

WHY SMALL GROUPS?

The Bible Shows that We need both Large Group and Small Group Church

Acts 2:46-47 - 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 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 5:42 - Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

Acts 20:20 - You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.



PURPOSES OF OUR VINEYARD SMALL GROUPS

1. REAL RELATIONSHIPS. To provide a place where we can fellowship together in personal, transparent, and loving relationships. Where we really get to know each other and care for each other. This is especially important in our times when family relationships and sense of community have deteriorated. A place where we can meet new friends, go beyond casual acquaintances, rejoice with those that rejoice, weep with those that weep and work at personal and ethical accountability.

2. EVANGELISM & HEALING. To provide a setting for the Spirit to establish people in the knowledge and life of Christ and bring healing. We desire people to know freedom from past entanglements and find acceptance and wholeness in Christ and His Church. Most problems that people have can be helped and overcome by being part of a loving weekly small group.

3. TRAINING. To train and equip people to minister - "everybody gets to play". We desire for people to discover and use their spiritual gifts. We desire the type of home groups that after a couple of years will produce people who can do the following:

- Pray consistently (with proper motives - love).
- Worship freely.
- Pray for healing for the spiritually, emotionally, or physically sick.
- Study the scriptures with understanding and insight.
- Lead people to Christ.
- Counsel out of the Bible
- Enjoy healthy social relationships, including family relationships.
- Participate fully in the life of the church.
- Minister in the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- Develop a life of service to God and one another

To equip in this way, the group needs to be well rounded in its activities - (a) worship, (b) prayer, (c) waiting on the Lord, (d) Bible study, (e) gifts of the Spirit, (f) ministry to one another, (g) fellowship, (h) fun, and (i) outreach.

HOW TO FORM A SMALL GROUP

1. Present your idea for a small group to the Pastor. He is the overseer of Small Groups and main guardian of what is taught at our church. No person outside of Providence Vineyard may be your guest speaker without prior permission from Les Yoder. As a Small Group Leader you are representing Jesus, but also Providence Vineyard.
2. Les Yoder will help you coordinate which day of the week and starting time with the church calendar.
3. As a discernment test, the small group leader needs to get a commitment from 4 other people to attend - before the group will be announced to the church.

WISE RECOMMENDATION - It is easiest if the leader is not the host home, and is not the person in charge of singing.

The Leader. Each group will have a leader who has the overall responsibility for the group and is appointed by and communicates with the pastor for resourcing and reporting and the weekly church announcements. Leaderless groups tend to flounder.

Num 27:16 - Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation.

The leader does not necessarily teach at each meeting, but arranges for at least 20 minutes of Bible study each meeting.

We want a lot more to happen at the meeting than just Bible study, yet we want to anchor our life on the Word. (Col 3:16; Psa 1:2; 1Tim 2:1; 4:13; 1Cor 14:1, 6, 26; Matt 18:19-20)

The Home Hosts. Each group needs an hospitable, inviting atmosphere and distraction free place to meet.

Things that facilitate this include taking care of cleanup, facilitate a nice smelling home and putting pets out before guests arrive, turning on the phone answering machine, welcoming guests, taking coats, showing where restrooms are, offering coffee, and introducing newcomers to at least a few other people.



VARIETY OF TYPES - Our regular Vineyard home group described on the first page is designed to meet the normal healing, training, and relationship needs of most Christians.

However, in addition to these, we desire a variety of Specialty Groups for outreach or for various classes.

Examples include the following:

- Outreach small groups
- Prayer groups
- Bible Study topics
- Diet & health groups
- Addiction Recovery
- Worship groups
- Classes - i.e. Boundaries, Steps to Freedom, New Christians Class, or Doctrinal Foundations
- Youth group
- Women's groups
- Men's groups

WELL ROUNDED QUALITY CHECK

Are the following things happening in your homegroup? In a healthy uplifting way? What might you do to facilitate each of these areas? What's been your most valuable Small Group experience?

