

HUDDLE LEADER'S GUIDE

RENEW COMMUNITIES

THE GOAL OF HUDDLE

The goal of Huddle is for participants to develop their ability to independently hear God, develop action plans, and follow through. The Huddle process helps build confidence in hearing God and capacity to obey him. Yet Huddle isn't just about building disciples, **it's about building disciples who disciple.** Once Huddle participants have developed their ability to hear and respond to God, they are encouraged to begin their own discipleship Huddles. This is the only way the church can see discipleship multiplication.

WHAT IS HUDDLE?

Huddle is a group of 4 to 8 Christ followers that covenant together for 8 months to develop their ability to hear and respond to God. It meets bi-weekly. The huddle leader helps facilitate this process. It is not discipleship through knowledge, but discipleship through obedience. Rather than curriculum, Huddle revolves around two major questions: First, What is God telling you? Second, What are you going to do about it? Therefore, Huddle is ultimately about developing our ability to hear God and do what he says.

Huddle follows the pattern of discipleship we see in the gospels. Jesus calls a group of disciples to journey together for an extended period. During this time, they learn to emulate Jesus. Jesus sends the disciples out into the world.. Then they come back together to receive encouragement and challenge. Next, they get sent out again and the cycle continues.

Huddle is done in a group and not one on one. As we look at how Jesus disciplined it was rarely one-on-one but always done in groups. We learn and gain confidence in hearing God as we see others learning and gaining confidence in hearing God. We use the Huddle time to help process what we hear from God and turn it into positive movement together. Furthermore, in a group you have more opportunity to learn from others.

Huddle is discipleship for the present, not discipleship for the future. The goal of discipleship curriculum is often to prepare you for the future. You learn a systematic spectrum of things so that you are prepared when x, y, and z happens, whereas Huddle is about discipleship for the present, What's God telling you now? And what are you going to do about it?

WHAT A HUDDLE IS NOT?

- Huddle is NOT a counseling group.
- Huddle is NOT purely a social time where you can hang out with friends.
- Although a vulnerable place, Huddle is NOT a place where you dump all your baggage.
- Huddle is NOT a place where everyone gives their little bit of advice to help solve someone's problems.
- Huddle is NOT a group where we just talk about God and what he's doing and then just go home.
- Huddle is NOT a group that you come to when you feel like it.

HOW TO ENSURE A SUCCESSFUL HUDDLE BEFORE IT STARTS

- Make sure everyone understands the purpose of a Huddle, what it is, and what it is not prior to joining.
- Clearly articulate the commitment level of the group to the participants prior to joining.
- During the first Huddle, have everyone pull out their calendars and declare which Huddle(s) they are going to miss.
- During your first Huddle, re-clarify what a Huddle is, what a Huddle is not, and that everyone should be prepared for you to course correct the Huddle if it seems to be going off course.
- Establish the pattern of a) hearing God, b) creating an action plan, and c) the expectation of follow through in the very first two Huddles.

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE AS A HUDDLE LEADER?

- Determine the logistics for your Huddle (Date, Time, Location, etc.)
- Invite the right mix of people into a Huddle. An invited core is essential for you to have a great Huddle.
- Create a trusting environment where participants can receive encouragement and challenge.
- Use tools ("life shapes") and powerful questions to help people discern how the Lord is speaking to them and what the Lord is leading them to do. Therefore, your role is NOT to give them advice or come up with content or topics to discuss. It is to point them towards God, listen to Him, and respond.
- Help participants move from the "idea" of an action plan to a concrete action plan through specific questions (For example, what are you going to do to accomplish that in the next two weeks?)
- Lead this Huddle process by example. Show them how you hear God, discern a way forward, and obey.

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD HUDDLE PARTICIPANT?

- You are a **thirsty person**. You are thirsty to develop your ability to hear God and obey him.
- You are an **available person**. You have the space in your schedule to make Huddle a priority.
- You are a **committed person**. This means you come to Huddle even when you do not want to.
- You are a **motivated person**. This means you will intentionally engage in the Huddle process.

THE ART OF LEADING A GOOD HUDDLE

1) Never lose sight of the goal of a Huddle.

Ultimately, at the end of eight months they will be able to independently work through kairos moments in their own lives: hearing God, creating action plans, and following through. Your goal is to come alongside and assist them in this process. Everything you do in a Huddle should revolve around getting your participants to this intended goal.

2) Put the burden of responsibility on them and God (NOT YOU)!

Often in discipling relationships, people will look to you to tell them the way forward. Don't do it! It's a trap! Huddle is about them breaking reliance on you and transferring their reliance to God. Constantly ask yourself if the way you are leading Huddle is creating dependence on you OR creating independence in the participant?

3) Ask great open ended questions that facilitate discovery; Limit advice.

