



NEW
CANAAN
SOCIETY

NCS CHAPTER PLAYBOOK Table of Contents

<u>A) NCS IN TWO MINUTES</u>	2
<u>B) OUR “RULES OF THE ROAD”</u>	3
<u>C) HOW NCS CAME TO BE</u>	4
<u>D) OUR “DNA” / OUR CULTURE – WHAT NCS IS . . . AND IS NOT</u>	5
<u>E) THE VALUES WE HOLD CLOSE</u>	6
<u>F) HOW NCS DOES WHAT IT DOES</u>	6
LOCAL CHAPTERS	7
ENERGY GROUPS	7
NCS ANNUAL NATIONAL AND REGIONAL RETREATS	8
<u>G) PRACTICAL POINTERS / STEPS FOR NEW CHAPTERS</u>	8
STARTING YOUR NCS CHAPTER	8
LEARNING FROM FAILURE . . . AND FROM SUCCESS	9
<u>H) THE CHAPTER KIT: THINGS TO HELP YOU GET STARTED AND OPERATE</u>	11
<u>I) SOME FINAL THOUGHTS</u>	12
<u>APPENDIX</u>	14
THE VALUES WE HOLD CLOSE	15
INSIGHTS FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHER CHAPTERS	19
SUGGESTIONS FOR RUNNING A CHAPTER MEETING	28
OUR NAME AND BRAND IDENTITY	29
NATIONAL TEAM & NCS BOARD (PLEASE SEE NCS WEBSITE)	30

THE NCS MISSION

The **NCS Mission** is the focus of who we are and what NCS does.

NCS Mission Statement

NCS is a network of men joined by a common desire for a deep and abiding friendship with Jesus, and lasting and transparent friendships with each other.

The mission and purpose of NCS is to connect men who seek and value such friendships, to work together in partnership and to encourage and equip each other to experience personal transformation, in an environment of trust and acceptance. Through friendship, partnership and transformation, we will have a positive and powerful impact on our families, our communities, the marketplace and the world.

Fulfilling the NCS Mission is happening every day, in small ways and in large, throughout the network of NCS Chapters, in lives of men who have committed themselves to friendship with each other and friendship with Jesus.

A) NCS In Two Minutes

Who finds a friend finds treasure.
- Irish Proverb

At NCS men gather together regularly in friendship and faith at local chapters across the country. We share our lives, our personal stories, our family concerns, our spiritual struggles and victories and the other challenges that life brings. And we encourage each other to become better friends, better husbands, better fathers....better men.

What holds an NCS chapter together is that we all come to realize that true friendship brings great richness to one's life – of a kind that money can not buy.

We are not a church group or a Men's Bible Study or like any other men's meeting you have ever attended. While our roots are Christian, we don't think of ourselves as a "religious" group. But our commitment *is* to grow in friendship not only with each other, but also with Jesus – the Friend who sticks closer than a brother, as the Proverbs say.

NCS is more like a men's fraternity – with (hopefully) none of the negatives, but many of the positives – including a culture that greatly values good humor and having fun – something usually alien from your typical “faith” gathering.

Weekly or biweekly, NCS men gather in local restaurants or other common ground (*never* in a church) to be together with other guys and usually share a meal. We listen to a personal story from someone's life – sometimes from a fellow “brudda” – or often from a guest speaker who is there not to give a lecture or deliver a sermon but to share something of personal value from his own life's journey.

What matters the most is that at NCS, friendships can develop which break down the walls of isolation that are so common among men in our society, especially among marketplace men who have traded some of life's true realities for the lures of success...and in the process can experience a deep sense of personal isolation.

An NCS chapter has a rather special character that men pick up quickly. For most men, their past experience suggests that a “men's meeting” falls into one of two types: a “churchy” gathering like a Men's Sunday School Class...or a Breakfast meeting where a “Christian celebrity” arrives to give a talk – coming as if from a Speaker's Bureau of the famous and the infamous.

These MO's are all about “content” and to our way of thinking at NCS, guys already have too much “content.” We are information-overloaded and that brings its own problems of boredom and loss of genuine meaning.

Neither of these two approaches will change a man's life. And while we do have content, we're not *about* content. What is critical to NCS is this: we encourage questions and feedback...and are less concerned about a speaker's “content” *per se* for the sake of gaining more information than about the personal impact and lively brother-to-brother discussion which a talk or public sharing provokes...and which can lead to new insight and personal changes.

NCS prefers to create an environment where men can be together, grow in friendship, share their lives, learn from each other and experience faith in new, real and lasting ways....ways that can change their relationships with their wives, their children and eventually their influence in their communities.

B) Our “Rules of the Road”

NCS chapters are guided by a few simple principles:

- **All men are welcome.**
- **NCS is a “safe place.** (In this, we take a cue from A.A. – “*what is said here stays here.*”)
- **We meet in neutral ground.** (Attractive, convenient locations like restaurants, country clubs, offices and homes... and we avoid church buildings.)
- **Membership is free to all.** (There are no dues or fees to be an NCS “member”.)
- **Any organization we have is very “flat.”** (We view NCS as a *movement*, not a formal organization.)
- **All our leadership comes from the marketplace.** (Some church leaders and pastors

may attend, but they are not the leaders of any NCS chapter.)

- **While Chapter leadership is essential, there are *no paid* chapter leaders.**

Most importantly, chapters should ***begin small and start with a core group of guys (5 to 7 typically) who commit themselves to building bonds of genuine friendship*** – then, only then, should the local group open things up and invite others.

C) How NCS Came to Be

It all started in the late 90's when a Goldman Sachs veteran Jim Lane recognized there was something profoundly lacking in his "successful" life. From one look, he had everything that goes with being a Goldman Sachs partner – the money, the power, the ego satisfaction, as well as the pressing schedule, the craziness and some other things as well... He had a personal phone book to die for – he could call anyone of influence in the world...but he had no one really to call when he needed help because he had not invested in any deep relationships with men he could really consider friends. Jim was the classic successful "I stand alone" business executive. But with the success came personal failures...his marriage was already in trouble, there was emotional chaos at home and his drinking was out of control.

The reality was that the success he found on Wall Street was not reflected in his personal life. Jim says: "I had a choice and I did not handle success well when money started pouring my way...I started believing my own B.S. – like 'You've made partner at 34...pretty damn good Jim'...and I started acting out..."

He says "I failed and I did not really know how to get back...I did not know where to go for help...there seemed to be no one I could honestly open up to..."

There is lack of for true, deep friendship in the lives of marketplace men. Men in positions of power understand the stress, the struggles and isolation of the marketplace but need to be with brothers who can be relied on in times of personal need and family struggle, guys that can honestly share life.

The idea of NCS was conceived and a number of guys began to talk about what a men's friendship group might be like. The conventional "fellowship" gatherings of churches, typical spiritual retreats or the worn-out fraternal orders held no appeal. He also recognized that men in the marketplace do not make deep and lasting relationships often or easily — especially with other guys. For those at the top, the feeling of being alone, of "no one really understands my circumstances" was particularly strong.

Men work hard, play hard and have little time for growing relationally. Most, deep down, carried concerns, fears and secrets they felt they could share with no one. If men are going to succeed at being better husbands, better fathers, and better members of their community, they needed God's help... and they need the help of other men just like themselves who struggled and could share their victories, their failures and their life learning.

