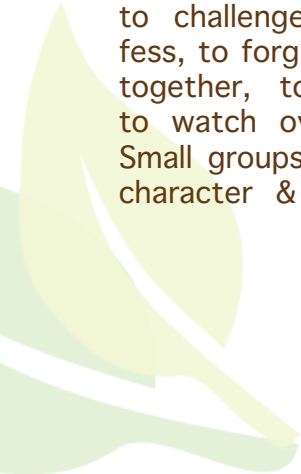
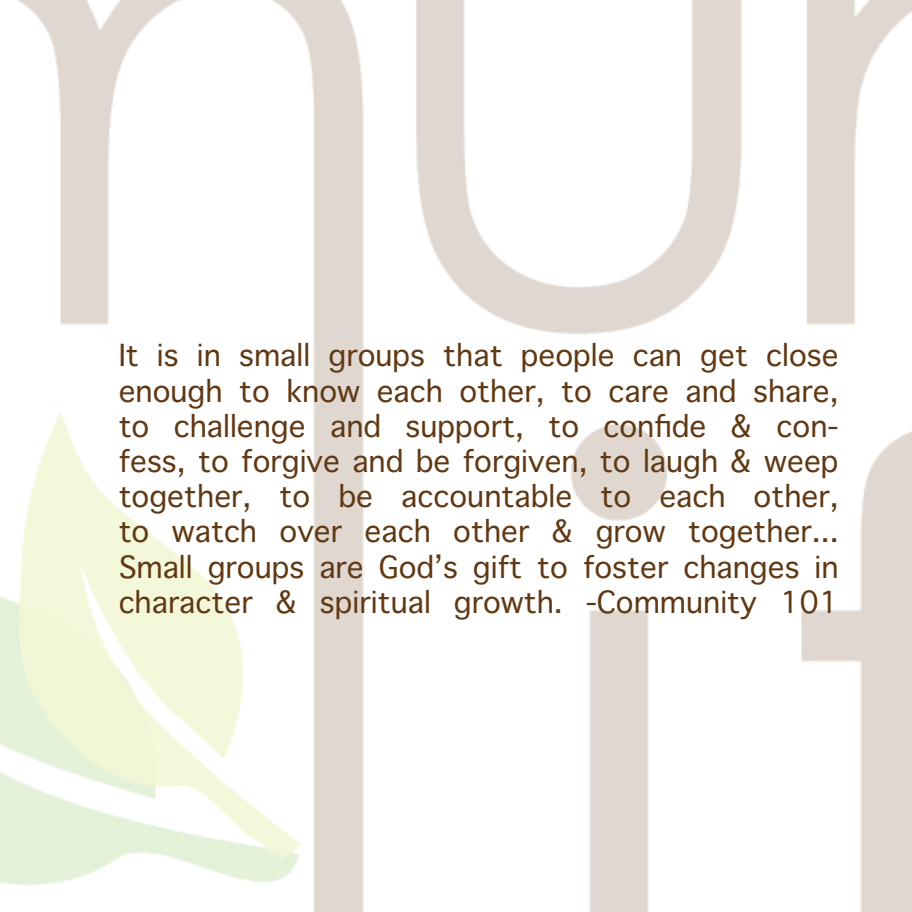


community
life



SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE



It is in small groups that people can get close enough to know each other, to care and share, to challenge and support, to confide & confess, to forgive and be forgiven, to laugh & weep together, to be accountable to each other, to watch over each other & grow together... Small groups are God's gift to foster changes in character & spiritual growth. -Community 101

Welcome!

We are so excited that you have decided to take the leap into small group leadership at Calvary. Whether you are new or a veteran we know that this will be an important part of your spiritual journey.

This booklet will provide you with basic information about what it means to lead a Calvary small group and give you some practical steps in getting started.

Thank you again for your willingness to lead. We pray that God will work in and through you for His glory!

-The Community Life Team



Why We Do Small Groups

We believe that spiritual growth happens best in the context of community. So our small groups are focused on developing authentic relationships that help us become more like Jesus Christ in every area of our lives.

Small groups offer a sense of belonging with a balance of fellowship, Bible study, prayer and support in a safe, informal environment which will grow your relationship with Christ and the Calvary family.



What Makes a Healthy Small Group?

There are three elements crucial for Biblical Community:

Fellowship: Be intentional in building relationships based on truth and grace through regular meetings, social activities, support and prayer. Have fun together!

Discipleship: Grow together in the knowledge of God's Word by applying its principles to our lives and encouraging one another toward spiritual transformation.

Service: Reflect God's love by reaching out in friendship and service to those in the communities in which we live. Serving will bring life to your group in ways that can't be met by solely meeting together.



What Does it Mean to Lead a Small Group?

- It means that you partner with the small group ministry team and communicate with your Small Group Area Leader.
- It means that you commit to leading a group for three months with the intent of praying for your group, encouraging them in building relationships with one another and growing together spiritually as a group.
- It means you participate in Calvary's Leadership Gatherings. These gatherings typically happen on a quarterly basis.



