

# NEXTSTEPPEERS' LARGE GROUP CURRICULUM

## Our Purpose

Some churches have a large group of people coming back from the mission's conference all on fire for the Lord and missions. They want to go. The pastor does not want to hold them back, but how does he help provide concern for those seeking to go into full-time or tent-making ministries?

We regularly face this situation at our church and would like to share some of the things we have done. We could have done better at times over these last four years. But on the positive side, we have seen a number of people go forth with a clearer vision, better trained and holding a positive view on how the church should function. We see ministry as an extension of Ephesians 4:11.



*“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11, 12).*

We are equipping God's people for the ministry. When we do well on this matter, we form committed volunteer co-workers. When we neglect this, confusion and mistrust occurs. God is doing something special in the hearts of His people as He uniquely calls them forth in many different ways. More has been said in another article on how to counsel and mentor such people even when you do not think they can contribute to the field! Check out the article.<sup>1</sup>

Our concern here is to help provide guidance for a large group of NextSteppers. Before introducing a rough curriculum that one could use, let us mention a few things to keep in mind.

## Our attitude

These NextSteppers will be differently gifted than ourselves. God wants it that way. Perhaps at times they are a bit overzealous. This is good. They will make time for the training. They want help even though at times they can get self-confident. Our attitude should be one of excitement of the team of co-workers that God is raising up. Where we see brothers more gifted than ourselves, we can simply think how good it is that they are gifted. Admire God's work in them and keep from jealousy which will destroy both you and them. We need them. Even if they are going to move on, God will use them to bring great benefit to the church while they are there.

Our relationship. We should create a warm learning environment. Some church leaders are better able to do this than others. Allow them to ask questions. Share from your personal lives. For example, share about your prayer life, successes and challenges. As we are honest, they can really open up and blossom like a beautiful flower. We are the church leader. They will respect us because we care for them and because of our position, not because we pretend to be perfect saints on the outward. We are not and they know this. I like to think of it as when I

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<sup>1</sup> Training\_Up\_New\_Leaders.pdf is in both English and Chinese. <http://www.afcinc.org/nextstep/html/mentor.htm>

was being called and how special it would have been if someone shared about their prayer, marriage and questions they had when going through the same stage of our life journey.

Our delegation. If we value them, then we will share our ministry with them. Some pastors have a difficult time with this while others do not. It is partly how we were trained. We suggest that if you are of the group that finds delegation hard or perhaps even wrong, think again how training best happens. Training and equipping is our responsibility as pastors and teachers. We need to make sure it is being done. We should not overdue it but give them occasional opportunities to further challenge them and give them opportunity to seek you for more wisdom and help.

### **The Curriculum**

An Explanation. Our church like yours is probably using different languages and of varying experiences, gifts and spiritual growth. Yours is also probably busy and you wonder how will it ever work out. We suggest this general LARGE group mentoring curriculum not because it is better than one-to-one but because it is the only way to provide general guidance. We should also ideally pursue providing individual mentors for them. This gets to be very difficult. We do our best. We might find help and ideas from neighboring churches. We do not believe this LARGE group training provides all that these NextSteppers need, but it greatly helps you, them and the church as a whole.

Other thoughts. We are pointing out a general way to provide mentorship for these NextSteppers. What we offer is a suggestion to get you thinking. Of course you can use that material but you know your people the best. There are many special things and contributions you yourself will make to the material. We recommend that you make it your own! We hope you can share your ideas with us, and we will pass them on as able. We will share our reflections as we go along.



### **Name**

One can call the group anything you want just so it distinctively reminds the attendees what the purpose is. We used the English word LARGE as an acronym for 'Leaders Assembled Responding to God's Enlistment,' but one can call it more simply the Next Step Group.

### **Purpose/Mission**

Again, you can write the purpose statement the way you like but it should describe what you want to happen in the group. We used the following.

