

GROUP LEADER GUIDE



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Graphic Design by Bailee Maresh

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*We help people
find & follow Jesus*





WELCOME

We are so excited to **partner with you to Help People Find and Follow Jesus** as you lead a Grace Group!

We know that Grace is a big church with multiple campuses and many ministries. This often makes it challenging for people to experience the deep relationships we are made for in God's family.

But that is the beauty of Grace Groups; where **every person is welcomed, known and encouraged** in their discipleship to Jesus.

We are committed **to equip and support you because of the influential role** you will have in the lives of our people. We understand that our leaders come from different backgrounds and experiences of leading and shepherding a small group.

The aim of this resource is to **set a common foundation and culture** for how our Grace Groups function and operate within the overall ministry of Grace Bible Church.

In this guide, you will find our core **Grace Group priorities, structure and leader expectations** as well as a variety of resources to equip you in guiding your group to Find and Follow Jesus together.

We are grateful for you!
Grace Adult Ministries Team

"In the same way we had a fond affection for you and were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us."

1 Thessalonians 2:8

GRACE GROUP PRIORITIES

As a Grace Group leader, you have the unique opportunity **to guide a group of people to find and follow Jesus together** for a season of their lives. Every person will be at a unique place in their spiritual journey but the unifying foundation for your group is built by being intentional about the five priorities that we believe every Grace Group should exhibit:

SPIRIT-LED

We believe that healthy Grace Groups **seek and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit** as they make decisions, learn together, meet needs, shepherd the hurting, serve the community and engage with people who don't know Jesus yet. The Spirit of Jesus is ultimately the true leader of every group; we follow Him together.

GROUNDING IN SCRIPTURE

We believe that the Bible is God's inspired communication to us and that our lives can be transformed through hearing and doing what God reveals in His word. Grace Groups have **a deep commitment to keep Scripture as their focal point**, often asking, "what does God's word say about that?" and, "what has God been showing you from His word?"

NURTURED IN PRAYER

We believe that when Grace Groups commit to **praying in and out of the group time** that God responds in big ways! Group members consistently lift up the needs of the group in prayer and boldly ask God to use them to engage with people who may be far from God but near to them, praying for opportunities to share God's love and the gospel in word and deed.

COMMITTED TO COMMUNITY

Grace Groups commit to build a life-giving community in which everyone **knows they are welcome, can share honestly, and encourages each other to become like Jesus**. Group time is prioritized in the busyness of life, confidences are held closely and forgiveness is extended quickly

BUILT FOR MULTIPLICATION

Grace Groups are **forward-thinking and outward-looking**. Leaders see the gifting and potential in group members and provide opportunities for them to create, plan, facilitate, lead, and serve; empowering new leaders as we go.

Group members are **challenged to personally make disciples** and to discover and use their gifts to contribute to God's great mission of restoring people to Himself.

Group members are encouraged to invite and welcome new people, growing to the point where **new groups are started**.





GRACE GROUP STRUCTURE

How do you lead a life-giving and balanced group meeting?

At Grace, we structure our group meetings into three sections: Connect, Grow, and Engage.

We suggest dividing the total time your group meets into thirds and **plan to spend approximately one-third of your meeting time in each section.**

CONNECT Relationally

This is the **relationship building portion of the group.** This time focuses on getting to know each other and sharing experiences as a group. Whether that's asking icebreaker questions, playing games, intentionally sharing about each others' weeks, praying with each other, sharing life stories or time spent worshipping, the purpose of this time is to deepen relational connection within the group. This is also the time to introduce any new people to the group to make them feel welcome.

GROW Biblically

This is the **content time of your group** where you interact with Scripture and encourage people to grow in their faith through their study and discovery of Biblical truths. As a leader, this is a time to ask engaging questions and facilitate the discussion so that people can discover Biblical truths together. It may be tempting to "teach" the whole time, but the purpose of the Grow section is for people to have an opportunity to actively process what they are learning together. Think of yourself as a facilitator rather than a teacher!

ENGAGE Missionally

This is the **application time of your group** where you engage in practically applying the Biblical truths revealed in the Grow section. This is the time where people learn to connect Biblical truths to everyday life. The Engage time is also where we intentionally encourage and **equip group members to personally help people find and follow Jesus** in their workplaces, neighborhoods, families and communities. As a group, we "pray big" for specific friends and opportunities to share our faith.

