

NOW WORD COVENANT CHURCH



Host Training Manual

Definition of Small Groups

Small Groups is a group of church members (between 5 to 10 people) who meet on a regular basis to study and grow in the word together for the purpose of connection and discipleship.

Purpose of Small Groups

You do not grow in Christ alone. You help people to grow and people help you to grow. Therefore, we encourage our members to connect relationally, so they will grow spiritually in a loving and supportive environment.

Mission of Small Groups

To connect and support one another so that we make our walk in life and our work in Christ a little lighter.



Why?

Small Groups

One of the higher priorities for the church in recent years has become assimilation. Gone are the days where people find the nearest church and commit immediately. Today people are more secular and are not looking to jump into a church and more Christians are cautious in their involvement.

People typically come to church anonymously to check things out. They are often looking for a connection to God that comes through worship, prayer, the sermon and communion as well as a connection to people. If they connect with God but don't connect with people, they may miss an opportunity for their spiritual growth or in some cases spiritual birth. Because of this some may even leave the church and not realize they left because they were not connected.

It has been said that if a person joins a church and does not connect within **six** months they will **almost, always stop coming**. If they are successfully connected (or assimilated) they are probably going to stick. Which then opens doors for evangelism, discipleship, and spiritual growth.

The Church Today (Five ways to connect with disconnected people by: Ed Stetzer)

Small Groups Help To:

Grow Closer to God:

69% Of group members feel closer to God

74% Understand the Bible better

66% Trust God more

90% Of churchgoers who belong to a group are more likely to go to church at least four times a month and 28% more likely to read the Bible daily

73% Of group attenders say they are intentionally putting their spiritual gifts to use serving God and others

Grow Closer with People:

63% of regular group attenders say they intentionally spent time with other believers in order to help them grow in their faith

48% Have more loving relationships

78% percent of churchgoers who are not involved in a group are open to attending

Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger in their book Transformational Groups.

Purpose of Small Groups

Christ-John 3:16

We want new and seasoned believers to fall more in love with Christ and develop a closer relationship with Him. (we want to always point every group member back to Christ through the teachings and living out a Godly example before them)

Connection-John 13:34-35, Hebrews 10:24-25

We want each group member to develop a connection with Christ and a deeper understanding of His word as well as closer relationships with each other, and the Now Word church body.

Community-Acts 2:46-47

We connect the world to Christ by encouraging group members to invite co-workers, neighbors, family, friends and all others to come and have fellowship with each other.

Goals of Small Groups

- **Create Disciples** Matthew 28:19
 - **Disciples:** Duplicate Christ-likeness in another person. Follow me as I follow Christ
 - **Multiplication:** New Hosts are added continuously to the ministry
 - **Spiritual Growth:** Members actively participate in group discussions leading to a better understanding of God's word
 - **Personal Connection:** members of groups develop friendships with other members of groups and develop a sense of belonging

Small Groups Win



Growing: You faithfully attend our worship services, and Christian education classes, so you can stay connected by learning and growing spiritually to become like Christ with our church family.

Belonging: You participate in our designated fellowships, so you can stay connected in building meaningful relationships with our church family.

Serving: You use your talents and skills, so you can stay connected with serving in ministry to help with the works of our church family

Giving: you give a percentage from the first portion of your income, so you can stay connected with supporting the prosperity plan of our church family.

Inviting: you inspire the world by sharing the gospel, so you can stay connected with our mission to increase followers of Christ in our church family

Qualifications of all Small Groups positions

- ✓ Must be saved
- ✓ Must be an active, tithing, covenant member of Now Word; attending all worship services regularly, as well as other important Now Word events
- ✓ Must currently be in a small group
- ✓ Must be relational-have a passion for people, and a desire to get them connected
- ✓ Must be energetic-be able to present the lesson in an engaging and relevant way that all group members can understand
- ✓ Must have a passion to grow the body of Christ and grow with people

Position and Responsibilities

Small Groups Host/Leader (2 years)

- Must be willing to study your word on a regular basis to grow spiritually
- Must be willing to counsel and encourage members when needed
- Select group curriculums
- Attend scheduled meetings and trainings
- Facilitate meetings according to Small Groups ministry guidelines
- Must turn in a brief weekly report and attendance
- Must have a back up facilitator to teach for you in case of emergency or if you are unavailable

What Small Groups look like at Now Word

All Life Groups fall in these categories:

Men
Women
Marriage and Family
Young Adults (19-28)
Mixed

Semesters

Small Groups yearly cycle is divided into 3 semesters. During each break we will be promoting for and training new host, who will then begin their own groups. Please plan your curriculum start and stop times around this schedule.

Spring: January – end of April

Summer: beginning of May-end of August

Fall: beginning of September-2nd week of December

Other Important Breaks:

Spring Break (optional)

Month of July (off)

Week of Thanksgiving (off)

Last two weeks of December (off)

First two weeks of January (off)

How we Choose Curriculums

Every group will complete a curriculum of your choice unless instructed otherwise. All curriculums can be found on the Right Now Media website. Please take a two week break in between the start and finish of curriculums. If required, all members are responsible for buying their own resources for the curriculum. Please do not buy the curriculum for your group members.