If a men's group has any hope of succeeding, it had to be a place where men could be men; where being open, honest, transparent and vulnerable could happen in a place of safety and real trust.

Jim started a group in his New Canaan, Connecticut home. That small group of guys included men who are still involved even many years later.

The key aspect of NCS are conversation, camaraderie, laughter, difficulties overcome, empathy, and personal sharing.

In the years that followed, this first group of “pre-NCS’ers” would recognize that the heart of NCS is ***to be together, to actively care about each other because friends were in the same place, at the same time, with the same goal.***

D) Our “DNA” / Our “Culture” – What NCS Is...and Is Not

NCS chapters create a place where guys can just be. No one cares about your credentials at NCS. Here guys can grow in friendship with others, share their own stories, their personal challenges, their lives. It is where a guy can process where he is at and bring some sanity to his life.

While chapter-wide meetings will usually have a speaker, NCS is not about speakers. For sure, there is no shortage of really good speakers who will come and give you “presentations” with lots of content. But these do not break down the walls, the barriers between men. That begins to happen when we meet in smaller groups and begin to discuss what the speaker shared and ask questions – because it is out of this that guys open up in a way which just getting one more information download can never do.

If you were to ask what is the **DNA** of NCS, it is really all about **life stories** -- simply, that NCS encourages men to share their personal journey (and we encourage *all* speakers to do the same).

What NCS Is NOT

To make things a bit clearer, some folks have found it instructive to consider what NCS is **NOT**:

- ***We are not a men’s program from a church or any denomination.***
- ***We are not a Bible Study...***although NCSers do read the Bible regularly.
- ***We are not a prayer meeting...***although we encourage men to pray.
- ***We are not a counseling service...***although there is no doubt we have many stories of guys lives being changed together.
- ***We are not a rehab program or a support group*** – 12 Step or otherwise...although we have taken some principles from A.A. like the need to be brutally honest about your own junk.
- ***We are not a drinking club...***although we have plenty of wine, scotch and cognac snobs among us, we also in fact have some recovering alcoholics among us. We are always sensitive to them.
- ***We have been rumored to be a cigar club...*** There’s never any shortage of quality cigars and the accompanying conversations. A great cigar is a great way to start a friendship.

Chapter Leadership commits to each other as friends, and commits to support the nurturing of the new chapter...taking time to do what is needed for a Chapter to succeed and digging in their own pockets to defray operating costs of the regular meetings. (This is not to say that chapters do not have a bucket at the door...but that is always *completely* voluntary... and usually does not cover everything.)

Perhaps the greatest hallmark of NCS culture is our **sense of humor**. We simply don't take ourselves too seriously. Humor, good clean ribbing and joking around have always been a part of NCS. Humor keeps things in perspective and chases away any religious "spirits"! And makes us realize we're not the center of the world – despite what titles we may have on our business card. The boundaries are pretty wide but never disrespectful. Paradoxically, the fact that we don't take everything seriously helps us to deal seriously with what really matters.

E) The Values We Hold Close

The course and growth of NCS has been steadied, we believe, by the way we've operated, without typical "Command & Control from the Top" organizational structure and instead had organic, decentralized growth. This has been guided, most of all, by a commitment to certain **Core Values**:

- **Friendship**
- **Living Life Together**
- **Safety & Trust**
- **Authenticity and Vulnerability**
- **Humor (*We don't take ourselves too seriously*)**
- **By Men, For Men... All Men**
- **Family Relationships As Primary**
- **Impacting Our Communities As a Faithful Presence**
- **Worship... *Like It Matters***

These Core Values are fully explained on the NCS Website and the first section of the Appendix.

F) How NCS Does What It Does

By now it should be clear that NCS is very much about finding your identity and your identity is not what you do – as if what mattered most is your career.

Of course, the reality is that men usually do lead with what they do. At NCS we step back and say we do not care that you are a partner at your firm. NCS is not about performance. It is about who you are as a man.

And we have seen that a man who has strong relationships with friends he can trust and be transparent...plus a growing vertical relationship with Jesus... has obtained the essential thing.

NCS chapters, then, are focused on helping men to know who they are...and ultimately their identity in Christ.

When NCS men get it right relationally with each other and with Jesus...what tends to happen is that eventually they do want to serve others...because men are made that way, they know how to get things done. (In the Appendix, you can read about what a number of NCS Chapters are doing to reach out into their communities and places of need around the world.)

To sum it up, we adopted (and slightly modified), as a kind of NCS motto, a quote from Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* -- a line of Sir Lancelot's that one is likely see posted at many NCS meetings:

"Live Grace... Speak Truth... Right Wrong... Follow the King"

A Closer Look: Local Chapters...Energy Groups...and the NCS National Retreat

Local Chapters

NCS chapters are the heartbeat of what we do. In over 60+ locations, local chapters are where men meet weekly or bi-weekly to hear a speaker share a personal story that challenges and gives insight into the kinds of real life situations many men are facing. A breakfast or other meal is almost always a part of the chapter meeting.

Chapter meetings are the place where guys enjoy each other's company, learn how to support and pray for each other when and where it matters most.

At the center of this is the sense of community that comes from knowing God loves us, forgives us and accepts us just as we are and we need to do the same. NCS Chapter meetings are all about men who come to recognize their own brokenness and who see their need for other "brothers" to give life more meaning.

Energy Groups

When NCS Chapters really get going, something unique happens: smaller groups of friends experience a much deeper level of caring for each other.

Many chapters will encourage these smaller clusters of "friends" to meet in what we call "***Energy Groups.***" It is within this more intimate group of guys — perhaps 3 to 5 men — that one really gets close knit. They meet on some regular basis at their own election and schedule.

Energy Groups are for men who pursue being authentic and who want others to hold them to that standard. It is here that the walls break down and friendships come together.

We call them Energy Groups because we get energy from our friends. But, if you ask NCS'ers, many really think of them as "***G.A.S.***" (*Give-A-Shit*) groups!

These guys really care about each other's lives, their jobs, marriages, families and communities. They feel "we're in it for the long haul," helping each other deal with pain, frustration and anxiety of living. That means we engage in life together. It might involve a regular round of golf, coffee before work, a weekly dinner, a time when all the families do something together or when we join with spouses and girlfriends. They communicate with each other regularly, many do so daily by text, email or phone. They live life together and share what really matters to them.

In short, ***NCS Energy Groups are at the heart of real transformation.*** This is where real friendships develop and out of that come the guys with whom you can live life together in a deeper sense.

NCS Annual National and Regional Retreats

Not quite five years after NCS started, we added a significant element with our annual get together or ***National Retreat.***

At the Retreat, men from all Chapters converge for a time of relaxation, talks and teachings from a host of speakers, spiritual growth and a lot of camaraderie. The first annual retreat in 1999 hosted forty-five men. Today, upwards of 800 will come together in an amazing display of *esprit-de-corps* (usually capped off with a late night cigar fest!)

At the national retreats, we are treated to internationally known speakers like Tim Keller and great musicians like Paul Baloche.

But always the ***“magic”*** lies, not in what’s said from the podium or played on the music stage, but in brothers enjoying life together in shared meals, conversations and heartfelt prayer. ***For many, once they experience the “magic” of an NCS Retreat... life can never be quite the same.***

Today, NCS Regional retreats are also happening, as a result of the growth of our Chapters across the country.

