



PREPARE MODULE #4

LEADER :: SMALL GROUPS | EASTSIDE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

COMPETENCY: Pastor the people God has entrusted to your care.

OBJECTIVE: Learn how to help group members take next steps in their faith, care for one another, and navigate difficult seasons of life.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- *Assignment 1 // Read Discerning a Person's Next Steps & Answer Questions*
- *Assignment 2 // Read One Another & Answer Questions*
- *Assignment 3 // Read Navigating Difficult Situations section & answer Questions*

ASSIGNMENT 1

Eastside is a church for everyone, no matter where they are on their spiritual journey. There are Eastsiders who have been following Jesus for decades and Eastsiders who don't yet believe Jesus is their only way to God.

One of our jobs as leaders is to help our group members take a spiritual next step, to grow in Christ-likeness. None of us are ever done growing spiritually. We can always be more faithful, more loving, more generous, more patient, *etc.*

Of course, in order to help them take this step, first we have to identify what that step is.

Some of you may have people in your group who are atheists, not just people who don't believe in Jesus, but people who are actively opposed to the idea that there is a God. For individuals like these, a next step might be an openness to the idea that there is a God.

Other people may have some spiritual belief, but they aren't following Jesus. Their next step might be to decide to follow Jesus or even simply to begin actively seeking to figure out who Jesus is.

Of course, most of the people in our groups are already followers of Jesus. And for them, there are any number of next steps that you might identify. In an appendix to this training is a list of potential next steps for your group members. This list is far from comprehensive, but it will give you a place to begin and some resources you can utilize.

How Do I Know?

Practically speaking, how do you know what steps people need to take?

The easiest way to do this is to simply let everyone know that next week you're going to spend some time discussing how each of you needs to grow spiritually. Encourage the group members to take some time during the week to think through what next step they need to take, and how the group can help them. You might print out the list of potential next steps in the appendix and give it to your group members.

Then, the following week, simply go around the circle and have everyone talk about their next step and how the group can help with it.

What if that Won't Work?

For some of you, because of the type of group you lead or the people who are in your group, simply discussing spiritual next steps might not work very well.

If that is the case, the first thing to do is simply to listen and notice. Someone may mention something in a prayer request or tell a story that gives you some indication.

Maybe a group member talks about calling in sick at work to go to an amusement park. You might identify integrity as an area where that person needs to grow.

Perhaps you have someone who asks a lot of questions about what God thinks about something or seems to earnestly want to follow Jesus but offers opinions that don't line up with how God calls us to live. That person may need to begin reading the Bible regularly in order to better understand God's plan for us.

Then What?

Once we've identified the next step that someone needs to take, we need to help them take it. This process will be different depending on what it is.

Let's say that you have a couple that needs counseling. If your group started three weeks ago, you may need to get to know them better before suggesting counseling. On the other hand, if they are truly in crisis, you may need to gently address it right away in order to help save a failing marriage.

Maybe you have a few people in the group who need to take similar next steps, you could decide to study a curriculum or book of the Bible that addresses those issues.

Perhaps someone in your group is an atheist. Helping him take his next step might not be done with direct conversations about a belief in God but rather by sharing (and having others in the group share) about how God is working in your own life.

What is my own Next Step?

As leaders, we are inviting people to join us on the exciting journey of pursuing Jesus. If we're just telling them about all of the things that they should be doing, then we're like the Pharisees, those first century religious leaders who judged everyone else's faith but didn't really know God themselves.

One way to combat this is to make sure that at the same time you're helping others take their next steps, you are seeking to take your own next step as well.

This, of course, means that you need to identify a next step for yourself, but it also means that you need people who are helping you take that step, just like you are helping your group members.

This could be the folks in your group. It might be your small group Director or Coach. It could be a close friend or a mentor. If you already have someone in mind, great! If you do not, we would encourage you to reach out to your Director or Coach. They would be glad to serve you in this way.

Delegate

One final piece of advice... you don't need to do this alone. If you have 15 people in your group, it's probably going to be difficult for you to personally keep up with where everyone is and where they need to grow. But if you have two or three people help with that, suddenly the workload becomes much more doable.

QUESTIONS:

- 1. How have things been progressing with the next step you personally identified?*

- 2. Given the type of group you are (or are thinking about) leading, what are some ways you can help group members identify and take a next step?*

ASSIGNMENT 2

God's purpose in sending Jesus to earth was restoration: restoring a broken world to the way God originally intended it to function; restoring the broken relationship between God and humankind; and restoring our broken relationships with one another.

