



PREPARE MODULE #3

LEADER:: SMALL GROUPS | EASTSIDE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

COMPETENCY: Coordinate/Organize a Group of People

OBJECTIVE: Successfully structure and manage a small group.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- *Assignment 1 // Read article below and answer questions.*
- *Assignment 2 // Read Effective Communication and answer questions.*
- *Assignment 3 // Read Make Friends and answer questions.*
- *Assignment 4 // Read Facilitate Meaningful Group Prayer and answer questions.*
- *Assignment 5 // Read Make a Difference and answer questions.*
- *Assignment 6 // Read Structure your Group Meetings and answer questions OR How to Evaluate Your Small Group and answer questions.*

ASSIGNMENT 1:

As a Small Group Leader, one of your roles is to help people follow Jesus, which leads to the question, “How do we do that?” Part of it is a process called discipleship, which basically means spending time with others, teaching and showing them what it looks like to follow Jesus. This is what Jesus did with his followers, which they in turn did with others.

Read: [Make More Disciples by Making Less](#) by Michael Mack

1. *Who is someone who has discipled you along the way in your faith? What are some ways they have helped disciple you along the way?*

2. *In his article, Make More Disciples by Making Less, Michael Mack says that you can really only disciple 2-3 people effectively. Our small groups often have 6 or more in the group. If you have a large small group, what can you do to ensure your members are being encouraged and cared for?*

3. *List 2-3 people from your small group that you could invest deeper in this year. How would you structure it?*

ASSIGNMENT 2:

Imagine a small group where everyone shows up on time every week, only misses when they're sick or out of town, communicates that they'll be absent as far in advance as possible, and always does their homework...

Keep dreaming. No small group functions that perfectly, but proactive communication can help keep things running smoothly, while a failure to communicate well can lead to frustration and disorganization: meetings cancelled at the last minute due to lack of attendance, nothing to talk about because people didn't come prepared for group, and perhaps the biggest small group sin of all... no snacks at the group meeting!

The day before your group meets, email or text everyone in the group to remind them about the upcoming group meeting and the details they need to know:

- When and where to meet (if this changes in your group).
- Any homework or other preparation for the upcoming group.
- Who is on snack duty.
- A reminder to let you know if they will be absent.

Within 36 hours of the group ending, email or text everyone in the group. Be sure to include those who were absent from group so that they're up on what happened:

- A thank you for coming.
- When and where to meet (if this changes in your group and/or if your group meets less often than weekly).

- Any homework or other preparation for the next group.
- Who is on snack duty.
- A reminder to let you know if they will be absent

QUESTIONS:

1. *What are some other things you can do to maintain effective communication with your group?*

ASSIGNMENT 3:

When people find authentic community, when they develop real friendships, life change happens. It takes an investment of time, energy, effort, and resources to build this type of community, but it is well worth the effort.

The first place community will be created is during your weekly small group meeting. These were discussed during the overview training done with potential small group leaders, but let's review two of them briefly:

- Create time for conversation. - Don't be so focused on your activity or study or whatever that you fail to give people time to catch up on life. Most groups will benefit from 15-30 minutes of unstructured time at the beginning of the group. (Note that this wouldn't apply to something like a hiking group where people will be chatting throughout the entire group.)
- Be transparent. - We as leaders set the tone for our group. If we're open and honest about our own lives, our group members will follow our lead. Don't share your deepest, darkest secret on the first night of group, but be real about what's going on with you.

The other place that community will be created is outside of your weekly gathering. One of the most common mistakes that group leaders make is thinking of their small group as a weekly meeting. It's not. The group is a group of people. The meeting is just a way to get those people together. The leader is not just the leader of a meeting; he or she is the leader of the group of people.

What this means is that while the weekly meeting might be a key component of the group, the group's interactions and the group leader's responsibility do not end when the meeting ends.

Here are a few things you can do to help create community in your group outside of the weekly meeting:

- Have a barbecue hosted by someone different than your usual group host.
- Serve on a ministry team together (parking, Kidside, JHM, greeters, cafe, etc.).
- Celebrate a group member's birthday.
- Encourage group members to attend the same weekend service if possible.
- Do a fun social activity like going to the movies, attending a free concert in the park, or watching a sporting event.
- Pair group members off and have them meet during the week over coffee or a meal to share their stories.
- Serve each other. If a group member...
 - ...is in the hospital, organize a schedule for group members to visit.
 - ...has a baby or loses a loved one, organize a schedule for group members to bring meals to the person.
 - ...is moving, organize the group to help.