G) Practical Pointers/Steps for New Chapters

Some of the decisions you make will be based on your own particular local needs. Some of the decisions you make will be based on your own style of leadership and personal likes and dislikes. Other decisions will be influenced by the chapter and their desires.

What works well in one area of the country may not work well in another. At the same time, we know from experience that it is good to try to follow the best practices listed here as well as visiting a few chapters to see how they run their meetings. It is also wise to see what previous chapters have done well and areas where they made mistakes. (See **Appendix for some Case Studies: “Insights From the Experience of Other Chapters.”**)

The big picture values of NCS have been explained; here are some practical steps of getting a chapter started:

Starting Your NCS Chapter

- 1) **Gather your core group:** Talk out the commitment level, determine a host location (usually home for starters) and put some more money on the line. Pray... and keep praying for wisdom.
- 2) **Spend time together:** Get the feel of the environment when everyone is onboard. Nourish deep friendships among the core team. These will set the tone when you open up

to a wider audience. Take time to experience life together socially *before* you invite the world to the front door. Care about your brothers like family, like they really matter.

- 3) **Visit an active NCS meeting, if possible.** Check the web page to get times and locations. Remember, men may be attracted by a speaker but they will come back because they see the leadership modeling Christ-like friendship.
- 4) **Get to the NCS National Event.** What you will take away from the retreat will give you a real experience of the dynamics of NCS. You'll see it happening right in front of you. More chapters have started as a result of men coming to the retreat than any other way. Take advantage of the opportunity. [Check the national website for details: www.NewCanaanSociety.org]
- 5) **Commit to the NCS "DNA":** Make the sharing of "life stories" a core part of your meetings...even on the part of "big time" speakers
- 6) **Have Time for Discussion When You Meet:** Always keep time for questions and discussion...after the major talk and on the off week during the more intimate closer Energy Groups (below)
- 7) **Humor Is Essential:** Be sure to keep things light...encourage fun...maybe even have a designated comedian who knows how to tell a good clean joke...
- 8) **Meet Regularly:** Weekly or bi-weekly works best. Some Chapters will have a larger, whole Chapter meeting on one week and then on the off week, the smaller Energy Groups often preceded by a short talk.
- 9) **Start Energy Groups:** As a part of your chapter, G.A.S. groups ("Give A Shit") are essential. Energy Groups are the life-blood behind your growth as a chapter, both numerically and relationally. [See the Energy Group Playbook for more information]
 - NCS Energy Groups are typically born out of the Chapters, but sometimes vice versa, the Chapters are born from guys just doing life together. The men gather to build friendship with one another and a smaller group is formed. Chapters can range anywhere from 50 to several hundred while Energy Groups remain small.
- 10) **Pray for God's Guidance & for Chapter Leadership:** Other than the Holy Spirit, the entire success of a Chapter is based on the depth in relationships and the leadership capabilities of the leadership /core group.

Learning From Failure ...and From Success

So much of time, men feel as though the demand for perfection rests squarely on their shoulders. NCS has an answer for this heavy armor. We're *all* broken. We learn about our individual and *mutual* brokenness in a lot of ways.

Put the drive to be perfect behind you. At NCS, we believe that failure is a big part of getting to success. Having said that, we have made mistakes along the way and have learned from them.

Avoiding Pitfalls - These are a few of the specific mistakes that we have made and which we urge you to avoid:

- **Best not to meet in a church** — as opposed to a home or restaurant. We want to create an atmosphere that makes any man comfortable as some of our guys don't yet know Jesus. The reality is some churches just aren't that welcoming and a church environment may scare some guys away.
- **Start Up When the Essentials Are in Place:** A few of our chapters have also made the mistake of opening their doors too quickly without the proper leadership team in place. There are no set rules as far as how long a chapter must meet as a leadership team or pray until they open their doors. A good rule of thumb would be to follow the Holy Spirit's lead and make sure the entire leadership team agrees when you are ready.
- **No Endorsements, Please:** Another reality about NCS is that we **do not make any endorsements** which could be divisive. We don't take political positions.
- **Leave Personal Agendas at the Door:** Discourage anyone who thinks they can use NCS as a way to network for business or other self-interest purposes. Business may eventually happen brother to brother. But the motive in coming to NCS should be actually wanting to enter into community and become friends with other guys. NCS is a safe environment and part of making it safe is **someone should not be here for their own "agenda"** — and we let that be known.

Some Things We've Done Right - On the **good learning side**, there were plenty of things that we have done well throughout the years, having 60+ NCS chapters up and running today. We realize that so much of this has come from the grace of God... as none of us are all that smart.

- **Prayer Is Foundational:** We began and ended every meeting and every get together with prayer. Many of our prayers were heartfelt, literally crying out to God because we didn't know where to turn or what to do or say next, and the Holy Spirit was there to guide us.
- **Start Small, Keep It Close Until You're Really Ready:** We kept a small, closed group before opening the doors, not worrying about metrics or numbers, but relationships. We realized that we needed a solid core group, and we were willing to wait it out and get it right, than rush things for the sake of quick growth.
- **Local Guys' Testimonies Are Very Important:** Many chapters also use the testimonies of the guys within their chapters to speak to the hearts of the men. Few of us can relate to the professional speaker, the elite international bestseller, but put one of our own in front of us and we will relate to their story all day long.
- **Make a Space for 12 Step Meetings:** A lot of our members are in 12-step programs like AA. To accommodate this important part of the healing process, we schedule our morning meetings so that 12-step groups could meet just before the NCS chapter. On the back end of the NCS meeting, we are careful to be prompt about ending on time. Everyone has to get to work, right?

H) The Chapter Kit: Some Things That Will Help You Get Started & Operate

Every NCS Chapter receives in essence a “tool kit” with resources to help your Core Team in launching and operating the Chapter. Here is the basic inventory of essential resources to help you launch and make operating a little easier.

- 1) An **Affiliation Agreement** that undergirds your becoming an NCS Chapter.
- 2) **Non-Profit related Documents covering the legal requirements** to put a chapter in place that immediately gives your local chapter 501C3 non-profit tax status under the IRS-granted “umbrella” that the New Canaan Society holds.
- 3) **National Headquarters Support:** NCS national leadership who will connect to help.
 - Leadership Training
 - Technical support for website and email application (see below)
 - Digital marketing applications to help your Chapter grow
 - A Governing Board to handle national issues and direction that will benefit every chapter.
- 4) **Access to Speakers:** While we encourage you to bring forward local guys who can share their stories from the heart to your meetings, sometimes what we have heard somewhere else from a Speaker is just so important it’s worth sharing across many chapters. Help is available from the National Office.
- 5) **Web Presence for Chapters:** Every chapter gets its own “microsite” customizable to meet your style and local needs. It is linked to all the resources on the national NCS website. (www.NewCanaanSociety.org).
 - NCS has developed a first-class national website capable of delivering audio and streaming video, information content, and other helpful applications. Leveraging off of the National website, the idea behind the Chapter microsite is really simple: it’s a chapter in a box.
 - You can customize your look and feel and still have a powerful, national confederation behind you and get access to materials, blogs, devotionals, e-store and other useful capabilities. The microsite provides a way for chapters to have their own place for posting calendar announcements and local content.
 - The local Chapter microsite will also provide a way for your chapter to stay linked with other NCS groups and functions across the network.
- 6) **Email Engine:** E-mail is a vital part of NCS communication. We use it to announce meetings, highlight speakers and broadcast important NCS announcements. That means your chapter will need someone who is responsible for keeping accurate email addresses and insuring that messages go out promptly.