To spur one another on towards greater fulfillment of God's life calling in vocational or tent-making 'full-time' ministry.

### **Strategy**

Ask yourself what God wants to do through you in this group of committed individuals. Here are some suggestions.

- Through studying of God's Word and other books on servant leadership and His world vision.
- Through planning and implementing practical steps towards our goals (with accountability).
- Through sharing and praying of our visions and goals.
- Through interacting with those who have gone ahead of us.

### Potential Members

Pray about who might be part of the group. This might at first seem to be straightforward as consisting of the NextSteppers from the mission conference, but there can be complications. Others who might be going into missions or the pastorate might be interested but never attended the mission's conference. You can add them to the list but give them more explanation. With others, you can talk to them individually. As you pray, see if the Lord wants to you to talk to anyone to see where they are at. If there are enough (4-5) in a language group, we would recommend have two separate groups for some of the meetings. These groups need more sharing and it is very difficult to translate this sharing.

### Getting Ready


We plan a year schedule with the hopes of monthly meetings. This though does not mean that we meet every month. Sometimes holidays, other church engagements or other forms of training can reduce the number of get-togethers. Probably meeting 8-10 times is good. Get a paper binder with pockets and 3-hole clips. Put a little cover on it and insert the needed pages for the classes into the book. This becomes a valuable resource for them and trains them how to keep related material together. Later, they will add their work to it. So will you with additional handouts. Our first page will include the purpose as shown on the right.

### Introduction Letter

We have sent out numerous letters in the past for our next follow-up groups. Here is another (see on next page).

Actually it includes several things in it. The email explains who the NextSteppers are and the objective of the LARGE group (or whatever you call it - in this letter 'Next Steppers'). Three specific objectives are written down so everyone is clear about what this series of meetings is about. We need clarity not confusion. If people are not prepared for such a meeting, then they should not attend.

*L.eaders*  
*A.ssembled*  
*R.esponding to*  
*G.od's*  
*E.nlistment*



**Purpose / Mission:**

To spur one another on towards greater fulfillment of God's life calling in vocational or tent-making "full-time" ministry.

**Strategy:**

- Through studying of God's Word and other books on servant leadership and His world vision.
- Through planning and implementing practical steps towards our goals.
- Through sharing and praying about our visions and goals.
- Through interacting with those who have gone ahead of us.

Lastly, the first part of year's schedule is written down. We must plan ahead if we are going to get these individuals who are often busily involved in different ministries to come. Offering a baby sitter is an extra incentive. We sent the letter below to a good-sized group in our church after this year's mission conference. We included some who have shown interest in missions but did not attend the conference. If there is a small church nearby, you might see if your two churches can work together on this project. (Appendix 4 has a fuller sample schedule.)

Dear Brothers and Sisters;

Hope you are not surprised when we referred you to our "Next Steppers" : ) Some of you have been in this group and knows what we are talking about, some of you maybe new to this term and plan. So let us explain briefly. the "Next Steppers" fellowship is formed in our church for those who are committed to live their lives in such a way as to make the Great Commission their priority. Some of you may be led into full-time ministry such as becoming missionaries, pastors, or Christian ministry workers, but some of you may stay in your profession and use your professions to serve God, or use your professions as a way of getting into countries that do not allow for full-time missionaries. In either case, you are clear and committed to live for God and His Great Commission. This does not mean you are perfect in doing this (no one is), and this does not mean you are very clear at this time where God is calling you. Some of you are, and some of you are still exploring. So the Next Step is for you and we hope to:

- 1) Provide helpful guidance to your progress in taking the next steps serving the Lord's calling for you.
- 2) Provide like-minded fellowship with other brothers and sisters for mutual support and network.
- 3) Provide training that will help you to become more effective as a servant of God.

Below is our schedule for the first half of this year, please mark them down and let me know if you can join us. Thanks!

