

04

CHAPTER FOUR

PREDICTABLE PATTERNS

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

- Acts 2:42-47

This passage paints a beautiful picture of how the early church did life together. We observe that this wasn't just a random string of events, but an intentional way of life. They devoted themselves to being with one another, they experienced God's presence together, and they shared everyday things like meals and possessions. These actions led to adding new people to the Church! We strive to emulate the consistency and intentionality of the early church in Villages.

Consistency for Clarity

A group of people thrives when there is predictability to what they do and when they do it. Without this sense of predictability, it will be impossible for a Village to get traction. If days and times are constantly shifting, people will feel confused and are less likely to make Village patterns a priority.

A family must be predictable in two ways: mission and meetings. In other words, when are they going to predictably pursue their Missional Focus and when are they going to meet as a Village? Weekly times to do those things need to be set and stuck to. It is also important to note though that the established patterns and Missional Focus do not have to be permanent. If the initially agreed upon rhythms are not working out, a Village can reorient after giving it a shot for a few months.

Belong Believe Behave

A helpful way to think about how Villages should function or how patterns should be set is the three B's - ***Belong, Believe, and Behave***. We see in the life of Christ that He showed people they belonged through His interactions with them, which led them to believe, which then changed the way they behaved. There must be environments for all three of these in order to flourish as a family on mission. Here's a little more about what each of the B's mean.

Belong

Villages are meant to be family and ***step one in creating family is ensuring that every person feels that they belong***. Believer or nonbeliever, everyone is searching for a sense of belonging, and Jesus invited everyone to belong during His ministry. Not every person met is going to stick to the family being created, but the goal is to bring in as many as possible. A sense of belonging is the open door that allows as many people as possible to get around people who know Jesus. This is why creating a sense of belonging is the beginning of what it means to be a Village.

What does belonging look like? It is a sense of feeling at home, pride in the family they are a part of, and ownership of making the family the best it can be. Again, believers or nonbelievers can feel this way about a Village.

In order to foster “belonging,” **the Village Leaders and the Core Family have to embrace belonging themselves**. They have to commit to making this their family and treat them as such. Our Village should become our closest friends that we do everything with. If we belong, others will sense this and want what we have: belonging and real, deep friendship.

Examples of Belong Environments:

- *Weekly Meeting*
Gathering everyone who is loosely connected to have intentional conversations about life and faith, in order to begin creating a family where people *belong*. [*Learn more later in this chapter*]
- *Getaways*
There’s something about getting out of town that allows people to grow deeper in friendship, and creates family through shared experience. [*Learn more in Appendix B*]
- *Relaxed hangouts*

It is crucial that a Village spends time outside of the weekly meeting with the people in our family. Building a family cannot happen on only one night a week, a family is built when people want to spend any time they can with one another (Movie Nights, Ultimate, Pick-up Basketball, etc).

Believe

After belonging comes the exploration of believing. The work of salvation in the heart falls on God alone, but He gave us a part to play. **The family we are creating is not the end goal, people coming to know Christ is.** Village is the vehicle by which we invite people into the greater family, in hopes that they would come to know Christ.

What do we, as a Village, do to help people believe? We invite people to explore who God is with us by consistently sharing the good news of who He is and what He has done for us (the gospel). As believers, we read our Bibles, we pray, and we learn; cultivating belief means inviting others into all of it. ***If there are no spaces for our family to explore who God is, then we are missing the point.*** We have to prioritize inviting people to believe in Him and thus join the greater family on mission through “believe” environments and efforts.

Examples of Believe Environments:

- *Reading the Bible*
Invite a believer to join you in reading the Bible in your daily DT or invite a nonbeliever to read together sometime and ask if they are interested in learning more.
- *Weekly Meeting*
Some Villages leverage their Weekly Meeting for engaging their people more directly about who Jesus is and what they believe about Him.
- *Sunday Gathering*
Exploring God in community is what we do and that should

include an invite to our greater community on Sunday.

- *Grow Group*

People who are consistently around and wanting to learn more should be invited into this. It involves content made for people new to faith, exploring faith, or even just new to Resonate.

- *Sharing the Gospel*

Spend time with people who don't know Christ and make a point to share the gospel with them in your casual hangouts. Share it individually, share it with your whole family at once, share it at the weekly family night, share it after reading the Bible.

Behave

As people come to know Christ, we then begin discipling them. The Great Commission is not just about making converts, it is about making disciples: people who live out what they believe. Following Jesus is a lifelong process of growth and sanctification, so the next step after someone believes is to teach them how to behave as a follower of Christ. The hope is that Resonate disciples would grow in their personal holiness, their pursuit of community, and their pursuit of the lost, and as a Village Leader facilitates this growth in their disciples the Village will start to see the fruit of multiplication.

