



Hello Home Group Leaders and Hosts!

Welcome to a new year of home groups. Thank you for being willing to serve our community in this context. I am praying that this year is marked by deeper levels of intimacy with God and with those in your group. The following information is provided to help as you prepare to lead your home group.

- **Small Group Leader Guide**
- **Our Vision of a Healthy Home Group**
- **Our Vision of a Healthy Home Group Leader**
- **First Night Agenda** to help you prepare for your first meeting
- **Sample Discussion Notes** with leader insights
- **Home Group Commitment** to help set expectations
- **Last Night Agenda** to help you end your home group session well
- **Community Service Card** to help you find the right service opportunity for your home group

Jessica and I are here to ensure your home group is as successful as possible. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to help you.

We are so grateful for you!

Rob and Jessica



## Small Group Leader Guide



## INTRODUCTION: LEADING A SMALL GROUP

Your role as a small group leader is vital to the ministry of Grace! You help provide an environment where people can grow in their faith, feel known, and build meaningful friendships with one another. As Proverbs 27:17 states, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."

Our vision for you is to be far more than a discussion facilitator, but rather a shepherd to the people in your group, serving as one who loves, guides, and protects. The role of a small group leader is intended to be life-giving as you offer yourself to the people in our community. You bring a unique set of gifts to the ministry, and we want you to freely use those gifts to love and lead the people in your group in the ways that are most suited to who you are.

At the heart of this ministry, we want to provide a faith-nurturing environment where people are challenged to apply the truth of Scripture to their lives – not just sitting with ideas together, but rather being transformed by the Spirit as we engage God's Word in community. We want to abide in Jesus and come alongside others to help them abide in Jesus too. Let's keep this goal at the forefront of our minds!

The following pages will introduce you to eight core dynamics that make up a thriving small group:

1. Shepherding Your Group
2. Commitment and Consistency
3. Vulnerability and Authenticity
4. Prayerful Dependence
5. Managing Conversational Flow
6. Facilitating Holistic Conversations
7. Ministering to the Moment
8. Navigating Hot-Button Issues



## 1. Shepherding Your Group

Small groups are the primary avenues at Grace where life-on-life discipleship takes place, so beyond seeing your role simply as a discussion facilitator, we want you to see your role as a shepherd-leader of your group. Shepherds feed, lead, protect, and nurture their sheep, and we want you to adopt that shepherding heart for the members of your group. This will involve a responsibility that takes you beyond the 90 minutes you meet each week to consider more comprehensively how you can care for your group. We recognize that this is a weighty responsibility, and in line with Jesus' own two-by-two ministry model, we have paired you with a co-leader to carry that shepherding responsibility together.

Tips and to-do's:

We'd strongly encourage you to connect regularly with your co-leader to discuss your group together. Consider questions such as: Where is God at work in our group right now? Who needs care and attention? What challenges are we facing as a group? What challenges are we personally facing in leading our group? Your shared reflections will be a great source of fruitful ideas and action steps, so find a way to connect regularly (a follow-up call after group every other week, coffee once a month, etc.).

Contact people regularly outside of your group time. Show them they are loved and thought of even when you are not with them. If someone shared vulnerably or expressed challenges, follow up and see how they are doing. Send texts or grab lunch or coffee with people when possible. Look to create social connections outside of group time.

Utilize the unique gifts of your members. You can't do it all, and you can't personally shepherd each member of your group, but you can shepherd the group as a whole so that the members are ministering to one another. Consider who might be gifted in hospitality, or who might be a good social coordinator, or who could lead a prayer text thread, etc., and empower them to lead in those ways.

Don't hesitate to reach out to your ministry leader when needed. Sometimes shepherding issues come up in groups that are very weighty and challenging, and we don't want you to feel isolated in those moments. We are here as a source of support and discernment whenever you need us.



## 2. Commitment and Consistency

The old adage, “you get what you put in,” is so true of small groups. Groups where members are committed, consistent, and invested in the material end up thriving, and groups where members come and go when it’s convenient and don’t invest themselves in the material end up languishing. So don’t be afraid to call your group to a high commitment. While it can be challenging to ask for that kind of commitment, remember that many people are actually longing to be called to something more, and trust that in calling them to this, you are helping to facilitate greater spiritual fruit for them and the entire group. Every leader has to find that balance of strength and warmth when calling for commitment, so we invite you to find your own unique way of doing.