Your goal is to facilitate growth primarily by helping people discover it themselves. This is not the time to share from your store house of wisdom. As you are listening carefully, ask yourself, "What question can I ask to push this person or our group deeper?" Ask questions that facilitate discovery. Good open ended questions begin with "What" or "How."

4) Don't let your default response be a personal anecdote.

Often people will default to a personal anecdote, "This happened to me two years ago and..." This actually takes the spotlight off of the participant and on to you. Keep the conversation on them, what the Lord is saying, and how they are responding.

5) Don't over-teach or over talk.

The goal of Huddle is for people to hear God, not you. The more time you teach or talk the less time there is to process kairos moments. I'd encourage you to use less than ¼ your Huddle time talking whether that be teaching a life shape or concept or your portion of helping others process kairos moments. If your voice is heard more than 25% of the time, it's too much. The lower that percentage the better!

6) Help participants discover their own kairos moments and generate their own plans.

Don't let them depend on you for their kairos moments. In other words, don't tell them what their kairos is, ask good questions that draw it out of them. This creates dependence on God, rather than dependence on you. Plus, we often *think* we know what their kairos are when we might be wrong.

7) Don't camp too long in the Reflect/Discuss portion of the circle!

Sometimes the best thing you could do for someone is to move to the planning stage. Often people have been sitting with a certain kairos for a long time and they share it with new groups of people to serve as some sort of cathartic experience. One of the best ways to cut through this is to ask the participant, "What they are going to do about all of this?"

8) Listen well in two directions.

One ear on them, One ear on the Holy Spirit! Develop your dependence on the Holy Spirit in how you should direct the Huddle participant through the kairos circle. God often speaks in the midst of a Huddle. It's your job as a Huddle leader to be sensitive to Him and be listening so you can bring what you hear to the group.

9) Don't be afraid to challenge someone.

People want to be challenged (in a nice way of course)! And if challenge is not a healthy part of your Huddle it will not be a productive Huddle. Sometimes the best thing for someone is to challenge them to consider something they might not have considered before OR believe something they have never believed before OR do something they have never done before. These moments, if handled right by the Huddle leader, are often the most formative and looked back at in fondness by the Huddle participant.

10) Be ok with silence.

If you feel weird during silence, it's because you feel the burden of responsibility. Silence in Huddle is often a sacred space where people have moments to process what God might be saying to them. Be conscious to not break a silence where God is working.

11) Don't let the group turn into everyone giving their two cents.

The best way to avoid this is to tell people in your first Huddle that Huddle is not about everyone sharing their advice. And that if people start just sharing advice that you will bring the group back into focus. Another way to curb people giving advice is this: If people start sharing advice during a Huddle time, just ask the participant being Huddled a new question that refocuses the time.

12) Be a model disciple(r).

Essentially, you are asking those in your Huddle to model themselves after you as you model yourself after Christ. This can only happen if you are first modeling yourself after Christ. Second, you must be willing to invite them into your life. This is essential because your vulnerability will set the tone for the group. Be sure that throughout your Huddle you are processing your own kairos moments in front of them so they can learn from you.

13) Pray powerfully in your Huddle.

Of course, you should pray at the beginning and end of your Huddle. What I am talking about now is when to pray in the middle of your Huddle. If you feel like you should pray for something right now instead of waiting until the end, do it! Learn to trust what God is telling you. Prayer does things you cannot. There are often moments I choose to pray immediately: 1) If it's a kairos that a participant has struggled to make a breakthrough over their life. 2) If it's an identity issue, often I'll stop and have the group pray that the person can receive the new identity that God wants to give them. 3) If you sense the person or group needs to press more into God when it comes to processing through a certain kairos. 4) If you just sense that you should, do it!

14) Using content within your Huddle.

A "pure" Huddle is where you spend the whole time processing kairos moments and using tools to process kairos moments. The assumption you are making of your group is that they are seeking God outside of Huddle through the Bible, prayer, life circumstances, and within a church community and that they bring their kairos moments in from these times into Huddle for further processing. Often I get this question, Can we use this content [Book of the Bible, Christian book, other] in our Huddle? Here is the response: It is ok to use content IF 1) you spend less than 15% of your Huddle talking about intellectual insights from the content AND 2) you spend more than 85% of your Huddle processing kairos moments that come from either the content or other parts of your Christian journey. Content should NEVER replace the core of Huddle, which is processing kairos moments.

15) Start off your Huddle with a focusing exercise

Let's be honest, everyone's heads are spinning from the day when they walk into the door of your huddle. I have found that a simple 5 minute focusing exercise helps center in on processing kairos. Often, I have a list of 3 questions for participants to ponder silently for 5 minutes at the beginning of Huddle. For instance, here is a sample set: 1) Where have you ignored God this week? Where have you heard from Him? What grace do you need to receive?

