mentioned and preparing a few key points that personally resonated with you during your study.
4. You are developing friendships – so be a friend!
5. Almost all the participants feel inadequate to lead a group. This is one more reason for having a co-leader to help boost the discussion. Give your leaders resources to help them lead and answer questions. For example, the *Holman Personal Evangelism New Testament* or *Share Jesus Without Fear* includes thirty-six answers for the most common objections to receiving Christ and can help build confidence that the facilitators can anticipate in advance the answers to tough questions.
6. Add personal stories to the discussion or other sources of information regarding the subject matter. Also write in the margins of your book the comments that will be worth remembering and sharing in future group studies.
7. Plan social events where the group can get together outside of the study. You could go out to dinner, go to a ball game, play golf, or something similar. The purpose of *The Four Priorities* group is not just to process information but to become a living, vital experience of what is being taught in the material. As you get into Priority Four, the group should be discussing how each individual is going to live out that priority. How will they be involved in evangelism, caring for those who hurt, and living out their calling?
8. Some of the chapters will hit close to home and may make certain individuals feel uncomfortable. The topic might be bitterness, depression, marriage, parenting, stewardship, or something else. The facilitator should explain that no one escapes the feeling of being in the bull’s-eye and to listen to the conversation without feeling everyone is looking at him or her. At this point, remind the group that everyone has “enemy held territory” that is a part of their territory.
9. This study will uncover a wide divergence in theological opinions. Encourage expressions without being judgmental. Maturity will come in time if everyone is kind to one another and no one is put down for holding a contrary view.