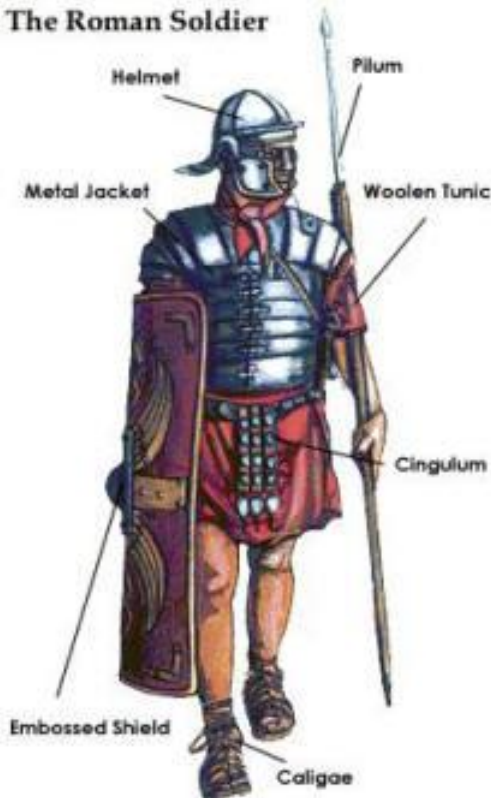


# 2011

## AG TRAINING

**The Roman Soldier**



## Ten Week Training for AG Leaders

### Principle 1 – Know the Needs of your Group

Scriptural support: John 21 – “feed my sheep”; 1 Pet 5 – “shepherd the flock”

Explanation: Every group attracts a certain kind of person/family to join the Group. It is important to understand the dynamics of your Group so that you will know whether a potential new member will fit in or not. Also, you can better meet the needs of the group if you are first aware of their needs.

Procedure: You can use a couple ways of finding out the needs of your Group. One way, which is effective especially with a newer group, and where people are not yet comfortable with each other, is to use a Survey (see *Appendix One*). Make sure that you inform the group the results will be tabulated, anonymously.

A second method is to have an open discussion among the group members who are comfortable with each other, and in fact may find clarity in their own understanding by listening to others share their views and opinion. See *Appendix Two* for sample questions.

A third method is a combination of the first two methods, conducting the survey first, and then discussing the results.

Desired Outcome: You will have a clearer idea of what kinds of needs your group has, and you can tailor your programme to better meet those needs.

Bottom line: To get to know the needs of the people in your group is your first priority.

## **Principle 2 – Mutual Ministry – Because Everyone has a Part to Play in the Group**

Scriptural support: 1 Cor 12 – “we are parts of the body”; Eph 4 – “each part contributing”

Explanation: Every group has a certain combination of gifts which the Lord uses to meet the needs of the members of that group. One may have the gift of leadership; another of listening; another of friendliness; another of organization, and so on. Each person should be encouraged to find out their own gift(s) and be empowered to use this in ministry to others (to build them up spiritually). This is what makes a group spiritually healthy.

Procedure: You can use a tool to help the members of your group to find out their spiritual gift(s) (see *Appendix Three*). Make sure that you inform the group the results will be tabulated, anonymously.

The key is empowerment. Group members must be encouraged to exercise their spiritual gifts within the bounds of good sense, of course.

Desired Outcome: The Group members are building each other spiritually, and because each member is able to serve, they experience the Presence and the Power of the Lord in them.

Bottom line: When everyone has a part to play, then the welfare of the group becomes everyone’s concern and effort

**Principle 3 – Keep Watch on the Time – even good things can become dragons.**

Scriptural support: Eph 5:16 – “redeeming the time”; Eccl 3:1 – “a time for every season”

Explanation: Every group member has responsibilities and obligations that must not be neglected. A group that enforces (reasonable) discipline in this area may be helping group members to develop a healthy discipline that could bless all other areas and relationships in their lives. No one likes to wait for those who are habitually late!

