

# **SMALL GROUP HANDBOOK**

*Small Group Leader*

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## WELCOME TO THE SMALL GROUPS TEAM

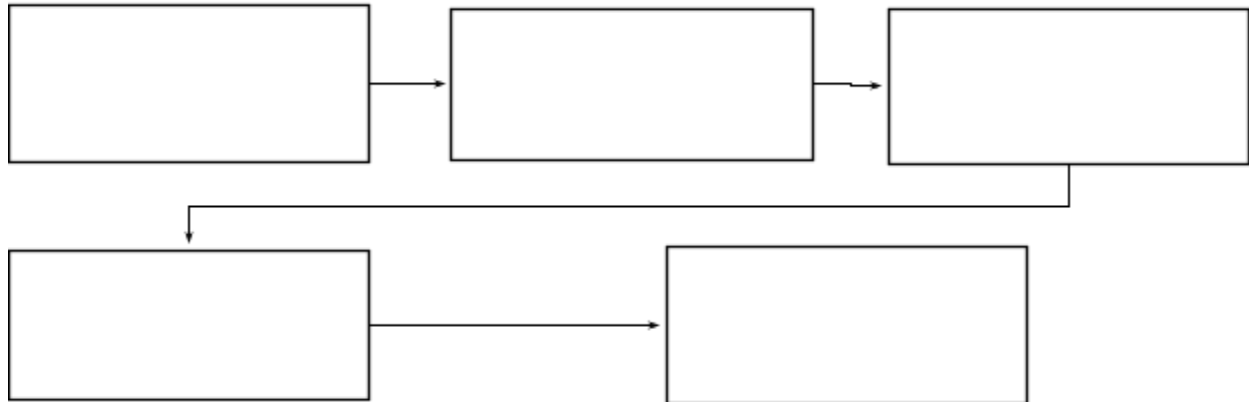
*We believe significant life change takes place in the context of intentional relationships. A small group is a place where real life and real issues are discussed. It is an environment where people celebrate the successes and good times of life, as well as comfort one another in the tough and disappointing times. It's a place to be encouraged, equipped, and challenged as we follow Jesus.*

*Thank you for leading a small group! Whether you are a new leader or a veteran, we have intentionally designed this resource to help you **lead people to experience life change through authentic community, meaningful relationships, and spiritual growth.***

*"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." Acts 2:42-47*

Biblical community is recorded throughout scripture and most notably in the book of Acts after the formation of The Church when 3,000 new believers were baptized! The disciples nurtured these new followers of Jesus through both large gathering and small groups of people who meet together in homes.

## ONBOARDING PROCESS SMALL GROUP LEADERS



We are so glad you've decided to join the Small Groups Team! We appreciate you and cannot wait to see you live out your God-given purpose by helping people experience authentic community, meaningful relationships, and spiritual growth.

Here's what you can expect while onboarding:

- A personalized approval process including a background check & new leader interview.
- Small Group Leader training, which provides training to assist you in leading your small group.
- Upon completion of new leader approval, you will be given permission to Group Vital database to set-up your small group & access small group resources.
- You will be provided a Small Groups Coach to assist you throughout your onboarding process & also while leading a small group.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Small Groups Department is a team that come together in a collaborative approach to create clear pathway for people to find freedom.

**Director of Small Group:** The Director of Small Group is ultimately responsible for oversight of the vision of Small Groups for the Church in partnership with campuses. This person establishes priorities for Small Groups and methods for the organization at large. He or she works in collaboration with campuses to create strategies that help people find freedom in small groups.

**Campus Senior Coordinator:** Responsible for the overall leadership, administration, and growth of the Small Groups at the campus under direct supervision from Campus Pastor. Manage day-to-day functions and integration of the Small Groups and Pastoral Care at campus. In addition, oversees, coordinate, and implement plans for recruiting new leaders and coaches, leadership development and leader retention to sustain growth in all hubs.