For Him  
Pastor Hugo and Paul Bucknell

#### SCHEDULE:

1/22 Tuesday 7:30pm to 10:30pm @ church (teaching from Bible, a time of sharing and prayer, overview, assign project#1)

3/15 Saturday 9:30am to 2:30pm @ church (teaching from Bible, a time of sharing and prayer, some training)

5/16-18 Weekend @ AFC retreat center (AFC/CMC Next Step Retreat)

6/5 Thursday 6:30pm to 9:30pm (teaching from Bible, a time of sharing of results of project#1, prayer, assign project#2)

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# Content of Meeting

Regular meetings will have several components. They are flexible as time allows. We tailor the meetings to reach our objectives. Our planning schedule is for about 1 year long, meeting about 8-10 times. We have four key components to the 90 - 120 minute long meetings.

## (1) Personal Sharing

Personal sharing forms an essential part to the NextStep group. It is easy to simply teach or to have a monologue. Teaching is important, and we will go over that part in a moment.

There are four sharing times but not all are done in the same meeting. (1) Sharing their testimony (How did you get at this point where you are thinking about serving God?). (2) Personal prayer requests. (3) Sharing results of the assignments. (4) Sharing from the leader and other 'veterans' who can share from their own experiences (good and bad). Personal sharing is important to help the NextStepper:

- ◆ To clarify where he or she is at,
- ◆ To form deeper bonds with the other NextSteppers and
- ◆ To help you know where they came from and are at.

It is here that we too as mentors can better understand and minister to these brothers and sisters. Do not be too busy to listen. God is speaking through them. Their difficulties and obstacles are opportunities for them to see God's amazing grace at work. "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6, NASB).

Another important aspect of this personal sharing is having those who have been on the field share. You will find in the schedule a meeting like, "Q & A with Veterans". The intent of that meeting is to help those who have already been through the path of getting on the field. (See appendix 2 for an example).

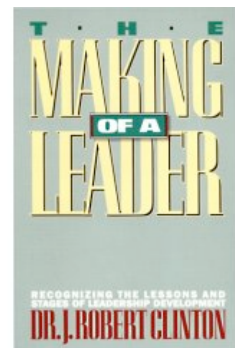
## (2) Prayer

Prayer is our weapon to ward off the attacks of the evil one and break into new areas. This is the place not only to seek God for extraordinary grace but to give these NextSteppers a glorious opportunity to see the important place of prayer in ministry. Make sure you pray regularly for this group and individual needs both in the forming of the group and in the maintaining of it.

## (3) Clarifying the next steps

We use three major assignments to help them keep focused on our target of specialized training, but there can be more. They are taken from Bobby Clinton's book, though adapted somewhat. The reading of that book (only in English) is a third assignment (You might not assign it if the English is not too well). The book is very practical in regards to understanding how God is working in the lives of those seeking to serve the Lord.

- ◆ Timeline assignment (A1). We assign the timeline the first week and then on the 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> meetings have people start sharing their timeline. This depends on the size of the group. We have about 15-20 so it takes a bit of time. We split it up. That is fine. No rush. (*The Making of a Leader*, ch. 2, pp. 39-55). (See appendix 3 for a sample).



- ◆ Set mission, vision, goals, strategies assignment (A2). This will take a bit of time to fill out, perhaps even more than A1. Review the next meeting and see if anyone is having success or troubles. If you haven't done it before, it would be helpful to do it. Give 2-3 meetings before asking them to share. (See appendix 1).
- ◆ Read Bobby Clinton's book, "*The Making of a Leader*" (Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development). One could just give photocopies of the key 2-3 chapters to them, but it would be good to have the book. Can the mission committee afford to give them the book? Check it out. (Used ones can be found online at Amazon.com).
- ◆ A fourth possible assignment clarifies the growth pattern that God has established in the church which we call the "The Flow." The Flow provides an overall picture of discipleship both in a person's life and how it integrates into the church. They learn what needs to be done at the different stages of their Christian life. This is particularly helpful to help the NextStepper realize what area that he or she need to work on in character, skill and the way they learn from God's Word for life and ministry.<sup>2</sup>