### Tips and to-do’s

Commitment starts with you. Your commitment as a leader sets the tone for the group. Commit to showing up each week having invested in the material ahead of time. Take time to prayerfully plan your group time. Have a basic goal for your time together, and provide a basic structure that communicates intention and purpose.

Have an explicit conversation about commitment expectations at the launch of your group. Give each member the opportunity to share how they want to show up and what commitment they want to make to the group and to themselves this year. Our hope is that our groups would develop the kind of culture where people commit to being present and prepared every week unless they are sick or out of town.

Ask people to let you know ahead of time if they will have to miss that week.

When people miss, don’t let a week go by without checking in on them. The goal is not to guilt them, but to let them know they were missed and that the group isn’t the same without them.



### 3. Vulnerability and Authenticity

When commitment and consistency are paired with vulnerability and authenticity, really good things happen in a small group. In our culture of constant image-management, posturing, and comparing, people are longing for a safe space to let down and be themselves. It's important to remember that, while members of your group may appear successful or put together on the outside, each person carries significant struggles, doubts, fears, and burdens under the surface. Our small groups are the primary spaces at Grace where people can be deeply known and loved through the ups and downs of life, and creating an environment of vulnerability and authenticity is central to that purpose.

Tips and to-do's:

Like commitment, authenticity and vulnerability starts with you. Your vulnerability will open the door for others to be vulnerable. This will require some risk-taking and courage on your part. Remember, vulnerability takes many different forms: sharing a personal challenge, sharing where you're wrestling with the material, or sharing your own doubts and questions.

Invite people to bring their real selves to every conversation you have, not the self they imagine others want to see.

Be explicit from the start that confidentiality will be kept in your group unless explicit permission is given.

Shepherd the vulnerable moments faithfully. When someone in your group shares something that's raw and honest, what happens next will shape your group for weeks to come. Do people jump in to give advice? Do they give platitudes? Do they minimize what was shared? Do they quickly move on to a more comfortable topic? You have the opportunity to create a space where the group can sit in that vulnerability without judgment but with love and grace. So always thank a person for being vulnerable, and avoid those common pitfalls.



#### **4. Prayerful Dependence**

Our small groups are not primarily relational connection groups, nor are they self-improvement groups. The primary goal of our small groups is growing in Christ together. That is fundamentally a spiritual work that only God can bring about by his Spirit. That means prayer must be an essential ingredient in each of our small groups. Jesus taught us to regularly bring our needs to our heavenly Father in prayer, and small groups are one of the central contexts where we can pray for each other on a regular basis.

Tips and to-do's:

Pray before your group time. We'd encourage you to spend time on your way to your small group prayerfully asking the Spirit to direct your conversation along the most fruitful paths.

Pray together during your group time. There's no right way to do this, but we'd encourage you to set aside the last 10 minutes or so for group prayer. There usually won't be time for everyone to share requests, but consider setting aside time for any significant requests to be heard and prayed for as a group.

Pray for one another between group times. Consider starting a group email or text thread where people can share prayer requests during the week as needs arise. This can become a great way to keep each other in mind and in prayer throughout the week.



## 5. Managing Conversational flow

One of your core roles during your small group meeting times is facilitating a conversation where each member is actively contributing to the conversation. Your primary goal is not to teach and provide the right answers but rather to draw people out and create a space where the group is able to explore ideas together. Some people are external processors who are ready to share their thoughts without much reflection, while others need time to process, but your role is to help all contribute and engage in meaningful ways according to their unique personalities.

Tips and to-do's:

At the launch of your group share the value of everyone contributing to the conversation, and communicate that you will take on the task of making sure that takes place. Making this explicit up front will make it easier to then later address an over-sharer or someone who never contributes.

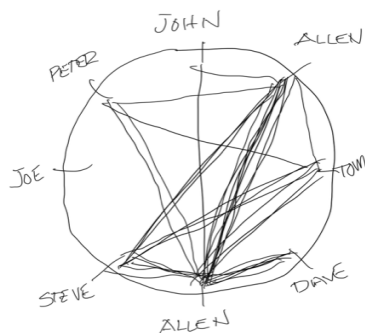
As a group facilitator, the questions you ask are as important as the perspectives you provide. Use probing questions. Don't tell people what to think. Encourage curiosity. Consider re-directing untruths with questions that help the group arrive at more biblical conclusions.

