



MCF Ministry Small Groups

Small Groups are a key building block of the Military Christian Fellowship of Australia (MCF). Such gatherings in Defence bases and establishments around the nation provide encouragement in the Christian faith and are good connection points for people as they are posted into new places. They also provides a platform for workplace evangelism, with groups able to both encourage personal evangelism and give opportunity to run group outreach events such as running a course like Faith Under Fire amongst other opportunities. In this short pamphlet we would like to consider some of the features of MCF small groups.

MCF is united by an acceptance of a statement of belief (<http://mcf-a.org.au/about-us/#statement-of-belief>) which is based on the Nicene Creed which all mainline churches hold to. We hold to a common faith in one God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit and have a common desire that he be made known in the world. Whilst we have this central unity in MCF our membership covers a large range of denominations and hence understandably on many points will differ. For the purpose of unity within MCF a small group code of conduct was devised which aims to allow all to feel welcome to a group, encourage constructive discussion and not feel like any one particular denominational line will be pushed throughout the meetings. We do not wish to belittle any particular denominational beliefs but rather desire to provide a means for differing people united by faith in Christ to meet and encourage one another.

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.
Ephesians 4:3 (NIV)

SMALL GROUP CODE OF CONDUCT

As a member of an MCF small group I will:

1. Respect the denominational differences of all Christians within the ADF and not focus on denominational doctrine or disputed beliefs.
2. Allow all members of the group an opportunity to speak regardless of spiritual maturity.
3. Respect rank during MCF meetings unless invited not to.
4. Foster positive relationships with local Chaplains and members of other Christian groups.
5. In group studies show gracious consideration of others when discussing books or passages of the Bible that denominations contest – such discussions should focus on the truth that unites us and not those issues that may cause division.
6. Apply wisdom in the demonstration of spiritual gifting where there is potential to cause offence to members present.
7. Respect the role of the small group leader, regardless of rank and service.

This does not mean that MCF small groups should be watered down nor should they be unchallenging. There are so many amazing truths which unite us without getting caught up in all our differences in a group. As diverse brothers and sisters in Christ stand united it is also a great witness to others in our workplaces.

KEY ASPECTS TO MCF SMALL GROUPS

1. THE BIBLE

The Bible should be core to MCF groups and will provide the central content for discussion. The study of the Bible can be through going through books of the Bible in the group, or by considering what the Bible says on certain topics or even by watching a DVD with discussion following. Whether preprepared studies or general discussion it is important that we are considering

what God is saying to us through his word.

Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.
Acts 17:11 (NIV)

2. PRAYER

As Jesus encouraged his disciples to pray we also should be encouraging prayer within our small groups. Prayer acknowledges the personal nature of God, gives praise to him and puts trust in him to respond to our petitions. We pray for each other because we know God is both powerful and good and we care for each other. Our prayers also carry the extra role of being a model to others that we can all confidently come before our Lord and Creator and that this doesn't have to be with any particular words or ceremony but merely an open and sincere heart. Further to this is the yearly National Day of Prayer for Defence which is sponsored by the Military Christian Fellowship of Australia which is a great opportunity to focus prayers on the needs of the Australian Defence Force.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NRSV)

3. EVANGELISM

There are challenges to evangelism from within our own selves (lack of confidence, uncertainty, fear, laziness) and from the external environment (which can be quite antagonistic towards the Christian faith) – yet we are nonetheless called to share the good news of Jesus with those around us. God has given us each other in this task - it is often easier to do this with others as we spur one another on. Also let us not forget that it is God who gives his Spirit who is at work in us and at work in those you are seeking to reach. Keeping evangelism on the radar might involve regularly praying for not-yet Christians and running a yearly introduction to Christianity course (of which many are available including Faith Under Fire and Alpha for the Forces).

We cared so much for you that we were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember our labour and hardship, brothers. Working night and day so that we would not burden any of you, we preached God's gospel to you. You are witnesses, and so is God, of how devoutly, righteously, and blamelessly we conducted ourselves with you believers.

1 Thessalonians 2:8-12 (HCSB)

4. SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT

A MCF small group as well as being outward looking will also show concern to each member there offering support and encouragement in practical ways. Life can be challenging and faith can be hard and we need to show practical love for each other.

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (ESV)

5. ALL TO GOD'S GLORY

We should in our lives and in our small groups be doing everything to the glory of God. Each group leader will be different yet if this attitude shapes our small groups this will provide a unifying purpose. It is not about getting noticed or gaining personal success rather we are to faithfully serve God giving praise to him.

... whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31b (NIV)

MCF groups won't always be all that we want them to be but God can take even our weak efforts and use them in ways which we never imagined for his glory. Let's dream big for the impact MCF can have in the Australian Defence Force.

We would love small groups to be operating in all defence locations providing encouragement and giving opportunity for outreach. If you would like to start a small group or link to an already existing small group with MCF please contact mcf.office@defence.gov.au

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