59 times in the New Testament, God tells us how we are to treat one another: *Love one another; Be at peace with each other*; on and on the list goes. It's quite literally impossible for us to live as God would have us live in isolation. We can't obey these commands if we aren't in relationship with one another, and small groups are where we find and form those relationships. Andy Stanley, pastor of one of the country's largest churches, said that "The primary activity of the early church was one-anothering one another," and "When everyone is sitting in rows...you can't do any one another's."

¹

Below is a list of the 59 one anothers of the New Testament. Read through them and consider how they can be lived out in your small group:

The 59 "One Anothers" of the New Testament²

- ...Be at peace with each other. (Mark 9:50)
- ...Wash one another's feet. (John 13:14)
- ...Love one another... (John 13:34, John 13:34, John 13:35, John 15:12, John 15:17, Romans 13:8, I John 3:11, I John 3:23, I John 4:7, I John 4:11, I John 4:12, II John 5)
- Be devoted to one another in brotherly love... (Romans 12:10)
- ...Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:10)
- Live in harmony with one another... (Romans 12:16)
- ...Stop passing judgment on one another. (Romans 14:13)
- Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you... (Romans 15:7)
- ...Instruct one another. (Romans 15:14)
- Greet one another with a holy kiss... (Romans 16:16)
- ...When you come together to eat, wait for each other. (I Cor. 11:33)
- ...Have equal concern for each other. (I Corinthians 12:25)
- ...Greet one another with a holy kiss. (I Corinthians 16:20, II Corinthians 13:12)
- ...Serve one another in love. (Galatians 5:13)
- If you keep on biting and devouring each other...you will be destroyed by each other. (Galatians 5:15)
- Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. (Galatians 5:26)
- Carry each other's burdens... (Galatians 6:2)

¹ Mark Howell, The Primary Activity of the Early Church, <http://www.markhowelllive.com/the-primary-activity-of-the-early-church/> (Accessed September 21, 2017)

² Carl F. George, Prepare Your Church for the Future (Tarrytown: Revell, 1991), 129-131.

- ...Be patient, bearing with one another in love. ([Ephesians 4:2](#))
- Be kind and compassionate to one another... ([Ephesians 4:32](#))
- ...Forgiving each other... ([Ephesians 4:32](#))
- Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. ([Ephesians 5:19](#))
- Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. ([Ephesians 5:21](#))
- ...In humility consider others better than yourselves. ([Philippians 2:3](#))
- Do not lie to each other... ([Colossians 3:9](#))
- Bear with each other... ([Colossians 3:13](#))
- ...Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. ([Colossians 3:13](#))
- Teach...[one another] ([Colossians 3:16](#))
- ...Admonish one another ([Colossians 3:16](#))
- ...Make your love increase and overflow for each other. ([I Thessalonians 3:12](#))
- ...Love each other. ([I Thessalonians 4:9](#))
- ...Encourage each other...(I Thessalonians 4:18, [I Thessalonians 5:11](#))
- ...Build each other up... ([I Thessalonians 5:11](#))
- Encourage one another daily... ([Hebrews 3:13](#))
- ...Spur one another on toward love and good deeds. ([Hebrews 10:24](#))
- ...Encourage one another. ([Hebrews 10:25](#))
- ...Do not slander one another. ([James 4:11](#))
- Don't grumble against each other... ([James 5:9](#))
- Confess your sins to each other... ([James 5:16](#))
- ...Pray for each other. ([James 5:16](#))
- ...Love one another deeply, from the heart. ([I Peter 3:8](#))
- ...Live in harmony with one another... ([I Peter 3:8](#))
- ...Love each other deeply... ([I Peter 4:8](#))
- Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ([I Peter 4:9](#))
- Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others... ([I Peter 4:10](#))
- ...Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another...(I Peter 5:5)
- Greet one another with a kiss of love. ([I Peter 5:14](#))

QUESTIONS:

1. *What is one time you have personally experienced an impactful "one another"? What made that experience so meaningful?*

2. *Which of these statements would you like to see your group/prospective group be intentional about practicing? Make a plan and be specific. What will you have your group do? How often will they do it? How will you cast the vision? How will you model it personally? Etc.*

3. *21 of these 59 statements reference our love for one another. How would you intentionally “love one another” when someone in your group is:*
 - a. *In the hospital or sick?*

 - b. *Struggling at work?*

 - c. *Having marital problems?*

 - d. *Struggling financially?*

 - e. *Grieving over a loss?*

ASSIGNMENT 3

When people are walking through difficult seasons of life, they will turn to their small group and to us as their leaders for support. God doesn't intend for us to simply do those one another commands when things are easy. He wants us to do them even when—especially when—things are hard.

