

SMALL GROUP LEADER TRAING PARTICIPANT GUIDE





DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WITH YOUR GROUP:

- How long have you been a part of our church?
- What was the catalyst to you wanting to be a Group leader?
- What are you most excited about? What are you most nervous about?

SEGMENT 1

Why Leadership and Your Calling Matters

- Have you Been Called?
- Prepare and Spend Time in the Word.
- Be a Group who Applies What is Learned.

As you reflect on these three challenges, what are some practical things you can start this week to
help make these part of your leadership and group culture?



DISCIPLESHIP

DISCIPLE | dis-ci-ple noun

A person who actively follows, learns from, and models their life after someone.

In our case, that someone is Jesus.

MAKE DISCIPLES

To engage in a journey of transformation and growth alongside others.

MATTHEW 28:19-20

"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."

It's about helping people know Jesus, follow His teachings, and experience His life-changing power as they see it in your life.

Discipleship is not some abstract concept. It's a journey we're on together, right here in the midst of our current lives. Also, it's not just about teaching or having the right things to say all the time or being a perfect Christian. True discipleship is about doing life with other people and going on a journey to grow to be more like Jesus as a group.

So, where do we start?

THE DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY > THE BIG 3

When Jesus beckoned people to follow Him, He set in motion a profound transformation, catalyzed by three mighty forces that we affectionately call **the BIG 3**.

We firmly believe that when we wholeheartedly embrace and embody the principles of the BIG 3, our lives become an irresistible testimony, drawing others closer to personally experiencing the love of Christ and we experience change.

As group leaders, it is our sacred privilege to walk alongside others on this transformative journey, and here's a glimpse of what this exhilarating BIG 3 adventure entails:



THE BIG 3 OF DISCIPLESHIP

1. KNOW GOD

We place a high priority on assisting our group members in coming to a true knowledge of God. This entails creating an atmosphere where strong bonds with God can develop. We delve deeply into His Word, sermons, or biblical teachings to discover its wisdom, direction, and truths. Inviting the Holy Spirit to reveal more about God's nature and His purposes for our lives, we promote both private and communal reflection and prayer. We assist our group members in establishing a sincere and passionate connection with God through focused study, worship, prayer, and conversations.

2. LOVE PEOPLE

Next, we lead our group members in the practice of unconditional love. As group facilitators, we design environments where individuals may feel recognized, listened, and supported. We cultivate an environment where everyone is respected and inspired by a culture of inclusion and empathy. We encourage group members to seek out opportunities to lend a helping hand, exercise forgiveness, and show Christ-like love in their everyday encounters both within and outside of our groups.

3. IMPACT THE WORLD

Lastly, we empower our group members to Impact the World around them. Flatirons is more than just a place we call home; it's filled with opportunities to make a difference. As group leaders, we push our team to go beyond their comfort zones and become involved with the needs of our group and community. We support gestures of generosity, advocacy, and service that demonstrate the love of Christ in concrete ways. We become agents of transformation through engaging with others, giving back to our community, and actively taking part in projects that improve our world.

You want a group that looks more like Jesus? Then help cultivate a culture of the BIG 3 and watch what a world craving love does. It becomes irresistible and magnetic and a great way to show Jesus to others.











? REFLECTION QUESTION How can you actively integrate the principles of Know God, Love People, and Impact the World in	tc
your own life and inspire others to do the same?	



Mission of Group Leaders

GROUP LEADER MISSION

To host a safe environment where people are known and cared for while pursuing Jesus.

HOST A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Creating a safe environment is crucial for fostering trust and openness within the small group. Here are some ways a leader can intentionally carry out this part:

Set Clear Expectations

Communicate guidelines and expectations to group members regarding confidentiality, respect, and inclusivity. Emphasize the importance of creating a judgment-free zone where everyone feels comfortable sharing.

Foster Trust

Build trust among group members by being vulnerable and authentic yourself. Encourage open dialogue and active listening. Address conflicts or misunderstandings promptly and constructively.

Create a Welcoming Space

Pay attention to the physical environment where the group meets. Ensure it is comfortable, inviting, and conducive to discussion. Consider factors like lighting, seating arrangements, and any resources needed.