#### **(4) Deepening their Biblical perspectives.**

Although we can foster great excitement for these matters, in the end our success will be based on how much these servants allow God's Word to speak to them. Our original series focused on messages on Isaiah and David. Through these short (maybe 30 minutes) but challenging talks based on the scriptures, several needy and applicable areas are highlighted. Add to the list as you see appropriate. The foot-noted reference material is rather lengthy. Just pick one key idea and focus on that. Or perhaps God will speak to you about such a topic through another passage.

- ◆ Being God's servant (like Christ) - Isaiah 11.<sup>3</sup>
- ◆ Finding God's will - Isaiah 29-32.<sup>4</sup>
- ◆ God's Heart-Training program - 1 Samuel 16:6-13.<sup>5</sup>
- ◆ Waiting for ministry - 1 Samuel 16:6-13 (later part).<sup>6</sup>
- ◆ Maximizing the use of our lives for the Lord - Isaiah 60:1-5.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Summary of Next Step LARGE Group**

Plan now. Start tomorrow. This might sound exaggerated but if one does not get going, then one will never get to where one should be. We need to be bold and trust God for wisdom to feed these sheep.

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<sup>2</sup> Check out [http://wwwFOUNDATIONSforfreedom.net/Topics/Disciple/Flow\\_Discipleship.html](http://wwwFOUNDATIONSforfreedom.net/Topics/Disciple/Flow_Discipleship.html) for an introduction. Other links can be found there.

<sup>3</sup> [http://wwwFOUNDATIONSforfreedom.net/Topics/ADT/Courses/Isaiah11\\_SpiritDepend\\_ADT.html](http://wwwFOUNDATIONSforfreedom.net/Topics/ADT/Courses/Isaiah11_SpiritDepend_ADT.html)

<sup>4</sup> <http://wwwFOUNDATIONSforfreedom.net/Topics/WaitingOnGod/WaitUpon010.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://wwwFOUNDATIONSforfreedom.net/Topics/WaitingOnGod/WaitUpon014.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://wwwFOUNDATIONSforfreedom.net/Topics/WaitingOnGod/WaitUpon014.html>

<sup>7</sup> [http://wwwFOUNDATIONSforfreedom.net/Topics/ADT/Courses/Isaiah60.1-5\\_Shining\\_ADT.html](http://wwwFOUNDATIONSforfreedom.net/Topics/ADT/Courses/Isaiah60.1-5_Shining_ADT.html)

# Advanced Discipleship Training (ADT)

As we begin to think about the needs of these NextSteppers, it will be important somewhere down the line to think about the need of their full training. The Next Step LARGE group focuses on helping them understand where God is leading them in their lives. This clarity is very important. Once this question is settled, however, another question pops up, “What do I need to do to prepare myself for such a role in life?”

Up until recently the church in the Western world just assumed seminary was the answer to this question. Things are changing, however. Many people who already have experience, age or other forms of training are bypassing the traditional route. Others cannot afford it while still others find that its training is incomplete. Let us provide one example.

Saturday Schedule		
9:30 - 11:30	Next Step	
11:30 - 12:30	Shaping the Heart	In-depth passage study shaping our hearts.
12:30 - 1:00	LUNCH	
1:00 - 2:30	Supplying Skills & Vision	Practical Biblical counseling emphasizing theory and practice.
2:30 - 3:30	Seeking Him in His Word	Bible book studies which fosters closeness with God through His Word.

A Chinese couple are working on their post-doctorate in the USA. They come to know the Lord Jesus and are discipled. After 3-4 years, they need to return back to China. Unfortunately, where they are going there is no church. They do, however, have a burden to start a church! They have been small group leaders and even did marriage counseling after the pastor led them along with others through some basic counseling seminars. What do you do with such individuals? Seminary is clearly not the solution. These and other similar situations are no longer rare.