THE HUDDLE CONVERSATION BOILED DOWN TO THREE CATEGORIES OF RESPONSE

Outside of when you present a LifeShape, share a quick piece of content, or pray for your group/individuals, there are three general categories of responses that Huddle leaders use to guide a kairos conversation. Here they are:

- 1. Questions that help participants bring clarity and insight to their kairos moments.** Central to your job as a Huddle leader is to ask powerful questions that help others understand their kairos moments better. This is your go-to and most used way of responding to your participants

in your Huddle. Sample questions include What's God telling you? What do you need to hear from God? Where is God leading you right now? What do you think is the root issue? What do you think would happen in your life if you obeyed God in this area? This is just the beginning and only to give you a general idea of how to ask these types of questions.

2. **Observation IN, Question OUT.** This is the mantra for when you ever share a word from God, encouragement, challenge, scripture, or insight. First, ask for permission to share what's on your mind. Rather than speaking any of these directly to the person, you share your thought as an observation, then you ask them to engage with that observation by asking a question like this: "How do you resonate with that?" Hence, Observation IN, Question OUT.
3. **Questions that drill down to a concrete action plan**
Once your participant has clarity on what God is telling them, now it's time to ask questions that move the participant from a general idea for action to a concrete (SMART) action step. Questions could include What are you going to do about that? What do you think is your first step forward? What should we ask you in two weeks? What's the best day to do this? What time? This is just a sample of questions that fit within this category.

Start Huddle Strong: Recommendations for your first three Huddles

Huddle #1

- **Ask everyone Why they joined Huddle?** This gets everyone talking 5 minutes and implicitly communicates that everyone talks in Huddles.
- **Explain what Huddle is.** Talk through page 1 of the Huddle Leaders Guide with everyone. The sections include *The Goal of Huddle*, *What is Huddle?* and *What Huddle is NOT*. Ask them if they have any questions about what Huddle is.
- **Reinforce the commitment level of the group.** Remind them that this is a high commitment group. Work trips, planned vacations, and real sickness are the only acceptable reasons for missing. I often ask the participant to pull out their calendars and let us know What Huddle they are planning on missing over the 8 months? This reinforces the commitment level to them and gives opportunity to reschedule a Huddle date if many people will be missing on a certain date.
- **Exercise: Who is God calling you to be over the next 8 months?** Hand out a white sheet of paper and have them write down the answer to this question, Who is God calling you to be over the next 8 months? Give everyone 10-15 minutes to write down their response. NOTICE: I intentionally don't ask in my first Huddle, "Please tell me about yourself." You get to learn about who people are while hearing about who they want to become. Believe me, it's more powerful!
- **Have everyone share what they wrote.** Go around the circle having everyone share what they wrote down on their sheet of paper. Once again, this implicitly communicates that, in Huddle, everyone communicates and everyone engages.

- **Then ask, "What is the one area God wants you to focus on in the next two weeks?"** Huddle each person towards a concrete action plan as they share. . The cool thing is that you are starting to model the Huddle process *before you even teach the circle*.

Huddle #2

- **Start Huddle within 5 minutes of you designated start time with prayer.** Doing this communicates that you are sticking to the goal of the group and that you are seeking God's spirit to lead the group.
- **Teach the Twin Triangles LifeShape.** This shape does a good job setting the foundation of the Christian life. Check out this video that how to teach the Twin Triangles:
<https://youtu.be/L34XJ01Nui0>.
- **Use the Huddle process to process your group's kairos moments that come out of you teaching the twin Triangles.** This shape always produces some sort of kairos moments in your group. Help you group members process the kairos moments that come up, guiding them towards concrete action plans.

Huddle #3

- **Start Huddle within 5 minutes of you designated start time with prayer.** Doing this communicates that you are sticking to the goal of the group and that you are seeking God's spirit to lead the group.
- **Ask your participants to share how their action plans went.** For the sake of time, I often ask people to give a quick 30 second update on your action plan. Sometimes they go a little longer than 30 seconds, but this request communicates that you are trying to not take up the whole time with this part.
- **Teach Kairos Circle.** This is the FOUNDATIONAL shape of Huddle. It teaches people the process of hearing God and responding to him. When you teach this life shape, be sure to give an example from your person life how you have worked through this lifeshape.
- **Open up the floor for people to process anything they have heard from God (kairos moments).** It's always good to start with people that are more willing to share. It shows others that are new in Huddle what the process looks like and makes them more comfortable to do it themselves.
- **Huddle people towards an action plan.** Remember, one of the top questions you can ask is, "What do you want me to ask you in two weeks?" This gets people to cut to the chase and create their own action plans. .

HUDDLE RESOURCES

Building a Discipleship Culture by Mike Breen