KNOWING AND CARING FOR PEOPLE

Building strong relationships within the small group is essential for supporting individuals' growth and fostering a sense of belonging. Here are some ways a leader can intentionally carry out this part:

Practice Active Listening

Give your full attention when group members share their thoughts, concerns, or joys. Show genuine interest and empathy. Ask open-ended questions to deepen understanding and encourage further conversation.

Foster Authentic Connections

Encourage group members to share their personal stories, experiences, and struggles. Create opportunities for them to connect on a deeper level, such as through shared activities, serving, prayer, or social events.

Follow Up and Follow Through

Demonstrate care by checking in with group members outside of the regular meetings. Send personalized messages, make phone calls, or meet up individually to discuss specific needs or challenges they may be facing and as a group try to support and help them.



PURSUING JESUS

Helping group members grow in their relationship with Jesus is a central aspect of small group leadership. Here are some ways a leader can intentionally carry out this part:

Facilitate Meaningful Discussion

Plan and guide discussions that focus on studying and applying the Bible. Encourage group members to ask questions, share insights, and apply biblical principles to their daily lives.

Provide Resources and Support

Equip group members with resources like devotionals, books, or online materials that can help deepen their understanding of Scripture. Offer guidance and encouragement as they seek to integrate biblical teachings into their lives.

Foster Spiritual Disciplines

We encourage group leaders to have a foundation in the Bible and Prayer. This not only using these in your life, but help members to engage in prayer, worship, and regular Scripture reading individually and within the group. Provide opportunities for group members to pray for one another, fostering a sense of spiritual community and support.

GROUP LEADERS ARE THE BACKBONE OF DISCIPLESHIP OF OUR CHURCH.



SEGMENT 3

How to Succeed as a Group Leader

Throughout the history of our church, hundreds of people just like you have stepped up to the plate to lead. Over time, common characteristics that define successful Group leaders have become very clear.

TAKE CHARGE AND OWN THE DIRECTION AND SUCCESS OF YOUR GROUP.

Begin by asking yourself these questions:

- **1.** How can I ensure the mission for Groups becomes the heartbeat of my group?
- 2. What kind of Group do you want to lead?
- **3.** How will you recruit people for the group?
- **4.** Have you prayed for God to bring you the right group members? If not start!

JUMP RIGHT INTO YOUR ROLE AND BE WILLING TO LEARN "IN THE GAME."

- What discussion/learning content will you use? (RightNow Media or Sermon Series)
- What other activities will you do to help boost your chance of connection? (Sporting events, game nights, dinners, etc.)
- How and when will you prepare for your group each week?

BE PLUGGED INTO THE LIFE OF YOUR CAMPUS.

Be proactive in inviting people to your group by:

- Spending time in your campus lobby between worship experiences meeting people and group members.
- Have 2-3 intentional conversations with people you don't know on the weekends.
- Invite your group to events and go as a group.

BE AVAILABLE

- Make time to talk and do life with people outside scheduled meeting times.
- Replicate your leadership in others. (Cast vision and challenge people)
- Support your group when they experience a personal crisis.

TAKE OWNERSHIP OF YOUR OWN DEVELOPMENT AS A LEADER.

- Pray and ask for wisdom and a caring and love attitude as you lead.
- Maintain your own vibrant spiritual life. (Prayer, time in word, and attending church so you have
- something to share with others)
- Utilize tools and resources designed to fuel growth.
- Seek out and be willing to receive feedback and become more self-aware.



ADDITIONAL EXPECTATIONS Your facilitator will now share some of the expectations or best practices of a Group leader that are specific to your campus. Use the space below for notes.
THINK ABOUT YOUR LEADERSHIP Consider your experience and call to leadership for a moment by writing your answers to the following questions:
As you think about the mission, what does it mean to you to "Host a safe environment where people are known and cared for while pursuing Jesus"?
What are one or two things you can start this week to apply the advice provided in the How to Succeed as a Leader section?
Which 2-3 people do you currently know that you could ask to join your group?



SEGMENT 4

People and Resources to Help You Succeed

While the success of your Group is directly tied to the amount of energy and ownership you are willing to put into it, we have a strong support system for you and some great tools to resource you and help you lead well.

