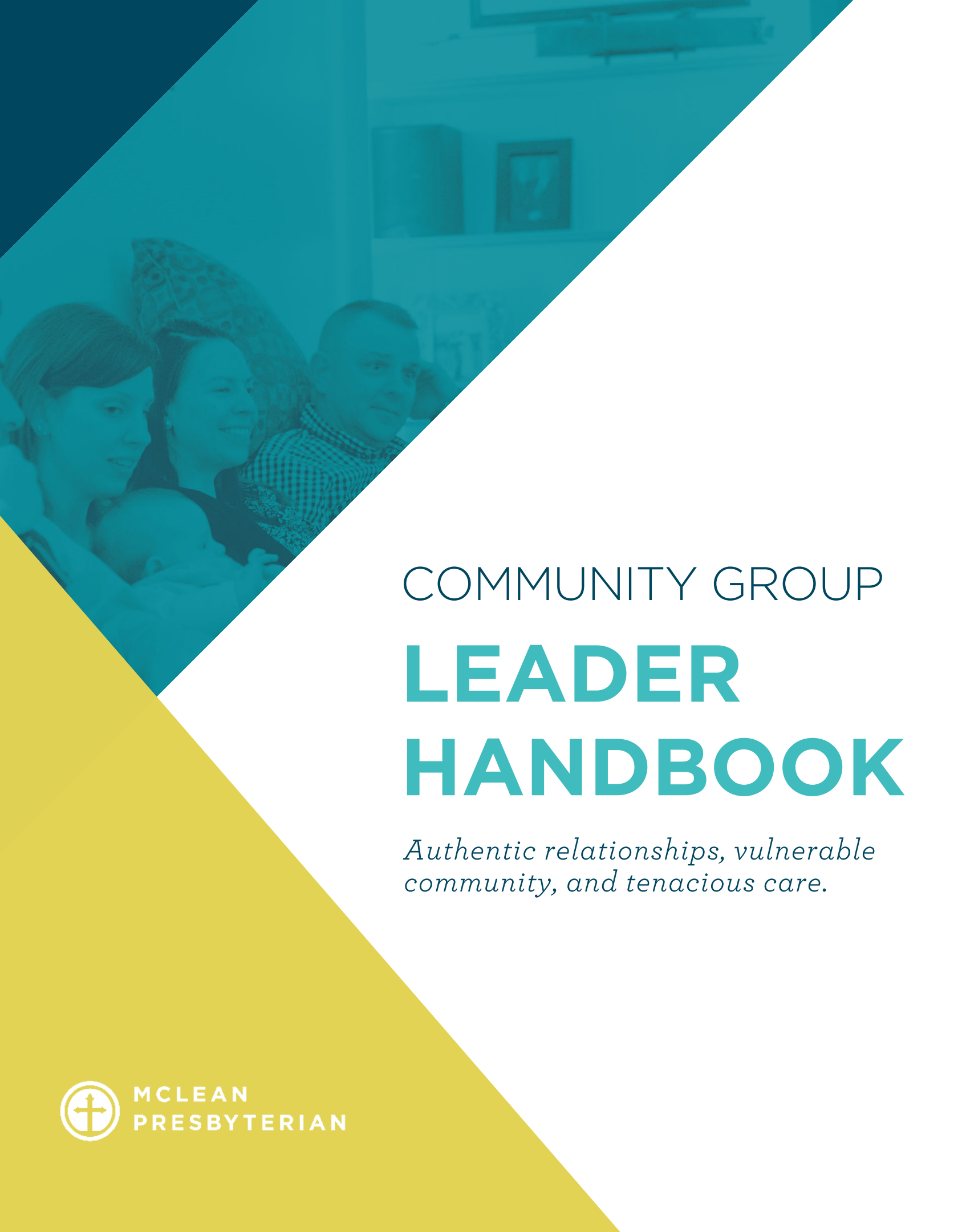




COMMUNITY GROUP **LEADER** **HANDBOOK**

*Authentic relationships, vulnerable
community, and tenacious care.*



MCLEAN
PRESBYTERIAN

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THE PURPOSE OF COMMUNITY GROUPS

Community Groups are a place to experience Jesus in our midst through authentic relationships, vulnerable community, and tenacious care.