Examples of Behave Environments:

- *Huddle*

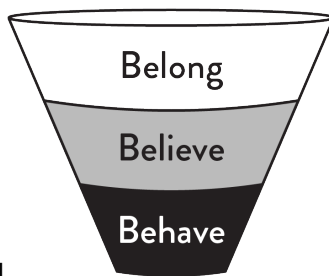
This is the primary way that our church helps believers grow in character and competency, by using biblical principles that lead us to repentance and obedience.

- *Sharing the Gospel*

Village Leaders should take their disciples with them to share the gospel, helping them behave like Jesus by sharing.

- *Leading*
Give believers some shots in leading something: Allow them to lead a DT, let them teach a shape in Huddle, or have them lead the conversation at the Weekly Meeting.

One helpful way to view Belong, Believe, and Behave is as a funnel: belong at the top, believe in the middle, and behave at the bottom. At the very top of the funnel are all the people a Village will meet and get connected to. Some will bail, but hopefully most will stick and **belong**. This will be the largest number



in a Village. Then, through sharing the gospel and exploring who Jesus is, some will **believe**. This number is going to most likely be smaller than the number of those who belong, but praise God for every single person who goes from only belonging to believing! Finally, at the bottom will be those who **behave**. Every single person in the believe category must receive an invitation to behave. We want to invite them into obedience to Christ and to participate in God's mission.

As a Village walks through these patterns, it will be a constant ebb and flow of all three simultaneously. A Core Family gets to figure out how to create space for all three to happen.

Sample Village Schedules

So what does it look like for these patterns to play out practically? Here are a few examples of what a Village's weekly schedule could look like. The key is for Villages to figure out and commit to what works for them as a group and what most effectively engages their Missional Focus.

Village #1

- Weekly Meeting
- DT's
- Huddles
- Friday night dorm hang outs

Village #2

- Weekly Meeting
- Huddles
- Ultimate Frisbee on Sundays
- Wednesday lunch meet new people

Village #3

- Weekly Meeting
- Huddle and Grow Group
- Study once a week with a person in our Missional Focus

Village #4 (Post-Grad)

- Weekly Meeting
- Alternating Huddles
- Park meetup's
- Guys basketball

The Weekly Meeting

The Weekly Meeting is the consistent gathering of the entire group to connect and grow together. It is what most people envision when they hear “small group” or “Village.”

The Weekly Meeting is key because family spends time together. What is a family if it is never together? Having a consistent family time or “Weekly Meeting” is how we steward the connection and growth of our Villages, and invite new people to join in.

In order to create flourishing within Villages, the ***least*** we can do is set aside one 2-hour block each week to meet together. Of course, we hope and expect that Villages are spending significant time together outside of their weekly time, doing life and everyday things together. We will address that later!

The Weekly Meeting is also key because structure leads to

flourishing. Depending on personalities, we all have either an attraction or an aversion to structure. Some of us crave it, some of us hate it, and the rest of us are somewhere in the middle.

Wherever we find ourselves, it is important to recognize the value of consistency and structure when leading a group of people. If the weekly meeting is constantly changing location, time, day, and activity, people will take invitations less seriously and the Village will likely lose traction.

Village Leaders are free to add variety every now and then, but predictability and consistency create momentum.

What does a Weekly Meeting consist of?

We want Villages to have freedom for innovation and customization, but we also want to give tried and true best practices that will likely lead to success within Weekly Meetings. Whatever the Village chooses to do, there must be intentionality behind the gathering or it will fall flat. Here are **3 “Musts” of a Weekly Meeting:**

Weekly Meetings Must...²

1. Have food.

People bond over eating together. It’s a shared experience, a way to bless people, and a way to draw people in. Eating is also a very spiritual act. Eating together is an underlying metaphor for having a physical need met, pointing to the fact that we have a greater spiritual need that is met in Jesus. We can also look to Jesus as a model as He often ate meals with His disciples, as well as with the nonbelievers He was reaching.

2. Be in and out friendly.

Villages should be safe places for disciples and the lost alike to be welcomed, grow, and process the things of faith

and life. Over the years, we have seen Villages swing into each extreme to their detriment. Considering only believers leads to an insider-only barrier-building environment that prevents the integration of nonbelievers. Focusing only on helping lost people get integrated overlooks the value of overtly-spiritual environments and settings. Similarly, game nights five weeks in a row will likely not keep people engaged.