New Leaders

Take advantage of building relationships with the new leaders you have met during your training today. That way you'll have a group to help encourage and support you as you get started. Consider staying connected to this group over the next three months.

Coaches and Staff Leaders - Each campus has a structure of leaders available to help you succeed. Each leader has experience as a Group leader and is trained on how to effectively coach your development in the areas that matter to you.

Existing Group Leaders

One of the greatest sources of support and ideas will be other Group leaders.

RESOURCES

Hosting Tips

We are equipping you to host inside of your home, but sometimes it can be a little uncomfortable to have new people come to your home for the first time. Here you can find some tips and suggestions to create that comfortable environment for the people who walk into your home.

Icebreakers

We have curated a list of icebreakers to help you connect with your people.

How to Edit/Manage Group

You can find details and instructions on how to edit and manage your group in Rock.

RightNow Media

A curated list of 1,000s of bible studies and video content for you and your group to use to deepen your relationship with Jesus and each other.

Campus Facebook Page

Your campus Facebook page is a great place to find out all that is happening at your campus, as well as a great place to recruit people to your Group.





Content Plan

WHY:

- 10-week plan to run with a focus on content and connection.
- Help build relationships with your members.
- Provide a solid foundation to build on.



PLAN OPTION 1

RIGHTNOW MEDIA VIDEO-LED 6 WEEK STUDY FRANCES CHAN - JESUS FARWELL MESSAGE

WEEK 1

Fellowship Night Week of ______: We will start with a Fellowship Night, where the focus will be on building connections and fostering a sense of community within the group. We'll have an ice breaker activity, establish ground rules and expectations, and enjoy a shared meal together. We will also watch a lesson trailer video to set the tone for the upcoming 10 weeks.

WEEK 2

In this session, we dive into the first video in the Frances Chan Study focused on How Christ Prepares His disciples. You will have review questions and be encouraged to have a time of prayer at the end.

WEEK 3

Continuing with the SG Content, it's an opportunity to delve deeper into understanding the character and nature of God as we learn how Jesus reveals the Father. We will also provide Week 4's Known Night Sheet, which contains 3-6 questions for further reflection and discussion we will use next week.

WEEK 4

Known Night This week, there will be no SG Content. Instead, we encourage you to foster a sense of familiarity and intimacy within the group. Allow time for each person to share their responses to the questions and personal stories, experiences, and challenges. The goal is for each member to feel known and supported. The leader should always go first in sharing their answers to the questions.

WEEK 5

We will resume with the SG Content, centering on the theme of 'God with Us.' This session will explore the concept of God's presence in our lives and how it impacts our faith journey. We'll also share the vision for a service event during Week 9 and encourage you to select a place for your groups service project by Week 7.



WEEK 6

The focus of this week's SG Content will be 'Abiding in Christ.' We will delve into the importance of remaining connected to Jesus and finding our strength and sustenance in Him.

WEEK 7

Fellowship Night For this Fellowship Night, we encourage you to plan a fun activity such as a potluck, going out to eat, or having a game night. The goal is to provide a relaxed and enjoyable environment for the group members to bond. You should also decide on the place where you'll serve during Week 9 and begin planning of this event.

WEEK 8

In this session, we will cover the SG Content titled 'Better with the Spirit.' The focus will be on the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives and how His presence enhances our faith and relationships.

WEEK 9

We will finish up the SG Content, exploring 'Christ's Prayer for Us.' Additionally, this week will be the designated serve week, where you'll have the opportunity to carry out a service project outside of the normal group meeting time. Please take lots of pictures of your team serving and share them with your Group Director.

WEEK 10

To wrap up the semester, we'll have another fun night with a potluck. During this gathering, you will cast a vision for ways to meet during the break and discuss potential events for the next semester. We'll also encourage meetups during the break to maintain connections.



PLAN OPTION 2

SERMON SERIES CONTENT

WEEK 1

Fellowship Night Week of _____: We will start with a Fellowship Night, where the focus will be on building connections and fostering a sense of community within the group. We'll have an ice breaker activity, establish ground rules and expectations, and enjoy a shared meal together. You should also set the expectation they attend services on the weekend and/or watch the sermon before they arrive each week.