In community we are able to develop genuine, vibrant connections, meet one another's needs, and experience gospel grace. Grace-filled community is not superficial. It is a sense of home, a commitment to one another to encourage, care, and disciple.

There are three main purposes for your CG:

- To **know** each other, sharing joys and sorrows.
- To **love** each other and love God, as together we learn more about him.
- To **serve** others and seek the flourishing of our city and our world.

These purposes happen through people, place, and transformation:

PEOPLE: Through CGs we commit to regular gatherings that provide hospitality to both the stranger and the friend. Your group may be the first contact a new member or visitor has with the community of our church.

PLACE: Community Groups provide a place where we bring the gospel into connection with the mind and heart, sharing grace in word and deed as we meet together.

TRANSFORMATION: Grace changes everything, and Community Groups are often where we see grace flourish, as we make disciples who make a difference through studying God's Word and growing together in our love of God.

CGs AS A PLACE FOR CARE

Community Groups are more than Bible studies. The primary purpose of a Community Group is to experience the living, Triune (relational) God. This, of course, includes Bible study, but also fellowship, prayer, and worship, all within the context of meaningful relationships with one another.

Community Groups are the frontline of care for our church body.

Our church sees Community Groups as the frontline of care for our church body. It's our desire to disciple and care for each person in our flock, praying with and for them, providing for tangible needs (meals, rides, etc.) in times of crisis, and ensuring each person in our midst is known and loved. CGs are a place for this type of care to be worked out in the everyday lives of the people in our church.

As a CG Leader, you're not responsible for providing this care for each group member – your role is to create a group environment where care can flourish. To support and come alongside in this effort, you will be assigned an Elder or Board of Women member to proactively care for you and your family. This elected leader will regularly check in with you, pray with and for you, and pray for the members of your CG. A CG Coordinator will also be available to you to provide resources and support as you lead your group.

It's through this model that we believe we can offer the best care possible in the life of our congregation. Life struggles that go beyond the expertise and capacity of the CG can be identified by leaders, CG Coordinators, Elders, and Board of Women members and referred to pastoral staff.

The purpose of your CG is not to provide intensive care for challenging life situations, but to foster an environment where caring, authentic relationships can happen as together we pursue grace-filled lives changed by the gospel.

YOUR ROLE AS A CG LEADER

The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.
– Matthew 20:28

Leading a CG doesn't require special knowledge. It's not about presenting a perfect example, always having the right answer, or displaying perfect wisdom. On the contrary, leadership is the exercise of thinking about others before yourself, of pursuing the flourishing of others.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

You don't need to be perfect; just present.

You are a guide, an organizer, a shepherd, a facilitator, and a model.

Training & support are available.

As a leader, you are encouraged to guide your group by modeling authenticity, vulnerability, and tenacious care. It's our prayer that through gentleness and humility, CG leaders will consistently share grace and foster grace-filled community.

As a CG Leader, you are a guide, an organizer, a shepherd, a facilitator and a model.

CGs are a place to experience God, find fellowship, and spread the gospel. As a CG Leader, your role is not to explicitly make those things happen: that is the work of the Spirit. You are a guide, an organizer, a shepherd, a facilitator and a model, as you create an environment in which these things can happen, and allow members to experience and engage with the living and triune God.

QUALIFICATIONS & REQUIREMENTS

While we do not expect or ask that our leaders possess extensive Biblical knowledge or impressive credentials, there are a number of qualifications that every CG leader should possess:

- A vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ; knowledge of your personal need of Jesus
- Church membership
- Acceptance and support for the teaching and beliefs of our church
- A high value of the unity of the body of Christ and a heart to encourage this unity
- Willingness and availability to set aside regular time for group meetings
- A love for others and a desire to see them flourish

We try to keep CG-related administrative tasks and other requirements to a minimum. The tasks that we do ask you to fulfill are to help us ensure we're providing the best care possible for our people. We ask that each leader:

- Coordinate regular CG meetings and gatherings, at least 2x/month
- Ensure emails from interested group visitors are responded to within 24-48 hours
- Maintain current group details and roster in CONNECT, the online church directory and database
- Respond to correspondences from Care staff within 24-48 hours
- Attend training events
- Meet with your CG Coordinator regularly & keep him/her updated on your group

We also ask that you commit to lead a group for 2 years to foster continuity and care for our people.