While mission (Out) shouldn't be limited to who might come to a Village gathering, it also shouldn't be a believer-only exclusive gathering. Jesus said that "they will know you're my disciples by your love for one another"- what better way to show nonbelievers how Christians love each other than by inviting them in to see family gather! Villages should think through how they want to make this time valuable for their people (both believers and nonbelievers) and help meet the needs of the people who are gathering around them.

3. Have intentional conversation.

Connection and depth is important to build within a Village, and having intentional conversations is the best way to ensure that.

How do you craft a conversation that is In+Out friendly? Prepare questions that are thought-provoking and relatable. Take into account the audience- nonbelievers, nominal believers, super integrated Core Family. Consider how the size of the group will affect the reception of the format and questions.

Conversation Tool Box

Here are a few of the best approaches to intentional conversation we have seen Villages use:

- **Question of the Night:** Right before people get their food, the Village Leader (or someone in the Core Family) shares an intentional “question of the night” for everyone to discuss with the people they sit next to or even as a whole group. This is more of a dinner party vibe and is generally more friendly for nonbelievers or post-college groups who may be resistant to formal group discussion.
- **Question Flow:** Discuss a series of questions in a big group (12-18 people). This seems to work well with freshmen as they are more open to unique social situations and need more guidance on how to go deeper in discussions. This also works well when the group is predominantly believers (which isn't ideal, but happens sometimes).
- **Mini Groups:** Break into small groups to discuss a series of more personal questions. This is a good strategy for a group that takes direction well, but needs more of a safe place to be able to share more deeply or for a larger group that needs to give more people opportunities to share.
- **Individual Initiated:** Empower your people to pursue conversations with people individually during your gathering time. This is the least structured and promotes more of a relaxed group hangout vibe, so it can be helpful for cultivating relationships with nonbelievers. Be aware to not stay here forever and remain comfortable without progress towards introducing Jesus.

The sermon topic can often be used as a springboard to create great questions, but discussion is certainly not limited

to that topic! Ultimately, the type and topic of questions should be geared around the needs of your people and your Missional Focus. What topics do they need to discuss? What topics would they be interested in engaging in? What questions would point them to Jesus?

How to Build a Series of Questions

Creating a series of questions that fits the group and flows from shallow to deep is a valuable skill for disciples to have. This is especially important for Village Leaders as they plan the sequence questions for their Weekly Meeting. This order of question types will help guide a smooth flow of conversation topics.

- 1. Surface:** Don't make people feel weird by going too deep too fast. Start with a light and accessible question.
- 2. Real:** Ask about meaningful topics, but without getting too personal. Ask about peoples' thoughts, stories, experiences, the hypothetical, or the past or present. All of these things allow you to build a question that is about something important, without requiring personal divulgence.
- 3. Depth/Heart:** These questions get at what is more closely held, but are able to form strong relational connections. Ask about things of the personal and the present. Try asking about feelings, tendencies, hardships, why's, and beliefs.
- 4. Action:** End by asking questions that point to how we can take action, apply what we discussed, or that challenge ways of thinking. Try asking about next steps, what they can do, or how to consider others.

Here's an example of a series of questions that slowly

increase in depth, using the topic of generosity.

1. **Surface:** “What is your favorite item of yours to share?”
2. **Real:** “When is a time you have experienced radical generosity?”
3. **Deep:** “Why is it hard for you to live generously?”
“What motivates you to be generous?”
4. **Challenge:** “How do you want to practice generosity this week?”

How to Foster a Good Discussion

Village Leaders or Villagers can apply so many small skills to make discussions better. It is especially important for Village Leaders to model this, as the rest of the group will take their cues from the leader. Here are a few ways a Village can make conversations better, whether in larger groups or even one-on-one.

- **Be curious.** Having a posture of curiosity encourages people to speak freely, knowing that people want to hear them out.
- **Be a good listener.** Not only will listening well make people feel more comfortable and open, but it will also help guide the direction of the conversation as it continues. Good listening looks like eye contact, nodding, and processing what someone is saying, rather than planning your next thought.
- **Leave questions open.** Questions that can be answered with “Yes or No” limit the opportunity for discussion. Choose open-ended questions. Try starting with “what/why/when/how”, or “What does that look like?”, “Why or why not?”, “What was the outcome?”
- **Follow up.** Build questions on top of each other,

rather than a random string of questions. If someone shares too briefly or vaguely, or brings up an interesting thought, press in and ask more. Feel free to step away from your planned questions if the conversation is heading in another meaningful direction.