The email application [**“Active Campaign”**] will be provided to local chapters, offering a powerful, yet remarkably easy-to-use system to send out regular email announcements and have a record of what’s been sent, who opened/who did not open and who may have clicked through. The NCS national team and our outside resources can work with you to

create a local chapter stylized email template and help you manage a database of email names/addresses.

- 7) **Tailored Local Chapter Branding** with Logos in digital formats for use with your materials — whether printed or online, along with a ready reference Brand Style Usage guide to help you and your local team in preparing quality pieces.
- 8) **Content Library** of the best videos, books and articles, audio and photos we can find. We have gathered content that we believe is of interest to men like us. We have curated a common learning experience – a baseline of knowledge for an NCS man.
- 9) **National and Regional Events:** In 1999, we gathered nationally for a time of relaxation, spiritual growth and connectedness. The first annual retreat hosted forty-five men. Today, these National and Regional events host hundreds of men in a hilarious good time, penetrating teaching and *esprit-de-corps*.

Retreats have been blessed by internationally-known speakers and top-performing musicians. But the power is not at the podium or on the stage. It is in the conversations, in shared meals and in brothers enjoying life together.

Many of our new Chapters got their impetus when men have gone to the National Retreat.

- 10) **Mentoring from Other Chapter Leaders:** New chapter leaders can have a seasoned chapter leader at their disposal, preferably one that is geographically close, to help answer their questions and encourage them. Setting up a monthly call or meeting can be helpful to both the mentor and the mentee. NCS National can facilitate this.
- 11) **A Web-based event platform** for local and regional events — This is a ticketing and RSVP system and also can be used for events that require money collection with pre-negotiated terms and non-profit fees. If and when your chapter is involved with require registration and booking of accommodations — regional retreats or holds special local events.
- 12) **Oswald Chambers' My Utmost for His Highest NCS Edition** is an NCS daily devotional classic — and is available to chapters and individuals in bulk or singles. We have created a special **David Bloom Commemorative Edition** to honor the NBC Reporter and NCS member who died in Iraq while covering Desert Storm.

I) Some Final Thoughts

NCS Long Term Vision

“Vision,” Jonathan Swift wrote, “is the ability to see the invisible.” Vision is what we desire at a future state that is beyond our grasp today. It is a mid-point, or the end point, we aspire to. And Vision is essential to life: as the Book of Proverbs says, **“without a vision the people perish.”**

NCS VISION

To inspire a global connected network of men who are committed to friendship with Jesus and with each other.

While NCS is clearly Christian and totally committed to Jesus as he has been proclaimed from the beginning, NCS is not a church, nor are we a church-related organization. We consider ourselves a movement of men who simply want to share their lives together and to be together in the presence of God. And we want to let our lives reflect Jesus with our families and in our communities.

In essence, The New Canaan Society is a social community of men committed to companionship and friendship and to the fulfillment of the two Great Commandments: ***Love God and Love Your Neighbor.***

We can dream about the future ... we can articulate our Vision and we can pursue what we believe is the course to move toward that Vision. Certainly, the implication of what NCS is and what NCS does, has international ramifications. Already we have chapters in Sydney and Dubai. But only God truly knows what lies ahead for NCS.

When Bill Wilson originally started what would come to be the AA movement, one has to wonder whether he would have ever dreamed there would come a time when AA meetings would number 5,000 meetings a week...in New York City alone!

As a movement of men committed to friendship, NCS addresses what Dr. Paul Vitz, retired Professor from New York University, has called "***the hunger for the analog.***" At a time, when everyone is overloaded with digital outputs on digital devices, when digital connectivity is virtually 24/7 and time gets compressed and relationships become highly mediated — there is an inner resonator that people have which calls out for analog connection... ***face-to-face relationships.***

Human beings are analog, not digital and we crave relational/personal connection. This involves a process of slower-paced involvement, or else entropy happens — which in an information sense is the ***loss of meaning*** .

For NCS, this emphasis on being highly analog is key, because in the pressure cooker of work and the economic challenges that men today face, the stresses are huge and time acceleration, desire to succeed, loneliness, seductions of all kinds — are present and at work in enormous intensity.

Our goal with everything we do is to get guys to be able to be together and to be open and honest.

We recognize, of course, the increasing role of digital communication and online engagement. Indeed, it our desire that we will integrate — perhaps uniquely — the analog and the digital in order to draw more men into friendship with each other and friendship with Jesus — here and abroad.

APPENDIX

- 1) The Values We Hold Close** (from NCS Website)
- 2) Insights From the Experience of Other Chapters**
- 3) Suggestions for Running a Chapter Meeting**
- 4) Our Name and Brand Identity: the NCS LOGO**
- 5) National Team & NCS Board** (please see the NCS website)

www.NewCanaanSociety.org

[SPACE LEFT INTENTIONLY BLANK]

1) The Values We Hold Close

The course and growth of NCS over many years have been steadied, we believe, by the way we've operated, without typical "Command & Control from the Top" organizational structure and instead had organic, decentralized growth. This has been guided, most of all, by a commitment to certain **Core Values**:

- **Friendship**
- **Living Life Together**
- **Safety & Trust**
- **Authenticity and Vulnerability**
- **Humor (*We don't take ourselves too seriously*)**
- **By Men, For Men... All Men**
- **Family Relationships As Primary**
- **Impacting Our Communities As a Faithful Presence**
- **Worship... *Like It Matters***

These Core Values are explained on the NCS Website and in what follows.

Friendship

Men in our culture have a hard time building lasting friendships. We do not have the aptitude for relationship and friendship that women have. What's more, men seem to have much less time. The culture does not put much value on friendship either; it's a culture that draws from the societal model where the ***individual has primacy over the community or group***.

The result is men do not get much of the benefit and blessing from relationships that are true friendships. And the issue with this sad state of affairs is that, for one, our Christian faith, is all about relationship. Said differently, men are literally robbed of one of the most important blessings in life, because we do not want to invest in, nor take time to be friends with other men.

Friendship for NCS is really the start of a journey of faith to a kind of wholeness that is, at once, discovery and transformation — deepening friendship with other men and with Jesus.

The notion of "friendship with Jesus" may seem an alien idea to some. But we know it is otherwise. The New Testament accounts tell us that Jesus ate with "publicans and sinners" and this was the basis for the smear campaign that he was a "friend of sinners." What those slanderers failed to see was that they, just as we, are all sinners needing to be rescued by such a Friend. We also know that he had 12 close friends, 3 in his inner circle and 1 that was an intimate friend.

Living Life Together

"NCS? It is just a movement of men who are committed to friendship with Jesus and friendship with each other. We laugh together, we cry together, we live life together. We really like to spend time together and to be with each other."

- Long Time "NCS'er"

NCS is not about organized, structured events, but it is about a commitment to **“partnership.”** That commitment to life together may be unspoken but present... to actually spend quality time getting to know each other by telling one’s story, by sharing the good, the bad and the awful, by being authentic and there for the other guys ... and letting the presence of Jesus work his healing, restoration and transformation.

Safety & Trust

Men find it hard to let down the barricades to their true self. We are so much into maintaining our “game face” and being in the marketplace just reinforces that.

At NCS, we go through a lot *together* ...and we *can* let down the walls. We are a group of guys, at the end of the day, who can talk through life’s tough stuff and no longer put on that “game face” and suck it up and report that all is good when in truth all is not so good.