WEEK 2

During this week, you will engage in a discussion using the provided small group questions related to the sermon. These questions will help delve deeper into the sermon's message and its application to their lives. Close the session with a prayer.

WEEK 3

During this week, you will engage in a discussion using the provided small group questions related to the sermon. These questions will help delve deeper into the sermon's message and its application to their lives. Close the session with a prayer. We will also provide Week 4's Known Night Sheet, which contains 3-6 questions for further reflection and discussion we will use next week.

WEEK 4

Known Night This week, there will be no specific content to follow. Instead, we encourage you to foster a sense of familiarity and intimacy within the group. Allow time for each person to share their responses to the questions and personal stories, experiences, and challenges. The goal is for each member to feel known and supported. The leader should always go first in sharing their answers to the questions.

WEEK 5

During this week, you will engage in a discussion using the provided small group questions related to the sermon. These questions will help delve deeper into the sermon's message and its application to their lives. Close the session with a prayer. Additionally, during this session, share the vision for a service event during Week 9, and encourage group members to collaborate in selecting a place for the service project by Week 7. Close the session with prayer.

WEEK 6

During this week, you will, engage in a discussion using the provided small group questions related to the sermon. These quetions will help delve deeper into the sermon's message and its application to their lives. Close the session with a prayer. Encourage participants to share personal stories or testimonies related to the sermon's topic. Close the session with prayer.

WEEK 7

Fellowship Night For this Fellowship Night, plan a fun activity such as a potluck, going out to eat, or having a game night. Allow ample time for group members to connect and build relationships with one another. Additionally, take the opportunity to finalize the place where you'll serve during Week 9. Close the session with prayer.



WEEK 8

During this week, you will engage in a discussion using the provided small group questions related to the sermon. These questions will help delve deeper into the sermon's message and its application to their lives. Close the session with a prayer. Encourage participants to share personal stories or testimonies related to the sermon's topic. Close the session with prayer.

WEEK 9

In this session, participants will engage with the sermon series as usual, discussing the sermon's main points, implications, and applications using the small group questions. Additionally, this week will be the designated serve week, where you'll have the opportunity to carry out a service project outside of the normal group meeting time. Please take lots of pictures of your team serving and share them with your Group Director.

WEEK 10

To conclude the semester, plan another fun night with a potluck. During this gathering, reflect on the previous 10 weeks and share how the sermon series and small group discussions have impacted individual lives and the group. Additionally, use this time to conduct surveys, cast a vision for the next trimester meetups, and encourage group members to organize meetups during the break. Close the session with prayer.

HOST A SAFE ENVIRONMENT WHERE PEOPLE ARE KNOWN AND CARED FOR WHILE PURSUING JESUS.



BONUS RESOURCES

New SG Leader Launch Documents

THE POINT OF THE FELLOWSHIP NIGHT

Caring is the difference between being a loving, wise disciple-maker and a "Know-It-All." Nobody likes a know-it-all. They are usually more concerned about being the smartest person in the room than they are about the people themselves. We can easily sniff one out. They give a lot of information, but don't really care about you or how that information impacts your life. But, as we all know from experience, this isn't how lasting, meaningful relationships are formed.

John C. Maxwell said it best, "People don't care about how much you know until they know how much you care."

Caring for someone's heart is a critical component to discipleship and connection of your group. Throughout Scripture, the "heart" is considered the source of emotion, drive, passion, motivation, speech, etc. And, since God has commanded to "keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life" (Proverbs 4:23), one question your Group must consistently ask one another is,

"How is your heart this week?"

Psalm 19:14, Proverbs 4:23, Matthew 5:8, Matthew 12:34-35, Philippians 4:7

WHAT THIS NIGHT COULD LOOK LIKE FOR YOUR GROUP

Many times, fellowship night happens best around a table. So, this week will primarily revolve around a meal. Your goal then, as a small group leader, is to create an environment where authentic, heart conversations can happen within this context. The following are various examples of how this might look and what leaders can do to set the stage for heart conversations:

Option 1: Potluck

This is simply a meal in your host home where everyone can bring something to eat. Although bringing food may seem like a small thing, it is important in helping others feel a part of your group. Make it fun by setting a theme (Best family recipe, Mexican night, Tailgate food, bring a dish that starts with the first letter of your last name, etc.)