- **Respond thoughtfully and graciously.** Think before you respond, then signal that you heard with words or body language. Maybe head nodding, or a brief verbal response like “that makes sense” or “that’s an interesting point.” Even if they say something that makes you uncomfortable, respond with grace and understanding.

Creating a Spiritual Environment

Part of leading a great Village means setting the tone for a time and space to be spiritually productive. Here are a few tools to use in prepping the Weekly Meeting, or any spiritual gathering, to be spiritually maximized.

- **Pray.** Taking time prior to people arriving to pray over the gathering and for yourself is so important. Spiritual movement is the work of God, not our own abilities.
- **Set the tone.** Give directions of what people can expect for the time together so that they aren’t guessing. Leaders and Villagers should be intentional, introducing themselves to everyone new, and then introducing those people to others. Background music helps break potential awkwardness and sets the vibe.
- **Create a safe environment.** Again, the Weekly Meeting should be a space where anyone can come and feel welcome. Create an environment where everyone is able to share what they think without fear of judgment. Be aware of and avoid “insider” language that will make people feel out

of the loop. Learn everyone's names and use them. Shut down moments of identifying someone's beliefs as right or wrong and then address that in a more appropriate setting.

- **Be bold in proclaiming Christ.** Don't shy away from an opportunity to share about Jesus. People should feel welcomed and heard, and we should be bold enough to engage spiritual conversations.

Final Weekly Meeting Tips

Have a back up plan

Sometimes the turn out is different than expected. Maybe you were expecting believers, but a nonbeliever or two end up joining you. Maybe you were anticipating lost friends, but only your Core Family has shown up. Have an alternate plan in your back pocket in case what you planned doesn't fit the group that is actually present.

First few gatherings

Knowing how to structure your first few gatherings is really part of knowing your people and knowing your Missional Focus. What should your first three meetings look like in order to really draw in and mobilize the people you have been given?

Some scenarios may be...

- Perhaps you're starting a freshmen Village and trying to cast as wide a net as possible. Maybe you just do games and a question of the week for two weeks, then introduce more formal discussion on the third week.
- If starting an upperclassmen Village with people who have been around for a couple years but don't know how to invite and connect with new people, maybe start with dinner parties and individual initiation of conversation so you can model what that looks like.

- For someone starting a post-grad Village with people who are very connected to our church but have no idea how to bring in the lost, the best decision may be to take the first few weeks to dig deep into family, discuss who you want to be, and give clear vision for how to invite.

Life on Life

The least predictable of patterns that a Village has is also the secret sauce to Village and disciple making; we call this life on life. Every fruitful and lovable Village in the history of Resonate has had strong relationships outside of just their Weekly Meeting.

Life on life simply means spending significant amounts of ordinary time together, building authentic and deep relationships. The disciples, believers, and nonbelievers in the same Village have to become each other's real friends. If the only time that those in a Village are texting the people they are pursuing is to see if they are coming to the Weekly Meeting, they are not pursuing them well.

Most often, individuals in the same Village have parallel life rhythms to their Missional Focus. For example, all students have classes. They all have homework. They all want to have fun. They all need food. They all want friendship. How can they use all of those shared spaces in their life to invite or join somebody they are pursuing?

If their lives aren't similar, they will have to be more creative in making daily life overlap. They will likely have to have to alter their life rhythms in order to effectively engage that Missional Focus.

An invitation into a missional believer's life is ultimately an invitation to discover Jesus. Life on life will be inconvenient at times, but it will always be worth it.

A Week In the Life

Let's review the types of Predictable Patterns we have covered in this Playbook that should be implemented into the life of a Village Leader:

- Weekly Meeting
- Coaching
- Village Prep
- Missional Engagement
- Discipleship
- Life on Life
- Sunday Gathering

Village Leaders need to make sure they have a place on their weekly calendar (or at least monthly) for each of these Predictable Patterns. Here is a sample week for a Village.

The patterns Villages form are crucial to who they become and what

M	T	W	R	F	S	S
Rest Day	7 PM: Weekly Meeting	12 PM: Coaching 8 PM: Huddle	2 PM: Life on Life with disciples (groceries or work out)	12 PM: Village Prep 3 PM: Soccer Outreach	10 AM: Life on Life (brunch or DT)	10 AM: Sunday Gathering

they accomplish. We cannot control what God does, or how people respond to us or the Gospel. We can only control the patterns we commit to and invite others to partake in. The life of a disciple certainly looks different (and maybe fuller) than the rest of the world, but we are called to be a people set apart. We hope these tools for creating effective Predictable Patterns lead to flourishing for your family on mission.