NCS is more like **“let’s figure it out, support each other and talk things through.”** That is a key benefit of our getting together *as men*, because NCS is a safe place. Much like AA, what is said at NCS, stays at NCS.

NCS, like AA, *is* a place where people understand they are broken... We understand and acknowledge that we have made some bad choices... We come together and support each other — in a *safe* place — (as happens at AA) where we can process the personal issues in a spirit of grace and truth, to be with others that have done the same and can support each other.

Authenticity and Vulnerability

Friendship at NCS is built on being **real**. It is about how we connect soul to soul as men. It’s not about having another name in your digital contact file; it’s not about collecting some new business connections.

It is worth noting the difference between Authenticity and Vulnerability. Authenticity is being honest about where you are. Vulnerability goes one step farther and allows other guys into your life and invites their involvement. It is permission to speak into another’s life.

This kind of friendship is about relating in a deep, meaningful way, giving ourselves to another friend and to a close group of guys in the community where we can share life together, in open, honest and authentic relationship.

So if you ask an NCS’er whose been around for a while **what is friendship**, you’re likely to hear something like this:

A friend is someone you can open up to in honesty and share all of your life with, the good, the bad and the ugly...someone who knows what you are struggling with, how your marriage is, how your kids are doing, what your individual challenges and personal issues are... and someone who will be with you through it all...

At NCS, we come to understand that we can, and must be, **vulnerable** if we are to live authentically.

One of our favorite speakers at NCS, Tim Keller, once said ***a friend is someone who always lets you in and never lets you down.*** Keller has also noted that this bond of friendship is the moment when we say “**You too??**”

Humor (*we don't take ourselves too seriously*)

Newcomers to NCS find it amazing that guys like us could have so much fun... Actually, humor, good clean ribbing and joking around have been part and parcel of the NCS experience right from the beginning.

Humor is important to keep things in perspective and to help us realize we are not the center of the world — despite what our titles may be. Humor helps us to not take ourselves so seriously.

Since we often deal with pretty tough problems and dysfunctions — like marriage breakdown, family disorder, addictions, and failures in business and before God — we have learned that laughing about our common struggles helps all of us get through the rough spots. Humor breaks down the barriers to sharing and gives us some perspective.

The boundaries are pretty wide, but not disrespectful. Paradoxically, the fact that we don't take everything so seriously helps us to deal seriously with what really matters.

By Men, For Men... All Men

NCS is a movement of men, by men and for men. It's not that we do not like women. But when there are women around, we have a hard time being ourselves. It is tough enough to talk openly about fears, failures, addictions, bad attitudes in the presence of other men who know exactly what you are going through.

This has applied to our Speakers as well. While there is a lot that men can learn from women, we focus on what other men have discovered, struggled through and understood.

While NCS is ***exclusively for men***, we make a real effort to ensure that it is ***for all men***. At NCS, no one is turned away.

All the men who are going to an NCS meeting have some issue that they are dealing with — be it anger, lust, greed or any of the other “seven deadly sins.” So we do not turn anyone away for anything because we know that every one of us is struggling ...and we are helping each other work through whatever are the life issues.

Richard Rohr says it well: ***“God does not love us if we change. God loves us so that we can change.”*** (*Breathing Under Water*)

Family Relationships As Primary

Son, brother, husband, father and ***grandfather*** — each is a relational reality of a man's life — not a "role" to be played as if his life were a stage drama.

For many, even most, of the men who come to NCS, a displacement of these primary relationship realities has occurred. Becoming a professional, an executive, a worker, politician, military man or a hundred other "roles" become center stage and, all too often, push aside the most primary relationships of life. They get short shrift, if one is really honest about it.

We call that: **life out of balance**... because the real priorities are the ones closer to home.

Most of our men, as they spend time with others at NCS, soon recognize that you are not defined by what you **do**, but who you **are**... They come to be not only a friend of other guys, but a friend of Jesus and go deeper in their personal faith walk. That gets them seeing how important it is to lead their family spiritually and, for one thing, to involve their whole family in a local church.

Impacting Our Communities As a Faithful Presence

"He who is not angry when there is just cause for anger is immoral. Why? Because anger looks to the good of justice. And if you can live around injustice without anger, you are immoral as well as unjust."

– St. Thomas Aquinas

We live in a broken world. And those who come to be a part of NCS, in their own way, are broken people whether they realize it at the start or not.

But while NCS is a place for men to experience friendship together, faith and personal restoration, we are not all about "*us four and no more*" to use the old back country commonplace. No, NCS men realize that their personal transformation must have a resonance — in their families, in their business and in their greater community.

A verse from the New Testament informs the way we at NCS think about how our lives can, and must, reverberate beyond ourselves, into the community and the wider world. Jesus said:

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill can not be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bushel. Instead they put it on its stand and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:13-16)

In short, there is no true journey with Jesus, which does not express itself in service to others.

A local chapter of New Canaan Society provides a kind of launching pad for guys to serve, guys who are used to getting things done. And being marketplace guys — many of whom you could say are "Type A" personalities, when they focus on something whether that be a non-profit, a ministry, the poor in town or whatever it is — things really get going.

What flows out of NCS now ranges from helping the poor in a very local community to some things halfway around the world — in partnership and teamwork. (The NCS website for examples of what some NCS Chapters are doing in their communities.) This is put to word in the old proverb – **“It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.”**

Worship... Like It Matters

For a lot of men, worship is an experience of dryness infused with boredom. That is in part a result of not yet entering into a real friendship with Jesus, but it is often the legacy of a lot of religious observance that has lost its soul and misses the sheer delight of experiencing God’s grace.

Worship music can touch us in ways that simply do not happen in the rough and tumble world of work. Music can open hearts. As most of our new men have not sung their hearts out with a group of other men, NCS breaks a barrier right there.

Many Chapters now have incorporated shared songs and find real value in doing that; while others have not done so. One thing for sure, is that our worship is never meant to become “church,” so our music is largely contemporary.

At NCS, we take times of worship so seriously, everyone actually enjoys it. For one thing, being part of a group of men singing songs of praise to God can be incredibly joyous and moving. In fact, a high point of our Annual Retreat for many men are the moments of shared singing. If NCS had a theme song, it would have to be **“Knowing You”** (written by Graham Kendrick). Singing the rich melody and lyrics to this song is so heart warming that NCS men have been known to be moved to tears:

Singing songs of praise is just one part of what it means to worship. Drawing close to God in ***moments of silence and reverence*** is just as important. NCS’ers know that the heart of every man is enriched by God’s presence in those deep moments of silence.

2) Insights from the Experience of Other NCS Chapters

Some Chapter Case Studies

We believe the best way to learn is to hear directly from other chapters in how they developed, so this section includes a number of case studies: *Bergen County* (New Jersey), *Winston-Salem* and *Orlando* as well as “newer” Chapters like *San Francisco* and *Houston*. There are clear similarities among them, but also some local variations in how each chapter developed operates.

The flexibilities demonstrate that NCS is about what works *locally* to build a community for men by men. And in the final analysis, this Playbook is a guide, not a system of rigid rules as if this were a “plan from the top” old style military strategy.

(Curiously, for military buffs, NCS's planning approach is more like the flexibility of the best German military strategy training: lay out the Objective, but let the field commanders have wide flexibility in how they implement — based on a close reading of “on the ground” conditions.