Procedure: Establish a firm starting time, and stick to it. Enforce a firm (very firm) ending time. Helping done so, be flexible. Most people do not want to be late, but sometimes cannot help it. Since it is inevitable that there will some who cannot come on time, start with an activity that does not require everyone to be present. One suggestion could be “sharing and praying for one another.” Those who come early get to share, and be prayed for. Another activity is to “have refreshments” – it is healthier than eating late at night. Then after about 20 minutes or so, start the Bible study, for about 40 minutes, and end the formal time with some singing, and closing prayer (covering any urgent prayer requests). Then, the informal (mutual ministry) time continues. See *Appendix Four* for a list of types of programme for your group.

After the firm ending time, group members are free to stay as long as they are still welcomed.

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Desired Outcome: The group members know that punctuality is expected, but the occasional tardiness is tolerated, and not looked down upon. You are treasured for who you are, more than your just being on time!

Bottom line: Trust the Holy Spirit to work in a timely fashion whilst respecting everyone's busy lives.

**Principle 4 – Participation - Everyone should share.**

Scriptural support: 1 Cor 14 – “wait for one another”; Rom 14 – “the strong versus the weak; or the loud versus the quiet, or the extrovert versus the introvert”

Explanation: In any group, there will be a variety of persons. Some are loud, and others are quiet. Sometimes, unless managed well, the extroverts/loud may dominate the discussion or the sharing of the group. This can be (and must be) managed, to ensure that the group continues to meet the needs of every member.

Procedure: You can use a method of going around the circle, and encouraging everyone to make an observation, ask a question, or give a suggestion of how the question being asked can be answered from their perspective, or based on their experience. You can actually pass a physical object (like a soft toy) so that only the person holding it may speak.

A second method is to use expressions such as, “Good, we have heard some good ideas/suggestions/points so far, but we want to hear from the others who have not said anything yet.” Then pray very hard that those who have not spoken up will take the cue. If you do this often, the group will get into the idea of sharing.

A third method is to point the question at a (quieter) member(s) of the group, and say “So and so usually thinks long and hard before answering, but she/he often has insights the rest of us need to hear.” Use this method when you are familiar with the members of the group.

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Desired Outcome: The quick-thinking ones are not stifled; but the slow-thinking ones are given a chance to share their (double-boiled) insights. This gives the group a variety of perspectives. You must not be looking for “right” answers. You will be amazed at how the group may have exciting (new) ways of looking at (old) truths.

Bottom line: Everyone has something worthwhile to say that the group needs to hear.

**Principle 5 – Location. One Fixed Place Versus Moving Around.**

Scriptural support: Gen 21 – “Jacob moving the flocks around” and “Isaac looking for springs”; Acts 2 – “meeting from house to house”

Explanation: Most groups enjoy the stability of meeting in one fixed location. Unfortunately, this inevitably takes a certain toll on the hosts. On the other hand, moving the meeting location around gives the group the opportunity to get to know the group members. There is hardly a better way to get to know a person than to visit that person’s domicile/family.

Procedure: If possible, establish a regular meeting place. This has to be a place big enough to accommodate every member of the group. There must be enough seats (even floor space is fine, but there must be at least space to sit down, on cushions, preferably). There must be enough lighting, if the intention of the group is to study the Bible, you must be able to read the Bible. Find the person with the gift of hospitality, and house your group there.

Once a quarter, the group should move around, systematically to each one of the group members’ homes, unless, a particular home cannot accommodate the whole group, then, the activity (which attracts the lesser number) should be coordinated with the smaller homes.

Do plan a variety of activities. See *Appendix Five* for a list of possible AG activities.



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Desired Outcome: Your group members are not confused as to where to go each time. Their GPS is set on the one, fixed location. But the group will also be blessed with a variety of activities in a variety of locations. Variety is the spice of life.

Bottom line: The right mix gives the group stability as well as excitement in trying new things.