As leaders, we need to be prepared to lead and love our group members during difficult seasons of life. The good news is, no one is expected to navigate this alone! We have resources available to support you as you and your group navigate these more difficult situations.

What to do when...

When something challenging comes up, whether it is at your small group meeting or in a side conversation, there are four simple steps to take:

1. Listen to their story.
2. Ask for the outcome they are seeking.
3. Point them towards potential next steps/resources.
4. Pray with them.

Your goal is to provide spiritual and emotional support and connect them to the appropriate resources. These steps will help you to navigate most situations that arise. At the end of this training is an appendix with a list of resources designed to help you know where to point someone in need. Review this list occasionally to make sure you're familiar with it, and you might even keep a copy of it with your small group materials so that you have it as a reference in case something comes up during your group.

After you have this conversation, reach out to your Coach or Director to talk with them about it. Even if you feel like you've got it under control, it's always helpful to have someone else to provide perspective, bounce things off of, and pray with you.

But what about when...?

Sometimes you will run into a situation that seems a bit trickier to navigate. If you're not sure what to do, the biggest and most important thing is to be honest. Don't fake it. Ask for help. Tell the person that you're not sure how best to help them and that you will reach out to leadership at Eastside.

Your first stop is your Coach or Director. They will either help you navigate the situation or will help you get the help you need.

Other times you may feel put on the spot based on the situation the person describes or the request they make. For example, let's say a couple in your group calls you at 6 PM on Friday and says, "We couldn't pay our rent and we were just evicted from our apartment. We don't have anywhere to go tonight. Can you help?"

You're still going to start with the four step process above. You want to listen to them, to hear their story. And then you want to ask them how they would like you to help them navigate the situation. They might simply need \$30 in gas money so they can get to the house of a relative who lives a few hours away. In that case, it's a pretty easy fix. Of course, they might ask if they can stay with you or ask if you know somewhere that they can stay tonight.

Here's where the rubber meets the road. At 6 PM on Friday, you might have trouble getting in touch with your Coach or Director, and even if you do, your Coach or Director might have trouble getting in touch with someone from the Compassion team.

So what do you do in a situation like this? There isn't an easy, one-size-fits-all answer, but here are a few passages of Scripture that speak to situations like these:

- Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. (1 Peter 4:9)
- Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." (Matthew 25:34-36, Jesus speaking)
- Is not this the fast that I (God) choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house...? (Isaiah 58:6-7a)

Notice that 1 Peter 4:9 doesn't say, "Offer hospitality to one another until it becomes difficult and requires more of you than providing chips and cookies at small group." We're called to serve and love sacrificially, not just when it's convenient. And having a family of four come stay with you won't be convenient, but that might be what you or someone else in your group is being called to do.

In a situation like this, there's obviously a lot to consider.

First, you as the leader aren't the only source of support for this family. You have an entire group for a reason. You might send a group text to the rest of the group telling them about the situation and asking if someone has space for them or if they know of a place the family could stay.

Second, you do need to think about your own family. Too often we use this as an excuse not to get involved. Thinking about your own family doesn't mean you say no because it's simply uncomfortable, but if the couple is addicted to meth, you might say no because there's a very real and active danger (as opposed to the irrational fears that often plague us).

Third, you need to consider what would actually be the best end result. Assuming you've known them for at least a little while, you probably have some idea of their circumstances. If they moved to town on a hope and a prayer with no real resources and have family somewhere else who will take them in, then the best way to help them might be to help them get back home rather than to take them in for more than a night or two. One Eastside staff member took in a friend of a friend who needed a place to stay "for a week." One week turned into three, and eventually that staff member said that he would buy the person a bus ticket back home if needed, but that they needed to be out by the first of the month.

Best Practices

- Do not try to fix the situation on your own. Don't be an island; ask for help when you need it. Never go it alone in high-pressure situations. Talk with your coach.
- Do not try to make others' decisions for them.
- Do not try to be a counselor unless you are a certified counselor.
- If someone is of the opposite gender and you and/or that person are married, ensure that another person is nearby while you are meeting. Don't meet the person at his/her/your home, an office with a closed door and no window, *etc.*
- Do not meet with any minor alone.
- If you feel uncomfortable with the situation for any reason, you can involve someone else in the conversation. Never override your gut!
- When meeting with a person of the opposite gender, be prepared to cut them off if the conversation heads into uncomfortable territory. Example, "I think it would be more appropriate if we had a male/female leader join us."
- When making recommendations for professional resources begin with disclaimer: "I'm not a trained professional but it sounds like you could benefit from meeting with..." "
- Maintain confidentiality. Some exceptions to this include: discussing a situation with your coach, director, pastor, *etc.*; when someone's actions or words pose a danger to themselves or others; when someone threatens to commit a crime.
- If you don't know, don't fake it. Admit it. Let them know you'll look into it more, research some options, need to gather more guidance/feedback/direction, and then you'll get back to them.
- Keep notes about sensitive conversations and keep your notes secure

Mandatory Reporting

The following situations must be reported as soon as possible. Document time, place, people and details of interactions as well as your response. Again, don't navigate these alone. Share these concerns with your coach, director, and/or pastor ASAP so that they can walk with you through the process.