A) Interview with Tom Lane of the Bergen County NCS Chapter

In Tom's own words:

“The NCS chapter in Bergen County really began at the NCS retreat in 2005. I went with my best friend and the experience that we had was powerful and convicting. On the drive back to New Jersey, we decided that we have to start a group in our area.

We gathered six to eight men several times that Spring to have exploratory discussions about the concept of starting a men's group in New Jersey.

In the Fall, we started meeting at my house twice a month. We got a lot of coaching from the NCS chapter in Connecticut and visited their meetings to see how they were doing things. At their suggestion, we kept the group small originally and made sure we built a strong core group.

We asked BJ Weber to come out and speak around Thanksgiving, and we each invited a friend or two. We had found a musician by then and he led our worship.

Our group began to grow after that. We continued to meet in my house for the first year, averaging about 20-30 men.

Our breakfast meeting occurred the following Fall when we had Ron Hutchcraft as a speaker. Knowing that he would draw a bigger crowd, we secured space at a local golf club. We served a full hot breakfast, brought in a quality sound system, and our worship leader brought a worship team. Over 90 men came for that meeting!

We realized we couldn't meet in my house any longer so we continued to use the golf club that season. After the Hutchcraft meeting, we jumped from 20-30 men to 50-60, and by the end of the season, we had grown to 70-90. We realized we were out of the growth potential at our current site, so secured a swim and tennis club to kick off the third season.

We now average 100-120. Two other New Jersey groups have started as well.

The real power behind our NCS chapter is the anticipation the men feel about Fridays. We get a chance to connect with each other, and spend quality time together. For most of us, the Friday meetings are the highlight of any week.

What we've discovered is that our chapter functions best when we keep it non-churchy, a bit edgy, and entirely optional. We tell guys we do not take attendance. We pay attention to quality-market place guys care about that. They are tired of meetings in church basements; we have great speakers, good food, and high-powered worship. It works. Guys want to come to enjoy this

experience and be around each other. When men come to NCS and see the energy level, get challenged by good speakers, and see deep friendships between guys modeled out, they want more. It is also a “safe” environment for bringing guys who don’t attend church at all.

There is a core of seven leaders. We consider each other best friends. We spend a lot of time together apart from NCS chapter meetings. We are all committed to this adventure. We have an annual retreat in Florida for just the leaders. It’s a time to deepen our friendships, do planning work for the year ahead, and just have fun together.

NCS plays a crucial role in my life by giving me a stronger and deeper foundation, not just for my faith but also in every aspect of my relationship- at home, at work and with my friends. An important theme we stress is our desire to be better husbands and fathers. And also better friends. For me, NCS is a time of being with my best friends, which has enormous benefits to my faith and other relationships in life.”

B) Recap of An Interview with David Robinson of the Orlando, FL NCS Chapter

Eight years ago, David Robinson was invited by New York City friends to visit an NCS meeting in Connecticut. Since Dave worked for a ministry non-profit focused on reaching out to executive leadership, he was intrigued by the opportunity to see Wall Street men gathered to celebrate commitment to Christ and to each other. He invited his close friend, Michael Tremain, to accompany him.

That meeting was an eye-opener. They discovered something that they knew was missing in their own geography. Their experience and subsequent conversations convinced them that they needed to bring an NCS chapter to Orlando.

Gathering a small core of men, Dave and Michael determined to launch a chapter as soon as possible. With Michael Tremain’s willingness to use his home, the “Parks Society” Chapter began two months after their visit to Connecticut. They followed the format of the original NCS, serving a simple breakfast, opening with prayer and a few worship songs, followed by a speaker and closing promptly to allow everyone to commute to work. They were fortunate to have a few close resident musicians who led the worship. Dave had a wide variety of connections with various business and non-profit leaders and usually handled the arrangement for speakers. That allowed the chapter to hear from men who were engaged in everything from film production to private equity to street ministry to running some of Orlando’s largest public corporations.

The group grew by word-of-mouth invitation. From humble beginnings of 10 to 12, the chapter was pushing 30 to 40 by the end of the fourth year. Michael’s living room was no longer adequate space, so the chapter moved to its present location at Casa Feliz, a renovated historical home in Winter Park. Laughter and warm, engaging hospitality have become hallmarks of the fellowship. The atmosphere was perfect for early morning community and the size quickly jumped to 60. Meetings are held every other Friday from September to June.

Leadership in Orlando chapter is an informal group of friends who have stepped up to take on the necessary tasks of running the organization. The core consists of men who were friends before NCS arrived on the scene. Since then, others have been added. The leadership is just as organic as the membership itself, growing out of men who see the vision and want to participate.

At the suggestion of several members, NCS Orlando is now preparing to launch a small groups discussion series. These groups will gather on the off-Fridays at the Casa Feliz “clubhouse,” and four modules are being designed to explore the biblical concepts behind the NCS motto, “Live Grace, Speak Truth, Right Wrong, Follow the King.”

This year, NCS Orlando inaugurated the “NCS Bowlinski Cup” golf trophy to recognize the winning team in a friendly Ryder Cup-type completion between NCS Winston-Salem and NCS Orlando. This idea originated as a way to have fun, fellowship and share ideas among chapters in the context of a guys road trip with Orlando as the first host team. We hope this will become a yearly event that includes other chapters.

The annual NCS retreat is a major emphasis of the Orlando chapter. Members are encouraged to attend as a group, and a significant part of bonding between members has occurred in and around the retreat. The experience is always powerful and enriching and usually becomes the impetus for inviting more men to begin experiencing deeper relationships.

C) Interview with Jay Helvey of the Winston-Salem NCS Chapter

Jay Helvey’s background with JP Morgan made him curious when he first heard about the New Canaan Society. As a result, when Jay was invited to attend the 2005 retreat by a member of the Chicago Fellowship, he accepted the invitation and encouraged four other friends from the Winston-Salem area to go with him. The experience convinced them that they should start a chapter in Winston-Salem.

Jay received a copy of the original Chapter Playbook from the NCS founders. He invited twelve men that he knew to join him for dinner at his home to discuss the prospect of a chapter. Eleven of the twelve men said they would support the effort. They began to meet for prayer and planning and eventually determining that they would use the streaming video sessions from New Canaan as the focal point for their meetings. The initial meeting time was set and invitations were sent out. Everything looked good. All the equipment was in place and tested.

Then God changed the plan.

The day of the first meeting the video feed failed. Scrambling to do something, Jay asked one of the participants to share a personal story with their walk with God. The results were amazing. The group started to bond around its own members. During the next few months, the group met intermittently, establishing deeper and deeper relationships with each other. They soon determined that they needed a larger meeting space. Once again, God seemed to direct. One of the members of the group, with out prompting, offered his newly opened restaurant. It was

ideally located and had an atmosphere conducive to a means group, complete with fireplace, sports-bar and antlers on the wall. To this day, the restaurant has provided the ideal place for the chapter meetings.

In September of 2005 the first meeting was held in the restaurant. About 30 men attended. Since then the growth has continued. Today the meetings are about 150-200 men, every week.

The Winston-Salem Chapter attempted to follow the outline in the Playbook but soon discovered that variation and adaption was more important than mechanical execution. They tried to find people to play the roles of comedian, music leader, worship leader, etc. but felt that God was leading them in a different direction. Most of their "program" today is a combination of guest speakers and members sharing personal faith stories. In fact, worship music has never become a standard part of their meetings.