QUESTIONS:

1. *On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being high, how would you describe your ability to be vulnerable with a group? What is the basis for that? What would you need in order to be more vulnerable? How can you intentionally create space for authenticity within the group?*

2. *Think about a time you experienced deep community in a small group. What impact did that have on your life?*

3. *What are one or two things your group can do outside of the weekly meeting to build community?*

ASSIGNMENT 4:

Prayer is key to every small group, but often the only way we think about incorporating prayer into our groups is to pray for a meal or to spend a few minutes collecting and praying over requests at the end of the group meeting.

Both of these can be good things to do, but there are other ways to incorporate prayer into the group, some of which have little or nothing to do with the meeting itself but rather are about having group members to pray for one another outside of group. Here are some ideas you might want to incorporate into your group:

- If someone is talking about a need during group, stop right then and pray for him or her.
- Ask someone to be the prayer coordinator, who writes down requests each meeting and keeps track of answers. If a group member has an emergency, he or she can contact the prayer coordinator, who will notify all the other members to pray for that person.
- Have each member write down requests for the week on a piece of paper, fold the paper, and put it in a hat. Pass the hat, each member agreeing to pray for the person he or she picks and to contact that person to encourage him or her during the week.
- Give everyone a three-by-five-inch card to write down prayer requests for the week. Have them exchange cards with another member of the group, and meet up with that person for a meal or coffee during the week to check-in.

When you do pray during the group meeting, there are some best practices that will help your group engage well:

- Keep prayers, simple, short, honest, and authentic. God's not impressed with people being overly spiritual, and flowery, complicated prayers can intimidate people who are new to faith.
- Share the prayer responsibility. You as the group leader aren't the only person who can or should pray for the group.
- Don't call on someone to pray unless you've asked permission beforehand or you know the person well.
- Don't expect everyone to pray every time.
- Try to avoid praying in a circle. Allow members to pray one at a time as they feel led.
- Respect the intimacy level. As the group grows in deepening relationships, a sense of safety will foster a deeper experience in prayer.
- Keep prayer requests focused on group members and those closest to them. No prayers for your uncle's dog-walker's cousin's cat.
- If multiple people are praying, be clear on who will close the prayer time.¹

¹ Lists of prayer ideas and best practices adapted from *Leading Life Changing Small Groups* by Russ Robinson.

QUESTIONS:

1. *What are one or two ways you can incorporate prayer into the group you are/are considering leading?*

ASSIGNMENT 5:

Small groups are units of the church on mission from God. They're meant to advance the Kingdom of God, not be a holy huddle concerned with nothing more than protecting those inside from the big, bad world.

There are two key ways for your group to make a difference. One, by finding a place to go and serve. Two, by inviting others who don't yet know Jesus to be a part of your group. Whether to pursue the first or second option (or both) will depend on your group.

If you're leading an in-depth Bible study, that might not be a great place to invite an unchurched neighbor. It could be under the right circumstances, but that wouldn't be the best first step for most people. On the other hand, if you're leading a softball group or a group on how to be a better parent, you could invite almost anyone. By inviting those people we know who don't know Jesus, we have an opportunity to introduce them the profound and deep love of Jesus expressed through a loving community of Christ-followers, and will hopefully eventually have the opportunity to introduce them to Jesus himself.

If you decide that finding a place to serve is the best way for your group to make a difference, you may find that it can be a bit of a challenge to actually make it happen, to get everything organized and to motivate people to participate. However, in the end your hard work will pay off, not just in the good that is done but in the deepened relationships that result when people serve together. Working shoulder-to-shoulder bonds people in a way that sitting across a circle cannot.

Here are some best practices for successfully engaging your group in serving others:

- Find a way that your group can serve that doesn't require a separate meeting time during the week. It can be difficult to get people out to one more thing. Try to simply replace one of your regular weekly meetings once a month or once a semester with an opportunity to serve.
- Try to leverage the interests and passions of people in your group. If half of your group are foster parents, figure out how you can serve foster kids. If someone in your group is already serving with a ministry to the homeless, see if that person can organize a time for the rest of

your group to join.

