**Sticking points**

Groups have a recognised growth cycle which has a number of stages. It is helpful to know what these stages are and how they work. This enables us to recognise how we can help to move a group to the next phase of its growth and development.

There is a PDF chart on this link which outlines these stages and gives some leadership initiatives which will help the group to continue to grow and develop successfully rather than get stuck.

There are 5 recognised stages:

The group ‘forms’ at a superficial level

This happens as the group first gets together and starts to build friendships. Often the initial enthusiasm of starting something new and getting to know different people gives a real buzz. This opening period, however, often just keeps relationships at a rather superficial level.

The group ‘storms’ by working through differences

For the group to move forward, relationships need to deepen and trust needs to be formed. This often only happens if the leader is prepared to be vulnerable themselves and ask more penetrating questions of both themselves and the group. This is the most common place that groups get stuck as the might make an initial foray into this stormy water and then head quickly back to the safety of the superficial relationships. The attached PDF gives some good practical things to do to help your group through this space.

The group ‘norms’ by accepting and loving one another

Having come through the storming stage, the group can have a tendency to ‘settle’. They enjoy each other’s company and they are relating together at a deeper level. This is all good in and of itself and the members of the group will feel supported and looked after. However, it is essential at this point that they revisit why they are together and focus on that.

The group ‘performs’ by working together as a team

This is where holistic small groups with a missional heartbeat are different from, say, Bible study groups or care groups. Their missional purpose and connection with people outside of the group enables them to work together as a team in reaching out to those around them.

The group ‘re-forms’ by following God into new group ministry

Often as a result of the previous stage, the group re-forms as new people join, or the group is reshaped to work more effectively in its missional endeavours.