Many groups deal with someone who is an over-sharer. We'd encourage you to address that dynamic earlier rather than later. Sometimes you can address it indirectly in the group conversation ("I'd love to hear from some of you who haven't shared yet"), but often you will need to address it with them privately. If so, be gracious but straightforward: rather than putting them down for oversharing, remind them of the goal of getting others engaged, and ask them to help more intentionally with that goal.

A conversational flow diagram can be a helpful tool for you and others to visually experience the flow of your group's conversation. On a piece of paper draw a large circle and place hash marks around the circle to represent where people are sitting around the table or room. Label each hash mark with the name of the person in that spot. At the start of your discussion start with the first person who speaks and draw a line from their hash mark to the next person who speaks and continue to draw a line from one hash mark to the next speaker's hash mark throughout the discussion. When all is said and done you will see a web of lines and discussion patterns (discussion imbalance, too much talking, not enough participation, etc.). The goal of this exercise of course is to promote a healthy balance of conversation within your group. Once people see the illustration of a real discussion they've had, they often do a good job of self-correcting their behavior for the betterment of the group. A sample of this diagram is illustrated below:







## 6. Facilitating Holistic Conversations

The greatest commandment is to love God with everything we are: heart, mind, soul, and strength. Discipleship to Jesus is a very holistic journey involving the ideas we believe in our minds, the core treasures we cling to in our hearts, and the tangible ways we live out our daily lives. One of your roles is to facilitate holistic conversations that move beyond mere concepts to what's going on in our hearts and to how we live out our faith in the concrete realities of daily life.

Tips and to-do's:

Become aware of your group's "safe zone." Most groups naturally gravitate towards one type of conversation that feels the safest to them. For example, some groups stay in the realm of ideas and concepts which don't require vulnerability or practical changes in life. Other groups stay in the realm of personal experience to avoid disagreements over doctrinal truths. Be aware of your group's default "safe zone," and work to encourage conversations that stretch your group into the other zones.

Work hard to ask questions that take the conversation beneath the conceptual level to the personal and practical level. The curriculum questions themselves are designed to address these multiple levels, so they can serve you in this way.

Lead the way by sharing how a concept or theological idea is impacting you personally or forcing you to reconsider how you're living your life in some tangible way.



## 7. Ministering to the Moment

One of the hallmarks of Jesus' own ministry was his "interruptibility": his willingness to abandon his planned agenda in order to minister to a need as it presented itself. As the group shepherd you are tasked with discerning the best direction for your group conversation on that day. Like an iceberg, every person in your group presents a small fraction of their lives while so many needs lie just under the surface. But every once in a while those needs surface, or a significant life event takes place. When those moments occur, free yourself from your planned agenda in order to minister to the need.

Tips and to-do's:

Be listening far more than you are talking. Listen for people's pain. Listen for untruths and lies people are telling themselves. Most importantly, prayerfully listen for God's Spirit during your group time and what he might be wanting to do. Use discernment: What does your group really need in this moment?

Remember the study guide is simply that: a guide, not a rigid script. When an important issue arises, feel free to go off script to lean into that issue.

Some days a need will present itself that is so significant you may need to drop everything you had planned for that week's conversation to spend the rest of the group time caring for that person as a group.

When a particularly challenging need surfaces, consider pausing in the middle of group to take some unhurried time to pray for that person before going back to the planned conversation.



## 8. Navigating Hot-button Issues

Most small groups have members who are passionate about certain political, cultural, or controversial issues and who find ways of regularly bringing those issues into the conversation. This can be unhelpful in that it can derail a fruitful conversation. More significantly, strong convictions can sometimes be shared in such a way that assumes everyone in the group would share this view. This can be a very isolating experience for a member who doesn't share that particular conviction. Learning to acknowledge hot-button issues when they come up while not letting them dominate your group is an art in group facilitation.

Tips and to-do's:

Whenever discussing controversial topics, focus the group's conversation on the biblical truths and principles that inform those topics, rather than the typical talking points or party lines. Whenever possible, keep conversations focused not on "those people over there," but rather on our own lives and what we're being called to as followers of Jesus.