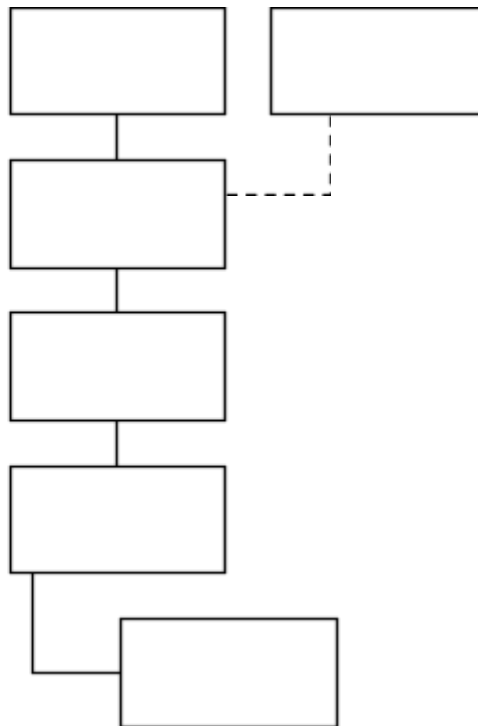
**Campus Area Coordinator:** Responsible for the leadership, administration, and growth of a specific type of small groups including care of small group coaches & small group leaders.

- COED
- Freedom
- Men
- Women

**Campus Small Group Coach:** Responsible for the providing hands-on coaching for small group leaders in addition to supporting the care needs of the Small Group leader.

**Small Group Leader:** lead a group of individuals in a small group setting by creating an environment that fosters authentic community, authentic relationships, and spiritual growth.

**ORGANIZATIONAL CHART:**



## **OUR CULTURAL VALUES**

We believe that the values we portray as part of this team should mimic the values our church holds to be important. Below are some established ideas and examples of what it looks like to live out each value on the Small Groups Team.

### **Love God**

- Stay spiritually nourished as we encourage spiritual growth in of those participating in small groups.
- We are committed to prioritizing and cultivating spiritual disciplines including prayer, fasting, reading God's word consistently and making regular church attendance a priority.

### **Love People**

- As small group leaders, we are called upon to care for those we lead. The most basic pastoral care needs can be addressed within the context of small groups and the friendships formed there. When someone is hospitalized or laid off, has a baby or a difficult boss, or loses a family member, we want the small group to rally around them, to be a supportive community. This can be as simple as serving as a listening ear when they're dealing with relational issues or texting them to check in when they've been having a tough week at work. Some of this is so obvious that we don't even think of it as care, but as normal human interaction. But it's extremely important.
- How we build community by encouraging and facilitating connections outside of regular meetings, you demonstrate the priority of relationships.
- Leading people in their next steps in their spiritual growth including salvation, water baptism, attending growth track and more is an outward display of our love for people.

### **Pursue Excellence**

- Be prepared for your small group each time you meet.
- Start & end your small group on time.
- Communicate with your small group consistently
- Take time to share how the group will flow from week to week. This can include things like explaining the times you will begin and end the group, how discussion or group activities will happen, and how group members can share prayer requests or best engage in the group

## **Be Life-Giving**

- Small Group Leaders should be the chief encourager of the small group. Encourage your small group consistently by sharing a scripture.
- Prayer is a foundation of our church, it is important for your Small Group and also brings life to a situation.
- Avoid controversial topics including politics in your group discussion.

## **OUR LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES**

### Cast Vision

- Communicate the mission with those you lead & connect people to it.
- Inspire people to be a part of small groups.

### Communicate Clearly, Often, and Honestly

- Create clear expectations.
- Provide consistent communication about small group life and regular check in with small group participants.

### Create Opportunity

- Empower people and bring them along with you. Provide opportunities for others to own pieces of the small group experience including leading a discussion, praying, etc.
- Look for potential. The next small group leader is already in your small group, and you have the unique opportunity to develop them.

### Cultivate an Environment of “We”.

- Be loyal to the small group.
- Embrace collaboration.
- Love sacrificially.

### Convey an Attitude of Hunger

- Seek to grow your own leadership.
- Connect with your Coach on a consistent basis.

