

EMMANUEL

Baptist Church

Small Groups, Bible Studies, & Ministry Groups Handbook



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The Purpose, Core Values & Vision of Emmanuel Small Groups, Bible Studies & Ministry Groups

Our Mission as a Church is:

Relying on the enabling presence and power of God, our mission is to **proclaim the Good News** of Jesus Christ, to **teach**, baptize and **disciple unto maturity** in Christ. (Mth 28:19-20; Eph 4:11-13)

Our Strategy & Vision for Discipleship as a Church is:

To see every person at Emmanuel **WORSHIP** (Sunday Mornings), **GROW** (In a small group, Bible study or Ministry Group), and **SERVE** (In small groups, church ministries, and in our community).

Purpose of Small Groups, Bible Studies & Ministry Groups:

To accomplish the work of Discipleship by helping every believer at Emmanuel **GROW** as a disciple who is **learning & living obediently, growing spiritually** in **maturity & Christlike Character**. (Mth 28:18-20; Romans 8:28-30; Eph 4:11-13; 2 Pet 1:3-8)

We believe in small groups, Bible Studies & Ministry Groups that relationally connect people in such a way that encourage them to be growing in their relationship with Jesus Christ. We believe that they can provide the best context within the church for genuine discipleship to happen: spiritual growth in Biblical community.

The Core Values for Discipleship:

Ultimately, it's the individual in partnership with God that Makes Spiritual growth happen, but we can work to create the environment for Spiritual growth to take place. (1 Corinthians 3:6)

Studying & Applying God's Word

(Acts 2:42; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12; James 1:22)

Prayer

(Acts 2:42-43; Matthew 18:18-20; Col 1:9-12; Acts 4:23-31)

Authentic Biblical Relationships

(Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:25)

- love and mutual care. (Acts 2:41-47; John 13:35; 1 John 3:18)
- Spiritual Growth & Accountability (Eph 4:13; James 5:16; I John 1:7-9; Heb 3:12-14)
- Mutual Ministry & Shared Leadership (1 Peter 2:5-9; Romans 1:11-12, 1 Cor 12:14-21)

Serving

(Mathew 10:5; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; 1 John 3:18)

Leadership Development

(Matthew 17:1; Acts 16:1-3; 2 Tim 2:2)

God's Word + Other Believers + God = Spiritual Growth

We have everything we need, through God's Word, His Spirit and Biblical Community for Spiritual Growth and transformation!

"His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires." 2 Peter 1:3-4

"small group ministry can also help a church become far more disciplined in its spiritual disciplines...Small groups take these important but not particularly urgent spiritual disciplines and make them urgent by putting them on the schedule." Sticky Church

"Most Spiritual growth moments aren't linear and don't come from a program or curriculum, but from the result of life putting us in a need to know or grow situation. These situations are usually accompanied by a trial or stretching experience that calls for a deeper walk with God when the two things we need most are the Bible and other Christians." Sticky Church

Our Vision: To see **every believer** at Emmanuel participating in a Small Group, Bible Study and ministry group, **growing** in their relationship with Jesus; experiencing biblical **community**.

The Qualifications & Expectations of a Small Group, Bible Study & Ministry Group Leader

1 – Character.

A small group Leader must be a person of Christian Character who has integrity and a good reputation. Someone who is committed to living a Christlike Life, who is growing in their relationship with God. Someone who loves and humbly obeys the Word of God. (1 Thessalonians 5:22-24; 1 Timothy 3:2-3; 2 Timothy 2:15;)

2 – Commitment.

A small group leader needs to be committed to their group, to the church and to small group ministry. They must be able and willing to give the time and effort to make small group ministry effective: prayer, preparation for bible study, following up on group members who are away or have needs. (Acts 20:17-24; Hebrews 13:7; Col 1:29)

3 – Competence.

A small group leader needs to be competent in what they do. Able to lead small group meetings, from prayer times to bible studies. Able to lead a small group in vision and direction. Able to lead members into deeper relationships with each other. Know your strengths and weaknesses, work with them. Willing to be trained, to learn more and committed to grow in their abilities. Use other's strengths & Gifts. (Philippians 3:12-17)

4 – Chemistry

A small group leader needs to be relational and able to relationally connect with the members of their small group, carefully handling any relational issues and dynamics that may arise. Leading small groups requires compassion, kindness, patience, and gentleness. It requires working to develop and maintain a compassionate heart for those they serve, knowing that often people don't care how much you know till they know that you care. Setting the example in caring in both word and deed. (Matthew 9:35-38; Galatians 5:22-23)

Love God...Love God's People

LEADERSHIP

leadership essentials

Stay Connected

Cultivate Relationships

Promote Participation

Provide Care

Serve Together

Replace Yourself

Small Group Leader Myths...

