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New Leader Training Guide

1 – Know the Why

Build Small Groups Where People Connect and Mature in their Faith

Ephesians 4:13 (NIV)
13 until we all reach ***unity in the faith*** *and in the knowledge of the Son of God and* ***become mature****, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

Parkway Fellowship Mission & Vision

Vision: To reach 10% of the population
Mission: To reach the lost at any cost and grow them to maturity.

So why do we have Small Groups? To help accomplish the mission and vision, especially "growing them to maturity."

The purpose of Small Groups is **connection** and **maturity**. We want to build Small Groups where people connect and mature in their faith.

We have all different types of Small Groups, for all different types of people, but all our Small Groups are accomplishing the same thing – connection and maturity

Types of Small Groups:

- Anybody & Everybody
- Men
- Women
- Couples
- Young Adults
- Singles (35+)
- Parents of Kids (0-12)
- Parents of Teens
- Empty Nesters
- Senior Adults
- Español
- Recovery & Support
- Adult Special Needs

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What is maturity? **Growing to be more like Jesus in character and actions.**

- If there was one word to summarize: **Love.**

Matthew 22:37-39 (NIV)
Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.

John 13:34-35 (NIV)
34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Now - love can be ambiguous. So Paul shows us what the character and actions of Jesus look like with with a fuller expression…

Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)
But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control

"The single most important question is, Are we becoming more loving? Not, Are we becoming more biblically educated? Or practicing more spiritual disciplines? Or more involved in church? Those are all good things, but not the most important thing. If you want to chart your progress on the spirituality journey, test the quality of your relationships—namely, by love and the fruit of the Spirit. Would the people who know you best say you are becoming more loving, joyful, and at peace? More patient and less frustrated? Kinder, gentler, softening with time, and pervaded by goodness? Faithful, especially in hard times, and self-controlled?"
- John Mark Comer, Practicing the Way

So we need Small Group Leaders who lead people in connection and maturity, to help people grow into people of love like Jesus.

Reflection Question: What comes to mind as you hear that the goal of Small Groups is connection and maturity, helping people become more like Jesus in character and in action?

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2 – How People Grow

The four ingredients of growth

Two initial thoughts:
1) Growth is only possible by the grace of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit
2) Growth does not just happen naturally – in partnership with God, it takes human effort

"Grace is not opposed to effort, it's opposed to earning" - Dallas Willard

Four Ingredients of Growth

1) Truth

John 8:31-32 (NIV) To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Truth means corresponding to reality. God has created a very real world that we live in, and created how the world works. To deny truth means we are living in a false world.

Scripture is the primary way we learn the truth of God. So we need to learn and discuss the Bible to learn the truth of God.

2) Connection with one another

Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)
They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

We need connection with one another to grow in maturity. Nobody grows alone. We are better together. We need friends in our life to help us.

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We need to connect with one another, love one another, serve with one, encourage one another, admonish one another, build one another up, etc. Essentially practice the "New Testament One Anothers" with the people in our Small Group.

3) Action

Matthew 7:24 (NIV) "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

James 1:22 (NIV)
Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

Our faith is not a passive faith, it's an active faith! God gives us the responsibility to take action in our faith and in our lives

We need to take action with major moments in our spiritual life like becoming a Christ-follower or getting baptized!

We need to take action in our lives when unexpected things happen by hearing from God and doing what He says.

And we also need to take action in our lives by putting into our calendar spiritual habits such as:

- Devotion time with Bible Reading & Prayer
- Scripture Memory
- Fasting
- Attending church weekly on Sunday Morning
- Attending Small Group weekly
- Serving regularly at church
- Tithing

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4) Navigating the Challenges of life

John 16:33 (NIV)

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

The Bible uses various words – trials, suffering, trouble – essentially guaranteeing that we will have challenges in life. These challenges can be major or minor, planned or unexpected. As Christ-followers, we need to learn how to navigate the challenges of life. We need to persevere and remain steady, with vulnerability.

With that in mind, here is a chart below that breaks down the four ingredients of growth with what Small Group Members Do and what Small Group Leaders do.

	What Small Group Members Do	What Small Group Leaders Do
Truth	Learn & discuss truth	Facilitate discussions around truth
Connection with others	Live New Testament "one anothers" with people in Small Group	Offer opportunities for connection
Taking action	2 Decisions, 5 Habits, and daily Hearing & Doing	Encouraging members to take their next step
Challenges of life	Persevere and remain steadfast	Care

So Small Group members commit to:

1) Learn and Discuss Truth
2) Connect and practice "one anothers" in Small Groups
3) Take action in their faith
4) Persevere and remain steady, with vulnerability

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3 - How to Lead

The Four Ingredients of Growth – *Truth, Connection, Action, and Suffering* – become the measures of leading a Small Group.

1) TRUTH: Facilitate discussion around truth of Scripture

Either self-teaching, going through a workbook study, or video. ***Your main role is not a master teacher, rather a facilitator of conversation.***

The best leaders don't have the best answers, they ask the best questions. When asking questions, use thoughtful, clear, open ended questions that is conducive to people sharing.

