

 McLean Bible Church

church group
LEADER STARTER GUIDE

FALL 2023

Dear Church Group Leader,

We want to thank you for your willingness to serve in this important role. We realize that serving as a Church Group Leader will require time and sacrifice. Yet, we hope that serving as a Church Group Leader will be fulfilling and a true joy as you seek to follow the Holy Spirit and lead a group that cares for one another, helps each other grow to be more like Jesus, and strives together to make disciples both in the DC area and throughout the world.

We want to remind you that we are here to help! You are leading your Church Group, but you aren't in this alone. There are coaches, pastors, and other leaders who are ready and honored to help all along the way.

This little booklet is offered as a quick startup guide to assist you as you begin to meet together and cast the vision and direction for your group. The first section of the booklet will include some possible options for how to spend your first four weeks as a group. The second section includes the same content your group members will find in their Church Group Member Guide. We hope this resource will be helpful as you cast vision and communicate with your group.

Most importantly, we want you to know that we are praying Ephesians 1:17-21 for all MBC Church Group Leaders. We are praying “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.”

Welcome to the Church Group Ministry. May God bless the work of your hands!

CONTENTS

05

AS CHURCH GROUP LEADERS, WHERE SHOULD WE START?

HOW TO START A CHURCH GROUP WELL

09

ABOUT CHURCH GROUPS

10

WHY “C-G-M”?

WHY ARE WE COMMITTED TO CARING?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO COMMIT TO
GROWING?

HOW DO CHURCH GROUPS MAKE DISCIPLES?

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF CHURCH GROUP
MEMBERS?

13

WHAT DOES A CHURCH GROUP MEETING LOOK LIKE?

WHAT ARE HUDDLES?

WHAT ARE WE AIMING FOR?

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

AS CHURCH
GROUP LEADERS,
**WHERE SHOULD
WE START?**

HOW TO START A CHURCH GROUP WELL

First impressions are important. When launching a new Church Group, we encourage an intentional plan. You may consider the following as you organize your first few group meetings:

WEEK ONE: STRONG BEGINNINGS

- Consider a fellowship night. You may want to host a simple dinner or a fellowship night. We recommend you keep it simple and easy.
- Remember, hospitality is not the same as entertaining. We desire to offer a warm welcome and want to prayerfully prepare our hearts as we prepare to open our homes.
- Get to know the group. Use your meeting time to intentionally get to know your group. You may want to ask an ice breaker question or two to help the group open up and share a little about themselves. Maybe you could ask, “What’s your favorite way to spend free time?” Or, you might ask “If you could share a meal with any person throughout history, who would it be and why?”
- Encourage bringing a friend. From the beginning, encourage your group to make disciples. Let your members know that guests are welcomed in your group!
- Pray and send each other out. Before you close for the evening, take some time to ask for prayer requests and pray together as a group. We intentionally “send each other out” and encourage each other to go and make disciples.

Note: Before you all leave you may want to share contact information within your group.

WEEK TWO: SET THE DIRECTION

- Cast vision through the 4-AIMS. This is a great opportunity to share the “4-AIMS” and talk about what they mean for you as a Church Group. How will you all work together to “C-G-M”? How will you welcome new people? Talk about what it means to multiply disciples, leaders, and maybe even Church Groups. And, consider ways you all can serve either individually or as a group.

- Plan your rhythms. When will your group meet? How will your group include time for community building, time in God’s Word, and time for intentional sharing and prayer? Will you meet year-round or will you take a couple of months off, possibly during the months of August and December?
- Discuss roles. Will you divide tasks among the group members? Would you consider shared leadership within your group? Encourage your group members to use their Spirit given gifts to build up the body of Christ. Offer opportunities for them to lead and serve within your group.
- Encourage bringing a friend. As always, encourage your group to make disciples. Let your members know that guests are welcomed in your group.
- Pray and send each other out. Before you close for the evening, take some time to ask for prayer requests and pray together as a group. Send each other out to live on mission and make disciples throughout the week.

