

# LT2 Module 6 - Caring for Our Groups

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## ***Video Outline and Notes***

### **Introduction:**

What does it look like to do a good job of caring for the group you are leading? Paul warns us against thinking that any one of us, including us small group leaders, is meant to carry all the weight of responsibility for caring for those in our churches and groups. The single most important thing you can do to help care for your group is to take care of your own relationship and walk with Jesus. Only when you yourself are full of the life of Christ will you be able to care well for others and to nurture spiritual life in them. A proper understanding of ourselves and of the church requires us to recognize our own limits, as well as the grace that God gives to every member of the body to support and care for every other member. It is not merely the responsibility of pastors and leaders to care for the body.

The members of your group will flourish if they themselves are connected to the True Vine, Jesus – if they themselves are learning to increasingly get what they need directly from him, and through receiving from one another the grace he has given each member of the body to share with every other member. To care for your group does not consist of you being some kind of superstar leader who meets every need, answers every question, wipes every tear, and is always available to everyone all the time.

Presuming you are doing a good job of taking care of yourself, here are the steps good leaders take in caring for their groups.

### **Outline -**

- I. Caring well for the members of your group.
  - a. Recognize your own limits.
  - b. Cultivate an **atmosphere** of care. (An environment where every member of your group is turning to and participating with Jesus to both experience and pass along his care and his love to others.)
    - 1) An atmosphere of care is **informal**.
    - 2) An atmosphere of care is **hospitable**.
    - 3) An atmosphere of care embraces vulnerability and **transparency**.
      - i. Make space in your meeting where people are encouraged but not obligated to share personally.

- ii. Coach your group in simply letting people share, without commenting, giving advice, or cracking jokes – simply listen to and receive as a gift the things you share with each other.
    - 4) An atmosphere of care establishes a culture of **attentiveness**.
    - 5) An atmosphere of care requires **prayer**.
  - c. Build a culture of **availability**.
    - 1) Encourage group members to get together with one another informally on their own, and to be proactive about inviting one another to share their lives in simple ways.
    - 2) Another helpful way to encourage your group members to support and care for each other is to encourage them to meet in single-sex groups of two or three for confession, sharing, communion, and prayer.
  - d. Caring well for your group will also **cost** you something and require you to sacrificially **love** the people in your group.
- II. Resources for helping you care for your group.
  - a. Your greatest source of wisdom and counsel for your group members is the **Bible**.
  - b. Some other Vineyard Columbus Resources:
    - 1) Support for Life
    - 2) Marriage and Family Life
    - 3) Vineyard Columbus Financial Ministry
    - 4) The Vineyard Columbus Counseling Center
    - 5) Vineyard Community Center
    - 6) Visitation Care Team

Continue on to Resource and Confession & Communion sheets.

## LT2 Module 6 - Group Care Resource Sheet

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Many or most of the needs you and your group members experience can be met informally in family, community, and small group contexts. But when you encounter needs beyond the resources of your group, here are a few key resource centers at Vineyard Columbus that may be able to help.

- **Support for Life:** Support for Life provides resources to help people in our congregation and community gain mental, emotional and spiritual health and healing. Trained volunteers lead groups and meet one on one with individuals in difficult seasons through Lay Counseling, Support Groups, Recovery Groups, and Classes/Events. For members of your group who are facing life crisis, are struggling with addictive and compulsive behaviors, or who need emotional or spiritual support beyond your group resources, Support for Life is a great place to look. For more information about Support for Life, check out Support for Life on the Vineyard Columbus web site, contact Debbie Johnson at 614.259.5289, or email [supportforlife@vineyardcolumbus.org](mailto:supportforlife@vineyardcolumbus.org).
- **Marriage & Family Life:** Marriage & Family Life offers classes on marriage and dating, courses and coaches for people preparing for marriage, classes and groups to support marriages in crisis, parenting training and support, and a range of other marriage and family related resources. You can always contact and refer people to Marriage and Family Life to provide marriage and family resource to your group members. For more information about our Marriage & Family Life ministry, check out Marriage & Family Life on the Vineyard Columbus web site, or contact Mindy Layman at 614.259.5365.
- **Vineyard Columbus Financial Ministry:** Our Financial Ministry provides financial education opportunities, one-on-one financial counseling, and other key resources regarding financial matters such as giving and estate planning. Also, our Financial Ministry oversees our deacons, who can consult with church members regarding acute financial need and in some cases can make church resources available for short-term help. For more information about the Financial Ministry, check out our Financial Ministry on the Vineyard Columbus web site, or contact Kent Irwin at 614.259.5505. Also, every holiday season, Vineyard Columbus offers Vineyard Christmas for Kids to help kids and families in our church who might not be able to purchase Christmas gifts for their family without assistance. For more information about Vineyard Christmas for Kids, contact Myra Gaiters at [myra.gaiters@vineyardcolumbus.org](mailto:myra.gaiters@vineyardcolumbus.org).

- The Vineyard Columbus Counseling Center: For people in your group struggling with issues including grief, addictions, depression, anxiety, marital issues, eating disorders, sexual abuse, family issues, behavioral problems, ADHD and more, the Vineyard Columbus has a team of professional counselors available to you and your group members. For more information about Vineyard Counseling Center, please contact Yolanda Zellars, 614.259.5409. We also offer free counseling by trained lay counseling to individuals looking for someone to listen and provide biblical input about life struggles. For more information regarding lay counseling, contact Debbie Johnson, 614.259.5289.
- For members of your group in need of medical and legal assistance, Vineyard Community Center offers free medical, dental, vision, legal, and immigration counseling services, as well as programs focused on the arts, education, exercise, the English language, citizenship, career help and more. For more information about Vineyard Community Center, please go on line to [vineyardcommunitycenter.org](http://vineyardcommunitycenter.org).

