

Shepherd's Guide

Leading Small Groups
at Grace Baptist Church



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Why we have Small Groups

We believe that our mission at Grace Baptist Church is to follow the commission that Christ gave to his disciples:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. Matt 28:19-20

Jesus calls us to be disciple makers and our Small Group Ministry is a critical part of discipling believers and equipping them to be disciple makers. Jesus ministered to large crowds, but he focused much of his time and attention on discipling a small group of people who continued his disciple making ministry after he ascended to Heaven. We believe that we fulfill our mission as we are used by God to Transform, Equip, and Send. Our Small Groups help to *transform* adults as they study God's word and share life together, *equip* them for ministry and service, and *send* them to share, make disciples and serve.

Transformation

Our transformation (or sanctification) begins when we are saved and continues until we reach Heaven. Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us freer from sin and more like Christ. Small Groups play a vital role in the transformation of the believer:

...from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:16)



Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed... (James 5:16)

Through the sharing of God's word together in Small Groups, we learn to renew our minds and learn to live free from the bondage of sin:

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
(Romans 12:2)*

*... "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
(John 8:31-32)*

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. (Colossians 1:9-10)

To learn more about the process of transformation see *Transformational Discipleship: How People Really Grow* (Geiger, Kelley, Nation).

Equipping

Jesus prepared his disciples to be disciple makers - for the life of faith and for ministry. He disciplined them as he shared life with them. Our Small Groups are focused on training rather than teaching – for preparing for ministry and sending. Teaching is a necessary part of training, but the objective is



different – in our Small Groups, we are always thinking about how what we learn can be applied to help the Small Group members live the life of faith and be better prepared for ministry. Ultimately Jesus is the one who equips:

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20-21)

For additional study, see 2 Peter 1:3-8 and Ephesians 4:15-16.

Every Small Group member needs to be equipped with several fundamental skills and practices to prepare them to feed themselves and for ministry:

- Telling our faith story
- Understanding and sharing the gospel
- Studying the Bible and applying it to our lives
- Praying and listening to God
- Understanding our identity in Christ
- Making disciples
- Understanding our calling and spiritual gifts

Our church has resources and training available to help you equip your Small Group with these fundamental skills and practices. Some members of each Small Group will need to be trained and disciplined as Co-Leaders, preparing them to lead their current Small Group or another as God leads them.

Sending

As believers, we receive the blessing of God's love and salvation, and in turn we serve, minister and disciple others. A



key to our transformation and growth comes as we share God's love with others:

*Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said,
'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"* (John 7:38)

*"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill
cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under
a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.
In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that
they may see your good works and give glory to your Father
who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:14-16)*

Grace Small Groups help to launch, encourage, and celebrate the service and ministry of its members.



Roles of a Small Group Leader

The Small Group Leader has many roles. Being a Small Group Leader is truly a God-sized position that can only be done with God's strength, wisdom and enabling. This list is not intended to overwhelm or intimidate, but to guide our thinking on the breadth of the responsibility that we have as Small Group Leaders.

Shepherd

The Small Group Leader is primarily a shepherd – modeled on the Great Shepherd – Jesus (Heb 13:20). The Bible portrays God and Jesus as our shepherd (Isa 40:11, Ezk 34:11-12, Jer 31:10, Psalms 23:1-2 and 100, John 10:11-16) and describes the wonderful way that they guide, protect, and care for us. The Bible also describes people who were called to be shepherds of God's people:

I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 23:4)

See also Matt 9:36, 1 Peter 5:2-4, and Eph 4:11-13. As Jesus discipled Peter, he challenged him to think about demonstrating his love for Christ by being a shepherd to other believers (John 21:15-17). A shepherd prays, cares for and encourages the sheep. They are always seeking the best food (God's Word) that their sheep need to equip them for life and ministry.

Follower

The Small Group Leader is a Christ follower. The most important thing that they can convey to their sheep is how to



follow after Christ and how to depend on him for what they need.