Growth in God’s kingdom around the world is not limited to leaders who have received formal training. We have come to a conclusion that the church must do the equipping. We do not always mean the local church in a narrow sense. Seminary can be part of the training. However, we have found that the training in the church equips a far greater number of people that would never get to seminary and that it equips them in areas that the seminary typically does not provide such as character, certain skills and attitudes.

Above is a schedule that we have used. In this case NextStep ‘graduates’ will join the present Next Step class at 11:30 am for advanced training (we call it [ADT](#) (Advanced Discipleship Training)). After a few NextStep LARGE group trainings, we have seen further training is a natural follow-up of the LARGE group. The training is a challenge, but the equipping in the lives of the co-workers brings about a great amount of extra help in the carrying on of the work in the church. See appendix 5 for another one day schedule just dedicated to advanced training.

We are not suggesting that you start with this right away. Enjoy the time with the NextSteppers in the LARGE group. Just keep praying to the Lord as to how you can help them be further trained in one or more areas. Our chief shepherd will see to it that extra grace is provided to feed these sheep.

## ***DISCERNING, SEEKING, & LIVING OUT GOD'S WILL FOR MY LIFE OF SERVICE***

1. What would you like to see God do through your life? What are your dreams for ministry? (now, 5 years, 10 years, and as a life goal) Where and how did you get this dream or burden from? (Be as specific as you can)

2. Write your dreams out as a life mission/purpose statement in short paragraph form (ex. "My life mission/purpose is to glorify God through...") Also write down your mission/purpose statement for what you are now doing. (if you are married, try to also work out a joint statement with your wife)

3. Link the present with the future. How might God use what you are now doing as a foundation for what He desires to accomplish through you in the future? If you are married, make sure you include the shaping of your wife and family, and how they are a crucial part of God's plan for you.

4. What is my God-given passion (a god-given desire that compels me to make a difference in a particular ministry), gifting, and personal style (structured or unstructured, people or task oriented, etc.)? How might these things effect the way

I serve the Lord? How can I focus these things to more effectively serve Him?

5. What specific areas of your life do you think that God needs to more effectively train you in? Include areas such as moral development, godly character, Christian disciplines, use of spiritual gifts, knowledge of His Word, etc.

6. How might God train you in those areas? Prayerfully pause before Him. What steps is He now asking for you to take? What other concrete steps do I need to take to reach the goal and calling from God? Write out a potential time line of specific steps/actions. What are some barriers that can keep me from getting there?

7. Who have you shared your burden with to keep you accountable? Are you keeping a spiritual journal to keep track of God's work in you? This will help you stay focused on what He is doing in your life. This enables you more eagerly to work along with Him but even more importantly, so that you know He is the One to receive all glory for His work in your life.

Appendix 2

This is a sample handout for a meeting with a couple (former elder) who has gone out from our church and soon to graduate.

**匹茲堡華人教會歐克蘭堂「下一步」小組聚會**  
**PCCO "NEXT STEP" Small Group Meeting 7.28.2007**

Schedule:

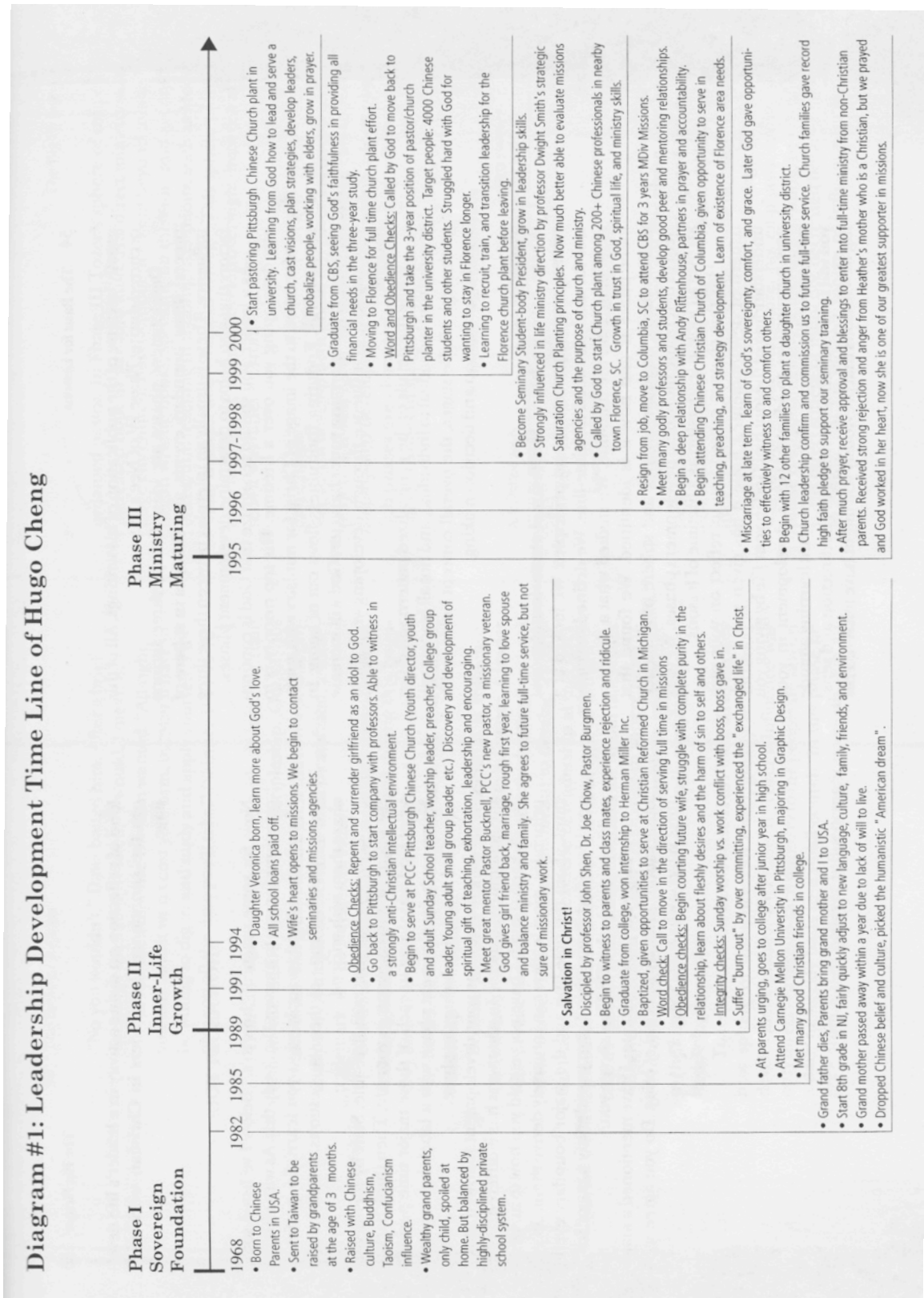
9:30am-10:45am	Welcome, Terence and Mickey sharing
10:45-11:05am	Q&A
11:05am-11:50am	"The Making of A Leader" article discussion
11:55am-12:30pm	The Healthy Servant of God "GRID"

The diagram consists of three overlapping circles. The top circle is labeled 'Personal 個人'. The bottom-left circle is labeled 'Interpersonal 人際'. The bottom-right circle is labeled 'Professional 技術'. The circles overlap in the center and at the intersections between two circles.

