



CreatingYourLifePlan.com/**Small-Group-Leaders-Dashboard**

# Welcome to *Creating Your Life Plan* for Small Groups!

Before you get started, send out an email to your small group members 1-2 weeks in advance. This will give them time to setup their username and password, download and print off the workbook, and have it in a 3-ring binder ready to go when you meet together for Week 1.

# WEEK ONE

## SET THE TABLE

Make food, drinks or whatever you need to create an inviting space to gather your small group. Have your computer hooked up to your television or a sizable monitor nearby.

- 1 Watch Module 1 Video.** Showing the Introduction video before you show the Module 1 video is optional, but it might be a good place to start if your group is unfamiliar with *Creating Your Life Plan*.
- 2 Discussion. (5 minutes)** Showing the Introduction video before you show the Module 1 video is optional, but it might be a good place to start if your group is unfamiliar with *Creating Your Life Plan*.
- 3 Break out. (30 minutes)** Ask everyone in the group to break out around your home and find a place to be alone. Have them take this time to write down a list of 8-10 positive and negative turns in their notebooks.
- 4 Round up. (5-10 minutes)** Once time is up, call everyone back together to discuss how the break out went for 5-10 minutes.

**Questions to ask:** *Did you find this process difficult or easy? Were you surprised by what came up in your memory?*

This is a great time to pray over the evening.

# HOMework

Assign the group to watch the Module 2 video individually at home and complete the Module 2 exercise before everyone shows up for next week's meeting. Everyone will be taking his or her new list of positive and negative turns and putting them on a visual timeline.

**You're done for the night.** But before everyone leaves, make sure to explain that next week will be really important, because they will begin processing the timelines of their positive and negative turns. We're just getting started!

# WEEK TWO

## SHARE YOUR STORY

Make sure everyone has filled out their visual timelines before you get started. If some haven't yet, ask them to complete it in the first 15 minutes as the group arrives and mingles with each other. They will need it!

- 1 Share your timeline. (5 minutes)** Bring the group together and briefly walk them through your visual timeline. Explain how it works, but don't share your whole story.
- 2 Break out. (30-45 minutes)** Break people up into groups of two and send them out into your house with their timelines to share their stories with one another. This is the main goal for tonight's meeting.
- 3 Round up. (5-10 minutes)** Bring everyone back together. The night will have already taken up a lot of time at this point, so only take about 5-10 minutes to check in and wrap things up.

**Questions to ask:** *How did it feel to tell your story? Did you learn anything about your own story in listening to your partner's story?*

- 4 Encourage connection. (1 minute)** Now you have a small group that is deeply connected and has had practice sharing their stories. Challenge them to take advantage of this next week to pursue any one else in the group whose story they might want to hear. Encourage them to grab coffee, invite each other over for dinner and create a space to share their stories with one another.

# HOMEWORK

Watch Module 3 video and do the exercise before arriving to Week 3.

Prepare your group for Week 3 by explaining that the assignment will be a little heavier, but it should also be really healing. Thank your group members for being brave enough to share their stories with each other, and take this time to pray over them before they head out.

# WEEK THREE

## REDEEM YOUR NEGATIVES

Before you dive into Module 3 with your group this week, it's important to make one thing clear:

The mistakes and things that happen to us in life are tragic, but they can also turn into something really good. They can be redemptive in a variety of ways. Although reflecting on our negative turns can feel heavy, it also has the power to make us lighter.

**1 Open Discussion. (60 minutes)** Gather the group and start the night off by making sure they understood the Module 3 homework assignment. Then open up these questions to the group and allow whoever is comfortable answering to share:

- *What did you come up with this week?*
- *What are some of the hard things that have happened to you?*
- *What have you found to be a blessing from this hard thing?*

This process is designed to put the spotlight on something hard then adjust it to put the spotlight on something positive. You're helping guide your group into becoming a little bit more optimistic and maybe a little less bitter about their pasts.