1. You must be a Bible Scholar (preferably with a working knowledge of Greek & Hebrew). You must have all the answers, if you don't, never ever admit it to anyone.
2. You must be the Super Shepherd, who has deep personal relationships with each member via phone calls, emails, visits, every day or two.
3. You must have all together, having little to no weaknesses or failures and if you do, you must work hard to carefully hide such flaws.
4. Leading the group is a one man show. You should make the decisions and do everything yourself. Success is all up to you and rests on your shoulders alone, good luck.
5. You should seldom ask for help from staff, other leaders, or small group members. You can do it all, alone.
6. You should dominate all the discussion and always do most of the talking. Do not allow for any silence or pause, it is too awkward.

7. You must be the ultimate entertainer. Your job is to make everyone happy, all of the time, if someone is not having a good time, it's your fault.
8. The goal is life altering, heaven experiencing meetings every night. If there is not visions, repentance in weeping, thunder and lightning, you are not doing it right.

Q: How do we measure success as A small Group?

First look primarily at the quality of the relationships within the groups and at the level of membership retention from one session to the next. look for stories of mortgages and rents being paid, meals provided, hospital visits, holidays and vacations spent together, encouragement, and tough confrontations. All in all, the same stuff I'd look for in a healthy extended family!

Leadership Training & Meetings

We know you are busy! You are already giving your time and effort to lead your small group every week. But we also want you to stay encouraged, focused and equipped. So we have designed leadership training to keep this in mind which includes:

- Three to Five Small Group **Leadership Meetings** a Year. One in September, November, January, March, May. These provide opportunity to encourage and learn from one another, by sharing and celebrating victories and struggles. They also provide training opportunities as well during the “seasons” of small group ministry
- **Weekly Emails & Short Video Training sessions** 15 min long that can you listen to when convenient to further help you stay encouraged and equipped for the long haul! You will find these at our Website under Ministries/Small Groups/ Small Group Leaders and also on our YouTube Channel EmmanuelLifeNetwork
- We encourage you to **take the Summer off!** Plan to meet as a small group once a month for a Social & time of prayer just to stay connected. Take advantage of messaging apps to stay connected and share prayer requests as well.

Suggested Small Group Meeting Format & Outline

Here is an outline of a typical small group, Bible Study or Ministry Group meeting with the KEY ELEMENTS that we believe are important!

Before the Meeting: Prepare & Pray! Go through material; set up small group area; pray for your small group members.

Welcome & Mingle / “Hosting” (10-20 min)

- *Get people connected and feeling welcome
- *Encourage and allow the building of relationships
- *Offering food or drink helps make people feel comfortable as well

Sharing Time (15-30 min)

- *Allow everyone to share how their week went. Share things that will be prayed for later.
- *Not everyone has to share, however some often wait to be asked or invited. Be careful not to allow others to dominate.

Bible Study & Discussion Time (45 Min – Hour)

- *Do everything you can to encourage everyone to **come prepared**, with the answers to study questions filled out. Periodically ask people to read what they have written down.
- ***Get in the Word.** It is the most valuable thing you have! Open Bibles.
- *Every question has one of **3 purposes**: Getting to know the person, Getting into the Bible, coming up with specific applications to each person’s life.
 - ***Don’t teach or preach**, allow any one person to dominate, but allow people to wrestle through what they have heard and begin to apply it to their lives.

Prayer Time / Accountability (30 - 45min)

- *Pray for what was shared earlier, but allow for some to share something not mentioned earlier.
- *Don’t force everyone to share but know some wait to be asked. Don’t allow others to dominate either. Give time for depth and transparency to develop.
 - *This takes time and creativity! Find ways to get everyone involved.
 - *Split into groups. Men & Women, accountability partners.
 - *Regularly pray also for the church with information provided.
- *Encourage everyone to use sentence prayers, praying for one item at a time. Let them know that they can pray more than once!
 - *Some groups find it more effective to have this time at the beginning.

Fellowship / Ministry Time (15-20 min)

- *This allows time for people to build relationships with one another
- *This provides a time to perhaps address a question raised in the study or to minister to someone in need.

After the Meeting: You may want to make notes of things to do differently next time, prayer request or concerns to follow up with during the week.

***EACH OF THESE is an important element of a small group meeting. No doubt some you will be naturally bent toward some elements more than others, the more they are kept in balance the most effective a small group ministry can be.**

***Allow the Holy Spirit to change your meeting once in a while. You may feel compelled to spend the whole time ministering to a crisis or need.**

***2- 3 hours is a good average amount time to run a small group well. We don't suggest anything less than 2 hours, anything more than 3 hours.**

***Every 8-12 weeks take time to just have fun together (A social) or Serve as a group somewhere in the church or in the community. We will often ask all our groups to help out in big outreaches (ie: County Christmas). Take a few minutes at the start of your quarter thinking ahead to this and plan a date. Give someone this project to lead.**

***Consider adding other elements once and while such as Worship or sharing each other's testimonies as well throughout the year, this can be a powerful thing.**

***THE FIRST WEEK!**

The first Night Your Small Group meets you should include a couple elements:

- **A Mixer** - Time for everyone to introduce themselves / Ice breaker (Fun game; answer questions ie: favorite food...)
- **Going over an outline / format of the small group meeting:** start time, end time, elements.
- **Go over the Vision, purposes, and core values of Small group ministry.** (Make sure they catch the vision of Why we are doing what we are doing!)
- **Go over Small Group Covenant, Values, & Expectations** – The Small Group Covenant that establishes some further ground rules or “Values” for the small group (ie: confidentiality, honesty, vulnerability, respect, commitment; ect...)