Curriculums can be chosen in one of three ways:

1. Right Now Media

Right Now Media is a software the ministry uses to select curriculums. There are over 13,000 curriculums to choose from. If you are having trouble picking a curriculum, there is a suggested curriculum list located on the site under the Now Word library.

2. PK series

If there is a series PK is currently on or starting and you would like to study further with your group you may do so. Use the weekly handouts and go over them answering any questions and open dialogue.

3. Approved Curriculums

If you would like to choose a curriculum not located on the Right Now media website you will need to submit it to the Director for approval.

Topics we do not discuss

The topics below can cause division in the body of Christ, and are therefore discouraged from discussing in group. Please do not pick any curriculums or discuss the following topics in group.

- **Politics**
- **Sexual Orientation**
- **Current Events**
- **If God, heaven or hell is real**
- **The state of the Church**

_____ I have read and understand the topics we do not discuss and I promise to refrain from discussing the topics.

Helpful Tools for Choosing a Curriculum

When choosing a curriculum for your group consider the following:

Age of people in your group: All curriculums have a recommended age group. Some curriculums target specific age (i.e. young adult, youth....)

You may have a mixed group of all ages. If this is the case you want to stick to topics the group would like to discuss.

Life Cycle of people in your group (i.e. young adult, married, single, widow...)

Be aware of where people are at in their life. You do not want to pick a bunch of curriculums about children when no one in your group or only a few people in your group have children.

Christian walk: Where is everyone in their Christian walk?

This is very important to consider. If you have a group of baby Christians you would not want to pick a curriculum for an (advanced) Christian. (this is if you plan on picking a Biblical study curriculum).

More than likely people are at all stages of their walk. That's what makes a life group so great. If this is the case you can pick however you want to and the seasoned Christians can help the baby Christians.

Interest of your group: What are some of the topics your group would like to talk about

What are topics that frequently come up in group discussion?

Example: We talk about faith a lot in our group. No matter what we are discussing faith always come up.

Are there topics your group has said they would like to discuss? Use this as a guide to help choose a curriculum.

Timing of Curriculum

You can go as fast or slow as you would like. The purpose is for group members to gain clarity and retention. You may take as long as you need in each curriculum.

No matter how long it takes you to complete a curriculum please allow two weeks before you start a new curriculum for people to purchase their material if needed.

How We Meet

- Your group meets once a week
 - The host picks a day and time. (Sunday -Saturday am or pm)
- Choose a location
 - Group can meet at home, church, coffee shop, etc...
- Meeting should last 1hr-2hrs

Facilitating Group Session

- Allow members to mingle before getting started
- Allow for testimonies and praise reports
- Open with prayer
- Facilitate an energetic and interactive session
- End with announcements, ask for prayer request, and close with prayer

Child Group During Session

We want kids to be growing in the word just as the adults. All kid groups will complete a curriculum with a facilitator. We want to foster an environment of growth and discipleship with our children by creating more child-adult interaction and their walk with Christ. Please discuss options with your group and come up with a plan that best works for your group.

Option 1:

One group member takes a turn each week to facilitate with the children in a separate location. You can also select a designated person (not a group member) to facilitate and watch the children.

Option 2:

Children may have group at a different location. All members will drop off their children at the designated house for the week. Children will be taught their lesson by the scheduled facilitator. After group, parents will pick children up.

Rules to Live By

- **70/30 Rule:**
 - As a host you should only be sharing 30% of the time and the group members should be sharing 70% of the time.
- **Anticipate Guest and Growth**
 - Name Tags
 - Have name tags for everyone at every meeting even if everyone knows each other
 - Extra Curriculums
 - Have extra curriculums on hand for guests and new members
- **80% Rule**
 - In North American culture physical space matters. When a group reaches 80% of its space capacity, numerical growth is likely to plateau or decline. Outreach often becomes less of a concern when group members perceive the space is already full. Always seek to grow. Never be comfortable with your numbers

Ways to Stunt Your Small Group's Growth

- **Going too long**
 - Please honor people's time. Constantly going over time without the encouragement of the group will result in losing members.
- **Host or Member Dominates the discussion**
 - Be careful when facilitating the discussion that you as the facilitator do not dominate the discussion. Please be mindful of members that dominate the discussions and be sure to interject when necessary, and have a private discussion if needed.
 - Be the last to answer the question. If a member has a question in your group, open up for the members to answer first, if needed always answer last.
- **Not being welcoming to members or guest**
 - It is important the host greets everyone who comes to group every time you meet. This creates a culture of comfort and connection in your group.
- **Not being prepared for guests**
 - Always be expecting guests. Have extra handouts ready and available for guest.

Goal of Discussion

To create an environment where everyone feels safe to open up about their spiritual walk. We want to see every member sharing in the discussion because when everyone shares then everyone grows.