- Any evidence of child abuse (neglect, physical, psychological, emotional, sexual)
- Any evidence of elder or dependent adult abuse (neglect, physical, psychological, emotional, sexual or financial abuse/exploitation)
- Threat of physical harm to another
- Threat of harm to self (suicide) – suicide is the focus here; you are not responsible to report addictions, reckless behavior, etc. If a minor is threatening suicide, the mandated reporting still applies but you must also immediately inform the parents as well.
- Information posing a threat to harm the congregation and/or ministry of church.

QUESTIONS:

1. *What type of difficult situation do you feel most capable of handling?*

2. *What type of difficult situation do you feel least capable of handling?*

3. *What questions and concerns do you have about dealing with a crisis within your group?*

APPENDIX: Potential Next Steps

Below is a list of potential next steps for people in your group. Again, this is not a comprehensive list, but it should give you a framework from which to begin.

Each of the headers that is a link will open a new page with more information on that topic and how you can help your group members take a next step in that area.

If you have questions about how you can help your group to engage with any of these, please reach out to your Small Group Director or Assistant Director.

[Next Steps](#)

Our four week Next Steps group is an essential part of the Eastside experience. If you or anyone in your group has not yet been a part of Next Steps, we would highly encourage it.

Next Steps meets the first four weekends of every month, and you can jump in any week. There's no need to wait until the following month to get started, and there's no need to register. You can just show up. If you have questions, you can email Greg Curtis (gcurtis@eastside.com). Times and locations at eastside.com/nextsteps.

[Baptism](#)

Jesus calls His followers to identify with his death, burial, and resurrection by being baptized, or immersed in water. If someone in your group is interested in being baptized, have them fill out the inquiry form at eastside.com/baptism.

Spiritual Disciplines

Spiritual disciplines are simply things that we can do in order to get to know God better. Our relationship with God is meant to be just that, a *relationship*. Think about a healthy family relationship. The members of the family spend time with each other, serve each other, give gifts to each other, *etc.* The same sorts of things are needed if we are to have a relationship with God.

If someone in your group is not practicing one of these disciplines, beginning to do so would be a good next step.

- [Engaging Scripture](#) – The Bible is God's primary way of communicating with us. In the Bible, we learn who God is, how he has chosen to interact with humankind, and how we can

live life to the full. At Eastside, we encourage people to engage with the Bible daily.

- **Prayer** – Prayer is simply a conversation with God that involves both speaking and listening. Again, this is something we would recommend that people do on a daily basis.
- **Fasting** – To fast is to abstain from something in order to focus ourselves more fully on God and to open our minds and hearts to what He has for us.
- **Generosity** – Many of us may not think about generosity as a spiritual discipline, but that is exactly what it is. When we are generous with the resources that God has given us, especially our financial resources, it changes us. We begin to become kinder people who are more apt to rely on God than on ourselves.
- **Sabbath** – Sabbath is simply a day of rest, a day we set aside each week to be with friends, family, and God, a day where we do our “get tos” rather than our “have to’s.”

Serving

Jesus set the example for us, coming as a servant who not only served in big, obvious ways—like healing or miraculously feeding thousands—but also in small ways, in ways that by most people’s estimates are “beneath” them—like when he washed the feet of his students. While someone can serve anywhere at any time, with an organization or simply by being intentional in their day-to-day lives, we have a few opportunities for people to serve here at Eastside.

- **Small Group Leadership** – For some people, a good next step for them is to begin leading a small group. They are at a place where they are ready (or almost ready) to lead others in their pursuit of Jesus. (eastside.com/lead)
- **Compassion** – God has called His people to unleash His compassion on those around them. Someone can take the step of going on a global missions trip (eastside.com/serveglobally) or serving locally in the community (eastside.com/localserve).
- **Change Maker** – Eastside is committed to being a church that reaches people who don’t yet know Jesus, and it takes a lot of work and a lot of people to make that happen. There are opportunities to serve in ministries such as guest services, creative arts, students, and many others. (eastside.com/volunteer)

Fruit of the Spirit

In Galatians 5:22-23, the Apostle Paul lists nine characteristics of people who have a close relationship with God.