<p>Prayer 禱告          Spiritual Vitality 屬靈活力          Integrity 正直, 守原則          God's Calling 清楚肯定神的呼召          Humility 謙卑          Family &amp; Marriage Life 家庭与婚姻生活          Holy Living 聖潔生活          Gospel &amp; Grace Centered 以福音与恩典為中心</p>	<p>Flexibility 靈活性          Likability 可愛性          Friendliness 友善性          Emotional Stability/Maturity 情緒穩定成熟          Sensitivity/Tactfulness 敏感性, 委婉          Dynamism 推動力          Fruit of the Spirit 聖靈的果子</p>	<p>Leadership 領導力          Evangelism 傳福音          Management 管理時間人力資源 (Time, People, Resources)          Preaching/Teaching 講道教導          Strategic Planning 策略計畫          Training Leaders 培養領袖          Delegating 委派分工          Counseling 輔導          Theological Knowledge 神學知識          Biblical Knowledge 聖經知識</p>
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This a sample Timeline. Draw your own. Observe key shaping points of your life!



This is a sample schedule on the 2002 schedule. Note the changes! Many church events will somewhat change the original dates and plans but be flexible and endure. God will bless your group. (Note: A1 stands for Assignment 1). Our church met on Sunday afternoons back then and so we met Sunday mornings.

**2002 Schedule:**

2/3 (Sun) Isa. 11:1-5; Share & Pray;  
*Assignment 1: Timeline*

3/3 (Sun) Isa. 49:1-6; Share & Pray

4/7 (Sun) "God's Training Process"; Share & Pray;  
*Review A1*

4/30 (Tues) Potluck, Q & A with "veterans";  
 Share & Pray

6/2 (Sun) Isa. 50:4-10; *Share A1*; Pray;  
*Assignment 2: Set Personal Vision Plans*

<sup>40:1-5</sup>  
<sup>7/7</sup> 7/7 (Sun) Leadership Lessons; Share & Pray

<sup>8/4</sup> 8/4 (Sun) Leadership Lessons; Share & Pray;

<sup>9/15</sup> *Review A2*

~~9/18~~ (Tues) Potluck, Q & A with "veterans";  
 Share & Pray (MISSIONS MONTH speaks?)

10/27 (Sun) Leadership Lessons; Share & Pray;

11/17 (Sun) Leadership Lessons; *Share A2*; Pray

12/15 (Sun) Review and Pray

**Understanding the Heart of Discipleship #1**  
**Pittsburgh Chinese Church**  
August 13th, 2005, Saturday 9:00 - 4:00

Empowering the local church by God's grace to raise up their own godly and equipped leaders to strengthen God's kingdom and join with others in completing the Great Commission in this generation.

● **Coming into His Presence 9:00-9:45 a.m.**

- **Worship & Prayer 9:00-9:20**  
Seek God's presence and wisdom.
- **Introduce Advanced Discipleship Training (ADT) 9:20-9:45**  
'Understanding the Heart of Discipleship'

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● **Shaping the Heart 9:45 - 11:00 a.m.**

- **Lecture 9:45 - 10:30**  
Isaiah 40:1-2 'Seeking God's Blessings'
- **Small group 10:30-10:50**
- **Large group 10:50-10:55**

BREAK

● **Supplying Skills & Vision 11:00-12:30 p.m.**

- **Lecture 11:00 - 12:00 noon**  
Practical Biblical Counseling (One topic emphasizing theory and practice)
- **Q&A 12:00 - 12:20**
- **Project Assignment**  
Related to counseling topic (applying to self and another).

LUNCH

● **Seeking Him in His Word 1:00-3:00 p.m.**

- **Lecture 1:00 - 2:00 noon**  
Joshua: Understanding how a whole book helps in both teaching and ministry.
- **Self-study (one passage with one message) 2:00 - 2:30**
- **Small group reflection (2:30-2:55)**

BREAK

● **Learning in His Presence 3:00-4:00 p.m.**

- **Lead sharing 3:00 - 3:15**  
Introduce group meditation and reflection
- **Others share 3:15 - 3:30**
- **Close in small group prayer (meditative prayer by day's themes)**