How to Grow your Group

Ways to Connect in Your Neighborhood, at Work, and at Church

1. Get to know your neighbors, coworkers, and church members
2. Reach out to them Monthly
3. Pray for your neighbors, coworkers, and church members
4. Invite neighbors, coworkers, and church members to your group
5. Invite your coworkers and neighbor's church
6. Be present in the Neighborhood, at work and at church
7. Be Ready and willing to step out of your comfort zone in more difficult moments
8. Just Be intentional

Host/Member Guidelines

Ways to lose the host position

- Teaching false doctrine or any other curriculums not approved by Now Word
- Having 3 or more unexcused meeting absences
- 2 or more unexcused weekly meeting cancellations
- Host does not turn in any of the required information provided by the Life Group Ministry
- Confidential or any information shared without permission to anyone outside the group
- Talking about the non-discussion topics
- Missing 3 or more scheduled training or meetings without a valid excuse
- Reports of host being inhospitable

If there are consistent reports of any of these actions, we will call the host in and have a meeting to correct the issues.

Group Member will be removed if:

- Found to be inhospitable
- Share information of group members with people outside of group
- Make other members feel uncomfortable
- Continue to break the rules established by the group

If the person refuses to heed to warnings, a meeting will be held with the Director, Member, Host and Zone Elder. After which a final decision will be made regarding the individual.

Group Communication Tools

Group Vitals

Group Vitals is the software we use to:

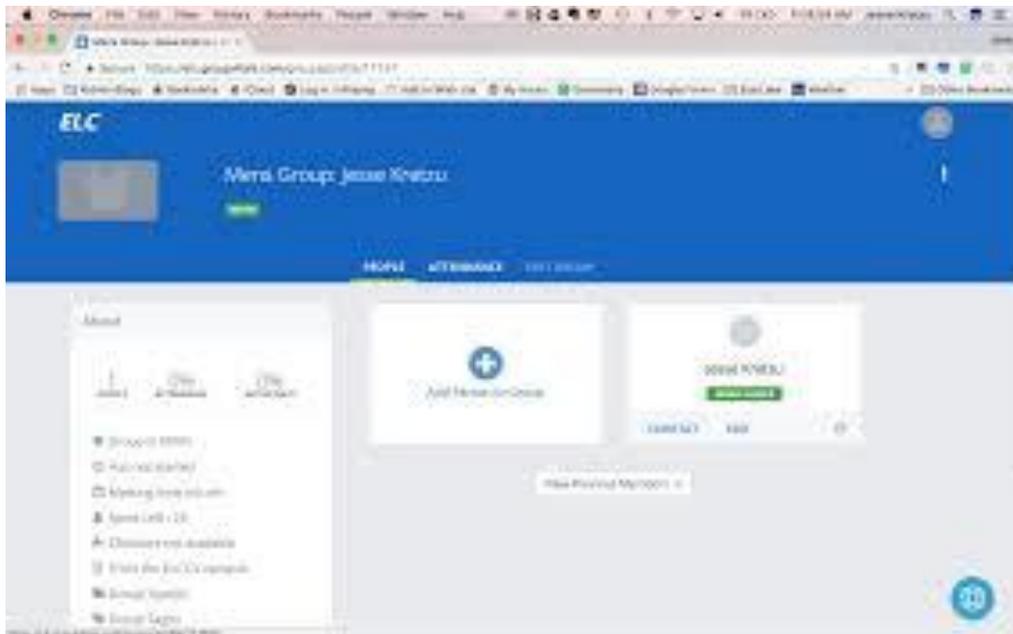
- Keep up with health of ministry
- Communicate with groups
- Take attendance
- Write notes for groups

As a Host you will use group vitals to take attendance. Attendance can be done through text or email by updating the settings on your profile. It is also the place where you will give prayer request, praise reports, and member crisis. This can be done in the note section at the bottom of your attendance.

Information to leave in note section of attendance:

- Major prayer request; i.e. cancer, car accident...
- Life Event: death of a loved one, surgery, marriage, birth of a baby, relocating...
- Group Member removal or change of position: If you are removing someone from your group or changing them from a member to a guest, please explain why

We take all of this information and send it to PK, Lady D, and the Elders for further care.



Honor Code

As an essential part of Now Word Covenant Church Leadership family, you have a responsibility to develop and exhibit mature Christian behavior. This should be the basic premise of your desire to serve in a Servant/Leader position here at Now Word Covenant Church.

While serving the Body of Christ as a Life Groups Leader at Now Word Covenant Church, you pledge to present a good appearance at all times. In both attire and behavior, you should strive to demonstrate Biblical standards in all situations.

As Christians, the way we present ourselves is of vital importance to the way others perceive Christ. Our conduct should never be an embarrassment to Christ, but should exemplify the best qualities of a mature believer and servant-leader.

Exemplifying the highest moral commitment, Now Word Covenant Church leaders are to maintain a disciplined life of Bible reading, prayer, and fasting.

By providing an example in speech and action, we encourage others to grow in Christ and become servant-leaders themselves. This way of live is measured by the heart and commitment of each leader in Now Word Covenant Church family. We should regard it as an essential part of our development, not as an imposition or restriction.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

_____ I have read the Life Group Training Manual and understand and will abide by the rules and regulations set.

_____ I commit to be a host for two years.

_____ I commit to attend all meetings and trainings required of me