Emmanuel's Sermon Based Small Group Model

Our Emmanuel we are intentionally moving to a Sermon Based Model for our Small Groups for these Reasons:

Sermon Based Small Groups...

- Make the task of leading a small group much more manageable and therefore makes it easier to find and train Leaders. It requires less experience and knowledge to lead. They only need a facilitator who has a growing relationship with God and a heart for the people in their group
- Make it easier to get "Spiritual window shoppers" and the casual Christian engaged in a small group and start growing spiritually. It's a relatively short step from listening to a sermon to joining a sermon based small group.
 - It makes the connection with the Sunday Morning Worship Service and sermon immediately change for the better. Listening deeper, taking notes, allowing God's Word to do its stuff, making Sunday messages more memorable and life changing.
- It keeps the entire church focused and headed in the same direction. Casting vision, clarifying direction, dealing with important issues. It puts everyone on the same page.
- It avoids biblical and spiritual data overload. Taking one topic and asking the entire church to slow down and digest it together, making teaching far more effective and memorable, beyond mere exposure to actual knowledge.
- Make it easier for new believers to engage in a small group where they can begin to grow spiritually. They don't need a lot of biblical background to discuss about a sermon they have heard and *experienced*.
- It is easier to mainstream a new believer into a sermon based small group that has an opening where they can rub shoulders with long time believers where they can benefit from life o life modeling and mentoring.
 - Allow for every small group member to come to their small group meeting more prepared. They make a large part of the preparation effortless, everyone comes to the meeting with at least 45 minutes of preparation from Sunday Morning! Those who miss the message on Sunday can watch in on YouTube, DVD, or CD.
- Make it easier to get more we get people into small groups, the more people grow spiritually and less end up leaving the church through the back door, giving people more time to grow to spiritual maturity, and the church to grow healthily.
 - Are sustainable at any size of church.
- The simple process of handling the scriptures on a regular basis and looking into them to see what they say sets the stage for the need to know or need to grow moments. Most Spiritual growth moments aren't linear and don't come from a program or curriculum, but from the result of life putting us in a need to know or grow situation. These situations are usually accompanied by a trial or stretching experience that calls for a deeper walk with God when the two things we need most are the Bible and other Christians.

Emmanuel's Open & Closed Small Group Model

Our small group model at Emmanuel is an open and closed model. As a new small group starts, it starts as an **open group** for a time to give it time to adjust and settle. This often takes 2 -12 months. People will many come and go but eventually **a core develops**. Once it is established, we recommend that it moves to a **closed group**. This will give the group time to **build meaningful relationships through which spiritual growth can take place**.

It provides a predictable small-group environment where participants can **build deep friendships** and experience **authentic community** and spiritual growth. We don't want our groups to have revolving doors. We believe healthy relationships take time to form.

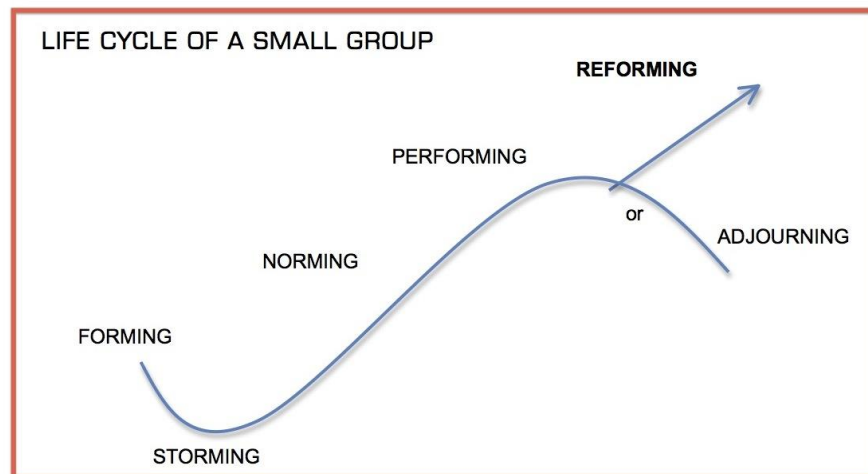
The group should always stay aware to the possibility that God may bring someone along to the group, but only on the agreement of the whole group. As groups grow they should consider multiplication at some point. We believe that a small group can experience healthy growth and multiplication when the time is right, and we are here to help!