This is going to be an open-ended night. There doesn't need to be a lot of closure. There are also going to be people in your group who aren't going to be able to find a redemptive perspective, and you don't need to pressure them; let it come to them. We don't need to control the process and make

sure that all the loose ends are wrapped up — that's not how life works. We just want to be able to shine some light in some places where they haven't been able to do that. That's a practice that some people are going to be rusty at, let them be rusty.

This whole module may just be an introduction to being a little bit more of an optimistic person, and that's going to serve its purpose. This is going to be a week where you're going to want to be extra compassionate. If you feel frustrated with your group, just bite your tongue as much as you can because they are processing hard stuff, and you won't always know emotionally what they're going through. Give people a chance to talk. This may go an hour and a half — let it.

- 2** **Wrap up the night.** Pray for those in your group who seem to be having a hard time with this module. Let it go where it will. Remind the group that this is a super healing exercise, even though it might feel painful at first.

**No Homework:** No video to watch, no exercise to complete, just ample time to reflect on the rough stuff they just went through. Next week you will all watch Modules 4 and 5 together. Encourage the group by letting them know next week will be a little more fun. They'll be discussing the roles each of them plays and will begin to pick ambitions for those roles.



# WEEK FOUR

## OWN YOUR ROLES

This week we're going to turn the lights on for our group and start to move forward. We've been looking back at and redeeming the past, and this week we'll switch gears and begin working on a plan to live a better story. We're going to do that starting with Modules 4 and 5.

- 1 Watch the videos.** Watch the Module 4 and 5 videos back to back together with your group.
- 2 Discuss. (5 minutes)** Spend a few minutes explaining the exercises for Module 4 and 5 after you watch the videos. This would also be a great time to share your roles and ambitions as examples.
- 3 Break out. (30 minutes)** Send everyone off to find their own individual spaces in your home and have them:
  - Identify and write down 5 roles.
  - Identify and write down at least 2 ambitions for each role.
- 4 Wrap up.** Once it seems like everyone is finishing up, bring everyone back together to wrap up the evening.

Then tell them why this assignment was so important:

**Unless a character in a story knows who he is and where he is going, the story doesn't make any sense.**

Many people are living lives in which they don't quite know who they are and what they want, and they're not really heading anywhere. This isn't by design. We're not supposed to be bored and only thinking about ourselves too much, we're supposed to be heading somewhere and building something. Otherwise our minds become foggy. That's why tonight's exercise is crucial for helping you gain mental clarity and direction.

## HOMework

Watch Modules 6 and 7 videos at home and complete the paired exercises in your workbook before arriving to Week 5. These will be short exercises addressing relationships, in which we will discuss further when we meet together.

# WEEK FIVE

## IMPROVE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

Each of your group members should show up with the following exercises from Modules 6 and 7 already completed:

- Relational Atom
- Analyzation of Relationships

**1 Encourage the group. (5 minutes)** You're going to get a lot of questions this week. People are going to be wondering if they did it right. Here's why: there's really not a wrong way to do this.

When you sit down, put your name in the middle of a piece of paper, and begin mapping out your relationships. Your brain is unlocking all sorts of things that have been hidden from you about how your relationships are working. Encourage your small group by telling them there is no right or wrong way to complete this process.

**2 Break out. (15-20 minutes)** Divide everyone up into groups of three and send them off to find a place to talk with each other. Then have all the subgroups share with each other their answers to these two questions:

- *What does your relational atom look like?*
- *How do your relationships need to change?*

Tell each person to only take about five minutes. This exercise will enlighten several of your group members when it comes to how they are in relationships.

- 3** **Wrap Up. (5-10 minutes)** Bring everyone back together to close out the night. You're going to get a lot of questions about how to manage relationships. Here's my favorite thing to say: I don't know. You are not the one who can supply the answer to everyone's problems — you're not supposed to. You are simply guiding people through this material, which sometimes creates a lot of questions because relationships are complicated.

Regardless, your small group will have made a lot of social, emotional and spiritual profit off of this exercise tonight if each person just analyzes their relationships and makes some healthy changes. That's the whole agenda for Week 5, Modules 6 and 7.