ONGOING SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR CG LEADERS

Regular training and resources are provided by our pastors and CG Ministry staff. It's our desire to honor and equip you as you pursue the care of our people. Resources include:

- Training opportunities throughout the year
- A 12-week introduction study for new groups
- Recommended Bible studies and study books (many of which are available in our church library)
- Weekly sermon discussion questions

Your Elder or Board of Women member and CG Coordinator are always available to pray with and for you, talk through difficult conversations, and provide other support you may need. There are also a number of people who are here to come around you with support and prayer as you lead your group, including our Director of Care and other members of our Care and Community staff.

GETTING STARTED WITH LEADING YOUR CG

As you set out to start your CG, it's helpful to think about how you want to set the tone and culture of your group. What you model and embody (openness, flexibility, humility) will provide the foundation for the relationships your group develops. Remember, the most important aspect of a CG Leader is someone who sees their need for Jesus and is willing to create an environment where others can encounter gospel grace.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

Model the tone you want your group to have.

Create a warm, safe environment for conversation & relationships.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

TIME/LOCATION: Chat with your group members to find a mutually acceptable time/location. Don't feel like you have to meet in someone's home (maybe you meet in a coffee shop!), or even every week (though we encourage you to meet at least twice a month). Regardless of the structure, make sure you stick to it – particularly the end time!

SIZE: Your group size will affect the types of relationships you develop, the quality of the discussion, and participation. We find that 12 – 15 tends to be the ideal size for a CG. If your group is larger than 15, prayerfully consider multiplication.

SPACE: A large or well-furnished home is not a requirement to host a warm, welcoming CG. Simply make sure the space is set up so that all members can feel included in the conversation. You may also want to break bread together: some groups take turns designating a member to bring snacks, some groups share dinners together, and some enjoy a beverage when they meet.

INTRODUCTIONS: At your first meeting (or whenever there is a new member or a visitor), make sure everyone knows each other's names, and some simple facts about each other ("Go around the room and say your name, where you're from, how long you've been part of our church family."). You may also want to use icebreakers on a regular basis to start the conversation in a fun, approachable way.

COMPONENTS OF COMMUNITY GROUPS

We recognize that each group is unique, so you have the freedom to structure your group in a way that encourages grace-filled community, drawing others to gospel grace. We also believe that in order to do that, there several important components that should be a part of every CG. These include:



WORSHIP & PRAYER

DISCIPLESHIP/BIBLE STUDY

CARE

SERVICE

These components reflect our church's 3 core values: Worship, Community (Care & Discipleship) and Missions. As a place to engage in all three of these values, CGs are at the heartbeat of our mission of making disciples who make a difference.

Each group is structured differently – some groups meet for a Bible study each week, others rotate between meeting for a Bible study one week and a night of fellowship/worship the next week. There are a number of groups that split into smaller groups to pray, while others share prayer requests with the full CG. How you and your group choose to incorporate these elements is up to you; the next few pages of this guidebook will introduce you to our church's philosophy around these areas, and provide suggestions for incorporating them into your group.

CGs are at the heartbeat of our mission of making disciples who make a difference.

COMPONENTS OF CG LIFE **GROUP WORSHIP & PRAYER**

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory! – Isaiah 6:3b

WORSHIP

Our vision for grace-filled worship is to see a glimpse of heaven on earth as we celebrate God's greatness by enjoying who he is and what he's done for us. In a CG setting, this can take many forms – singing together, sharing your testimonies, etc.

Worshiping together as a CG can be incredibly encouraging – and also challenging. You may not be particularly comfortable engaging in worship, or you may find that it is awkward to enter into with visitors present at your group.

If you do decide to engage in regular worship, you can consider worshiping together at any point during your gathering - at the beginning of the meeting, to set the tone; after the Bible study, as an appropriate response to God's character and Word; or at the end of the meeting, as a time of praise for what he is doing in your lives.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

Worship is celebrating God's greatness together.

Worship can be awkward to enter into together, but also very encouraging.

Different CGs take different approaches to worshiping together; find what works for your group.

PRAYER

Prayer is an opportunity for God's glory to be made visible to ourselves and others. Group prayer brings personal and corporate growth as you petition God together.

