



## **Small Group Leader Orientation**

# **Small Group Leader Orientation Booklet**

Welcome to a new year of small groups! As you may have heard, small groups form the backbone of our ministry and are essential to its health.

Everything we do in our ministry points students to connect in a small group. It's our prayer and dream that within the small group a student's spiritual maturity will flourish.

Our small groups exist to create a safe place for our students to connect with the Body of Christ, and to help them grow in their faith.

Powerful and life-changing community can exist, with great difficulty, because a Christ-centered environment calls for acceptance, encouragement, authenticity, and discernment.

In our world, people are quick to join clubs and form crowds, and everywhere you look, superficial relationships abound. It is our prayer that each small group becomes a "pocket of community" within our world that is filled with powerless relationships.

## **What you'll find inside this orientation booklet**

### **1. What we want you to know**

Important things to keep in mind

### **2. Who we hope you will be**

Who you are in Christ

### **3. The small group leader cheat sheet**

A summary of what it means to be a small group leader

### **4. Appendix**

The theme verse for our small groups: 1 Thessalonians 2:8

Some "tune-up" questions you may be asked

Things we value for our small groups

# What we want you to know

Important things to keep in mind

## 1. The vision and values of Small.

Why We Do What We Do: Small Groups  
The Next Step: Moving Students to Spiritual Growth  
Our Small Group Leadership Structure

## 2. The Small Groups Program and Curriculum

## 3. Keys to Leading a Small Group

# 1. The vision and values of Small Groups.

## A. Why we do what we do: small groups

### 1. What are we trying to accomplish?

The primary biblical purpose for small groups is fellowship (connect). Our greatest desire for Small Groups is that it is a place where believing students can connect with one another and form a relationship with a significant adult. We do small groups to make our large group smaller . . . we want students to create and maintain meaningful relationships. This helps students move from a number to a name. Everyone wants to be known and valued.

The secondary biblical purpose for Small Groups is discipleship (grow). Every week we will study and discuss biblical passages. A portion of the small group time will be devoted to the application of biblical truths to our lives. Small Groups is not a classroom (all learning), nor is it a party (all play). Small Groups is a place for students to form relationships - with others and with God so that they can grow in their faith.

The type of students we target with small groups are our "congregation" students. Congregation students are at a point in their spiritual lives where they are committed to a relationship with Christ and other believers. You may have other types of students (e.g., non-believers) show up that's okay. Since small groups are designed for believers, chances are a non-believing student will eventually turn to Christ or drop out and attend our crowd program (the weekend service).

Understanding WHAT (connect, grow) we're trying to do, and WHO (Christians) we're trying to do it with, will help you be a better, more focused leader.