Continue on to next worksheet.

## LT2 Module 6 - Confession & Communion in Group

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In much of the Protestant tradition, and certainly in the Vineyard tradition, we have not been taught a simple model for making confession accessible and practical to people in the church. The text from James 5 below, however, links the healing of our bodies and the effectiveness of our prayers with the practice of confessing our sins to one another and praying for each other. While there is no guarantee that confession will always lead to healing and effective prayer, there is nonetheless a relationship between them. And confession is not meant to be offered only to pastors and leaders, but to *one another* – to our ordinary brothers and sisters in informal contexts. The guidelines here are designed to make biblical confession easier and more accessible to us and our groups.

We have found the practice of confession in “*triads*” – groups of three – to work really well, sometimes even better than confession in pairs or in larger groups. While there is no hard and fast rule here, there seems to be some real value in there being two witnesses to our confession, perhaps because of the power of two witnesses as opposed to one, or perhaps because it helps guard against unhealthy dynamics that may potentially arise when we only ever confess our sins privately and to one person, especially if that person is in a position of official spiritual authority over us. Whatever the reasons, the dynamics of confessing our sins in single-sex triads has been received enthusiastically among many who have practiced it, so we provide a simple model here to help you get started. This said, feel free to adapt this model to groups of two, or of four or more, as seems best.

To start, simply arrange a time for the three of you to meet. It often helps to have one person appointed as the triad facilitator to ensure that someone takes the lead in setting up the time and place for the triad to meet, and also to be sure that communion elements are on hand. You may choose to meet together as a triad for several months and then reform the groups to place different people with one another, or you may choose to keep your triads fixed for a longer period of time. Also, you may choose to meet as a subgroup during a regular small group meeting or as a separate, freestanding meeting at another time. Whatever you choose on these accounts, it is best to set a one-hour slot at a time convenient for everyone. Leaving it as no more than an hour and ending on time is ideal, as it helps people to commit to the time and be consistent. It’s often easiest if people live near one another, as well.

When you meet, here are the basic parts of your time together. This is meant as a flexible guideline, not a rigid script, so feel free to adapt it in ways that seem helpful.

1. Gather at your appointed place, informally connect for a few minutes, get a cup of coffee, etc., and move soon to sit down and begin your intentional time of confession and communion.

2. Have one of you read the scriptures below out loud to start your time.
  - 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. **James 5:16 (NIV)**
  - 8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us. **1 John 1:8-10 (NIV)**
  
3. As you prepare to confess your sins to one another, pray the following prayer of general confession out loud together (adapted from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer):
  - ***Almighty** and most merciful Father, I have sinned and wandered from your ways like a lost sheep. I have followed the plans and desires of my own heart. I have rejected your holy commandments and have lived disobediently in many ways. I have left undone many things you have asked me to do, I have done many things you have asked me not to do, and truly, Lord, I am in need of your forgiveness and healing, for there is no health in me. But You, O Lord, are merciful to me, and I come to you for mercy. Free me, O God, as I confess my sins before you and my brethren. Restore me according to the promises you have declared to all people in Jesus Christ my Lord. And fill me with your Holy Spirit, most merciful Father, that from now on I might walk forward in a life of obedience that pleases you and brings you glory. In your name I pray, amen.*
  
4. Take some time for silent reflection together. Begin by praying this text from Psalm 139.
  - Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. **(Psalm 139:23-24 (NIV))**

Then take a minute or two moment to pause quietly and reflect before God. Ask God, “Where have I rejected your instructions?” or “What have I left undone that I should have done?” or “Where in my life have I turned myself away from you?” Quietly attend to whatever he shows you.

5. Choose one of you to begin with their confession. When that person is ready, they can begin their confession by saying, “I confess to the Lord and to you...” and then follow by confessing the things God has brought to mind. When they

are finished confessing, they can indicate by simply saying, "This is my confession."

6. After each confession, have one of you pray a prayer affirming their forgiveness before God. Feel free to pray along these lines:

- *Lord you say in your word that "If we confess our sins, you are faithful and just and forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) We therefore declare and affirm your forgiveness over our dear brother/sister here with us today. Please, Lord, give this sister/brother the gift of true repentance, and fill him/her with Your Holy Spirit, so that she/he will find freedom from these sins, and true joy from you. Cleanse her/him from these sins, give her/him true peace and rest in your love, and make him/her able to serve you with his/her whole life going forward. We pray this in the name of your Son Jesus, whose precious blood cleanses us from all sin. Amen.*

7. Offer communion to the person who has just confessed. Many people find it to be a powerful experience to take communion immediately following confession, but this is in no way obligatory. If the person would like to take communion, offer it to them according to the following simple order of service from I Corinthians 11.

- The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." (offer the bread)
- In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." (offer the cup)

8. Pause briefly in silence after the person has taken communion, and then have one of you pray a brief prayer of blessing over the brother or sister, closing with a simple "amen."

9. Move on to the next person who needs to confess, and after all of you have confessed and taken communion (if you chose to do so), simply close your time with a brief prayer and be on your way.