Because we always want to take a moment to open the Scriptures, gathering to pray before your meal is a great opportunity to set up the night and read a passage together. This also gives a moment to introduce visitors in your group and help break the ice. For example, you could say something along these lines:

LEADER: "Hey everyone! Let's gather to pray for our meal. Tonight, at some point during dinner, I'm going to encourage everyone to answer one question: 'How's your heart this week?' That's another way of saying, 'How are you doing? What's been going on in your life?' Be as open and honest as you're comfortable with. In fact, let that be the first thing y'all talk about when you sit down to eat. Find out how the people around you are doing and what's been going on in their lives. I'd also



encourage you to sit with someone you haven't gotten to know yet and hear some of their story and get to know them better.

Before we pray, I want to read Psalm 19:14 [any of the five passages listed in the previous section are great "heart" verses as well]. This is David's prayer:

'Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer." Psalm 19:14

What has been the meditation of your heart this season? It's important that the people in this room know what's going on in your life, so take advantage of this moment to let others into it. Have those conversations over dinner. As we do that, let me pray and then we can eat."

Option 2: Going Out to Eat (Not ideal for first week of Group)

Sometimes it is great to get out of the norm and go eat as a group. If a mixed group - This may also be one outing where your group eats separately (i.e. Men - Buffalo Wild Wings; Ladies - Chili's) or you may all decide to go to the same one. In either case, because of the public atmosphere, you must be very intentional to set the stage for heart conversations. For example,

LEADER: "Hey everyone! [Name] is going to pray for us, but, before he/she does, I wanted to encourage you to ask the people sitting across from you, 'How are you doing? How is your heart?' at some point during your meal."

Option 3: Going to an Event

Sometimes, a simple change of scenery can create a greater sense of community. Plato once observed, "You can learn more about a person in an hour of play than a year of conversation." Having fun together is a huge part of building community. So, try to plan one fun event each semester to attend together. There are a lot of environments that groups have found to be good atmospheres for fun and conversation. Here are several:

- Hikes
- Professional Sports game
- Fourth of July firework display
- Trivia Night at a local restaurant
- Watching a local Christmas parade/light displays
- Going to a pumpkin patch
- Brewery/Wine Tasting
- Farmers Markets/Festivals
- Concerts

Option 4: Host a Game Night

Sometimes just getting together over some board games and snacks is just what people need to connect. Invite group members to bring their favorite group board game and snacks, then spend some time laughing and connecting over some games.

These are all simple, and relatively inexpensive. Whatever the event, make it an intentional time to get to know each other. Keep this in mind when choosing what to do. In other words, try to ensure that it's an environment where conversations can still happen!



WHAT TO DO EACH WEEK WITH YOUR GROUP

When your Group gets together, you can use this guide to help with time and discussion:

- Start with light snacks/catchup conversations until everyone arrives and it's time to start.
- Discuss HIGHS AND LOWS of your week (10 minutes)
- Transition to Right Now Media Study or Sermon Questions- Read opener question/scripture as provided in leader handout for the week (10 minutes) (Note: ask someone new each week to read scripture)
- Watch lesson video (8-14 mins) Make sure everyone has something to take notes/encourage them to write down anything that stands out during video.
- Facilitate session questions/discussion (15-20 minutes)
- Share PRAYER REQUESTS and pray for one another (10 mins).
- Leave with clear actions steps for members to take this week based on discussion/prayers.

SETTING HEALTHY EXPECTATIONS

One of the best ways to experience a successful group is laying the foundation for what to expect. This is important both for group participation as well as conflict-resolution. When your small group begins, sharing these expectations week 1 will get your group going in a good trajectory. Feel free to adapt or add to some of the following suggestions:

The Small Group Commitment

- We will grow together. I commit myself fully to the Lord with the anticipation that I am entering a time of accelerated spiritual transformation.
- We will be present. I will meet with our group for approximately 60-90 minutes on the agreed upon days, unless providentially hindered.
- We will be trustworthy. I will commit to an atmosphere of confidentiality, honesty, and transparency for the edification of others in the group as well as my own spiritual growth.
- We will contribute. (Though it may be in various degrees depending on personality), I will participate in group discussion, service, and fellowship.