Grace-filled prayer is bold, specific, and persistent. Because of gospel grace, we can pray with freedom and confidence (Ephesians 3:12).

THE CHALLENGES OF GROUP PRAYER

Prayer is a core component of regular CG meetings, and can also be one of the most challenging to moderate and guide. Sometimes you find your group sharing their concerns for 20 minutes and then only praying for two. Or, you may have someone who shares too

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

If you pray in small groups, be aware of cliques that form and try to connect the full group to major prayer requests.

If you pray together as a full group, try to moderate the sharing time & encourage brevity, as needed & appropriate.

Prayer can be a time of discipleship and is an opportunity to be Kingdom-minded.

much, while you still can't get another person to share or pray at all. This next section spends significant time talking about how to structure and navigate prayer in your CG.

Here are two common approaches that CGs take for group prayer:

Small Group Breakouts: This approach can often facilitate more vulnerability and enables each person to pray and share more fully. It also prevents a long, unwieldy group prayer time. Groups with married couples may find male/female small groups particularly helpful as you navigate the challenges of marriage.

If you decide to pursue this approach, be aware of cliques that may be forming, and try to find ways to make sure the entire group is aware of each other's needs. You can ask for group-wide requests before splitting into groups, and/or send out (appropriate) summaries via e-mail to the whole group after the meeting. We'd also encourage you to give clear parameters for the breakout groups as they pray and share together to prevent gossip and ensure that all members have an edifying time of prayer.

Large Group Prayer: Many CGs choose to pray together with their full group. This creates vibrant connections across the group.

To avoid excessively long prayer time as a full group, preface your prayer time with the encouragement to share succinctly, and moderate the sharing time to keep things moving. Additional details/requests can be sent out via e-mail, if needed.

Regardless of how you pray together, as a leader, seek to use your group's prayer time to glorify God, and go beyond external circumstances to minister to your members' hearts. Those consistent requests about worry – is unbelief at the root? The constant frustrations at work – is pride at play? When you pray for the requests that are offered, you can use it as a time to disciple you Group members; as you pray for worries, ask God to enter into and remove unbelief. As you pray for work frustrations, ask God for hearts of humility to navigate difficult situations.

Use your group's prayer time to glorify God, and go beyond external circumstances to minister to your members' hearts.

Continue to encourage your members to pray for concerns beyond their immediate circumstances. While prayer is a time to be encouraged and comforted in our personal struggles, we also want to strive for Kingdom-centered prayer that recognizes God's power, presence, and work in all areas – not just of our lives, but in our city and our world.

COMPONENTS OF CG LIFE DISCIPLESHIP & BIBLE STUDY

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.** And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. – Matthew 28:19-20 [emphasis added]*

Bible study, while essential, is not the sole purpose of your group. As a CG leader, you are not expected to have any special Biblical knowledge. There are, however, some simple steps you can take to structure your study time to help your group members get the most from the passage and connect with the topic at hand.

This section covers a wide variety of concerns, including choosing a study for your group, and how to prepare to lead a discussion. There are a number of groups that rotate discussion leadership; if your group is comfortable with this approach, feel free to rotate who leads the discussion, using your judgment as to who may or may not be suited to lead an encouraging, edifying discussion. If other members are leading, you may find it helpful to share some of the preparation tools outlined in this section.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

You are not required to have any theological knowledge to lead.

There are a number of recommended resources available, and discussion questions are provided after each sermon.

Prep for discussion time by prayerfully engaging with the text/topic at hand.

Choose discussion questions that are clear, open-ended, and relevant. Be cautious not to ask questions that are too personal.

Silence is both natural and common during discussion time. Ask additional, clarifying questions as needed for engaging discussion.

CHOOSING A BIBLE STUDY

Choosing a study is often a group decision. There are several helpful resources when searching for your next study:

Sermon Discussion Questions: Each week, 5 – 8 questions are provided after the sermon to guide discussion around the Scripture and themes from Sunday’s sermon. This is an easy way to facilitate discipleship and connect to the church’s regular teaching.

Recommended Studies: Our church library in our McLean building has an extensive list of recommended studies for our CGs, many of which are available in the library itself. These include studies of Scripture, topical studies, Christian books, and several DVD-led studies. This list is available at mcleanpres.org/groups.