Entry Points & Escape Routes

Acquaintance → Friendship → Trust & Openness → Authenticity & Accountability

- **Small group members won't stick in groups where things are uncomfortable...**and that's ok. Relationships that lead to **deep friendships** are different. They often require a set of **shared interests, values or experiences** that bind them together.
- In helping every person find a small group that they can spiritually grow in, we want to give them **pain free off ramps and escape routes**. We do this by offering everyone in the group the opportunity to **bail out, no questions asked, without guilt at the end of each small group series**. At the end of each session everyone is given 3 options: continue in the group, take a break, or try a new group.
- The reality is that it may take someone three or four groups to find a group that feels like home for them. We want people to keep trying they find it! We want to avoid a one and done experience
- We believe that if we **provide an environment** where people are **connected closely enough** and **long enough** for life to happen, **God will show up** and people will begin to grow spiritually.
- We know that groups need to be allowed to grow deeper at **their own speed**. Sometimes it takes an **unexpected trial or crisis** to change everything.
- Thanks to the **normal transitions of life**, carefully adding new members to the group can bring a **fresh perspective** and a **healthy change** in the relational dynamic of the group.
- In adding members to your group, look for people that will **connect**. That have **room for more connection** in their lives. For those with **common interests** that will help them bond and connect.

The Life Cycle of a Small Group



Stage I: Forming

characterized by participants being polite and often **superficial** in their interactions in the group. People are testing the amount of compatibility with others. **Anxiety** is usually high. The individual's need is to establish safe patterns for interaction. The group's need is to establish criteria for membership and interaction. Typical questions include, "Do I want to be part of a group with these people? Are they going to accept me? At this stage the group is very dependent on the leader to provide guidance and direction. The leader plays a very visible role in providing structure and direction for the group. The leader is the primary person who casts the vision for what the group is about and what it is intended to do in the lives of the members.

Stage II: Storming

characterized by individuals beginning to challenge differences as they seek to retain (or regain) their individuality, influence and power. This may be directed at the leader or other emerging leaders. Individually people are working out their own **control** needs so that they maintain a sense of control while still being part of a group. The group's need is to persevere so that they develop norms and patterns for decision making within the group. Usually the most unpleasant of all the stages, it is, however, vital for the group to go through this stage. Small Group members are trying to figure out just how deep they were willing to go. In this stage, the best thing the group leader can do is to be honest about their hopes for the group, while also making room for others to share their thoughts as well. A short attention span or short commitment is another characteristic to watch for. Don't be surprised if some try the group for a while and then disappear. This is normal.

Stage III: Norming

Characterized by the group finally becoming a team or **cohesive unit**. It negotiates roles and processes for its work and study, tackles goals and works together collaboratively. Individuals are working on **care and affection** for others and fellowship among the members. The group is working on **achieving its goals** by **recognizing the unique gifts of each member** and utilizing them to everyone's benefit. There is growing trust and growing relationships.

Stage IV: Performing

There is a **growing level of commitment, openness and involvement**. Members are **comfortable** with one another. There is a **growing awareness of one another's abilities and faults**. **Lasting friendships** are developed. The group begins to take full responsibility for its actions and pursues the purposes of the group with passion. **Leaders are developing** from within the group. The good leader provides opportunities for others to **identify and use their spiritual gifts** and is delegating more responsibility to team members. **Lifelong friendships** are made here.

Stage V: Transforming or Adjourning

Once a group feels it has achieved its goal and climax, then they have the decision on how to move forward – either finding continuing or finding a way to grow **or multiplying a new group**. This group has **bonded interpersonally** and will tend to **want to hold onto the experience and stay together**. At this stage, the group will either adapt and change based on the evolving needs of the group, or it can die. All outcomes can be healthy.

Strategy for Small Group Ministry Growth & Multiplication

The spiritual paradox. Small groups ultimately do not exist for themselves. Groups often need to grow and multiply so that **others can be connected** to and experience what small group ministry provides.

Living things grow. The church and small groups are a living thing. If they do not grow, they can become stagnant, self-centered, withdrawn and die. The church must always be committed to growth. In Multiplication we go from a view of ourselves to others! Our own needs to the needs of others.

The **optimal size of a small group is 8-12 people**. The level of care and overall effectiveness of a small group often will diminish greatly when the group gets too large. A loss of intimacy, caring, sharing and involvement happens which produces frustrated members who drift away from involvement until suddenly the group grown smaller again, but for the wrong reasons.

Small groups must have an openness to growth and reproduction. These are our strategies for small group ministry growth:

1. **MULTIPLICATION!** One of the most effective ways of small group ministry growth is multiplication! To see a small group grow to the point of becoming two! Be preparing your group for this from the beginning. Take time every small group ministry season (Usually between spring & fall) to consider whether your small group is ready for this! Don't be afraid to talk and pray about this.
2. **Leadership Development!** (2 Tim2:2) Small group ministry is the ideal place for leadership development! Always be looking for those with the skills and gifts to be small group facilitators. **Find and appoint an apprentice leader(s)** as they emerge. **Share group leadership** with them. Encourage them. Mentor them. Someone who has showed Character, Competence, Commitment, and Chemistry. Let your group know at some point that someone is begin trained to be a small group leader. Eventually your group can multiply with that person starting a new group, or those apprentice leaders starting an entirely new group.
3. **Celebrate it!** When the time comes, we can help you celebrate it! It doesn't have to be a negative, it is a positive!