When someone has shared a strong conviction on a controversial issue in a way that assumes agreement from the group, take the opportunity to verbally acknowledge that not everyone in the group may share that conviction. That creates a safety for the other members of the group.

On occasion, you may discern that it's an appropriate use of your time to spend the rest of the group time discussing that particular issue. If so, verbally acknowledge that you've gone off topic but that you think this would be a fruitful use of your time, and work hard to give each person an opportunity to share if desired.

Most of the time, these hot button issues will side-track a conversation, and we'd encourage you to refocus on the topic at hand. To do that, acknowledge the importance of that particular issue and propose a separate time to discuss it for those who are interested.



## Our Vision of a Healthy Home Group

**Goal:** That our home groups help to cultivate committed followers of Jesus Christ as articulated by our values:

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### 1. Treasuring God

Our main goal is to point each other to the greatness of God and to help discern His presence and work in each of our lives.

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### 2. Word and Prayer

We bring God's Word to life. Our focus is on the practical application of God's Word to our minds, hearts, and daily lives. We also bring our real needs to God in prayer as a group. We commit to praying for each other in and out of our group gatherings.

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### 3. Family

Our group is a place of safety where we are able to be vulnerable and experience acceptance just as we are. We feel known and loved by each other. We truly care for each other as a family, and we seek to meet each other's needs in practical ways in and beyond the group gatherings.

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### 4. Growth

We are committed to growing together in our relationship with Jesus and our journey to becoming more like him. There is a strong commitment to attend each week, and a commitment to challenge one another, speak the truth in love, and encourage one another towards Christ.

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### 5. Gifts

We recognize and encourage the unique gifts of each member. We have a sense of shared leadership where every person recognizes the unique contribution they bring to the group and uses his/her gifts to encourage the group in Christ.

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### 6. Mission

We are committed to bringing an outward orientation to our group to share the gospel with those who don't know Jesus. We seek ways to serve together, we pray for each other's mission opportunities, we encourage one another to reach out, and we look for ways to invite others into our relationships as a group.

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## **Our Vision of a Healthy Home Group Leader**

**Goal:** That our leaders are mindful of the vision of what we want to see cultivated in the lives of our people and lead in such a way that is complimentary to that end.

### **1. The leader keeps the vision of the group in front of its members**

### **2. The leader shepherds the members of the group**

- He/she watches out for issues/needs within the members and takes the initiative to make sure those needs are being attended to by someone in the group
- He/she prays for the members of the group on some regular basis
- He/she connects with the individual members of the group outside of the group gatherings on some periodic basis
- He/she helps identify the gifts of the members and encourages/empowers those gifts so that the group is building itself up as each person uses their gifts

### **3. The leader fosters a healthy group dynamic**

- An environment of vulnerability, safety, and acceptance. The leader leads by being vulnerable himself/herself and creates space for others to share vulnerably without the group needing to “fix” them or solve their problems or jump in with the “right” answers.
- An environment of challenge and growth. The leader speaks the truth in love, challenges the group in practical areas of growth, holds the group accountable to show up, and follows up when members don’t show up.
- An environment of discovery. The leader asks good questions that draw out the members of the group and help them to think for themselves.
- An environment of participation. The leader works to keep the group sharing distributed evenly, so that no one (including the leader) is dominating the time, and so that the more reserved or introverted members are given time and space to share.

### **4. The leader commits to his/her own personal growth for the sake of the group**

- A personal investment in the Word that leads to a competent knowledge and perspective in group discussion
- The leader is committed to a daily personal walk with Jesus which serves as a model for the group.

# FIRST NIGHT AGENDA

## FIRST NIGHT PREPARATION

**Leaders/Hosts** – Check your rosters online and **CONTACT ALL MEMBERS** *one week before* the first meeting and welcome them to the group. Provide the location and time of your group, as well as any entrees to bring for dinner/dessert.

## GOALS FOR THE FIRST MEETING

- Rekindle relationships and meet new members
- Clarify your group's direction / expectations / commitments
- Briefly discuss the sermon topic (if there is time)
- Pray for the building of relationships and spiritual growth of the group

## ITEMS NEEDED

- *Dinner / dessert plans decided*
- *Beverages set up*
- *Life Group Commitment / dessert sign up sheet*
- *Name tags (especially if you have new members)*
- *Get to know you questions or icebreaker*

## THREE ESSENTIAL PARTS OF YOUR EVENING

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### #1 WELCOME, MINGLE AND TALK WHILE YOU EAT

- Leader/Host greet members upon arrival with music.
- 1st Impression: The first seven seconds after arrival are critical for new members.
- Make a great first impression!