## HOMework

Assign Module 8. Have them watch the video and complete the exercise before you meet for Week 6. As they go through Module 8 at home, they're going to be asked to reflect on what they want their life to look like at 75 years old. The reason we chose 75 is because this age marks the beginning of the last season for most people. We want each group member to fast forward to 75 years old, look back and write down what they hope to see. This is really important because it's going to set a compass for each person's life. We'll discuss this more as we open up Week 6!

# WEEK SIX

## CREATING A PLAN FOR YOUR FUTURE

Before arriving to Week 6, your group members should have already watched the Module 8 video and thought about what they want their lives to look like when they're 75 years old. In the *Creating Your Life Plan* workbook, they should have also completed an exercise of setting up disciplines for each of their different areas of life (relationships, health, career, etc). This was not talked about in the Module 8 video, so you may get some questions about this exercise.

1

**Clarify the Module 8 exercise. (5 minutes)** Here is what the process for the Module 8 exercise should have looked like:

- In each of the listed sections, you write down an ambition for what you see your life looking like at 75 years old. An ambition needs to be something you can be working toward every day of your life.
- Then pick your disciplines for that ambition: daily, weekly, quarterly and annual.

**Example 1:** *If writing a book every year for the next 10 years is an ambition for your career, you need to create disciplines like finishing a couple paragraphs daily, finishing a chapter weekly, meeting with an editor quarterly, and releasing a book annually.*

**Example 2:** *If having a happy and healthy marriage is an ambition for my*

*relationships, every day I'm going to connect with my wife, every week we're going to go on a date or some adventure to connect more deeply, every quarter we're going to go through a book or some resource together and every year we're going to plan a romantic vacation.*

Those are just two examples of daily, weekly, quarterly and annual disciplines your group can make to chase their individual ambitions. We need to identify disciplines in order to make sure we're taking practical steps toward the ambitions that we've set. Guide the group through this process. We want to make sure this process has been completed before we move on.

**2**

**Discuss. (20-25 minutes)** After everyone has finished the exercise, ask these questions:

- *What is it you want your life to look like at 75?*
- *What disciplines are going to help you get there?*

Allow everyone to kind of openly share their answers and naturally popcorn around the room. It's important that you encourage the group to share their disciplines because they can learn from each other's disciplines. So when someone shares his or her disciplines to become more healthy leading up to 75, someone else might be inspired to incorporate that same healthy discipline into his or her own life.

**3**

**Wrap up. (5 minutes)** Thank everyone for sharing his or her ambitions for the future.

Share the homework assignment below and then close the evening. Remember, you're getting close to the end of this process, and you are helping change lives. I know leading a small group can be stressful, but you're almost at the end! Finishing this process is really important because you're encouraging your small group to also finish.

## HOMework

Assign the Module 9 video and exercise to be watched and completed before they show up to Week 7. Module 9 will be about specific projects your group members may want to complete that are in line with their roles and ambitions. So if my role is a writer and my ambition is to write encouraging books for people, then my project is a book. If my role is a father and my ambition is to have an active, loving relationship with my children, my project may be to build a sand volleyball court in the backyard. We're going to get really specific on these projects. Show up to Week 7 prepared and ready to discuss!

# WEEK SEVEN

## PLANNING PROJECTS

For homework this past week, your group members should have watched the Module 9 video and completed the exercise. Today we'll be talking through the projects they dreamed up and wrote down in order to move their ambitions forward.

- 1 Discussion. (10-15 minutes)** Gather everyone together and begin the night by asking everyone to go around the circle and share about some of the specific projects they wrote down for Module 9.

This discussion time is important because it will inspire your group members to refine or rework their individual projects. Encourage them to scribble down ideas and steal each other's projects if it will help them better chase their ambitions.

- 2 Spur Action. (10-15 minutes)** Here's the next question you'll want to ask the group:

***How can you help each other accomplish each other's projects?***

For example, say someone in your group wants to build something. Do we have tools? Can we do a workday at your house? What do you need to do next? How can we help?