Discovering & Developing Leaders

- The best place to find and develop small group leaders **is in the groups we already have**. Those who have experienced a healthy small group. We believe the best small group leaders come from recommendations more than Volunteers.
- We ask every small group leader in an existing group to find and appoint an **apprentice leader** who can help them lead their group but also be trained as a potential new group leader
 - We look for two key traits: **Spiritual Warmth**. An attractive growing relationship with Jesus. Those who are ready and willing to grow. People who inspire others to grow spiritually. **Relational Warmth**. Someone with good relational skills. Who are likeable, people enjoy being around. People who care about their relationship with God and care about others.
- Look for those who are humble, compassionate, faithful, self-controlled, teachable, gentle. (1 Timothy 3:1-7)
- Start by affirming the potential you see in them. Give them time to consider and pray about it. Let them know that there is no absolute commitment, but an opportunity to test out their gifting.
- Start small, don't overwhelm them. Allow them to lead a prayer time, a bible study. Slowly increase ministry opportunity with their comfort level. Allow God to work and to grow them.
- Mentor them. Teach them through relationship. (Paul & Timothy, Barnabas & Mark). Model Ministry for them.

Small Group Commitment, Values & Expectations

Small groups succeed when everyone is committed to the same vision, purpose and values together. We challenge each person to commit to these values and expectations:

Purpose - The primary purpose of small groups at Emmanuel is Discipleship: To make lifelong followers of Jesus Christ in all nations, who are living obediently, growing in maturity, bearing fruit, and being transformed into Christlikeness.

Commitment - Making Small Group meetings a priority, doing my best to attend regularly and be on time. Knowing that my lack of commitment can affect the whole group's experience.

Participation - Coming to Small Group meetings prepared and ready to participate (having listened to the message on Sunday, taken notes and worked through the questions). Being read and willing to share my life to others, being honest and transparent but without disrupting or monopolizing the time and attention of others. Using my gifts and abilities to contribute to the group as needed.

Openness, Transparency, & Unity - Creating a safe place for each member to share with openness, honesty and transparency in mutual respect and love. Accepting others and doing my best to contribute to the unity of the group and church, building others up, loving and forgiving others, and working through any conflict, being constructive and not destructive.

Relationships – Being committed to building biblical relationships with other believers where I and others can be known and cared for.

Confidentiality - Maintaining confidentiality of the personal information that is shared. Avoiding gossip and slander. Understanding that my Small Group leader may contact a Pastor if there is a situation that he/she doesn't know how to handle, where a person is being harmed, or if there is serious ongoing unrepentant sin.

Accountability & Spiritual Growth - Coming with the purpose to learn and apply Gods word, and develop relationships for the goal of spiritual growth and maturity, striving to help one another take the next step in our spiritual growth and development and allowing others to hold me accountable for growing spiritually and living a life that honors God.

Caring – To do my part to care for others in my group, to help meet their needs with the love of Christ.

Outreach & Multiplication - Committed to seeing our group work together to reach out to others in and outside the church. Being open to new members, as it grows, being willing to multiply a new group when the time is right to allow others to experience biblical community.

Show up...Join In...Be Real

Small Group Essential Elements

“Hosting”

Who should be the Host?

You may want to be both a facilitator and Host, however it may be easier to find someone else the group willing to host! Finding someone with the gift of Hospitality would be best. You can even share the hosting responsibilities.

Consider The Area of Hospitality!

This involves everything that works to make your small group members feel loved, welcome, comfortable, safe. Create a comfortable environment for spiritual growth, intimate fellowship and transformation! That we suggest the Home!

- Make it feel welcome and comfortable. Consider things like background music, lighting, and having food or drink available.
- Get rid of distractions! Phone, kids, animals.
- Make sure everything works! DVD. Television.

Its all about relationships!

Building good relationships with your guests is crucial!

- Learn their names.
- Greet them warmly.
- Learn everything you can about their family, work, lives.
- Help build the relationships BETWEEN your guests! Introduce them to each other. Help them find common ground and connections with each other.
- Be sensitive for those who seem to be struggling to get connected.

Prayer

Pray for your small group members...The intercessor role

We must understand the spiritual battle at work in the lives of your small group members! Pray by name for each member of your group on a weekly basis. If you want to see transformation, you will have to ask God for it.

Having a Prayer time as a small Group...