## **Principle 6 – Size of Group – How Big before You Explode? How Small before You Collapse?**

Scriptural support: Gen 13:6 – “the land could not support them”; Acts 18:7 – “moved next door”

Explanation: Every group has its own dynamics and a great degree, that dynamic determines the optimum size of the group. For most groups, though, two couples (or three individuals) is the minimum, and six couples (or twelve individuals) is a healthy maximum. This applies to groups that are focused on studying the Bible, or a book, etc. There may be a group with a “teacher” and the size of the group is then limited only by the size of the home. On the other hand, if your group wants to support each other (and it should), then intimate sharing and praying for one another must be a staple of the group’s activities, and so, the size of the group must remain manageable.

Procedure: You should start a group only with the firm commitment of one other couple or two other individuals (see *Appendix Six* on how to start a group). As your group grows, it must be your goal to raise up other leaders (see Principle 9). When your group reaches its optimum size, it is time to pray about spreading the blessing. If you have applied Principle 9, your group members should be ready to trust God to find another location, with more (new) group members to bless another area of Singapore.

Your original (super-sized) group can (and should) plan to meet together on a six-monthly or yearly basis, or for special activities (see *Appendix Five* )

Always remind the groups the goal of the group which is to minister to one another. This helps the two groups to remain focused on the goal, to overcome the problems that arises.

Desired Outcome: The members of the group have a higher goal of wanting to minister to each other rather than feeling hurt or disappointed at being separated from those in “the other group.” This sense of purpose helps the groups to be focused and healthy.

Bottom line: Trust God to guide the life of your group as you go through the stages of group life.

## **Principle 7 – Leadership. The “Teacher” Versus The “Facilitator”**

Scriptural support: Eph 4:11 – “some to be teachers”; Acts 18: 24 – “Apollos – a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures”

Explanation: Some groups will be blessed to have a person acknowledged by the group as the “resident teacher.” This person, knowledgeable in the Word, and of spiritual maturity, is depended on to lead the group into spiritual growth. Other groups will depend on the leader to act as a “facilitator.” The facilitator merely ensures that the group acts as it should, and the programme is faithfully carried out.

There are pros and cons with having a “teacher” in the group (mostly, pros, though). The one con I can think of is that it sometimes inhibits exploration of the truth, since most people assume the teacher has all the answers. It would be excellent if the group can have the best of both worlds, with time to explore the truth for themselves, and a teacher to guide them put everything into place.

Procedure: Establish the availability (if any) of “teachers” within the group. If they are always present, then, establish a procedure by which the group has some time to answer the questions on their own, and then to have a time at the end, when answers are shared, and doubts and questions are answered by the resident teacher. Otherwise, let the group use the format of study, followed by discussion, with the group leader bringing the unanswered questions back to the Ministry Staff for help in addressing these.

After a few weeks, it can be arranged for a member of the Ministry Staff to attend the group meeting to deal with unanswered questions, and doubts which may have arisen. Alternatively, the theological/pastoral support can be arranged on-line.

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Desired Outcome: Your group members benefit the most from the spiritually-gifted people within your group, and tapers its programme to capitalize on the mix within the group.

Bottom line: Make use of the spiritual gifts the Lord has brought to your group.
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## **Principle 8 – Attendance – “How Many Times can I Miss?”**

Scriptural support: Matt 18:21 – “how many times shall I forgive my brother...?”; Hebrews 10:25 – “meeting together”

Explanation: Most groups will have members, who, as much as they do not want to, will miss some of the group meetings. This is almost inevitable, as few of us have a good control over our lives, and our schedules. The problem arises when this question is raised. For the question reveals a certain disconnectedness to the group. In other words, a person who is healthily connected to the group is not worried about “being asked to leave the group.” This will not happen as that person is “the group.”

Procedure: Most groups understand that members cannot come for legitimate reasons. When it happens often enough, the group may need to make adjustments to accommodate that person’s peculiar, or changing needs, as when a new job, or, different working schedule, etc. arises.