Let's actually take these plans and put them into action.



- 3 Looking Ahead. (5 minutes)** Everything's going great! You're all nearing the end of this process. Encourage your group for coming this far and then take a little time to dream together as you close the night:

*Six months from now, let's count how many ways we've physically changed the world because of what we talked about tonight. What projects have we completed? How is the world we live in different? How can we begin tonight to invest in each other and our projects?*

## HOMework

Next week you'll wrap up *Creating Your Life Plan* by discussing a 30-day planning system together. This system is what is going to really allow the concepts from this whole process to sink in. To prepare, have your group watch the final Module 10 video and then fill out the productivity schedule for any 2 days in the week leading up to the last meeting. Preface this assignment by letting them know they don't really need to do the 30 days in a row, they just need to do it 30 times over the next 3 months. They're most likely going to come into the last week with a bunch of questions, so we'll explain the process further from there.

# WEEK EIGHT

## PRODUCTIVITY SCHEDULE

Congratulations! You have made it to the end of the Creating Your Life Plan process, and you brought people with you. Make this an awesome night for your group — get food and drinks and make sure you have a great time. But before you get down to the celebrating, let's make sure to finish up the last bit of work together.

- 1 Watch The Module 10 Video.** You should have all watched the Module 10 video already and filled out the assignment, but your group members likely have some questions, and watching it again *together* will hopefully help trim those down.
- 2 Answer questions. (5 minutes)** After you've shown the video, make sure everybody understands how to use the SPS. Let people answer each other's questions to make the most of your time.

### **Here's what you need to know before you start answering questions:**

The Storyline Productivity Schedule (SPS) won't work for everybody. It ends up working best for people who have a lot of time that they have to self manage. So some people are going to opt out of the planner, and know that's fine. I have an unbelievably productive and effective staff, and I would say a good number of them don't use the SPS. I have found it works great for me and many other creatives, but again, it won't be for everyone. However, even if they only fill it out on weekends when they have a bunch of free time, it will likely still be helpful. The point is to lock in the concepts of the life plan, not just to be more productive. So if you only fill it out over the weekend, that's great, too. It's a fantastic tool.

**3 Watch The Conclusion Video.** After you've taken a few minutes to answer the questions, stop and watch the conclusion video of Shauna and me wrapping up *Creating Your Life Plan*. It's no more than a few minutes long.

**4 Create A Finish Line.** Now the question is: how do you end this thing? You've just led a group through an 8-week process and 10 modules, so their minds might be mush, but they now also have this amazing tool that's going to change the rest of their lives.

So now what you want to do is create a finish line for them. You want to create some sort of celebratory ending.

**Here's what I've done:** it might be a little strange, but take a little time to sign off on their life plans. I don't mean physically sign off — I mean to give them some verbal affirmation and encouragement. Just take a look at each one and congratulate them on what they've written down. Do that with each individual.

**5 End With A Splash.** Gather as a whole group, and take some time for prayer and thankfulness. Then maybe make a toast; lift your glasses to living better stories. That would be the light way to end things.

The *really* awesome way to end things would be, if it's cold, to go out and jump into a pond or do something memorable that just says "we did this together." Make it something they won't forget that will forever mark the ending of this process. Be super creative. And do me a favor, film it and then send me a link to the video on Twitter. We'd love it! And we may even feature the video on our blog to share your inspiring finale with the world.

6

**You Did It. You Really, Really Did It.** This was a marathon for you as the group leader. And look, you finished! You actually believed that the lives of the people you led through this process mattered. You believed that their lives were going to change, their families, their jobs. I just want to personally thank you. I've taken people through this process, too, and now we can both attest that it really works and changes lives. That realization has given me so much energy and reminded me that I have the power to help change people for the better. Hopefully you've just experienced that feeling and you'll keep changing people's lives and living a great story of your own. And don't forget! Send us a video of how your group wraps this thing up. We can't wait to watch it.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Don Miller". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.