WEEK THREE: LET’S DO THIS

- Spend time building community. Plan ahead for this time. You may want to ask everyone their “high” from the week and their “low” from the week. Take time to talk, laugh, and connect as a family. You may want to do this around snacks or coffee.
- Spend time together in God’s Word. We recommend you use the Sermon Discussion Guide (found online) and talk about ways to apply the sermon together.
- Form Huddles. This is a great opportunity to divide your group into smaller groups of 3-4 people of the same gender for deeper sharing and prayer. For this first night, you might ask the huddles to spend their time just getting to know each other.
- Encourage bringing a friend and send each other out in prayer.
- Remind each other that we are “sent” by Jesus! (John 20:21)

WEEK FOUR: BUILDING RHYTHMS THAT LAST

- Spend time building community. Plan ahead for this time. You may want to provide snacks or coffee or even an ice breaker question or game.
- Spend time together in God's Word. We recommend you use the Sermon Discussion Guide and talk about ways to apply the sermon together.
- Take time to share and take time for prayer. Ask each huddle group to take some time within their huddles to share how each member is doing and to support each other. You may recommend they talk through one of the sample huddle questions found in your Church Group Leader Manual. Ask each group to take some time for specific, unrushed prayer with and for each other.
- Encourage bringing a friend and send each other out. Send each other out to live and apply what you discussed when you were together.

ABOUT
**CHURCH
GROUPS**

CHURCH GROUPS

The DC Metro area is filled with busy people moving in different directions, often at a fast pace. If we aren't intentional, we can keep that pace in our church involvement. We can enter our church buildings, sit on the back row, and hurriedly leave without anyone even knowing our name. Add to that dynamic a global pandemic that has left many people feeling disconnected and alone, and our need for genuine community in the church is evident.

We want every member of MBC to experience the deep, healthy community that we read about in the New Testament—it's what we were made for.

We are committed to caring for the spiritual health of the body of Christ by creating and strengthening opportunities for biblical community for every group member at every MBC location. We believe that Church Groups can help us experience the strengths of a large church and yet offer the family relationships of a small church community so that no one slips through the cracks.

At MBC, a Church Group is a group of people who commit to Caring for one another, Growing together to become more like Jesus, and Making disciples together on mission in the world (“C-G-M”). Church Groups are designed to be representative of the entire body of Christ, including men and women of all ages and backgrounds, married and single, and families with and without children. Church Groups often begin in different ways, meet in different places, and are many different sizes. MBC Church Groups may look different at any given time, but all Church Groups commit to caring, growing, and making disciples together. We warmly invite you to join us and be a part of a Church Group!

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Acts 2:42

WHY “C-G-M”? (CARING, GROWING, AND MAKING DISCIPLES)

WHY ARE WE COMMITTED TO CARING?

The Bible tells us that God’s church is much more than an event on Sunday. Church is a family. As a family, we are committed to caring deeply for one another - for both our physical and spiritual needs. We are inviting you to be a part of our lives and we hope you will have us be a part of yours!

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

John 13:34-35

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

1 Timothy 3:14-15

Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Romans 12:10-13

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO COMMIT TO GROWING?

Growing as a disciple is the process of becoming more and more like Jesus. The Bible tells us that before we trust in Jesus we are slaves to sin. Yet, God makes a way for us to be freed from our sin and reconciled to Him. That way is His Son, Jesus. This is the gospel. God sent His Son who lived a perfect and sinless life, one that we couldn’t live. Jesus willingly died the death that we deserved. That means that although we could not pay the debt of our sin, Jesus paid the entire debt on our behalf. The great news of the gospel is that if we repent of our sin and believe in Jesus as our Lord we are saved and united to Christ. The Bible tells us that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Jesus makes us new!

We can become more like Jesus, and that is what growing is all about. We are inviting you to join us as we all strive to do this together. Church Groups do this in the power of the Holy Spirit, by studying God's Word together, and helping one another learn to obey and follow Jesus.

We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.

Romans 6:6-9

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

Ephesians 2:4-5

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

2 Corinthians 5:17

HOW DO CHURCH GROUPS MAKE DISCIPLES?

A disciple is someone who follows Jesus. As Church Groups, we are committed to following Jesus and helping others to follow Jesus. In what we call the Great Commission, Jesus told His disciples to make disciples of all nations. Church Groups strive to make disciples right here in the DC Metro area and to be a part of making the gospel known all around the world.

There are many ways Church Groups are involved in disciple making. We pray for those who don't know Jesus. We give financially to make the gospel known around the world. We support missionaries who serve around the world and share the gospel with those who need Jesus. And, we actively tell others about Jesus right here in the DC area. We encourage each other, equip each other, and pray with and for each other as we make disciples of Jesus.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 28:18-20

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF CHURCH GROUP MEMBERS?