## EXPECTATIONS

**Small Group Leader** – The leader a group of 8-10 individuals in a small group setting by creating an environment that fosters authentic community, authentic relationships, and spiritual growth.

- Creates space for your small group to consistently gather throughout the semester.
- Takes attendance for your small group within Group Vitals.
- Prays over and checks in with your small group participants throughout the week.
- Identifies apprentice leaders who have potential to lead as a Small Group leader in the future and develops them as needed.
- Communicates to his or her coach/coordinator regarding the health and operations of the small group within their scope of care.

Small Group Specific Expectations, Meetings & Rhythms:

- Meet regularly with your small group
- Meet once a semester with your coach
- Attend training seminars & leader events



## **PROCESSES, SYSTEMS, AND RESOURCES**

### **SEMESTER SYSTEM**

Small Groups meet throughout the year in three semesters. Most small groups meet weekly during each semester. Small Groups meet in a variety of places like homes, parks, restaurants, coffee shops and office buildings. New small groups start every semester making it easy to build community and enjoy different types of groups.

### **SMALL GROUP MEETING STRUCTURE**

No matter what your group meets about, each meeting should be made up of four things:

1. Casual Fellowship / A laid back time for group members to talk and get to know each other.
2. Activity or Discussion / This will vary based on what kind of group you're leading. It could be an activity like Frisbee or outreach or a discussion about a book or Sunday message.
3. Prayer/ Ask for prayer requests from group members and pray at the beginning and/or the end of each group meeting.
4. Spiritual Component / This is what differentiates your Small Group from your neighborhood supper club. Whether it's through activities or discussion, always find a way to include the Word of God. This can be as simple as sharing something God is teaching you with the group or talking about a verse you read that week.

### **SMALL GROUP RESTRICTIONS**

Small Groups are not a place for the following items:

- Business & marketing
- Offerings & Collection of Money except for paying a small group childcare provider
- Unapproved materials or speakers
- Controversial topics including political discussions

- Alcohol

### **NEXT STEPS**

People in your group will be at different places in their spiritual lives and each person will have different next steps to take. Here is a guide of some next steps you can help people take:

- Start attending Sunday services.
- Start reading the Bible regularly.
- Start praying regularly.
- Be water baptized.
- Attend Growth Track.
- Join the Dream Team.
- Start tithing.
- Invite a friend or neighbor to church or a Small Group.
- Attend a Small Group Leader Training to become a Small Group Leader.
- Attend a Lifepoint College Preview Day or enroll in Lifepoint College.

### **CREATING A GOOD GROUP DYNAMIC:**

- Set expectations / A key to helping people feel comfortable in your group is to let them know what to expect. Take time to share how the group will flow from week to week. This can include things like explaining the times you will begin and end the group, how discussion or group activities will happen, and how group members can share prayer requests or best engage in the group.
- Follow the 70-30 rule / Give the members of your group room to speak up instead of doing all the talking yourself. About 70% of talking should come from members and 30% from the leader.
- Keep discussion positive/ If conversation takes a negative or destructive turn, guide it back to a healthy place. If someone needs to talk about a sensitive or complex issue, you can follow up with them after the group or call your Coach to help you respond well.
- Keep the conversation relevant to everyone / Remember people in your group will be at different places in their spiritual journey. Be thoughtful when you talk about spiritual concepts or church terms that might be unfamiliar to new Christians or new churchgoers.

### **PREPARING FOR YOUR FIRST SMALL GROUP:**

- Send a message to group members reminding them about the first meeting. Be timely in your communication!
- Arrive early to set up a welcoming environment.
- Consider having nametags available to help everyone learn names for the first few weeks.

### **GROUP CONVERSATION:**

Here are a couple conversation starters to help get people talking as your group gets to know each other:

- How did you learn about our group?
- What are your hobbies?
- What are you looking forward to this year?
- What brought you here?
- What are you hoping to get out of this Small Group?

## **SYSTEMS & RESOURCES:**

**GROUP VITALS** is the Small Group database utilized for participants to register for small groups, allows leaders to track small group engagement through recording attendance and serves as a communication tool for the small group leader.

