



Small Group Starter Series Overview

Hey Group Leaders!

Thank you so much for your interest in and willingness to lead a small group! I believe that small groups are an important part of our discipleship because they provide a space where spiritual growth occurs as we study God's Word and connect with others in meaningful relationships. The goal is always to become more like Jesus, to grow spiritually as we seek after the Lord, but growth takes intentionality. It takes leaders who are willing to invest in the lives of those around them, helping them become like Jesus! I hope this leader's guide is a helpful resource as you prepare to lead your small group. If you have questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me. I am here to help and walk alongside you!

- *Tim Kitchen, Director of Connection Ministries*

Purpose of the Starter Series

This series is for any group that is just starting out (or restarting). Its purpose is to provide small groups with a foundational understanding of the importance of small groups in accomplishing the mission and vision of Hope Community Church: becoming more like Jesus and helping others become like Jesus. We firmly believe that life transformation happens in the context of community, which necessitates cultivating spaces where transformational community happens. Our hope and desire is that as you dive into this series, you will begin to cultivate such a space with those in your group, discovering what a healthy group is and what a healthy group does.

Hopeful Outcomes of this Series

- To provide a foundational understanding of Hope's mission and vision
- To stimulate spiritual conversations centered on Christ
- To begin developing trust within each small group

Possible Challenges of New Groups

- Building trust takes time (Don't rush it)
- Having spiritual conversations is vulnerable (Don't force it)
- Tensions can arise from clashing personalities and differing opinions (Embrace it)

Details for Leaders to Consider

When will you meet and how often?

There are great benefits that come from meeting weekly, although that might seem like a daunting commitment. Remember that building relationships and developing trust takes time, so meeting more frequently will provide more opportunities to gel as a group. That being said, many groups choose to meet bi-weekly to accommodate busy schedules. It is highly encouraged that you meet *at least* twice per month. Whatever you decide, remember that not everyone will make it every time, but those who can make it will appreciate having a consistent rhythm.

What will you study?

Sermon Discussion guides are available each week based on the most recent Sunday Sermon. We do not require groups to use the sermon discussion guides, but we do ask you to be mindful to choose biblically sound material that aligns with the [EFCA statement of faith](#) and Hope's [Vision and Mission](#).

Questions to Ask When Choosing a Study

Should we try the sermon discussion guide?

Do we want to study a book of the Bible or look at a topic?

Do we want homework?

Do we want to read a book together or have a curriculum to follow with pre-written questions?

If we're studying a topic, what would be relevant for our stage of life right now?

How long do we want the next study to be? (Keep in mind how frequently you meet.)

Multiplying Leaders

Small group leaders are amazing, but they cannot do it all alone! Identify those in your group who are willing and able to take on responsibilities. This will accomplish two things:

1. It reduces the risk of burnout for the small group leader
2. It gives others opportunities to grow in their giftings and leadership skills

Here are some key areas to consider utilizing the giftings of those in your group:

Hospitality

Who will host?

Who will provide snacks/drinks?

Communication

Who will communicate when and where you will meet next?

How will your group members receive details about any upcoming events with your group?

Leadership

Who will lead Bible studies and facilitate group discussions?

Who will lead when you're not there?

Note: The goal as a leader is to work your way out of a job by raising up other leaders! Pay attention to which people in your group display leadership qualities in any area and intentionally give them opportunities to use their giftings! It may take time to identify other leaders in your group, but the best way to test someone's leadership capabilities is to give them a responsibility.