### 2. Why we have small groups

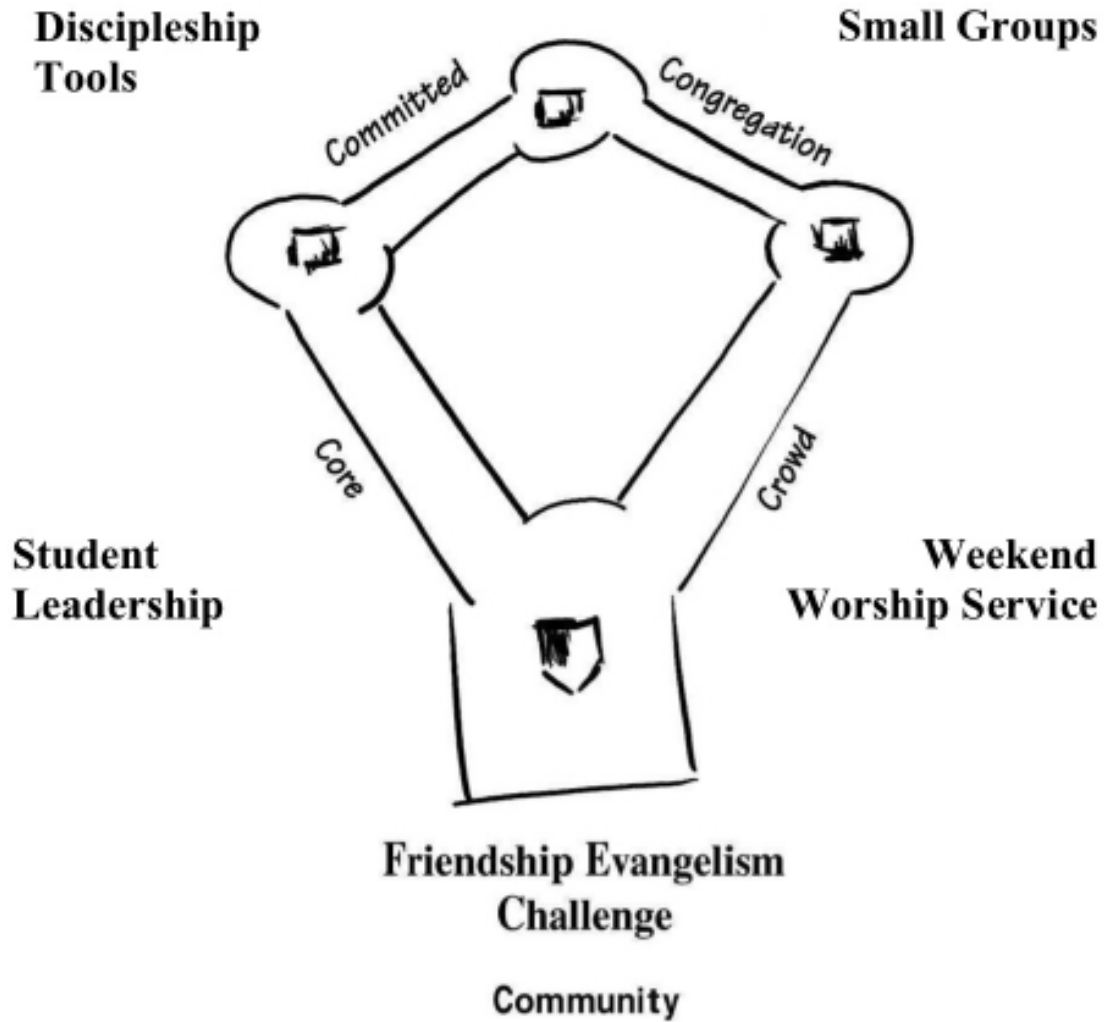
Our Weekend Worship Services are large by design. Crowds can be inviting because "requirements" aren't high: just show up. On the weekends, it's difficult to connect, nearly impossible to be known among hundreds. While these programs are a big part of our ministry, they cannot "stand on their own" to minister to the needs of students.

In our world, clubs and crowds are everywhere you look. Superficial friendships, casual interactions, and godless values make up the dominant colors in the tapestry of our culture. The Church is called to be different, and marked by powerful, authentic, and Christ-centered community. We seek to create these "pockets of community" within our small groups. Here are some of the benefits for our students:

- ❖ Students can be known, and accepted for who they are.
- ❖ Students can be verbal, and discuss important life issues.
- ❖ Students can be accountable to a spiritual mentor, and challenged to spiritually grow.
- ❖ Students can get personalized applications of biblical truths, and find real help for the real problems that they face.

## B. The Next Step: Moving Students to Spiritual Growth

You're probably familiar with the baseball diamond, our intended path for spiritual growth. Most students in a small group are congregation students, committed to a relationship with Christ and others. Within the context of your small group, we want to be continually challenging students to take the next step in their faith. The following few steps are some good places for you to encourage your students to move toward with their faith.



## 1. Next step #1: HABITS

We want students to develop some spiritual HABITS that will help them grow on their own. As you have no doubt experienced, there are some awesome things God does in the lives of his children when they “take a break” from life and draw near to him. Learning some classical spiritual disciplines won’t just enhance our student’s maturity, their growth won’t be dependent on a program—they can take these HABITS with them when they graduate.

To help students, we have resources available to help student create HABITS. These tools are available at every weekend service for a minimal cost. It would be good for you to know what the HABITS are and to practice them in your own life so you can encourage your small group students to take the next step.