Worship

- Does the worship leader come prepared?
- Does the group enter in with freedom?
- Does God's Presence come?

Spiritual Gifts

- Do people get prayer for healing?
- Are prophecies or words of knowledge happening? Are dreams or visions reported?

Teaching & Bible Study

- Is some scripture looked at almost every meeting?
- Are the topics appropriate for the relationship, healing and training purposes of the homegroups?
- Is the length of Bible study and discussion short enough to make room also for worship, prayer, and fellowship? Homegroups are to be more than just Bible studies!
- Would printed study notes be helpful?
- Do a variety of people get to teach?

Personal Ministry

- Is prayer for each other happening almost every time?
- Do you use a variety of ways to do this? The "hot seat?" Breaking up in clusters of 3 to pray for each other? Waiting on God for Words of Knowledge?

Growth & Evangelism

- Were people invited to your group this month? Newcomers? Unsaved friends?
- Is all prayer inward, or is there also outwardly focused prayer for unsaved friends or family? The Valley?
- Would you be glad to invite a friend to your group, or is there something embarrassing about the group that would keep you from

including a friend?

- All three core couples or individuals should be involved in inviting and recruiting additional people for their home group. Especially getting to know and inviting the newcomers to the congregation.
- Giving maps out with the invitations is helpful.
- Our homegroups are built on relationship rather than any strict geographical divisions.

Coffee & Goodies

- Does your group have a good setup for simple (vs. elaborate) refreshments?
- Do you rotate bringing them?

Length of Meeting - In general (there will be exceptions), do you quit in time...

- so that informal visiting can happen afterward?
- so that families with young children's bedtimes will be able to attend?
- so that all people are out of the Hosts home by 10pm?

Fun Nights

- Fun nights help homegroups not to stagnate. Do you have something out of the ordinary about every 6 to 8 weeks?
- A potluck, a birthday party, go bowling, watch a video, go hiking, etc. ?

Benevolence/Service

- Does anyone in your group need help around their home?
- Are there acts of kindness that your group can do every 2-3 months? rake leaves, help someone move, cut wood, food shower, etc.?

Children Options

- Each group is free to do what is best for the cluster of people involved
- Is what you're doing hindering or helping the life and growth of the group?
- Some groups include children for the worship, sharing, and prayer - but then take them to another room for a lesson at their

level with different adults taking turns.

- Some groups arrange for a children's meeting, videos, or childcare in a nearby home.
- Some groups are for adults only, and each family arranges their own childcare.

Taking Breaks and Rest periods

- Summer Break - Most groups choose to take a 2 or 3 month break during the summer and then regroup when school restarts in September. Often during this time they may hold a monthly potluck for fellowship.
- Holiday Breaks - Each group should do what is best for its own cluster of people. Many groups will take a the last two weeks off in December during the busy Christmas to New Years time. Others break their routine by holding holiday parties.
- So others can Learn to Lead - In some groups a leader may sit in the background for 4-6 weeks in order for an assistant leader to grow in his/her gifts.

A Group's Lifecycle

- If a group does not keep taking in new people, it will stagnate after a couple of years. This is one reason the lifespan of most small groups is about 2-3 years.
- A wonderful goal would be for a group to grow and divide into two groups every 9 to 16 months. But this takes a commitment to the value of reaching and helping more people over the value of staying together in the same group.



“Relating to “One Another”

Small Groups are one practical way to fulfill these instructions

Acts 2:44-46 All the believers were together ... Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts...(and) in their homes (Note the balance of both big and small groups)

Joh 13:14 you also should wash one another's feet....V34 A new command I give you: Love one another.

Ro 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Ro 12:16 - Live in harmony with one another.

Ro 15:14 - competent to instruct one another.

Ga 5:13 But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

Ga 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

1Th 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Heb 3:13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Heb 10:24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Jam 5:16 confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

1Pe 4:9 Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.