We want every person who joins a Church Group to flourish in these settings. In order for you and others in the group to experience deep, healthy community, we strongly urge everyone to commit to following two tasks:

- 1. *Show up consistently.*** Make every effort to be present at all meetings. If you don't show up consistently, you will miss out on the formative experience of learning and obeying God's Word. You will also miss out on relational experience of sharing and praying with others. Unless you're sick, traveling, or unexpected circumstances arise, we encourage you to make your Church Group gatherings a consistent priority.
- 2. *Seek to care for others.*** Seeking the good of others means asking others how you can help and serve them. If you don't seek to care for others, you will likely become critical of others for similar reasons. Seek to consider others more important than yourselves (Philippians 2:3-4) while loving them as yourself (Matthew 22:37-40), which is how God desires members of His family to care for each other.

If you commit to showing up consistently, while seeking to care for others, that also will likely be reciprocated. Over time, you will begin to experience deep community with others. We invite every Church Group member to experience this kind of healthy community by showing up and asking others how they can help.

WHAT DOES A CHURCH GROUP MEETING LOOK LIKE?

Church Groups are much more than a meeting, but they do commit to meet regularly as a group. So, what does a Church Group meeting look like? All Church Group meetings will look a little different, but MBC Church Group meetings will include the following three things:

- ***All Church Groups devote time to building community.*** This could include doing things like sharing a meal or snacks and using that time to talk and catch up on life. It could include serving together in a ministry or outreach.
- ***All Church Groups devote time to God’s Word.*** This could include discussing a sermon, doing a Bible study, and discussing books that are based on Scripture. Most group meetings will include discussing the sermon from the previous Sunday as the group members seek to understand and apply the sermon content.
- ***All Church Groups devote time to deeper sharing and specific prayer.*** This could include praying together in the larger group with all the Church Group members. It could include breaking into smaller “huddle” groups to pray more specifically for one another and share more deeply about the details of their lives.

WHAT ARE HUDDLES?

As your group seeks to spend time focused on sharing and prayer, your group may choose to pair up group members into smaller groups, often 3-4 people of the same gender, for deeper sharing about the details of your lives and for more specific prayer. We call these groups “huddles.” What people do during their time in huddles varies, but generally speaking, huddles help us to deepen friendships, live in transparency and accountability, and pray for one another. These huddles typically become one of our first lines of care at MBC.

Why are huddles helpful? Well, sometimes in a group of ten or twenty people it can be difficult to have enough time for each person to share the important details of their life and receive meaningful support. In a group of 3 or 4 people it can be easier. Huddles are also a great place to share and pray together about topics that are

more appropriate in a single-gender context. We hope huddles will be an environment that offers every huddle member an opportunity to share openly, offer and receive care and support, and pray specifically and regularly with those in their group.

There are many different ways to use our time in huddles. Sometimes, we simply focus on taking time to “Share” and taking time for “Prayer”.

SHARE: This is a time when you might share the important things going on in your life. As the Spirit leads, ask one another questions to help care for, support, protect, encourage, correct, and advise one another in love. Praise God for His grace and for the great things He’s been doing in and through you. During this time of sharing, we ask how we can support each other, point one another to Christ, and build one another up in love.

PRAYER: Pray specifically for one another and for others, including those who don’t know Jesus. Commission one another to go in the power of the Spirit to make disciples in the world.

WHAT ARE WE AIMING FOR?

In Church Groups, we strive together towards what we call the “4-Aims”.

AIM #1: We strive to see all Church Group members caring, growing, and making disciples.

AIM #2: We strive to integrate new people quickly and meaningfully into our Church Group. So, invite your friends and neighbors!

AIM #3: We strive to multiply through our Church Group. We desire to multiply disciples, leaders, and even new Church Groups, as the Lord leads.

AIM #4: We strive to serve our church, not just our Church Group. Your group can consider serving in MBC’s churchwide ministries (e.g., Kid’s Quest, The Rock, Access, Local Outreach, Global Outreach, Welcome Teams, etc.). And, we want to be actively involved in the corporate gatherings of our larger church family.

The above aims can be summarized using the acronym “**A-I-M-S**”, which stands for the following:

- A**ll group members caring, growing, and making disciples;
- I**ntegrate new people quickly and meaningfully;
- M**ultiply disciples through your Church Group; and
- S**erve your church, not just your church group.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

The best way to get connected to a Church Group is to attend MBC Connect. This class is designed to orient you to MBC and answer questions you might have about how to be involved in the life of our MBC family.

Some of the key topics we will cover in MBC Connect include the vision, mission, and direction of the church. We’ll explain how to get involved through serving, we’ll share an overview of our churchwide ministries, and we will help you get connected to a Church Group—where you can find a smaller community committed to caring for one another, helping one another grow to be more like Jesus, and making disciples together both in the DC area and around the world.

 McLean Bible Church

mcleanbible.org/churchgroups