### HABIT

Hang time with God  
Accountability with another believer  
Bible Memorization  
Involvement with the church body  
Tithing Commitment  
Study Scripture

### TOOL

Quiet Time Journal  
Student Accountability Groups  
Scripture Cards  
Going to “big” church  
Giving an offering  
Rootworks

## 2. Next Step #2: Ministry

Everyone is gifted by God—including the students in your small group! Believers who want to mature must learn to discover and express their giftedness. One of the greatest roles of a small group leader is to challenge your students to get involved in ministry. This is an important next-step in their spiritual growth! If a student is currently serving in a ministry, ask how you can help. If not, help them find one. The great thing is that you are modeling this right now . . . by serving as a small group leader.

## 3. Next Step #3: Class 101,201,301,401 and baptism

As you get to know the students in your small group, you will come to know where they are spiritually. As you put them before the Lord in prayer, he will reveal to you the specific areas and ways you can challenge your students to grow. One important aspect of being a believer, is making a public confession of faith. The Bible clearly teaches that baptism is one way every believer should shout to the world, “I’ve been made new in Christ!” If you have believing students who haven’t been baptized, encourage them to “take the plunge.”

## 4. Next Step #4: Friendship Evangelism

Evangelism is one of the many paradoxes we believers have created. On one hand:

- ❖ We have the greatest story ever told, to share with others
- ❖ We’re empowered by the same Holy Spirit who rose Jesus from the grave
- ❖ We get to share the wonderful joy and hope and life we received from God with others.

On the other hand:

- ❖ We don’t know what to say.
- ❖ We’re convinced we can’t make a difference.
- ❖ We make excuses not to share the gospel.

Evangelism **is** tough. We have created the “Friendship Evangelism Challenge” to ease students into becoming evangelistic. What follows on the next page is our explanation of this challenge:

## Friendship Evangelism Challenge

We have created this challenge to help you share the Good News with others.

First: Make a list of five friends (or people you don't know yet) who don't know Christ. Next, begin praying for your friends; ask God to provide opportunities for you to share with them about your faith. We call this the 5 Friend Focus!

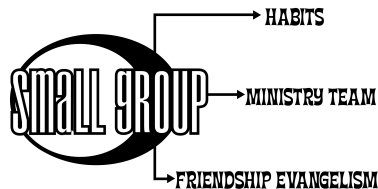
Below are five steps you might consider taking. The first is easiest—anyone can do it. Begin to work through all five at your own pace! Don't feel like you need to do all five in a week, the important thing is that you set some goals and make progress!

- Step 1: **R**eveal that you're a Christian
- Step 2: **E**xtend an invitation to a weekend service
- Step 3: **A**sk if it's okay to share your story
- Step 4: **C**ommunicate why/how you became a Christian
- Step 5: **H**elp your friend to know Christ personally

If you decide to take the Friendship Evangelism Challenge, we want to know about it, so we can pray for you.

## The Bottom Line:

Within the context of the small group, we pray that our leaders will encourage their students to take the next step with their faith. Keep reading, there's more.



This may seem like a lot of information to remember, but in the context of small groups, you are the youth pastor. That means you are responsible for shepherding your students to grow through the four steps we've outlined.

## **C. Small Groups Leadership Structure**

We have designed three vital roles in each Small Groups in order to fulfill what we want to accomplish.

### **1. Small Group Leader**

An adult leader who cares/shepherds 6 to 8 students (ideally) within the context of deep relationships in a small group.

### **2. Coach**

A leader in the ministry who is the point person for his/her Small Groups. This person is responsible for the OVERALL health of all the small groups within the house. This includes (but is not limited to):

- ❖ Upholding the vision and values for Small Groups
  - Preparing and Teaching the lesson each week
  - Taking attendance (or making sure it gets done)
  - Overseeing the effectiveness of the Small Groups
  - Holding other small group leaders accountable.

### **3. Division Leader**

As we get larger we will add this role to our team. This person is responsible for the health of 2-4 Homes that contain 2 Small Groups per home. He/she will occasionally show up and help the coach with whatever he/she needs.