### #2 FIRST GROUP DISCUSSION

- *Sharing Activity*: "Getting to know you" questions and/or Getting to know you game like 2 Lies and a Truth.
- **REVIEWING THE COMMITMENT IS CRUCIAL**: Set up your time to go over the Commitment.
  - Go over how to access notes/questions on the website, coming prepared to discuss the questions. Make sure to have people sign-up for desserts.
- *Closing Prayer*: Dedicate the quarter to God.

### #3 KEEP IN MIND, YOUR DESSERT CONVERSATIONS ARE JUST AS IMPORTANT AS YOUR MEETING DISCUSSIONS.

#### LEADERSHIP TIPS

**1:** Never underestimate the significance of the time after the meeting.

**2:** Use the Commitment to set the standards for your Home Group.

**3:** Visit the Leader Resources for additional tips at <https://gracefellowshipchurch.org/home-group-resources/>

## **DISCUSSION NOTES EXAMPLE: Praying With God** - sermon title

### **The Word**

Read together Romans 8:22-39 - *make sure to read the passage out loud*

### **The Big Idea**

Prayer is much more than us sharing what's on our heart with God, as meaningful as that is. Prayer actually involves us into the life of the trinitarian God who prays with us and for us and hears our prayers. - *a brief summary to jog everyone's memories*

**Questions for Discussion** - *these should be filled out by the group ahead of time and ready to discuss. This ensures a better discussion and allows non-verbal processors to be prepared.*

1. What is your current practice of prayer? When and where do you most often pray (your bed, a certain chair, your yard/patio, walk, car, etc.)
2. The goal of Sunday's message was to expand our imagination for the spiritual realities that are taking place when we pray. What spiritual reality was most highlighted for you as you considered the truths Romans 8?
3. How might a deeper appreciation for the life of the Trinity impact the way you pray on a regular basis? - *usually 3-4 questions based on Head / Hand / Heart*
4. After going through this series on prayer in the Psalms, and as we move towards the fall, is there any specific rhythm or habit of prayer that you would like to commit to?

**Digging Deeper:** - *this section is for scriptures that shed more light on the topic but didn't necessary make the sermon. This is for those who are doing personal study ahead of the home group conversation. There may be a question or two provided for direction.*

### **Sermon Outline** - *for easy reference*

#### I. Introduction

- A. The psalms model an honest sharing of our hearts with God
- B. Romans 8 opens us up to the bigger theological realities that take place when we pray. We are brought into the very life of the trinitarian God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- C. We need to expand our imagination to get a glimpse into the deep spiritual realities taking place when we pray.

#### II. The vision of prayer we get from Romans 8

- A. Context
  1. The groaning of a fallen world (see v. 22, 23, and 26)
  2. The hope of eternity in the midst of the groaning (see v. 24-25)
  3. The complexity of prayer in the midst of a fallen world: we don't know what we ought to pray for (v. 26)



## COMMITMENT

Small groups thrive on participation! The purpose of this commitment is to help you to discuss and clarify your group's goals, expectations and commitments.

### HOME GROUPS: THEIR PURPOSE

Home Groups exist to promote spiritual maturity and personal growth through meaningful Christian relationships and the study of God's Word (Romans 8:29 & Hebrews 10:24-25). We'll do this by focusing on four primary activities:

#### STUDY

Each week we'll study a section from God's Word that relates to the previous weekend's sermon or an appropriate personal growth topic. Our goal is to learn how to live out our Christianity in everyday life.

#### SHARE/SUPPORT

Each week we'll take time to share what is happening in our lives. At first this sharing will include planned "sharing questions," but after the first few weeks, it will become more informal and personal as we feel more comfortable. Each week we'll learn how to take care of one another as Christ commanded (John 15:9-13). This care can take many forms, such as prayer, encouragement, listening, challenging one another and meeting real needs.