- Think hyper-local. Is there a single mom who lives on your street who needs to have her house painted or a park within walking distance that needs to be cleaned up? Could you invite your neighbors over for a barbecue? The closer to home people serve, the more that serving comes from a place of love and relationship (rather than an “us the saviors” serving “them the needy”), and when serving comes from a place of love and relationship, it has a more significant impact on all involved.

QUESTIONS:

1. Go to <https://www.eastside.com/serve locally/> and identify a couple of specific opportunities that might be a good fit for your small group/potential small group.

ASSIGNMENT 6: (Leader to Be)

Exactly how your group meetings are structured will depend on the type of group you're leading. An hour-long lunch group during the workweek will be different than an evening Bible study, which will be different than a basketball group.

Don't feel like you need to include all of the items below, but here are a few things to consider including in your group meeting:

- Unstructured Conversation - This usually takes place while people are arriving or before they leave and gives people an opportunity to catch up on what's happening in their lives.
- Conversation Starter/Icebreaker - When a group first starts meeting, icebreakers can help people get to know one another. As time goes on, you may not need an icebreaker every week, but if the meeting topic is heavy, it can be good to ask a lighter question at the beginning to get people warmed up.
- Prayer - Depending on the type of group you have, you may or may not pray together as a group during the meeting. For example, if you have a fishing

group full of people who don't know Jesus, praying during the group might be a good idea... or it might be super-awkward.

- Content - Whether it's Bible study or basketball, this is the thing you came together to do.
- Logistics - Time set aside to go over what next week's homework assignment is, changes in meeting location, *etc.*
- Musical Worship - Some groups enjoy singing worship songs or hymns together. These can be led by someone in your group who is musically inclined or by your phone and a bluetooth speaker.
- Make a Difference - Time to plan how your group can impact others and to pray for friends, neighbors, and loved ones who don't yet know Jesus.
- Meal - Food helps people bond and get to know one another.
- Storytelling - Time set aside for group members to share a testimonies of how they came to faith, how God has revealed Himself in the past, and/or how God has been at work in their lives recently.

As you're developing a structure for your group meetings, keep in mind that you don't have to do the same thing every single week.

If you're leading a Bible study, you might decide that one week a month is a potluck or an outing where you just hang out rather than do a study. Perhaps once a month or once a semester your group devotes a meeting to doing a service project. Or you could set aside 15 minutes at each meeting that is used for different things: storytelling the first week of the month, musical worship the second week of the month, planning to make a difference the third week of the month, and extended prayer time the fourth week of the month.

QUESTIONS:

1. *Create an agenda for your weekly group meeting. Be sure to include the amount of time you expect to spend on each item.*

2. *Are there any times during the month or throughout the semester where you plan for your group to vary from the regular routine?*

ASSIGNMENT 6: (Current Leader)

How to know if your group is doing well?

Whether you are meeting in person or online, it may be hard to know if your group is doing well or not. Online groups have the challenge of being unable to meet face to face and missing out on the relational aspect of in person groups. You might find it challenging to read people, some people have their cameras off, or after a long day at work their eyes hurt from looking at a screen all.

Are you meeting in person and you ask questions as everyone just stares at you? You begin to think, “why isn’t anyone participating? Did I say something wrong? Am I boring them? Will my group show up next week?”

Every leader has felt that way at some time. As leaders it is good to take time each semester and evaluate your small group. Here are three questions to ask:

- Do my group members rely on one another?
- Are my group members becoming more like Jesus as a result of my group?
- If my group stopped meeting, would anyone outside of the group notice?

Read [5 Mistakes that Ruin Small Groups](#) by Carter Moss

QUESTIONS:

1. *Think about your group and answer the 3 evaluation questions. Rate how you are doing on a scale of 1-5.*

2. *Name an example of one mistake that might be hurting a small group that stood out to you and what steps do you think you can take to try and prevent that?*

What are at least two LEADERSHIP TAKEAWAYS from this module? Be prepared to discuss with your group.

- 1.

- 2.