## 2. The Small Groups program and curriculum

### A. The Program

The typical night at Small Groups will look like this:

Time	Action	Lasts for
6:45	Leaders arrive (promptly, of course)	15 minutes
7:00	Students arrive	15 minutes
7:15	Greeting and announcements	5 minutes
7:20	<b>Teach</b> introduction	25 minutes
7:45	<b>Break</b> into Small Groups	45 minutes
8:30	<b>End</b> Small Group time, hang out, talk	30 minutes
8:45	Students go home	1 week

Although the coach is responsible for the "program" and making the schedule happen, all leaders need to help by paying attention, keeping students quiet during the teaching time, etc.

### Small Group Boundaries

It is important to define some basic boundaries for small groups to provide clarity and direction. These boundaries are guidelines and not unbreakable laws (with only one exception, see below). These boundaries will help eliminate confusion within small groups. The Coach will be responsible for applying these guidelines to his or her specific Small Group Team.

- ❖ Small groups will be same sex (this is the only non-negotiable)
- ❖ The best size is 6 to 8 students
- ❖ Depending on the consistency of students attending, available leadership, and the leadership of the coach, larger small groups should "launch" another one.
- ❖ When "launching" a small group, it can be done along the lines of natural friendships, grade, or school, or arbitrary splitting can work (depending on the "setup" and the attitudes of the students and leaders).

### B. The Curriculum

We have chosen curriculum that we believe will help develop and grow students toward maturity!

#### Middle School

**6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> grade students**

#### **Fuel video curriculum.**

Fuel has the potential of taking students through the Bible in 2 years

**8<sup>th</sup> grade students**

#### **One Minute Bible / Life Church Videos**

The One Minute Bible will help introduce what it means to have a personal daily time with God. It will also help us transition 8<sup>th</sup> grade students to an older approach to small groups in high school!

#### High School

**9<sup>th</sup> grade students**

**10<sup>th</sup> grade students**

**11<sup>th</sup> grade students**

**12<sup>th</sup> grade students**

#### **Accountability Groups/Character Studies**

#### **Ministry Teams/Character Studies**

**Nooma Videos / Dave Ramsey Generation Change**

**Nooma Videos / Dave Ramsey Generation Change**

### **3. Four Keys to Leading a Small Group**

#### **A. Connections**

*We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. 1 Thessalonians 2:8*

Superficial community exists at nearly every level of our lives, and we often settle for clubs and groups and miss out on powerful relationships. Your small group should be a safe place where people feel the freedom to be real and take risks in sharing their struggles. The first step to creating this environment should be taken by the leaders.

#### **B. Commitment**

*Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. James 3:1*

Your task is not to be taken lightly. As a mature believer, you have within you the ability to communicate God's truth. Be committed with your diligence to prepare for your small group time. Follow up on important issues.

#### **C. Authenticity**

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. Colossians 3:16*

Don't seek to offer something to your students that you don't have. Maintain a vibrant relationship with Christ. Make *filling yourself up* with God's Word your first priority, and then passing that along to others will require less effort as you'll be offering directly from your heart.

#### **D. Maturity**

*But solid foods for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Hebrews 6:11*

The ultimate goal of your investment in students' lives is to encourage them to grow closer to God. Help them mature in intimacy with God and the knowledge of the truth.

# What we hope you will do...

Model who you are in Christ

**1. Be regularly concerned about your spiritual health.**

**2. Be the leader GOD created you to be.**

Explore the gifts God has given you  
Take risks, and be ready for the difficult

**3. Pray for your students and other leaders**

**4. Allow your Coach to care for you**

**You will be asked difficult questions . . . be ready to share about your ministry!**

## The Small Group Leader Cheat Sheet

### The Big Picture of Being a SG Leader

**1. Mature Believer**

- Healthy spirituality

**2. Pastor-Shepherd**

- Encourage the broken-hearted
- Help everyone to love one another deeply
- Work hard to create authentic community
- Know the condition of your leaders and their ministry

**3. Leader**

- Be the POINT PERSON for your Small Group
- Facilitate Small Group discussion
- Understand vision and values of Small Groups
- Be ready to do the difficult (if need be)
- "Quality Control," help enforce the Small Groups vision
- Be organized and systematic with follow up

**4. Communicate**

- To your Coach, Fusion Staff, and Parents

### Specific Steps to Take as a SG Leader

**Things to do once a week:**

- Lead Small Group discussions
- Pray for your students
- Do necessary follow up (see below)

**Things to do once a month:**

- Contact students in your small group
- Contact at least two student in your small group outside small groups

**Things to do every two months:**

- Have an in-depth conversation with your one of your small group students
- Plan a Small Group Activity (e.g. laser tag etc.)