What is a Small Group Area Leader and Why Do I Need One?

Every small group is assigned an Area Leader (AL). The role of the AL is to help encourage, equip, pray, troubleshoot, and provide resources for you as a leader.

They are available to meet with you one-on-one, visit your group, exchange emails, phone calls or catch up with you before or after services on a Sunday morning. They are here to serve and support you.

We encourage you to get to know your AL and communicate regularly with him or her about what is happening in your group.



Overcoming Common Fears

It has been said that courage is not the absence of fear, but moving forward in the face of fear. Stepping out to lead or host a group can feel a bit scary. That's why we want to address some of the fears that are common to us all.

What if no one shows up?

We've found that personal invitations are the best way to encourage people to attend your group. An email invitation and a follow up phone call to let people know you are looking forward to seeing them at your group is best. Make these contacts...then leave the results up to God.

My house is...(fill in the blank)! What will people think? As long as your home is relatively clean and everyone has a comfortable place to sit, you'll be in good shape. The most important thing is that people feel welcomed.



What if they ask a biblical question that I can't answer?

We don't expect you to have all the answers, so just be honest. Feel free to access the resources listed at the back of the booklet, but always remember that people grow the most when they take ownership of their own spiritual journey. Don't do all the work for them!

What if I'm not a great speaker?

You don't have to be a trained speaker, leader, or Bible scholar in order to facilitate a great group! You do have to love the Lord and love people. Relax and guide the conversation so that every person has the opportunity to connect with God and to experience positive life change.



First Meeting

The first meeting should be a time of getting to know one another, as well as discussing and agreeing on logistics of the meeting. Some things to cover would include:

- how long the group will stay together before reevaluating.
- how often the group will meet; where & when
- basic ground-rules such as mutual respect, confidentiality, and freedom to share diverse ideas without judgement.
- curriculum options
- take time to share what brought you to the group and how you hope God will continue to shape you through the group.

Have some fun as well! An ice-breaker can be a good way to melt people's defenses and create camaraderie.



Share the Responsibility

Everyone in the group has a responsibility to be an active participant. As a group facilitator, your job is to lead a productive discussion and to encourage others to use their gifts to serve within the group. Here are some of the roles for people to fill:

Communications: This person is a good organizer and a people-person who is available to call or email group members in regard to schedule changes. They can also coordinate snacks, potlucks, birthdays, or activities.

Service Projects: Find someone who loves to serve and let them come up with ideas for how your group can serve together. This is a great way to show the love of Jesus and to grow closer as a group.

Prayer: This person is someone passionate about prayer who can email the groups prayer requests, keep a prayer journal and find creative ways for the group to engage in prayer.



Facilitate discussion by using ACTS:

Acknowledge everyone who speaks during a discussion--recognizing participants will reinforce their contribution and encourage quiet speakers.

Clarify what is being said--restating in someone else's words is a good way to make sure you are listening well to the speaker.

Turn it back to the group as a means to generate discussion and build consensus--ask what others think rather than providing answers or recaps.

Summarize what has been said--this will help clarify the overall topic and increase learning.



Curriculum:

A recommended curriculum list is included on the next page with small group discussion guides of various topics, formats, and styles. Most of these are available through the Journey Resource Center at Calvary.

Sermon-Based Discussion guides are available when applicable. These guides are available on Monday afternoon by email following the weekend message. They are simple, easy to use and focus on going deeper with the weekend message and applying it to our lives.

The goal of any curriculum is not to merely inform but to actively engage all members in meaningful discussions that will transform lives. As such, the leader is free to use the material as the Holy Spirit leads.

Curriculum:

1. Sermon-Based Discussion Guides
2. Interactions Series: topical study guides
3. New Community Series: book of the Bible focus
4. Just Walk Across the Room (Bill Hybels): DVD with study guide on pointing people to faith
5. The Life You've Always Wanted (John Ortberg): DVD with study guide on spiritual transformation

These and other recommended materials are available in Journey Resource Center

Recommended Books on Community & Small Groups

1. Leading Life Changing Small Groups: Bill Donahue
2. Everybody's Normal Until You Get to Know Them: John Ortberg
3. Community 101: Gilbert Bilezikian
4. Walking the Small Group Tightrope: Bill Donahue



Web Bible Translations & Commentaries

1. www.biblegateway.com
2. www.youversion.com
3. www.biblestudytools.com

Small Groups Websites with Helps & Tips

1. www.smallgroups.com
2. www.smallgroupexchange.com
3. www.willowcreek.com/grouplife

Service Opportunities for Your Small Group

1. Go to www.servesomebody.org for local and global outreach opportunities through Calvary
2. Visit www.actionvc.org to find a service project within Ventura County
3. Volunteer for a ministry at Calvary
i.e. Communion, Parking, Children, Usher

Contact Info

If you have any questions regarding Small Groups contact your Area Leader or email:
smallgroups@calvarycc.org



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