

Core Study #1

Introduction to Core

Passage: John 20:28-31

Background Summary:

Chapter 1 is an introduction to who Jesus is and why he became human. The apostle John introduces Jesus as the word (For the 1st century Greeks the word or logos was the impersonal force that governs the world. To the Jews of the 1st century the logos was the knowable personal Creator - God). John introduces Jesus to all readers of this gospel as the knowable force behind the world, as the Creator of the world who has existed from the beginning. God has now become flesh and blood. Near the end of this gospel John explains in chapter 20 why he wrote what he has written.

Leaders' Preparation:

This is your first Core gathering of the school year. In many ways it is the most important because you have the opportunity to set the tone for your Core for the rest of the Term. Remember that you will be spending much more time getting to know each other and less time studying Scripture in this Core meeting than you will in future Core gatherings. Appendix 5 from your Summit Guide is provided as a help for your first Core.

First Core Meeting

After personally contacting every person signed up for your Core and reminding each one at least twice about time and venue, keep in mind the following:

The Goals for the First Core

1. To set the tone for the year. (Patterns tend to be established early on)
2. To get people connecting and having fun together.
3. To introduce what we will be studying this Term and going through the short Study provided.
4. To draw out hopes and expectations of students in your Core.
5. To end on time, even if the students are so enthusiastic that they could stay all night!

Sample First Meeting (1 ½ - 2 hours)

✦ Snack food (15 minutes)

✦ Welcome everyone

Lay out the goals for the evening:

- to get to know one another
- briefly explain our vision for Core
- introduce what we will be studying this Term
- Talk about people's hopes & expectations for Core this year

✦ Ice Breaker (10-15 minutes)

- a. Lead a brief "getting to know you" game or use a question from the Ice Breakers (Appendix 7 Summit Guide)

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- Make sure everyone knows each others' names

✦ **Vision for Core (10 minutes)**

- Explain why we have Core in UCM
- Explain what we will be doing in Core this Term (fellowship, prayer for each other, Bible study, opportunity to help on the downtown Eastside, Core dates...)
- Group guidelines (eg. what is said in Core stays in Core; everyone is encouraged to participate and ask questions; to have fun as we grow in Christ together).
- Explain that we will be looking at the Gospel of John as it relates to our theme this year from Jn. 13:34-35. We are going to focus on studying Jesus to see how we are loved by God and in turn extend that love to one another and our campus.
- Ask what hopes each of the Core group members might have for this group? What might be their expectations?

✦ **Short Study (10-15 minutes):**

Introductory Question:

- What are your reasons for why it is you believe in something?

READ: JOHN 20:28-31

Discussion Questions (selection to choose from):

- In chapter 20 verses 28-31 John spells out why he wrote this gospel. Why did he write it?
- John writes that Jesus' miraculous signs inspire belief in who Jesus is. Do you think a miraculous sign would inspire you to believe? Why or why not?
- What are some of the key things or people that have helped to make your faith real?

Application Questions (choose one):

- How would you like your faith to become more real this year?
- In what ways do you hope Core will help your faith become more real this year?

✦ **Prayer (10 minutes)**

Focus the prayer time on the group as a whole; not so much on individual people's needs. There will be lots of time for individual prayer requests in future meetings.

✦ **Announcements**

Make any announcements UCM as a whole may have (Fall Retreat; Weekly TNTs in Buch A102)

✦ **Remainder of the Time**

Encourage people to visit and connect. If you have more room to fill, encourage

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people to invite along friends (and to let you know ahead of time if they have!)

A Checklist for Your First Group

Here is a checklist to help you remember what needs to be done *before* a first meeting. Of course, there is no way anyone could think of everything--there are some things you just can't plan for--but I hope this list helps.

- Pray.** Lift up the people you've invited, their friends, yourself and co-leader as you plan to lead.
- Don't worry needlessly.** Do your part in the planning and leading and leave the results to God. (*Read Matthew 6:25-34.*)
- Don't do it alone.** Work with your Core leader/co-leader. Later in the Term delegate snacks to others.
- Decide where you are meeting.** Find a comfortable place--big enough for the number of people invited, but not so big that the group loses its sense of closeness.
- Think about how people will get to Core.** Do you need to give them directions? A map?
- Check the lighting of the room.** Good lighting not only helps people see their study guides and each other, it can provide a sense of warmth.
- Make a circle.** Seating should be in a circle, whether around a table or not. Be sure everyone can see everyone else's face. If possible, don't use couches--the people on the ends have to talk across the person in the middle. Try to get everyone on the same eye level. Be sure seating is as comfortable as possible.
- Get rid of distractions.** Cell phones off.
- Send an email** to everyone you've invited about a week before your meeting and then again the night before Core. Remind them of the time and place of the meeting, anything you'd like them to bring, whatever you are providing, and anything else you think is important. Include directions if necessary. Be creative; get them excited about Core.
- Plan the content of the meeting.** If you are using a good Bible-study guide, it will include aids to help you plan everything you need to do and have. If not, think about the parts of a good meeting: an icebreaker, Bible study, application, caring time, prayer. You might also include worship in your Core.
- Plan the time.** One of the biggest problems group leaders have is losing track of time or running out of time. While your objective is not to "get everything in," you still need to know about how much time you want to spend on each activity. You can be flexible, but keep

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things moving. If you don't manage the time, you could end up spending an hour on one good activity and miss out completely on a great one!

- **Don't forget the food.** It can be the most important part of the meeting for a group. It's really not the food itself, of course--or maybe it is!--it is what happens as people relax and talk as they are eating. Try to be like the early disciples, who "ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all of the people" (Acts 2:46, 47).
- **Plan to plan.** There are many other things you'll learn to plan for as you lead the group. Remember that the best planning includes prayer.

*Adapted from *The Lookout* magazine, August 27, 1995.

<http://smallgroups.com/about/who.html>

Simple Ice Breakers & Get-to-Know-You Questions

"Breaking the ice" is crucial for making everyone feel at home in a group. It gives everyone a chance to participate- and those who are on the shy side feel much more able to speak up. Every time you "break the ice" you create opportunities for deeper understanding.

While many people assume that ice-breakers are only done for the very start of a group's formation, I want to suggest that they should be done often and with enthusiasm. Think about questions that stimulate conversation and laughter.

Sample Questions:

Entry-level

- ⊕ What was the best vacation you've ever taken? Why?
- ⊕ If you had only one day to visit Vancouver, what is one thing you'd like to do?
- ⊕ What is the best book you've ever read? Why?
- ⊕ What is your all-time favorite movie? Why?
- ⊕ When you have free time what do you like to do?
- ⊕ What is the best birthday present you've ever received?
- ⊕ What is the best advice you've ever received?
- ⊕ If you had to move and could only take 3 things with you, what would you take?
- ⊕ As you have traveled, what hilarious things have happened to you?
- ⊕ Where would you go to for a vacation if you could go anywhere for free?
- ⊕ What's your favorite ice cream, colour, song?

(refer to Appendix 7 in the Summit Guide for more questions)