#### SERVE

Spiritual growth is fostered not only by what we gain through the support and input of others, but also through service to others. The role each of us fills is important to the health of the church and for us to be the hands and feet of Jesus to our community (Ephesians 4:11-16). Throughout the quarter, it is our hope you can find and/or be affirmed in the ways God has designed you to serve and make a difference in God's Kingdom.

### FIVE MARKS OF A HEALTHY GROUP

For our group to be healthy, we need to...

1. Make spiritual growth our number one priority (Romans 8:29).
2. Accept one another (Romans 15:7).
3. Take care of one another (John 13:34).
4. Treat each other with respect (Ephesians 4:25-5:2).
5. Keep our commitments to the group (Psalm 15:1-2, 4b).



# **GUIDELINES & COMMITMENT**

## **1. Dates**

We'll meet on \_\_\_\_\_ nights for \_\_\_\_\_ weeks. Our final meeting of this quarter will be on \_\_\_\_\_.

## **2. Time**

We'll arrive between \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_ and begin the meeting at \_\_\_\_\_. We'll end approximately at \_\_\_\_\_.

## **3. Children**

Group members are responsible to arrange childcare for their children (unless otherwise noted). Nursing newborns are welcome provided they are not a distraction to the group!

## **4. Study**

Our studies will focus on the same topic covered in the previous weekend's sermon. Our goal is to hear from everyone every night and keep God's Word at the center.

## **5. Prayer**

Praying for one another.

## **6. Homework & Attendance**

Joining a Life Group requires a commitment to attend each week and do the homework ahead of time. Obviously, allowances are made for sickness, work conflicts and other special events—but not much more!

*If we cannot come to a meeting, we will call or text \_\_\_\_\_.*

## **7. Dessert /Snacks**

## **8. Social & Service Projects**

***We agree to honor this commitment throughout the quarter.***

(To be decided by each person on or before the third week.)



## LEADERS' GUIDE COMMITMENT

- Download this and other Commitments: <https://gracefellowshipchurch.org/home-group-resources/>
- When discussing, use the proactive leadership style - clear direction, yet flexible

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#### SHARE/SUPPORT

Each week we'll take time to share what is happening in our lives. At first this sharing will include planned "sharing questions," but after the first few weeks, it will become more informal and personal as we feel more comfortable. Each week we'll learn how to take care of one another as Christ commanded (John 15:9-13). This care can take many forms, such as prayer, encouragement, listening, challenging one another and meeting real needs.

*Our goal is to interact interpersonally on the topic and how we can practically follow Christ, not to answer all the questions.*

#### SERVE

Spiritual growth is fostered not only by what we gain through the support and input of others, but also through service to others. The role each of us fills is important to the health of the church and for us to be the hands and feet of Jesus to our community (Ephesians 4:11-16). Throughout the quarter, it is our hope you can find and/or be affirmed in the ways God has designed you to serve and make a difference in God's Kingdom.

### FIVE MARKS OF A HEALTHY GROUP

For our group to be healthy, we need to...

1. Make spiritual growth our number one priority (Romans 8:29).
  - *Tangents: They are okay sometimes, but sometimes we need to be refocused. We'll need to keep spiritual growth our focus and stay on topic.*
2. Accept one another (Romans 15:7).
  - *We will have different preferences.*

3. Take care of one another (John 13:34).
  - *When crisis happens we're there to help with support, prayer, encouragement, listening, meals etc.*
4. Treat each other with respect (Ephesians 4:25-5:2).
  - *Listening to one another, if one's talking let's all listen, nothing worse than two conversations going on at once.*
  - *Our goal is to listen, not give advice. (Advice is given when asked for) We are not here to judge or fix – unless someone asks. An example of giving advice is by saying, "Well this is what I think you should do." On the other hand, that doesn't mean we can't question what is said or what someone is doing.*
  - *Some of us have the gift of gab, also known as a dominator – be careful, I as a leader might have to help you.*
  - *Be careful of gossip prayers. For example, "we need to pray for (person's name) because they are doing this ..."*
  - *No put-downs.*
  - *What is said here, stays here – of course we never promise confidentiality if something shared would be harmful to yourself or someone else and/or if I, as the leader, need to seek counsel on how to respond to an issue in the group.*
5. Keep our commitments to the group (Psalm 15:1-2, 4b).
  - *Please give us a call or text if you can't make it to Home Group so we know what's going on and how to pray for you.*

**(next page)**

# GUIDELINES & COMMITMENT

## 1. Dates

We'll meet on \_\_\_\_\_ nights for \_\_\_\_\_ weeks. Our final meeting of this quarter will be on \_\_\_\_\_. *Fill in blanks*

## 2. Time

We'll arrive between \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_ and begin the meeting at \_\_\_\_\_. We'll end approximately at \_\_\_\_\_. *Fill in blanks*

## 3. Children

Group members are responsible to arrange childcare for their children (*clarify your stance*). Nursing newborns are welcome provided they are not a distraction to the group!