There is typically lots of socializing before and after the general meeting. Many small groups have spun off, providing the men with opportunities for deeper connection and intimacy. Humor is certainly part of the meeting but it seems to be the result of general banter rather than directed by an individual. The chapter does have a specifically dedicated "prayer meister" who leads the men in prayer before the speaker gets up. He injects some NCS humor along with a spiritual "thought for the week" and blesses the meeting with prayer. Jay describes the NCS chapter like this: "It's not work, not school, not church and not Bible study- and if you don't have fun, don't come back!" The attendance keeps growing and the mailing list now is over 500. There is a good cross-section of occupation interests.

The leadership places a lot of emphasis on prayer. Several men act as prayer warriors to handle prayer requests from the men. Nametags are used at the meetings and database management of the e-mail list is managed by one person. Funding is still handled principally by Jay and the leadership team. Provision is made for weekly contribution for breakfast items and normal operating expenses. Otherwise, there is an annual request to the members for contributions and special solicitations (done privately) to fund exceptional opportunities. Once a year the chapter passes the hat around for contributions, but leadership covers the monthly deficit.

As Jay Helvey, Chapter Leader at Winston Salem, has stated:

1. "NCS is relational to its core. The first relationship is active prayer to seek God's intention and blessing for a chapter launch followed by more prayer requesting Him to send His saints and those whom He is calling to the gatherings."

2. "You need a core group to commit to launching a chapter to both encourage others to attend and to model friendship with one another. Once established (small 'e') move forward in faith."

3. "Pray for Jesus to bring speakers, both from the local group and from elsewhere. Pray for the Holy Spirit to anoint the testimony with power to change hearts. Wait on Him."

4. "Ask Jesus for laborers to support the weekly meetings. His timing is perfect."

5. "Avoid over organizing. Allow for discomfort which comes with flexibility when yielding to the Holy Spirit. However, shoot for excellence within the constraints of allowing the Holy Spirit freedom to move."

6. "Embrace intercessory prayer."

7. "Do not burden anyone. Invite Partnership. NCS is a round table and everyone has ample relational capital in their "capital accounts" if they are showing up and willing to be transparent with one another."

8. "Observe those who are answering His call. Obedience is inspiring and infectious. Encourage those who are going and doing. Report back to the group without shaming folks to get involved."

9. "Prepare for spiritual attacks by the enemy as hearts change. Stay in the Word and in prayer."

10. "Guard against any religious spirit taking root. Humor and humility is the best anecdote."

In how the Winston Salem chapter was birthed, Jay felt a call from Jesus and responded. He prayed for His direction with inviting the initial group of men and prayed for a location. In the early days, Jay prayed personally over the nametags. Every week he prayed for the speaker and for Him to send the men intended to join the gathering. Jay prayed for laborers and they have emerged. Many others have joined and lead in these prayers.

Jay says, "invite men to friendship with each other based on friendship with Jesus. The only requirement is to show up and be real with others. From that expect a Kingdom Partnership to form, which will allow men to catch the vision of the power and privilege that flows from being a worker approved by God, a priest and a King. Life comes alive!"

Key facts on the path taken at Winston-Salem from Jay's actual chronology are very instructive. His summary below reveals the kind of deep personal commitment needed for a successful NCS Chapter:

- Invited by friends in Chicago to attend the NCS Retreat at Mohonk Mountain House in early 2005

- Called by the Holy Spirit to start a NCS chapter in Winston Salem
- Read Oswald Chambers' teaching which reminded me that when called by the HS we should act and burn our bridges
- I invited approximately 12 men whom I knew to my home for a steak dinner and nice wine to discuss launching a chapter
- As a recovering institutional/wall street guy, I prepared a power point presentation to make the case
- 11 to 12 men agreed to join the effort to launch
- In May 2005 we began meeting in Chris Perry's home. Our initial plan was to watch the online, real time content of CT speaker
- All technology was purchased (flat screen in CP's home and computer) and initial test was ok but at launch nothing happened
- We asked Phil Ziesemer to share with us from his story and a verse and it was good.
- We continued to meet bi-weekly with a different member of the group sharing his story
- My wife tells me that she found a place for us to meet for NCS (River Birch Lodge). Scott Gerding who is the owner is part of our launch group
- I do not say anything to Scott but pray for a meeting place
- Scott offers the River Birch Lodge in late summer of 2005
- In Sept 2005 we decide to move to the RBL and ask each man would to invite a friend or two. We had about 30 men at our first meeting in September 2005 in the
- I prayed for workers and prayed over each name tag
- We focused on personal testimonies to encourage others as we saw God active in men's lives and their focus on Jesus
- In the early days, I was involved with breakfast, weekly emails and name tags. I prayed harder for workers and partners in the movement and workers and partners emerged. Parker Umstead stepped forward with a 501c3. Different men took the name tags, and weekly emails, and breakfast
- I continued to pray and went to prayer mountain in Korea; many were interceding for our group
- We tapped into the NCS network through relationships from Jim and others. Jim came; Eric Metaxas, Hal Rosser, Bill Jolly, Father William, Dudley Hall, Tom Cole, Mac McNally, Paul Michalski, Matt Evans, Dave Robinson, Scott Morgenthaler
- We now meet three times weekly about 46 weeks each year
- Our speakers have come from our group and from all over the world. For example, we have had the local shoe shine specialist from the airport to the former Chief of Naval Operations; former prisoners and business leaders and college Presidents.
- We strive for excellence but hold on to the leadership of the movement very loosely. As I write this email I do not have any speakers beyond this Friday but Jesus sends us speakers every week
- The key to a successful chapter is prayer and covenantal relationships with other men who are willing to seek Jesus in prayer and scripture and who have the courage to be obedient and go ...
- We are alert to open doors through which we can help connect members and pastors in the institutional church with one another in our city
- We are about partnership in the Kingdom based on relational capital built upon faith in Jesus

The following chapters are among the newest in NCS and offer some practical suggestions as well for you to consider as you plan:

D) San Francisco, CA

- The San Francisco Chapter has been meeting since September 2013. In a Q&A, SF Chapter leaders offered these comments.

When starting out with the San Francisco Chapter, what did you do well and not so well?

Probably too early to tell what we didn't do well, but here's what worked:

- Having Jim speak with our core group during one of his trips through SF was impactful to our team. This interaction shaped future core group discussions. Someone with NCS experience would be beneficial to envisioning the leaders of any prospective group.
- We closely followed the NCS playbook
- We focused first on the core group recruitment, getting bonds going among that team and making sure we had prayerful alignment before we started holding chapter meetings. We also had a deep enough bench that if a few guys couldn't attend the group would hold together nicely and could execute the morning program (we started with 12 men in our core group and have since added 2 more).
- We're focused on keeping things simple but doing those simple things with excellence per the NCS DNA.
- We distributed the work so the core group was engaged.
- Our meetings are focused, high quality and the speakers have been impactful. God is showing up which is the most important part.

How did you build your core group dynamic?

Some of us had NCS experience having attended other chapters so there was a common understanding of the importance of NCS. There was an intentional and prayerful effort to find likeminded men who had a heart for what God could do through NCS in San Francisco. As the group began to be identified we started having periodic lunches together to discuss and pray about what we might do in San Francisco. In addition to the lunches, we did an overnight trip as a team which allowed for more social bonds to be formed and discussion about the vision of the chapter.