Other Helpful Tips/Expectations

Every group is unique and has its own personality. However, here are a few "house rules" that have helped various groups in the past. When setting expectations, leaders have told the following to their small group:

- Embrace awkward silence. It takes time to think of your response sometimes. So, it's okay for us to be quiet for a few moments after we a question is asked.
- Everyone should participate in discussion but not dominate it.
- We don't try to fix everything (aka we won't be amateur counselors). When a crisis moment arises in a person or family, a small group leader will bring a coach or staff member into the situation to help guide next steps towards counseling.
- Be willing to initiate fellowship moments outside of formal group meetings. In other words, participate in creating fun moments with your group outside of the normal meeting times.
- Get a text group going so everyone can share updates, prayers, and what happing in their lives.





- Encourage folks to use it!
- Set any personal boundaries for communication, one-on-ones, or other areas upfront so folks know what is acceptable and what is not.
- Also, let folks know they are not "stuck" in the group. If after they attend a few weeks and are not vibing, give them permission to try another group. Also, share as the leader you have ability to ask someone to leave if they are not a good fit or step out of expectations.

Feel free to use any (or all) of these to help build healthy expectations for your group. You can also add your own to set the stage for spiritual growth and fellowship. Remind them consistently of your commitments. Whatever the case, it's crucial that everyone in the group is on the same page.

KNOWN NIGHT QUESTIONS

Leader Notes: This is an intentional moment to help each of you in the group get to know each other better. How you lead out in your answers will shape what is shared from the people. Be as real as you feel comfortable for the group.

Intro into Known Night (Week 3). You can say something like this:

John Maxwell once wrote, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." To put it another way, people won't care as much about the scripture you're quoting if they don't feel like you know them. People will only open-up to others who they know and who they trust to know them. We need others (Iron Sharpens Iron proverb) to navigate this life.

I am praying that we would be a group that can go deeper than surface level and really be open with each other.

Foundation for this is confidentially and trust. We need for this group to be a safe ground. Or as we shared in week 1, what said here stays here, we won't share with others. What you hear from each other is their story and only they have right to share. Can we agree to that?

One of the best ways we learn about God, ourselves, and one another is through questions. So, for next week, we will be answering some deeper questions. The goal is to provide everyone in the group a chance to share answers to 6 questions within about a 5-8 mins max timeframe. While someone is sharing, I ask that we give them our complete focus and use this time as chance for us a chance to just listen. The goal is to help us learn more about each other and show that we all have a story and while it may be different, I bet we see some threads of commonality or lest give us some perspective on each other as we grow in relationship as a group.

Close with prayer.

Hand out 6 Question Template (last page) to everyone so they can write out their 5-8 minute response and bring back to read next week.

Explain what you'll be doing together for the Week 4 Known Night.



Example: "Next week, I'm going to be sharing my answers to the questions. I'll take 5-8 minutes and answer the same questions you'll be answering. When I'm done, it will be open to at least one follow-up question (not to fix but better understand) based on what I shared and then the group will pray for me. Then we will go around and do the same as each one of you shares one at a time.

Questions:

- Who are the people who've had the greatest positive impact on you? Why/how?
- What have been the happiest moments of your life?
- Where do you go or what do you do when life gets too heavy for you? Why?
- In what ways is life challenging for you right now?
- In what areas of life are you most disciplined? Why are these disciplines important to you?
- Picture the first time you will stand before God. What do you want him to say about your life?



? KNOWN QUESTIONS:	
Who are the people who've had the greatest positive impact on you? Why/how?	
What have been the happiest moments of your life?	
Where do you go or what do you do when life gets too heavy for you? Why?	
In what ways is life challenging for you right now?	
In what areas of life are you most disciplined? Why are these disciplines important to you?	
Picture the first time you will stand before God. What do you want him to say about your life?	