Given then that most people feel that they are a part of the group, to then give them “ownership” of the group and of its growth, appoint them as co-leaders (see Principle 9). This may help the group members to raise the priority of group meetings to the point where they will not miss a meeting unless absolutely necessary.

Sometimes there is a need to acknowledge that an open discussion of the problem is necessary to address it. You must not blindly hope for the best. Before you broach the discussion, you may want to confirm the commitment of the group member involved, to the group.

Find alternative meeting places, times, or regularity of meetings that will meet the needs of the most number in the group without alienating those with special needs.

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Desired Outcome: Your group is constantly adjusting itself to meet the changing needs of its members, and the members feel that the group exists for them.

Bottom line: The only constant is change. Change at the right time, at the right pace, for the right reason.
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## **Principle 9 – Responsibilities - “Everyone is an Assistant Leader”**

Scriptural support: Num 2 – “everyone has a place in the camp”; Eph 4:7/Rom12:6 – “we have gifts which vary according to the grace we have received”

Explanation: Being Asians, most people hesitate when given a leadership role. They feel that “they are not good enough” or that “someone else can do this job better.” This has something to do with our Asian sense of “humility.” However it belittles the grace of God in our lives. The end result is that the group leader takes on more responsibilities than he should – he is exhausted; whilst the group become concerned that things are not working out well.

Procedure: The number of tasks/roles actually depends somewhat on the size of the group. See *Appendix Seven* for a list of the leadership tasks/roles necessary to keep a group functioning smoothly. At the next group meeting, let everyone have a copy of the list, and ask different ones to volunteer for the task they are most suited for.

Knowing how Asians tend to function (to down-play their abilities, and to think of themselves as “less than they should”), start with the most demanding role first. If you start with the least demanding role, it might not work as well.

Assure everyone that you will revisit this list in six months, and everyone can change to another role if so desired, and new responsibilities will be given out as new members join.



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Desired Outcome: Your group members are giving of themselves in ways that they are gifted to do so. Everyone serves, and everyone grows. The group is blessed.

Bottom line: The body is not made up of one part, however important. It is made up of many parts.

## **Principle 10 –Spiritual Care. What to do When it gets to be “Too Much”**

Scriptural support: Exodus 18:18 – “appointing leaders over others, not bearing the whole load”; Jude 9 – “the archangel Michael knowing his place when rebuking Satan”

Explanation: As a group leader, you have been given an awesome responsibility. It is a burdensome task. You are asked to do an important task by the church – and the church realizes that there will be times when the burden becomes too heavy for you to bear.

You, however, have to know your own limits. See *Appendix Eight* for tell-tale signs of burnout or brown-out. Failure to know where to draw the lines will result either in you failing to fulfill your full potential (if you do less than you are capable of); or in you ending up with serious problems (if you attempt more than you should). You need to ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom to draw the line.

Procedure: Each group leader should have a support system. First, seek within the group for those who can pray with you, and pray for you. Then, seek for support outside the group as well. The leadership of the church is generally ready to help you in any way they can. Finally, and most fundamentally, be sure that you are nurturing your relationship with the Lord you are serving.

Attend the bi-monthly AG Leaders’ Training. Do not be afraid to ask for help. Form a cluster group with some other groups, for the group leaders to come together for prayer.

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Desired Outcome: The group leaders are being nurtured so that they are healthy enough to give spiritual support to the members of the group.

Bottom line: Watch your life and your health. As you remain spiritually healthy, you can help your group members to seek health from the Lord too.
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## **List of Appendices**

*Appendix One* – Survey Questions on the Needs of the Group

*Appendix Two* – Discussion Questions on the Needs of the Group

*Appendix Three* – Help In Finding Your Spiritual Gift

*Appendix Four* – Suggestions on the Type of Programme for your Group

*Appendix Five* – List of Possible Activities for your Group

*Appendix Six* – How to Look for People to Start a Group

*Appendix Seven* – List of Leadership Roles/Tasks within a Group

*Appendix Eight* – Tell-tale Signs of Burn-out or of Brown-out.