Read through the questions a head of time in your study. If you can't answer it easily neither can they.

Goals:

- Hearing from everyone
- Allowing people to hear how God is speaking to them

Tips:

- You can try breaking people out into groups of 2-4 before sharing with the whole group
    - 1) Gets them ready to talk to the whole group
    - 2) Helps people think about what they want to say
    - 3) Ensures everyone is getting a chance to participate

- You can try different ways to answer a question:
    - Anyone answers
    - Go around the circle
    - Directed at one person
    - Piggyback questions

- Encourage people to come prepared with thoughts and questions on the study material

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2) CONNECTION: Connect with Small Group members and offering opportunities for Small Group members to connect with one another

People need a safe place, People need consistency, people need to enjoy their time in the group.

"The secret of Small Groups is what happens outside of Small Groups"

Tips:

- Meeting 1/1 with Small Group members outside of group time is the fastest way to build connection and trust
- One on ones, ask about how things are going in in their relationship to God, relationships to home, relationship to church, and relationship to work and the the world
- Encourage Small Group members to meet 1/1 with each other outside of group time
- Vulnerability breeds vulnerability
- Take Time to Celebrate and Have Fun

3) ACTION: Encourage members to take their next step

Our faith is an active faith. However, somewhat ironically, we DO NOT want to tell people what to do. Rather we want to encourage people to hear from God themselves and do what God is telling them to do.

By telling people what to do, it creates a one up, one down relationship where we unintentionally place ourselves in the position of Holy Spirit, where peope no longer need to hear from God themselves, we'll just tell them what to do. By trying to be helpful, we actually hurt people in their faith by not allowing them to hear from God themselves.

What is God saying and what does God want them to do?

- 2 Decisions – Christ-follower, Baptism
- Daily Hearing & Doing *(Matthew 7:24-27, James 1:22)*

- What spiritual habits are they doing in their weekly schedule?
    - 5 Habits – Devotional, Serving, Small Group, Giving, Evangelism
- We want to be spiritual partners, not spiritual police
    - Spiritual partners wants people to hear from God themselves on what they should do
    - Spiritual police want people to hear from them

4) Care for members in their Small Group, especially those navigating the challenges of life

IF someone does not come to Small Group, you're first question should be: How are you doing? Are you okay?

Tips:

- Meal trains, hospital visits, storm debris cleanup, etc.
- Remembering important dates and checking in

Reflection Question: What do you naturally do well and what would be a growth opportunity for you as a Small Group Leader: Facilitate, Connect, Encourage, and Care

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4 – Design a Meeting Flow

Every week you will have a structure to your meeting. We recommend trying to do 4 things each time you meet: food, life sharing, prayer, Bible discussion.

Below are samples of what that can look like. These are sample recommendations, not requirements.

1-hour Small Group:

- 25 minutes – Life Update and Prayer Requests, while eating snacks
- 35 minutes – Bible Discussion

1.5-hour Small Group:

- 15 minutes – Arrival and get snacks
- 30 minutes – Life Updates and Prayer Requests
- 45 minutes – Bible Discussion

2-hour Small Group:

- 15 minutes – Arrival and get snacks
- 30 minutes – Life sharing
- 45 minutes – Bible discussion
- 30 minutes – Prayer & Hang out

Ultimately, we trust you as the leader to design your meeting flow in a way that best serves the people in your Small Group and help them grow.

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5 – Make Your First Meeting Great

Your first meeting is unique in that it sets the tone and trajectory of your Small Group. Here are 5 elements to consider:

1. Communication

- You want to personally invite people to your Small Group
    - Email is good but texting is better
- You will want to create a group chat for the members in your Small Group to communicate with each other

2. Connection

- During your first meeting, connection is the most important piece of the meeting. Spend extra time just getting to know one another through natural conversation or ice breaker questions if needed.
- It's okay in the first meeting if you do not get to your first study. You want to lead with connection and relationship.
- Spend time talking about yourself and some of your testimony so group members can get to know you

3. Expectations

- During the first meeting, communicate what expectations you have for the Small Group members and address what expectations they may have from the meeting.
    - Examples:
        - Start time and end time for the meeting
        - If there homework or outside reading in the Small Group
        - Do not give other members in this Small Group advice or counsel when they have not asked for it
        - Do not dominate the conversation

4. Share Your Vision

- What is your vision for this Small Group? Why are you meeting? What do you want to get out of this Small Group and what do Small Group members want to get out of it as well?

5. Logistics

Address logistics for the Small Group. Some examples:

- Snack schedule
- Childcare
- Shared responsibilities in the Small Group like note taker for prayer requests
- Etc.