It was at this overnight trip that we picked our first target meeting date and made decisions about the frequency of the meetings, divisions of labor, meeting format and so on. Even after the chapter started meeting formally we still have quarterly lunches as a core group to check in with one another and discuss chapter business/planning.

When did you decide to expand and officially open your doors?

During our overnight trip which was roughly a month prior to the first meeting date.

Can you give a brief synopsis of how you've grown and matured as a chapter?

We're still in our first year, but we're starting to establish an identity. We've learned how to operationalize the morning meetings and execute those with consistency and quality. Our next push is to assess whether the relational connections are being formed among the men who do attend. Getting guys to show up is great, but having them establish meaningful connections where they're doing "life together" is really what we're after. We're accomplishing the former, but not sure about the latter and that will be the true measure of success. Check with us again in a year!

Do you have a story or two about how the chapter has impacted your own life or the life of someone else?

Without getting into details, we are familiar with several situations where men in the group are taking initiative to minister to, and encourage, others who are going through challenging life circumstances.

What advice would you give a new chapter leader?

Get the core group dynamics right and don't start the open meetings until this is nailed down. Be mindful of the gift-mix of the men in the core leadership group and be practical about what's needed. For example, in our first few months we received last minute notice that we needed to find a new venue at least for a few weeks. One of our guys knows SF extremely well and with a few phone calls we had another venue and continued without interruption or much organizational stress.

Having people in the core group that are well connected to the community you're serving is important. You also want some "angel investors" among the core group who are willing to underwrite early chapter expenses until you get bank accounts and more can contribute.

Once a chapter starts meeting, keep it simple but execute at a high level of quality and consistency (things like having name tags each week, a group of core guys designated as informal greeters looking for new attendees to make them feel welcome, consistency with the MC (one or two people sharing this role)).

The SF Chapter's meeting format goes like this:

7:00-7:30 - Social time (guys arrive, fill out name tags, bagels and coffee are served).

7:30-7:40 - General announcements from an MC, introductions, some sort of question that allows for an easy answer (who are you rooting for in the Super Bowl, etc). We have recently added the opportunity for one person to provide a 1-2 minute overview of a non-profit or other social endeavor that they are involved in. During this window we also set up the speaker for the day. We've also tried to maintain consistency in the MC role so even though the format and speakers may change that there is some predictability and rhythm to the meeting.

7:40-8:10 - Speaker. We started with the core group taking turns sharing their story and have added in a mix of outside or NCS-connected speakers to the format.

8:10-8:15 – Closing/wrap up. Prayer. Some of us stay behind in case any of the guys want some private prayer time.

E) Houston, Texas Chapter

In a Q&A, Houston Chapter leadership offered these comments:

How long have you been meeting?

Since June 2011 as a larger group. The leaders met for 4 months prior to that.

What is the format for a typical meeting?

We meet at 6:30 am with coffee, small breakfast snack, 2 songs, prayer, rotating leader provides message, go around the group and share, close in prayer.

When starting out, what did you do well and not so well?

We have grown steadily but have stalled at a meeting size of 15-25.

How did you build your core group dynamic?

We were put together by Tom Lane (Benjamin Thomas, Scott Brown, Madison Mauze and myself) Tom Vann and Jonathan Lusk are now key leaders for the group.

Can you give a brief synopsis of how you've grown and matured as a chapter?

Pretty Steady growth. It took a while to land on a standard meeting format that worked for all.

Do you have a story or two about how the chapter has impacted your own life or the life of someone else?

Everyone has been positively impacted. Those who have gone to a conference have benefitted more in most cases.

What advice would you give a new chapter leader?

Be patient, set a meeting time and format and stay consistent, make everyone feel wanted and involved. Realize that someone has to play the role of administrator.

3) Suggestions for Running A Chapter Meeting

Once you are ready to go, follow a simple approach. The following is merely suggestive of how some Chapters do it. You will no doubt want to move to your own approach as you go forward.

- **Food:** Breakfast buffet style so it won't interfere with talking, greeting and listening to others. Let the community warm up over good food.

- **Music:** If you're using music, sing a few (not many) songs that focus the group on God. Be sure to provide printed words so that everyone can join the choir. (This step is entirely optional. Some chapters use it. Some don't.)
- **Opening Greeting:** Let the host greet everyone. Keep your announcements short. Always let newcomers know they are welcome and how they can connect with others.
- **Prayer:** Offer a short opening prayer
- **Speaker Introduction:** Welcome and introduce the speaker (be certain to confirm in advance that the speaker must finish up in time for men to leave for work)
- **The "Talk":** The speaker (who may be a part of the membership or an outside guest) usually talks about 30 minutes or less, then opens the session for questions if time permits.
- **Meeting Sign-Off:** Close the gathering with prayer, a song, a gentle "benediction" or some action that is unique to your chapter (for example, Orlando usually prays for the Speaker).
- **Invite Them Back:** Dismiss with an invitation to come back to the next meeting — time and date
- **Stick Around Afterwards:** The core team, or someone from the core, sticks around for those who want to ask questions, talk a little longer or need help or prayer.
- **Meeting Frequency:** Meet on a regular basis as determined by the core team, but at least 2 times a month. Meeting together any less than that doesn't develop community.
- **Humor Always:** Oh yes, and don't forget that lubricating the meeting with some light humor goes a long way to making things welcoming and easy going — especially for newcomers.

4) Our Name and Brand Identity: the NCS LOGO

OUR NAME

New Canaan Society gets its name from several places. Most directly from the Manhattan bedroom community of **New Canaan, Connecticut** where Jim Lane, our Founder, lived at the time. First a dozen or so men and eventually over 200 gathered which led to the first six NCS chapters.

Then there is the Biblical reference is of the promised land of **Canaan**. For NCS, the analogy is our leaving behind the bondage of any fragmented, and, often broken, lives and journeying toward a "new" Canaan, a place where we are connected, where life together is richer, more fulfilling and empowered with God's grace.

The fact that the word "Canaan" means "merchant" or "trader" also seemed apt: since NCS'ers are men from the marketplace, the moniker suits us well.

The word “Society” is a purposeful completion to our name. We are not a club or religious organization. We are an intentional community, a fraternity of men for men by men, who are committed to friendship with each other and friendship with God. Just as 19th century English parliamentarian William Wilberforce used the term “Society” over 15 times in various endeavors to end slavery and reform the moral condition of Britain, we became the “**New Canaan Society**” — a community of men committed to hospitality, companionship, friendship and the fulfillment of the two Great Commandments: **Love God and Love Your Neighbor**.

OUR LOGO

We chose the archer as a symbol of the strong friendship between Jonathan and David in the Bible.

David’s good friend Jonathan was the son of King Saul, and the rightful heir to the throne. When God clearly anointed David, Jonathan was faithful and honoring to God and his friend David.

King Saul wanted to kill David to reinstate his own son and made many attempts to capture and kill David.

During one episode David was coming to Saul’s home to seek peace and Jonathan thought he could be in grave danger. They made a plan that Jonathan would shoot his arrows deep past the target if Saul was setting a trap for David and this would be his sign to flee for his life. The arrow was long, the clear warning that David was in danger.

David’s success as one of the greatest kings in history was made possible by the sacrificial friendship of his friend Jonathan. We see this as one of the most striking examples of a committed, true, friendship.

5) National Team & NCS Board

(please see the NCS website)