- Upon completion of Small Group Leader Training, you'll receive an invitation via email to join group vitals.
- <https://lifepointchurch.groupvitals.com/>

**SLACK** is a communication tool that both campuses & departments use to communicate specific information regarding the team you serve on and pertinent information about your campus.

**CCB** is the church wide database that is utilized by the Small Groups department for managing onboarding process queues for new leaders, background check management and maintaining an active roster of the small groups team.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **How can I recruit people to come to my group?**

- Start with people who are already in your sphere of influence (co-workers, friends, and neighbors).
- Find people around you who are new to the church, are new believers, or have shown interest in getting involved.
- Look for people you think you can help to realize their potential.
- Ask God to send the right people to your group.

**Where can I hold my Small Group?** We encourage Small Groups to meet outside the church building in places where you like to spend your time. Some of the most common meeting places are homes, restaurants, parks, coffee shops, and office buildings.

**Where can I find Small Group curriculums?** We have a variety of curriculum suggestions available to you on the resources tab of Group Vitals.

**Does my group have to meet weekly?** We encourage meeting weekly each semester to build genuine relationships.

**How do I measure if group members are taking next steps?** Ask! Make it part of your discussion whether in a group setting or individually. Here are some great questions to guide your conversation:

- How did you get connected to this Small Group?
- What are you most looking forward to in the group?
- What brought you to Lifepoint Church?
- Which campus do you attend?
- Have you ever been part of a Small Group before?
- What do you feel like God has been doing in your life lately?
- Are you familiar with 21 Days of Prayer?
- What areas of your faith are you hoping to grow in the coming months?
- What are you focused on in your life right now?
- Have you been through the Growth Track? Do you remember what your personality type is or what your spiritual gifts are?
- Have you ever served on the Dream Team?
- How can I pray for you?

Everyone in your group will be at different places spiritually. The vision of helping them “take next steps” is not to get them to do everything at once, it’s to help identify where they currently are spiritually and offer a practical next step to help them grow.

Here are some examples of next steps you can share depending on where a group member is spiritually:

- Invite them to attend a Sunday service with you.
- Share your personal story and what God has been teaching you.
- Share how the Growth Track can help them discover their purpose and invite them to attend.
- Invite them to consider being water baptized. Invite your Small Group to be there to celebrate anyone getting baptized.
- Share how you find time regularly to pray, worship, and read God’s Word, and encourage them to make their own plan for time with God.
- Tell them about the One Year Bible reading plan.
- If they are ready to receive Christ, offer to pray with them.
- Encourage them to learn more about areas like tithing, the Holy Spirit, prayer, and spiritual warfare by watching past messages at [Lifepoint.org/sermons](http://Lifepoint.org/sermons).

### **What should I do if someone asks a question I can’t answer?**

It’s okay to not have all the answers. Thankfully, we can find guidance through prayer, God’s Word, and the Holy Spirit. Encourage them to spend time reading the Bible and praying. Also, let them know that you will do your best to get some information and get back with them at your next Small Group meeting. Do some personal research and call your Coach to

get advice.

**What should I do if someone in my group shares something with me (or the group) that requires attention beyond what I (or we) can provide?**

If you encounter a difficult situation within your Small Group, please know that you are not alone. If a member is going through a crisis, you can rally the group around them to provide prayer, encouragement, and support. Use wisdom and be sensitive to the situation. If you are unsure of what to do, don't hesitate to ask your Coach.

**How can I share stories of life change from the Small Group semester?**

We love hearing about lives that are changed through Small Groups. You can share your stories with your Coach or submit them at [lifepoint.org/story](http://lifepoint.org/story)

**THANK YOU FOR LEADING A SMALL GROUP**

We believe life change happens in the context of relationships. Meaningful relationships can be hard to find, and Small Groups exist to make life-changing relationships relevant and accessible to you.

*Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. ECCLESIASTES 4:9-12*

Thank you for being an important part of Small Groups at Lifepoint Church!