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6. How to Choose A Study

There are 5 primary ways to do a Bible Study for Small Group discussion:

1. Write your own Bible Study and discussion questions
2. Parkway App Digital Library
3. Just using the Bible, using something like the SOAP method or Discovery Bible Study
4. Physical book study or Bible Study Workbook
5. Streaming video Bible Study with discussion questions

If you're unsure what to do, a great place to start is our recommended library on RightNow Media.
You can get free access here: https://app.rightnowmedia.org/join/parkwayfellowship

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7. Logistics – Attendance & Childcare

Attendance

Why do we ask leaders to take attendance? Because that is one of the ways we care for your Small Group members. If someone is not showing up for Small Group, it give us an opportunity to check in on them and ask them if they are okay.

- Rock is the app we use to manage your Small Group roster and where you take attendance
- You will get an email the day your Small Group,
- Please keep the Small Group team notified if there are changes to your Small Group membership
- Note: If you're having trouble logging in, our IT team can make sure you have access

Childcare

- If you decide to offer childcare, you need to find childcare for your own Small Group
- If a Small Group member is unable to attend Small Group because of childcare needs and costs, they can email smallgroups@parkwayfellowship.com and apply for a childcare supplement

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Discovery Bible Study

1. Connect

To begin the Bible study, each person answers these questions:

- What are you thankful for?
- What is causing you stress?
- How can we pray for you today?

2. Look Back from Last Study Session

- Retell story of scripture you studied, from the previous meeting.
- What did you do differently this past week because of this story?
- Did you tell anyone about it and what was the reaction?

3. Read & Re-tell

- One person reads the newly selected Bible passage out loud, and the rest follow along
- Someone else retells the passage by memory, if possible. Others can fill in what is missing.

4. Look

- Read the passage again.
- Discuss what this passage says about God, Jesus or his plan.
- Discuss what this passage says about humans

5. Reflection

- According to this study, what am I doing well?
- What do I need to change?

6. Who else?

- Who needs to hear some part of this passage?
- How can I tell them?

TROUBLE SHOOTING GUIDE

for common Life Group scenarios

Someone has a hard time opening up

OPTIONS:

1. Take some time as a leader to talk one-on-one with this person.
2. Invite them to share and state again the commitment that we will make Life Group a safe place.
3. Create smaller groups from time to time for this person to share in.
4. Take some time to call this person and let them know you are glad they come to your Life Group. This may help them feel a part of the group and help them feel safer.

You have an EGR (Extra Grace Required)

OPTIONS:

1. It is important to establish clear boundaries with the person early.
2. Address the situation. Pull them aside and gently bring the situation to their attention with a suggestion and an offer to help solve it. Let them know you are bringing the issue up because you love them.
3. Understand that some issues such as sexual abuse, alcoholism or drug abuse require professional help. Help that person get in touch with the appropriate resources that can truly help them.

Someone is dominating group discussion

OPTIONS:

1. Take some time to get to know this person. It could be that this person is a natural leader who needs some coaching on how to balance their leadership and people skills.
2. Remind them that their style can come across as challenging to people in the group. Ask them to monitor themselves.
3. Take them aside and let them know you see leadership gifts and skills in them and would they like to work with you as a leader apprentice so that in the future they could have their own group.

Someone leads the conversation off track every week

OPTIONS:

1. Immediately following the person's response redirect the group back to the original question by restating it.
2. Have a private chat and bring the matter to the person's attention. Ask them to stick to the subject at hand when they respond to a question.
3. When the person's response derails or gets off track, redirect them, even if you have to gently cut the person off.

The group takes a long time with prayer requests

OPTIONS:

1. Break down Life Group into smaller groups so that people can share and take time to pray.
2. Suggest that along with the study guide each person bring a prayer request written on a 3 x 5 card. Exchange cards and pray.
3. Have people share their request while praying.
4. Explain what "Topical Prayer" is and then walk the group through praying that way.

Someone is talking too much

OPTIONS:

1. Take this person aside and address the issue. Explain to them that when any one person dominates the discussion it doesn't allow those who are more introverted to share. Ask them to limit their input.
2. Share what the vision of Life Group is and help them contribute accordingly.
3. After you pose the question, ask someone else specifically to answer so the talker doesn't have time to interject.

You have a critical person in your group

OPTIONS:

1. Take the person aside and remind them of the consequences of a critical spirit.
2. Help this person to see that their critical spirit hurts people and doesn't help make Life Group a safe place to build healthy relationships.

Someone rarely does their study guide

OPTIONS:

1. Offer to meet before Life Group and do the study guide together over coffee or dinner.
2. Discuss the study guide questions with the group in such a way that they need to do the questions. Doing this consistently sends a message to the group that doing the study guide is important.
3. Explain that the study guide is one key element of why we meet as a Life Group.
4. Remind them they agreed to a commitment to do home work from the Weekend teaching.
5. Don't let them share from any question unanswered from their study guide. Make it fun and not a disgraceful thing.

Someone is consistently late to the group

OPTIONS:

1. Address that person in private. Ask them what keeps them from getting to Life Group on time and how you or the Life Group can help them make it there on time. They might have a very legitimate reason. If so, ask their permission to share that reason with the rest of the group so that everyone is aware of what is happening.
2. Remind the group of the starting time.
3. Explain to this person how being on time shows respect to everyone in the group.