Many groups choose to do several types of studies; don't feel locked in to one type of study or another.

Many groups choose to do several types of studies; your group may decide to do a scriptural study of Job, followed by a book written by Tim Keller, followed by the sermon series questions, etc. Don't feel locked in to one type of study or another.

PREPARING FOR DISCUSSION

Regardless of what you choose to study, it is good practice to prepare yourself for the discussion. Often, the instinct is to jump into the passage, especially if you're running short on time. Set aside time to read through the material, and start your personal time of reflection in prayer, asking for the Spirit's insight and guidance.

Many studies are accompanied by a Leader's Guide that will provide insights and commentary. You may also find it helpful to engage with the text in various ways on your own, to deepen your own understanding. Here are some helpful guidelines:

Read the passage several times, in different translations, to get a general sense of the content. Try to summarize its meaning in one sentence (this is usually quite challenging!).

Search for context. Look at the surrounding passages, and how the passage you're studying fits into the context of the entire book. You may want to seek out commentaries or study Bibles that provide additional context (when this book was written, what was happening at that time, who was it written for, etc).

Observe the main points: who, what, where, when, and how. Search for how the gospel is displayed in the passage.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

When preparing, there are a number of application questions you can ask to help you connect a passage of Scripture to your members' hearts. You may also find these questions to be helpful for your group to discuss together.

- *What does it show us to confess?*
- *What does it show us to aspire to or ask for from God?*
- *Is there an example for us to follow?*
- *Is there a command for us to obey?*
- *Is there an error for us to avoid?*
- *Is there a sin for us to forsake?*
- *Is there a promise for us to claim?*
- *Is there a characteristic of God we can magnify or study?*

LEADING THE DISCUSSION WITH YOUR GROUP

OPEN.

Briefly review what you studied in the past weeks, and explain any context for this week's discussion. The group does not need to know everything you learned; you studied so that you would understand the main point of the text and be able to lead a helpful discussion.

DISCUSS

Again, you may have a Leader's Guide with questions for the group, but you may also find that you need to add to or adapt those questions. When leading discussion, aim for the following types of questions:

- **Engaging.** Open-ended questions that aren't overly simplistic will inspire discussion.
- **Clear.** Questions should be concise and easy to understand.
- **Relevant.** Relate questions to the text at hand and to the situations of your members.

You may find that some questions produce an extended period of silence. While this is sometimes to be expected as your members gather thoughts and assess the question, too much silence can be awkward and unfruitful.

Try to avoid silence that comes from these types of questions:

- **Too deep.** Sometimes, the passage at hand is difficult and the question is just hard to comprehend! Rephrase, or ask a series of simpler questions.
- **Too easy.** Avoid questions with painfully obvious answers.
- **Too vague.** Rephrase the question in a different way, with greater clarity.
- **Too personal.** Be sensitive to the comfort level for sharing in group discussions. You want to continue to encourage appropriate vulnerability, but that may be a slow process.

CLOSE

Connect what you are studying to your members' lives. Summarize your discussion and ask for any final thoughts. You can then move into a time of prayer or worship before you end the meeting.

COMPONENTS OF CG LIFE CARE

We were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. – 1 Thessalonians 2:8

As a church, we desire to be a community that meets the messiness of everyday life with the hope of Jesus Christ through authentic, vulnerable, and tenacious care. CGs are places where this care happens in the context of regular meetings, meaningful relationships, and sacrificial service.

As the leader, you are not solely responsible for providing this kind of care for your group members. Your role is to cultivate an environment where people can be authentic and vulnerable and others respond with the tenacity of the gospel.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

Your role is to create a culture in which care can happen. You are not solely responsible for caring for your group.

Refer particularly difficult situations to our Care staff for additional help and resources.

Recognize the stages of your group and lead accordingly.

CREATING A CULTURE OF CARE

A culture of care in your Community Group will be marked by the following:

- **Safety:** Members are able to share their struggles and information is kept confidential.
- **Space for Differences:** The only thing you truly need to agree on is Christ and him crucified.
- **Proactivity:** When members are missing or struggling, others seek them out and check in.
- **Encouragement:** Members are reminded of the power of the gospel and affirmed for their dignity as image-bearers.
- **Generosity:** Members are willing to sacrifice their time for one another and open up their homes for meetings.
- **Depth:** Discussions go beyond the traffic and the weather with a genuine desire to know and love one another.

