Writing Healing and Recovery Group Curriculum

Basic Principles

Introduction

As the number of recovery ministries continues to grow within the church community, a proportionate number of local church pastors and recovery group leaders search for quality curriculum with which they can offer biblically sound, Christ-centered ministry to the broken and hurting.

Stepping up to the challenge of offering quality recovery curriculum has been a wide array of publishers, each presenting material reflective of their own theology and philosophy of recovery ministry.

(See Sample Curricula)

The quality and value of any curricula cannot be measured solely through the filters of "ease of use" (the prayer, thinking and formatting has been done for us); or, its "accessibility" (all we have to do is order enough copies for everyone, and we're there).

The value of a curriculum for a group of broken and hurting must be measured through the filters of its "freshness" (did you get it from God?); its context (does it apply to these people in this setting?); and its "Christ-centeredness" (does it turn us to Jesus or human effort?).

Principles for Writing Curriculum

- ***Principle #1: Know God***

  Because many of the broken and hurting will come in the door to your Healing and Recovery Ministry with keen "survival skills," they will be able to readily identify a "phoney:" someone who knows some "stuff about God," but doesn't know God experientially.

  Priority One in the development of a Healing and Recovery Ministry must be to spend personal and leadership team time in worship, waiting on God, listening to His voice and passionately pursuing intimacy with Him. Anything less and the team becomes candidates for enemy discouragement and distraction.

- ***Principle #2: Know Your People***

  Did you know that the "It's O.K" gesture common to our American culture is considered egregious in the Brazilian culture? How about facial hair? Did you know that in Brazilian church culture, those wearing facial hair (beards, mustaches) are considered gigolos?

  As critical as it would be for us to study the norms and mores of the Brazilian culture before we attempted to serve that people as a Christian missionary, it is equally critical we understand the norms and more of the subculture of the broken and hurting before we initiate ministry to them.

They following is a brief overview of some of the characteristics that distinguish the subculture of the broken and hurting from other groups in our American society.

- Chaotic lifestyle
- Difficulty in finishing tasks
- Short attention span
- Shame-driven
- Disoriented
- Fearful
- Guarded
- Insecure
- Anxious
- Angry
- Relationally isolated
- Trail of broken relationships
- Blame-driven
- Believe distorted truth
- Jaded

  - Know your people personally, Spend time visiting. Make eye contact.
  - Ask the Father to give you His heart for the broken and hurting one at a time.
  - Step away from the "numbers game." It's about one prodigal at a time coming home.

- ***Principle #3: Pray. Ask the Father to Show You His Heart***

  Each time you gather with your group, the Father will have something He wants to say through you.
  - Pray.
  - Ask Him to show you what His heart is for that evening. Wait. Listen.
  - Write out everything you sense Him saying to you about the group.
  - Study the Word for insight into the topic that the Father will lead you to emphasize.

- ***Principle #4: Begin with the Truth and Add the Issue.***

  Never Begin with the Issue and Attempt to Add the Truth.

  Remember, it is "The Truth," not "a truth" that will bring freedom (John 8:32). The scripture offers a wealth of teaching around healing and recovery themes. The following is partial list of scripture and the issue that scriptural truth addresses:

- John 5: The Man at the Pool
  - Do you really want to be healed? It will change everything!
- Judges 6: Gideon
  - Gideon's belief system and subsequent self-talk almost cost him his opportunity to man God could use for His honor.
- 2 Samuel 11: David and Bathsheba
  - Entitlement / Relapse
    The enemy strategy is to make sin "logical and necessary"

- ***Principle #5: Determine Your "Target." Write to Him / Her***

  Is it John? Or Heather? Or, Tiffany?
  Your group may be "all over the map" in terms of their awareness of their need. Some may still feel that they "can do it, if they just had a little help." Some have a "couple more options in their back pocket" they're planning to use. But, they do want to hear what you've got to say.

  Others who will sit around the table with you are done. They've "burned all their bridges." They used up every family member, every friend. They're alone, frightened, and hopeless.

  Allow the Holy Spirit to show you who you are to write the curriculum to for a specific group. As you prayerfully write to address the needs of that person, everyone else will receive ministry in the process.

  Do try to address all the issues in one teaching.

Sample Group Format

- ***Settle-In***
- ***Prayer***
- ***Sharing***
- ***Large Group Interactive Teaching***
  - Approach Question:
    "Do you think it's true that some people don't want to get well?
    Why?
  - Read John 5:1-15
    Background to the Text
  - Issue-Specific Questions:
    - *Do you think the lame man at the pool as any similarity to those in recovery?*
      In what way(s)?
    - *Why would someone want to stay in recovery forever?*
  - Teaching:
    Everything the lame man knew about life had been defined by the "pool culture." His friends were there (they were in recovery too). His world was safe. Yes, he was lame, but at least he knew what to expect. Life was predictable; controllable. Etc.
  - Jesus – the Way, the Truth, the Life – Questions:
    - Why did Jesus ask if he wanted to be healed? Seems like a foolish question, since the whole culture of the pool was about healing.
    - The man's answer to Jesus question was: "I have no man."
      What's the point here?
      What needed to change in the man's belief system before he could be healed?
  - Personal Questions:
    - *Do you want to be healed?*
    - *The man's healing cost him. He left his friends, his environment, his way of life, that which he could predict and control and started a new life.*
    - *What would your life look like if you asked Jesus to heal you?*
- ***Small Group***
  Prayer for one another
  Prayer for specific needs
- ***Close***
  "Next steps" for this week?

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