Listener

The Small Group Leader is a good listener. They listen carefully to what is on the hearts and minds of the sheep (Prov 18:13) so that they can discern how to answer and care for them.

Guide

The Small Group Leader acts as a guide to point people toward Jesus and his word:

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. (Colossians 1:28)

The goal is to develop sheep who are dependent and connected to Christ, not to the leader.

Prayer

One of the most important things we must do as leaders is to pray for our sheep (Colossians 1:9-10). As we believe in the importance of prayer and that God answers our prayers, there is no better way to care for those in our group.



Equipping a Co-Leader

One of the most important things you can do as a Small Group Leader is to pray about and begin to encourage someone in your Small Group to be a Co-Leader. This is a key step toward making disciples who *make* disciples:

And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2 Tim 2:2)

The Co-Leader should be someone who seeks to be obedient to the teachings of God's word. They can fill in for the Small Group Leader when they are absent (however, this should not be the only time that they lead the group, so that they can be observed and coached). They can also move into the role of the Small Group Leader if the current leader has to move or step down. Finally and most importantly, the Co-Leader can be called to start a new Small Group as God continues to connect new people into groups at our church.



Balancing Group Organization

Each Small Group Leader has several organizational / administrative responsibilities.

<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Take Attendance	This is one of the most fundamental measures of group health – how often does the group meet and how regularly do members attend? This can also help you to determine who needs extra follow-up.
Have Regular Social Activities	Relationships are key to connections and for members to know each other well enough that they become comfortable sharing life together. Seek opportunities to do things together in addition to your regular study time.
Share the Load	Seek help with the care and activities of the group by asking for assistance with taking attendance, communicating with the group, planning activities, etc.
Stay in Touch	Regularly reach out to members of your group (phone calls, texts, social media, letters, visits, etc.). This is especially important for those who are starting to miss group meeting times. If someone has moved or no longer wants to attend the group, ask that they be removed from the group roll.



<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Coordinate Social Media	Our church has responsibilities and liabilities when it comes to social media associated with the church and its ministries. If you set up some kind of social media, web page, etc., please coordinate this with the Small Groups Pastor.
Coordinate Study Material	There are many outstanding Bible studies and Small Group resources available, however, there are some resources that are controversial and in some cases are best not to use. Please coordinate your resource choices with the Small Groups Pastor.
Attend Quarterly Small Group Leader Meetings and other Training Opportunities	The role of a Small Group Leader is challenging! There is always room to grow as a leader, discipler, and teacher. Make it a priority to attend the quarterly meetings and training opportunities to be better equipped to transform and equip your sheep.
Coordinate Absences and Cancellations	Let the Small Groups Pastor know when you are absent or your group meeting is canceled. This will help inform people who might not have gotten the word and avoid the possibility of bringing guests to a group that is not meeting.
Difficult situation or Topic	Contact the Small Group Pastor for help and prayer support.



Resources

As the leader of your group, you should take an active role in choosing what your group will study based on what you discern is most needed (not just by popular demand). This can be a book or passage of the Bible (i.e. Genesis) or can be a topical study. The church will pay the first \$5 of topical books you need (group members pay the difference). If you choose to use Lifeway quarterly material, like the Gospel Project, the church will pay in full (cost is less than \$5 per book). The church will also pay the cost for the leaders guide/kit or book for the group leader.

How to pick a book? See below for several ideas:

- We have copies of many studies/leader kits that have been used in the past in a "library" in the Grace House - feel free to come and browse or borrow to make a decision. A list of these resources is also available in a spreadsheet.
- If you have a topic in mind, but not a book:
 - Check with the Small Group Pastor for suggestions
 - Check with other Small Group Leaders (our Yahoo Group is one way)
 - Look on a good publisher's website like Lifeway, Navigators, or InterVarsity Press

Please coordinate your resource choices with the Small Groups Pastor.



Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28: 18-20





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