These are fruits of the Spirit. In other words, they are the result of the Spirit's presence in our lives. They are not things we can manufacture, that we can make real by sheer force of will, but they are things that we can cultivate. We can prepare the soil and fertilize, we can ready ourselves for the work of the Holy Spirit.

There are times when you may notice that a group member has a problem with anger or integrity or greed or pride or something else similar. This indicates a lack of one or more of the fruit of the Spirit in that person's life.

- **Love** – Love is, perhaps, the toughest one of these to encapsulate, as it in many ways encompasses most or all of the other fruit of the Spirit. However, love is that quality of selflessness that cares more about others than self.
- **Joy** – Joy is happiness that doesn't depend on circumstances. Happiness, by definition, is a feeling of wellbeing. Joy is that same feeling of well being *regardless of what we're going through*. Joy contains happiness; it is happiness rooted to eternal truths and promises in Christ, not stuck on the outcome of temporary situations.
- **Peace** – True peace comes when we trust God. Worry and anxiety are the enemies of peace, and they come when we don't really believe that God is in control. If we truly believed that an all-knowing, all-powerful God who loved us was in control of everything, we wouldn't worry very much. It would be like having loving, billionaire parents and worrying about money. Practicing the discipline of Sabbath is one good way to begin to gain peace.
- **Patience** - There are two kinds of patience. There's the patience you need when you're stuck behind the world's slowest driver, and then there's the patience you need when you're waiting on a dream deferred: finding a spouse, starting a business, having a child, achieving financial freedom, leading a loved one to Jesus.
- **Kindness** - Kindness is more than just "being nice." Kindness is about serving, caring, and showing compassion. It's about blessing and bearing burdens. It's about radical hospitality, unconditional love, unqualified forgiveness, and the gift of presence.

- [Goodness](#) – Goodness is not merely a state of being; it is a state of doing. God is not just good because He is without sin. He is good because of what He does. When we look at Psalm 107, we see so many dimensions of God’s goodness: He redeems, provides, protects, listens, blesses, and rescues. Goodness is not simply an inward virtue but an outward expression of God’s character.
- [Faithfulness](#) – The depth of your impact is determined by the duration of your investment. We live in a world of short-term commitments. We take a job and move on in 12 months if a better one comes along. We live together before getting married to see if it will work, or we get married with the idea that divorce is a convenient escape hatch if it just doesn’t work.
- [Gentleness](#) – Sometimes we confuse gentleness with weakness. Gentleness is not a lack of power but is rather power under control. It is the ability to have power without using it.
- [Self-Control](#) – Self-control is often what is necessary to react with the other fruit of the Spirit, to be kind to the person who was unkind to you, to express gentleness when you’d rather reply with anger, to hold onto joy rather than give way to despair, to remain patient in the face of delay, to maintain peace in a situation that challenges your equanimity, to hold to the good when tempted by an attractive or selfish alternative, to remain faithful for the long haul, to love the person who is being so unlovable – all these can require the exercise of self-control.

APPENDIX: Resources

You can and should connect with your coach or director when you are navigating a difficult situation. However, here are other resources that are available to you through the church.

Recommended Counselors

eastside.com/s/ECC-Counseling-Referral-List-MASTER-I.doc

Care & Recovery Groups

eastside.com/careandrecovery

We currently have groups for people dealing with addiction, codependency, anger, divorce, loss of a loved one, serious illness, food issues, being a single mom, and blended families.

Pastoral Care Team

If someone needs/wants to speak to a pastor, you can connect them with Justin Domogalla (jdomogalla@eastside.com) at Park Rapids, Norm Hamre (nhamre@eastside.com) at La Habra, Marcos Garcia (mgarcia@eastside.com) at Bellflower, Matt Feldkemp (mfeldkemp@eastside.com) at Redlands, or Dave Higgins (dhiggins@eastside.com) and Greg Arbues (garbues@eastside.com) at Anaheim.

Financial Resources

If someone needs help managing their finances, we run Financial Peace University in the spring and summer for our Southern California locations. A list of available FPU classes at other times and locations is available at <https://www.daveramsey.com/fpu/classes>.

If someone needs financial assistance beyond what the group is able to assist with, you can connect them with Erica Flora (eflora@eastside.com) or Priscilla Ward (pward@eastside.com). Or you can direct them to the Compassion kiosk at their location during weekend services.

LEADERSHIP TAKEAWAY (To be completed during group discussion)