Next to the lesson and discussion, the group prayer time is the most vital part of a small group ministry! The Prayer time can develop the caring for one another aspect of your group, as well as the avenue by which you really will get to know one another in an intimate way. Here are a few tips to make the most of your small group prayer time:

1. Keep the prayer time focused on group members, not individuals outside the group. This is not the church prayer meeting time. This is also not the time to “talk” about others. This is the time to meet the intimate needs and concerns of the people in your group. They will be challenged to be real and honest about the struggles and needs of their own lives.
2. We will provide a few Church wide prayer requests to each group and do ask that each group is praying for the church and key church concerns.
3. Enforce and remind of confidentiality! Your small group members need to feel safe enough to share their personal requests. They will never be real or honest about the struggles and concerns in their lives unless they feel safe and can trust others.
4. Encourage and give every member an opportunity to share a request. If there is a member who is not participating, simply ask a simple question like is there anything happening in the week ahead that we could pray for? But don't force the issue! You many need to confront someone away from the group who is over dominating the prayer time.
5. Don't try to fix the problem! This is a time to pray for one another. Avoid the urge as a small group facilitator to offer your solution to every prayer request that comes up! (That will probably happen naturally after the prayer time)
6. Ask people to pray for 1 or 2 items, not for all as to give everyone a chance to pray. This avoids really long prayers by individuals and also making others feel like there is nothing else to pray for!
7. As the Facilitator close in prayer. Pray for the prayer items not prayed for.
8. Be creative. Use different ways to involve everyone, ie: everyone prays for the person on their right; break into smaller groups; Individual quiet prayer; ACTS (Adoration, confession, thanksgiving; supplication)

9. **Keep Track of the Prayer requests! A list, a Journal, Email. Pray Through needs in request in Fatih!**
10. **Follow up prayer requests! Depending on the nature of the prayer request, look for an opportunity to follow it up by giving a call during the week, a hospital visit, meeting a simple need.**
11. **Lead out in being authentic and real with your struggles and sin, which will provide the context for others to appropriately share their concerns and issues.**

Honesty, Transparency & Accountability

James 5:16; I John 1:7-9

A primary goal of small group ministry is spiritual growth that leads to sanctification. God has called us each to be conformed to the image of Christ. One can acquire anything in solitude except character. God uses people in three ways – to reveal our sin, to help us to take action against our sin, and to walk with us in our struggle against sin.

Look for ways to incorporate and develop accountability into your small group . Ministry. Using during prayer time is good. Maybe divide up into smaller groups, same gender. Develop accountability partners within your small group that meet outside small group time once a week or every other week. Even perhaps one on one Discipleship within your Group.

“A strong small group ministry can help a church become more authentic in its relationships ...Sadly, transparency is hardly the hallmark of most churches.

Most Christians don't know that it's okay to be honest and to share their problems. Sunday Mornings and large church gatherings are generally not conducive for this to happen. Small groups however by their nature and structure foster greater honesty and transparency and overtime this can leak into the entire church”

“Small Groups take important but not particularly urgent spiritual disciplines (prayer, bible study, accountability) and make them urgent by putting them on the schedule.”

***We have a simple and easy one on one discipleship program that you can use within your small group Ministry, called Xchange. Talk to us if you are interested!**



Caring for One another

Acts 2:41-47; Romans 12:10-15; Galatians 6:2; 1 John 3:18

One of the key values and goals of biblical fellowship is to develop care for each other in the small group. Our Small groups at Emmanuel are a strategic system to see that people are being cared for.

1. **Comfort those who need comforting.** Ease the struggles and grief's of those in the group. It could be trials, tragedy, disappointments or just a bad day. Just be there. Listen. Weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. Pray for each other. Be a compassionate shepherd
2. **Mentor those who need Mentoring.** Sometimes those in your group need wisdom and insight for experience that you or another small group member has gained. Do this CAUTIOUSLY! Only mentor when you feel led. Do it with gentleness and humility. Do it with great listening! One on one same gender or as couples is probably the best.
3. **Encourage those who need encouragement.** There will times when your small group members get discouraged. Look for ways to encourage them. To give them hope, to spur them on, to inspire them. Offer scripture. Offer appreciation and expressions of affirmation.
4. **Help those who need help.** In some situations, words alone can't meet the need. Sometime there will be the need to help physically or materially. Meals, hospital visits, work projects, financial help, vehicle rides. Do this cautiously and prayerfully.
5. **Recommend counseling to those who need greater counsel.** We have a relationship with Shalem Counselling services which can offer professional counselling to those in need in our church. Talk to Shawn, Rachel, If needed.

Discouraged – Encourage

Ignorant – Teach/correct

Rebellious - Rebuke

Bible Study & Discussion

Be Prepared

It is important to do what you can to be as prepared as you can for each lesson. Review any material ahead of time. Think through your questions, where you want then to go, the key points you want your group to get!

Know the intentions of each question.

Each of our questions for small group discussion has one of **3 purposes**. First to allow people to **become more known**. To get to share their story or personal background more. Secondly just to **dig deeper into Scripture**. To get in the bible, find verses, learn to figure out how to learn what scripture is saying and how it related to other scripture. Thirdly **application!** To get each person in your small group to personally **apply God's word to THEIR life** and situation. To know how God is asking them to obey and respond and be **accountable** to follow through.

If you're watching a Video or listening to Audio, Take Notes

Take Notes as you watch the Video. Specify things that grab you attention that you would like to talk about! GIVE YOUR SMALL GROUP MEMBERS paper and pens/pencils to take notes also! In the case of Sermon based small groups make sure you create the clear expectation of everyone in the group having watched the message and answered the questions provided, and prepared to share and discuss.