**Things to do before Christmas and Easter:**

- Have a significant conversation with EVERY student in your small group
- Write one personal letter or card to EACH Student in your Small Group

## **The Theme Verse For Our Small Groups: 1 Thessalonians 2:8**

*We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you, not only the gospel of God, but our lives as well because you had become so dear to us.*

### **We loved you so much ...**

Ministry without a pure heart is empty: ministry must be an expression of the love in our hearts for students.

### **...that we were delighted ...**

There is nothing wrong with feeling good because we are ministering to students. In fact we should train ourselves to take joy in serving students.

### **...to share with you ...**

Sharing is exactly what we are doing ... we can't force students to take what we have to offer.

### **...not only the gospel of God ...**

Our shared gift to students is nothing less than the very gospel of God. We have the truth and we offer the truth to students.

### **...but our lives as well ...**

We are much more than college professors, we offer more than truth and facts. We must make large investments in relationships without worrying about the interest and return.

### **...because you had become so dear ...**

One of the goals of small groups is for your students to become "dear" to you: know also that "becoming" is a long road paved with time.

### **...to us.**

There are no lone rangers in a healthy youth ministry . . . remember that you are a part of a team; rely on them and be reliable.

## **Some “tune-up” questions you may be asked by a coach . . .**

You may be asked some or all of the following things by your Coach, so that they can better care for you.

1. Is there something specific I can be praying about?
2. How is your spiritual life right now? Prayer Time? Time alone with God? Are you on an upswing or downswing?
3. How do you feel about your ministry right now?
  - a. Are you enjoying your ministry?
  - b. What do you like most? What do you like least?
  - c. What’s the hardest aspect for you about being a small group leader?
4. What’s God doing in your life right now?
5. Tell me about your small group.
  - a. Are you having any difficulties?
  - b. How are they responding to the lessons?
  - c. What are some of their struggles?
  - d. Do you feel like you’re connecting with the students?
  - e. Have you seen anyone in your small group outside of Area Bible Study Small Groups?
  - f. Are you comfortable leading your group?
6. How can I help you? Is there an area where you are struggling?
7. I’ve been praying for you, is there something specific I can be praying about?
8. Are you enjoying your ministry?
9. What do you like most? What do you like least?
10. What’s the hardest aspect for you about being a small group leader?
11. To Coaches: Tell me about your leaders, how are they doing?
12. To SGLs: Tell me about your small group? (don’t accept one word answers)

## **Values for small groups.**

### **R**elational Approach

We value powerful and authentic community built on God's love and deep relationships.

### **E**ncouragement

We value a positive environment that encourages growth; a place where God-infused potential is recognized and affirmed.

### **L**aughter & Celebration

We value fun; Area Bible Study Small Groups don't have to be a comedy show, but it shouldn't be a funeral either.

### **A**cceptance

We value a safe environment, accept people for who they are and where they're at.

### **T**ransparency

We value real leaders: admit your confusion to some questions, share your struggles.

### **I**nvovement of students

We value student input and involvement; they should be doing 75% of the talking, and staff 100% of the listening.

### **O**utreach Oriented

We value the encouragement and development for evangelism. Pray for non-Christian friends.

### **N**umerical Growth

We value numerical growth . . . there are too many unconnected students who need to be connected.

### **S**piritual Growth

We value our communities drawing nearer to God.

### **H**omelike

We value the feeling of belonging; when students miss a couple of weeks, they should be noticed; when they return they should hear, "It's great to see you back."

### **I**ntimate

We value personal relationships; these result in genuine trust.

### **P**rofessional

We value parents' perceptions and our host home families.

### **S**trategic Follow-Up

We value the active pursuit in meeting special needs outside of Area Bible Study Small Groups.