Your role is to cultivate an environment where people can be authentic and vulnerable and others respond with the tenacity of the gospel.

CULTIVATING TRUST

How is this kind of environment created in a CG? Honesty and vulnerability are best carried out in a climate of trust. As a leader, you can seek to foster:

- **Sincerity:** Love as Christ loved, and express a genuine interest in your members. People can tell if you're faking interest.
- **Friendship:** Get together with members outside of group time (lunch, coffee, etc.) and encourage your members to do the same with each other.
- **Pairing:** Break up into smaller groups for application, sharing, or prayer.
- **Purpose:** Be intentional about going deeper in conversation. Ask questions that get to the heart, as your group is ready for them.

MODELING CARE

As a leader, what you model is what your group will become. Think about how you can model:

- **Enthusiasm:** for your people and your topic
- **Honesty:** transparency and vulnerability are contagious
- **Affirmation:** encouragement for those who share
- **Freedom:** it's not necessary to always have the right answer
- **Equal Access:** make sure everyone is heard

CONNECTING WITH VISITORS & MISSING MEMBERS

Part of a culture of care is making sure newcomers feel welcome and regular members know that they are missed. Try to reach out to new visitors within 48 hours of receiving their contact information with a short introductory e-mail, text, or phone call. When members are missing, especially if they did not let you know they would miss the meeting, try to reach out to them to check in within a week.

REFERRING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

All groups have challenging personalities at some point or another, but sometimes, there is someone whose troubles are so dominant they become destructive or overwhelming to the group. You are not expected to provide in-depth support to someone with critical, ongoing needs, and neither is your CG. If you find that you have someone who is not merely hard to love, but who is spiritually and emotionally draining you and your group, please refer them to the Director of Care so that we can tap into broader church networks to help care for this person and their family.

You are not expected to provide in-depth support to someone with critical, ongoing needs, and neither is your CG.

These types of cases may include divorce, ongoing illness, deep financial troubles, or other persistent challenges that require emotional, spiritual, and sometimes financial support.

There are also a number of Support Groups around the issues of divorce, grief, sexual addiction, and sexual abuse/assault. We encourage you to refer group members to these resources as needed as they journey through difficult seasons.

RECOGNIZING THE STAGES OF YOUR GROUP

Finally, part of caring for your group is simply recognizing the current stage of your CG and leading accordingly. In developing healthy biblical community, groups generally go through a series of stages. These stages, like stages in life, are never clearly marked. Sometimes, you may not even notice that your CG has passed from one to the next. However, a basic understanding of stages will help you adjust to the different issues and problems of each level of group maturity. The below pattern is typical. Where do you think your group is?

BONDING GROWING DEEPER MUTUAL MINISTRY & SERVICE MULTIPLY

COMPONENTS OF CG LIFE SERVICE

Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all peoples! – Psalm 96:2-3

Our church is passionate about grace-filled missions: sending disciples who enjoy God's grace to extend his glory through service and multiplication. While our CGs are places of grace-filled community, we also believe they are one of the best opportunities to enter into missions, joyfully participating together in the spirit-empowered work of Jesus.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

Encourage your group to focus on the needs of your community and city in addition to members' needs.

Select a Service Coordinator to help your group engage in service.

SERVICE IN CGs

We encourage every CG to serve together and our hope is that your CG will develop a culture of service. What does that mean? CGs are open, welcoming communities that are focused not just on the needs of the group, but of our church community, the broader communities where they live, and our city as a whole.

CGs bring hope and light into our neighborhoods by looking out for and meeting the needs of the communities in which they meet.

CGs are not cliques for church members. They are welcoming places for newcomers to our church and friends/coworkers/neighbors who are seeking to know Jesus. CGs are places that bring hope and light into our neighborhoods by looking out for and meeting the needs of the communities in which they meet.

This might mean that your CG blesses a member's elderly neighbor with meals or yard clean-up. Maybe your CG hosts a dinner party where faith-seeking friends/coworkers are welcome. Or, maybe you volunteer to help with a local non-profit.