The Opening Question is Key

The opening question is key for your discussion time. The opening question should put them at ease and invite them to participate. Often we will make the question easy, open ended (not a yes or no) and maybe fun.

Give Them Time to Respond

Now, this next point is **critical**, because the room may get silent. And YOU, as the host, will feel threatened by that silence ... even 2 seconds of "dead air" can make you feel like "the discussion time is failing!" You will have an urge to jump in and break the silence and "save" the discussion time. DON'T DO THAT! You will unwittingly "train" your guests to remain silent. They will learn that they don't need to talk, because their host will do it for them. Sometimes the discussion will be immediate and explosive, but sometimes the Holy Spirit is working and needs time. So, plan on **giving them time**. For the early lessons, while your group is getting to know each other and to become comfortable with each other, there may be a few moments of uneasy silence. If you get to the point where you just can't stand it, then say something like this: "If you are waiting for me to break this silence, I'm not going to do it." This will usually break the tension and bring some laughter

Do Not Be Anxious

Don't be anxious. You are going to find that this will become a most delightful time. Make sure you are **praying about the discussion time before** your group meets. Ask the Lord to open up your group and especially pray for those who have been silent, that they will feel comfortable and begin to join the conversation.

Dealing with those who are domineering

Pray that the Lord will give them sensitivity for others. If it persists, you will need to have an honest discussion with them privately to talk about what you are trying to achieve and ask them to help you by allowing others opportunity to share. They probably don't like silence, either, and feel that they are the ones who can "save" the day. They will KILL group discussion if left unchecked.

Quiet, non participating Guests

If you have small groups members who aren't participating, that's ok. Give them time to be comfortable. But sometimes what they need is a little bit of prodding. Don't be afraid to gently ask them what they thought or if there something that they thought good, interesting or helpful. Don't force the issue, but don't afraid of inviting people into the conversation.

Check out the questions ahead of time

Don't feel like you have to "plow through" and get all the questions done. You know your group better than the author of your discussion; you know how much time you have. Decide ahead of time what questions are best, what are relative, what questions will cause people to interact with the a material and apply it to their lives. Even write your own questions.

Don't give in to the urge to "Preach" or to "Teach"

Your role as the Facilitator is not be to do the teaching or the preaching! The best way for your group to learn and grow in the small group is through them discovering truth on their own! Let everyone be involved! Let everyone work through the material together. Let everyone get involved! Allow for discussion.

Be Gentle and Understanding

Be prepared! You may hear and see some different reactions to what your small group members are learning, discovering, and wrestling through. You may hear discussion you don't necessarily agree with. Respond carefully, with Gentleness and understanding, ESPECIALLY if you have new believers or non-Christians involved. Some people may respond defensively out of conviction. Allow for differing opinions, even wrong ones, don't feel the need to correct.

Stay on Track

You want to keep the discussion on track to the topic at hand! Make sure that you are gentle and tactful, not making members feel like their input is unimportant, or that you are not caring about their input. But avoid drifting into debates, storytelling, and getting of topic.

Application, Application, Application. The ultimate goal is to apply Gods word. Strive in every bible study to get your small group members to apply the word of God to their lives personally! And to share that to keep each other accountable.

Keep discussion focused on God's word! Always come back to the biblical truth the author is saying. Its Gods word that has the power to work in us.

Keep a Positive Tone

Also be careful that the discussion does become very critical, judgmental or negative, especially about people or the church.

Keep an eye on the clock and Wrapping up

You may find that the discussion could go on for a very long time! Make sure to set a definite time to wrap up the discussion. Watch the clock. End the discussion sensitively, saying “this is great discussion, but we do need to allow those who need to go, to go. Invite those who want to discuss more to stay if that is alright with the host.

ENJOY! Do everything you can, within the guidelines, to make the discussion time enjoyable for everyone!

“A model meeting isn’t one that goes on for three hours because the leader lets the discussion range across a dozen topics, but one that ends with members applying biblical truth to everyday areas of their lives.”

Outside the Small Group Meeting.

Again, between the small group meeting times, there will be opportunities for you to meet the needs of small group members. Let me suggest some things you can do!

1. **Pray** for you small group members regularly. Especially the needs and concerns they share during the group time.
2. **Phone or Email.** Making calls or emails to follow up on needs or concerns that came up during the small group time are a great way to care for you small group members!
3. **Visit.** An opportunity may even arise to visit a small group member in the hospital, in their home as certain needs and concerns arise.
4. **Meeting Specific Needs.** Specific needs may arise during the small group time that can be met outside the small group time. Look for those opportunities and share them with your Group!