## 4. Study

Our studies will focus on the same topic covered in the previous weekend's sermon. Our goal is to hear from everyone every night and keep God's Word at the center. *Not to answer every question. Discussion questions will be found on the home page of our Grace's website under the link: [This Week's Discuss >>](#)*

## 5. Prayer

Praying for one another. *Remember - being forced to pray in group or just the idea of it can cause people to not want to come to your group. If you have new people in your group, you might want to say something like this: "It's exciting to see how God works in our lives through prayer. We also realize prayer in groups is something many have never done. Know that you will never be forced to pray." Let them know you'll talk more in the weeks to come on how we do group prayer and that we break a lot of the stereotypes of what it means to pray.*

## 6. Homework & Attendance

Joining a Life Group requires a commitment to attend each week and do the homework ahead of time. Obviously, allowances are made for sickness, work conflicts and other special events—but not much more! *This commitment is the key to a healthy group for synergy and connectedness.* If we cannot come to a meeting, we will call or text \_\_\_\_\_.

*- Emphasize the importance of the commitment to attendance and preparation. (A good group starts with good preparation)*

*- Make sure that everyone is with you. (Do we agree? Is this what we want? Make eye contact, etc.)*

*- Most weeks require 20-30 minutes of homework to prepare for the group study and discussion.*

## 7. Dessert

*Have everyone sign up for a night to do dessert.*

## 8. Social & Service Projects

*Emphasize the importance of a quarterly social and service project. As a leader and host, have 2 or 3 suggestions ready and 2 or 3 potential dates. Choose a date or ask the group to bring their calendars next week. New groups are preferred to have their social by mid-quarter.*

*(The first time around, you may want to choose the date and the service project just to get things rolling)*

*We give them three weeks to decide to commit to the group, because we want them in or out as commitment is key for growth.*

***We agree to honor this commitment throughout the quarter.***

*(To be decided by each person on or before the third week.) Verbal agreement.*

# LAST NIGHT AGENDA

## FIRST NIGHT PREPARATION

**Leaders/Hosts** – Check your rosters online and **CONTACT ALL MEMBERS** *one week before* the first meeting and remind them this night is different. Provide the question that they'll be discussing as well as the link to the online FEEDBACK Form.

## GOALS FOR THE LAST MEETING

- End the session well
- See how God has been moving
- Grow closer together through sharing and communion
- Pray for the new leaders and hosts set to launch in the next session



## ITEMS NEEDED

- *Dessert plans decided*
- *Beverages set up*
- *Communion Elements*
- *Handouts of FEEDBACK Form (try to get everyone to do it online using the QR code)*

## FOUR ESSENTIAL PARTS OF YOUR EVENING

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### #1 WELCOME / CONNECT / FEEDBACK FORM (20 MINUTES)

- As people come through greet them and offer them something to eat/drink.
- Direct people to the QR code or the hand out the FEEDBACK Form.

### #2 ANNOUNCEMENTS & DISCUSSION

- Share any changes next session. (Time / Place / Day / New adds)
- Announce anything that is happening at the church in the next month that needs highlighting.
- Pray for the new leaders and hosts set to launch groups in the next session
- **OPEN UP THE SHARING:** *How has God been working in your life over this last quarter?*

### #3 COMMUNION / REFLECTION / PRAYER

- Bring out the elements / set the tone
- 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 | <https://www.christfellowship.church/articles/how-to-lead-communion-in-your-home>



## SERVICE PROJECTS



**LEADERS:** For your first project, select a meeting date and project ahead of your first group meeting, so that you can allow them time to schedule it in. Giving them options at this point creates problems in momentum.

Possibly, in the future, you can give them options on what project you pick.