There are opportunities to engage in serving our church together as a CG (teach a kids' Sunday School class together or serve together on Easter Sunday or Christmas Eve), or with local organizations like homeless shelters and pregnancy centers. Opportunities with our church and with our supported missions partners are posted at mcleanpres.org/serve, and you can ask our staff for the most pressing needs. The CG Ministry staff will also reach out from time to time with ways your group can engage in service.

CG SERVICE COORDINATORS

To most fully facilitate grace-filled service in our CGs, it's our hope and vision that every group will have a Service Coordinator, a member of the CG dedicated to connecting the group with ways to serve and pray.

What does a Service Coordinator do? This person commits to bringing service opportunities before your CG for consideration and participation. Ideas and opportunities are provided by Missions staff, along with inspiration and resources to encourage a culture of service in your CG.

When beginning your CG, talk with your members about this role and, if needed, make a specific, personal ask of one of your members to serve in this role. Once your Service Coordinator is identified, send their name to the Director of Missions who will be in touch with initial details.

MULTIPLICATION

Multiplication can be a tricky issue for groups, but it is often one of the natural stages of a CG. As your group grows in size, it can be difficult for you to guide and for members to connect, share, and receive the care they need.

When you've reached 12 – 15 people, begin to talk about multiplication, and, as a leader, start to consider the people in your group - do you see someone who may make a great leader of a new group? If your group has been meeting for a while, it might be time to go ahead and plant a new group. If your group just started in the last year, then it might be best to recruit this person to be a co-leader and prepare them to begin a group in the near future. If none of these options seem right for you and your group, then we'll invite you to pray with us about recruiting someone else in your area to start a group.

Once you've identified another leader, you can connect them to our CG Ministry staff. Our CG Coordinator will meet with them to talk through the role of CG Leader and help them as they decide when and where to meet. This new group will then be advertised to the broader church, as appropriate and needed.

Multiplication is a healthy part of grace-filled community.

Encourage several members of your current CG to prayerfully consider moving to the new CG. The two groups can continue to meet occasionally to fellowship and honor/maintain the relationships that have been developed.

Multiplication needs to be handled with sensitivity and care, but it is a healthy part of grace-filled community.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

Begin to talk about multiplication when you reach 12 – 15 members.

Be praying about who might be able to help you co-lead, and, eventually lead a new group when it comes time to multiply.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

We cannot fit any more people in our living room. What should we do?

This is a great problem to have! The first thing to do is notify the CG Ministry staff. We will temporarily remove your group from our main website to prevent you from having to turn away people interested in your group. We'll then set up a time to talk about next steps.

What happens if someone in my group is struggling with difficult issues such as a cancer diagnosis, marital difficulties, etc.?

Please notify the Care Ministry staff at care@mcleanpres.org. Depending on the situation, we will notify the appropriate church leaders (Elders, Pastors) to care for this person or family in the best possible way, whether it's providing a Care Team for meals, rides, etc., or offering counseling services or Deacons' Fund assistance. Your Elder or Board of Women representative will be keen to know about the situation so that he/she can offer support both in prayer and visits, if appropriate. You are not in alone in caring for this family, and we are here to support you.

What can I do to include a person who does not contribute to group discussions and seems to be on the fringe?

The fact that you have picked up on this dynamic is a sign of good leadership! There could be several reasons why this person is not participating, including comfort level around sharing, prior experiences with Bible studies, or current life challenges. It will be important for this person to feel welcome and at home in your group regardless of participation.

Start by praying and asking God to work in this person's life and in your group. From there, you can pursue one of several approaches, depending on context and personality:

- ***Ask a discussion question and, instead of soliciting verbal answers, ask members to write out their answers.*** Then ask if the group would share one of their answers. At the very least, everyone is participating through writing. (Ex: "what are three spiritual goals you have for this year? Share one with the group.")
- ***Periodically break up into groups of 2 or 3 to pray.***
- ***Consider this person's gifts.*** Is he organized and tech-savvy? Perhaps he can help with group administration. Does she have a passion for a local ministry? Maybe she can find and organize a service project. Find a way to use this person's God-given gifts to bring him/her into the fabric of the group.
- ***Consider taking this person to coffee.*** Do what you can to learn his/her strengths and affirm as appropriate.

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