Serving & Outreach

Acts 2:41-47; 1 John 3:18; Eph 4:11-12; 1 Peter 2: 5-9; Romans 1:11-12, 1 Cor 12:14-21

Again, one of the key elements to spiritual growth and Discipleship is **servicing God!** We serve God by serving one another, the church, and the community! There are a variety of ways to **be intentional about serving as a small group.** We encourage everyone to **Serve in and through** their Small Group

- Talk about and utilize the talents and **Spiritual gifts** of those in your small group! Recognize and encourage those in your group to use talents and spiritual gifts ie: Hospitality, teaching, mercy, serving, giving, administration, encouraging, prayer, worship. We have a tools to help you help your small group members discover and test their spiritual gifts!
- Serve as a small group **within the church.** Choose a ministry to be involved in if it works. There are also times in the year where we have large outreach events where we will call on our small groups to serve together (ie: County Christmas)
- Find a ministry within your **community.** Choose a place in your community where you can serve in as a small group to show Christ's love. Take a small group night every couple of months to serve there. Let someone gifted with administration or mercy lead this.
- Look for opportunities to **serve one another.** There are always practical opportunities and moments that will provide the small group with a real tangible and practical way to serve and to one another. Visiting when sick or in hospital. Making meals. Work project.

“Small groups provide the opportunity to see ministry “genuinely unleashed” in the church, getting rid of “the Holy Man and the Holy Place myth. Bringing God to the workplace and the neighborhood rather than just the church building. Every small group empowered and released to do the work of the ministry” Sticky Church

Conflict Resolution

Conflict and offense are inevitable. When we mix with people who are sinful (all of us) we expose ourselves to the possibility of conflict and offence. It's especially likely where we are relating closely to others. Disagreement is also inevitable because we are different from each other, praise God! Disagreement does not always need to lead to offence and conflict. We can disagree with someone without sinning and taking offence. The bottom line is that **we are responsible for resolving conflicts in a Godly and redemptive manner!** Avoiding conflict resolution builds a dam between us and others allowing a reservoir of misunderstanding, bitterness, unforgiveness, and resentment to form. Eventually the dam will burst!

1. Try to avoid conflict. (1 Peter 4:8; Romans Ephesians 4:2; James 4:11; 5:9). Not by ignoring it, or switching groups. But be realistic. Set guidelines, communicate honesty, gently, and deal with the little things.

2. Work through it. James 1:9.

- **Evaluate the conflict** to see whether it involves sin, personal preference or mere disagreement.
- **Get a grasp of the issues** by listening carefully to BOTH sides. Stay on the subject and only handle one issue at a time.
- **Finally only speak what will lead to Godly resolution.** Don't accuse, express anger or self-pity.

The Goal is to solve the problem, grow closer in the process, and become more Godly through the process.

Confronting Sin in others

There may come the time that confronting someone's sin in the group becomes biblically necessary. (**Matthew 18:16; James 5:19-20; Ephesians 4:15**). This must be done carefully and biblically.

- 1. Determine if confronting the person is necessary. Proverbs 19:11.** It is not necessary to go to someone every time they sin or we are offended. Open conflicts NEED to be addressed and resolved. Ask yourself: Is this a sin pattern? Is it serious enough to require immediate attention? Am I the person to confront?
- 2. Define the Problem.** What are you confronting this person about? Is sin involved? What was the impact? How does he/she need to change? You must be able to define things **biblically. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)**
- 3. Examine your own heart & life. Galatians 6:1; Matthew 7:3** This helps to prepare you in humility and gentleness.
- 4. Prepare Your Heart.** Make sure **your motives** are right. To Glorify God and turn your brother from sin. Make sure **your attitudes** are right. Gentleness, patience, humility, and a genuine concern for the welfare of others. **Pray** for Gods leading and for the person's repentance.

5. **Confront.** Speak to the person privately. Plan for the right atmosphere with minimal distractions. Affirm your affection for the person. Share your perceptions. Maintain a spirit of inquiry. Offer biblical counsel. Present an appropriate course of action. Pray for them.
6. **Provide time. Follow up.**
7. **If the person does not respond in a Biblical way, inform a pastor of the situation, and walk through Matthew 18:15-17.**

Responding to being confronted

Sometimes WE are the ones who sin and need to be confronted. How we respond will have a significant influence on our group and relationships! Its far more important to regularly examine our hearts to identify instances where we may have sinned.

1. **Listen humbly and prayerfully.** Ask the Holy Spirit for conviction and Godly sorrow. **2 Corinthians 9:7-11**
2. **Confess and ask forgiveness where possible.** Ask for time if needed. But be careful, sometimes this can be a sign of pride and unteachableness. Confess your sins honestly, clearly, specifically, and completely. Never gloss over your sins, offer excuses for your behavior or generalize. Express sorrow. Let the person know that you realize how your actions affected them and let them know you are willing to accept the consequences. Ask for forgiveness.
3. **Thank and affirm the person for coming.** Remember the goal isn't just to clear your conscience, but to gain reconciliation with the one you sinned against.

“Small Groups is letting the powerful mixture of God’s Spirit, his people, and the Scriptures do its work...Anytime a group of friends commit to gather together to share their lives, pray, and discuss the biblical text and life application of the previous weekend’s sermon, good stuff happens”. Osborne, Larry. Sticky Church