CLOSING

This is your administrative time to go over any announcements, updates, or anything you need to relay to your group. This is also a time to note which members are not present in the group so that you can reach out to them.

LEADER ROLES & EXPECTATION

Leading a group well requires many types of gifting and capacities. Healthy group leaders recognize their need to partner with others to share the leader roles and expectations for their group. Prayerfully look for and invite maturing group members to step into roles for which they can contribute and grow in their faith.

Model | *Lives like Jesus*

- Lead out of the overflow of your personal walk with the Lord. The most effective group leaders are ones who are actively pursuing an authentic (not perfect!) and wholehearted daily experience of following Jesus by His Spirit.
- Live a life of integrity that is consistent with the teachings of Jesus.

Co-Leader/Apprentice | *Works together with other leaders to lead the group*

- Work together as a team to pursue, lead, and help your group members Find and Follow Jesus.
- Address any conflicts or disagreements with one another in a Christ-like way. If problems cannot be resolved, reach out to your Grace staff person.
- Hold one another accountable to the standards and expectations of a group leader.

Shepherd | *Tends to the soul care of the members in the group*

- Seek to know the real lives of group members and take steps to help care, guide, and direct them as needed.
- Be relational as well as content-driven.
- Follow up with people who have missed group time to check in on them.

Facilitator | *Creates an environment that includes all members, and guides conversation towards relevant and appropriate topics.*

- Plan group time and facilitate discussion. Avoid the temptation to teach the whole time—encourage discussion among members. Speak less and listen more.
- Ask open ended questions that engage with the text.
- Facilitate the discussion so that everyone has an opportunity to speak. It is perfectly ok to ask someone to not answer a question to leave space for others to answer.
- Keep to the schedule; make sure that you stick to the time limits of the group.

- Use discernment and step in if someone gets stuck on an irrelevant or inappropriate topic or a topic that may be best discussed one-on-one.

Prayer Warrior | *Prays for and with the group*

- Creatively plan and lead prayer in the group time.
- Pray individually for the small group outside of programmed meeting times.
- Manage prayer requests and follow up with them.

Engagement Leader | *Works together with other leaders to encourage group engagement opportunities*

- Champion disciple-making in your group; leading prayer time for lost friends and practicing the Disciple-Making Tools.
- Creatively plan and lead service and outreach opportunities for your group.

Communicator | *Communicates needed information to group members*

- Establish the preferred method of letting the group know important information (email, group text, etc.)
- Communicate all needed information about the group and opportunities at Grace.

Miscellaneous Expectations

- Arrive early to everything (a good life principle!).
- Engage with people as they arrive.
- Be flexible with change or unexpected things.
- Stay until everyone in your group has left.



LEADING WELL

WELCOMING

A warm, welcoming environment helps people to feel comfortable and be more likely to engage in the group. Spend a few minutes making sure:

- There are enough seats for everyone in a clean, clutter-free space.
- To use name tags especially in the first few weeks of a group.
- To greet everyone by name as they come in and introduce people to each other.
- To let people know where things are located - restroom, drinks, snacks, etc.
- To remind people of the group's purpose to:

Connect Relationally

Grow Biblically

Engage Missionally

- To explain what the group time will be like. For example: "The first 30 minutes we will spend some time connecting and sharing a highlight from the week. Then we will go over this week's Scripture passage for about 30 minutes and last, we will spend some time talking about our spheres of influence and filling in an Every Neighbor Map."
- To stress confidentiality about what is shared in the group.

ICEBREAKERS

As a group is forming and getting to know one another, it is a great idea to do a few icebreakers to get the group talking and laughing. Here are a few suggestions:

Lightning Round

Choose 1 person to get to know; set a timer for 1 minute. The group asks rapid-fire questions such as: Mountains or beach? Hot weather or cold weather? Food you refuse to eat? Favorite movie? Best pizza in town? "Lightning Round" 1-2 people each week or if your group is larger, divide into groups of 3-4 and play.

Easy Starter Questions

Where in the world would you travel if you knew you would have to stay there for up to a year?
If you were stranded on a desert island, what three items would you want to have with you?
What's the most unusual food you have ever eaten?



GOSPEL CHECKPOINT

As you get to know your group members, prayerfully discern if they know and understand the gospel. Determine if they have personally trusted Christ and are in a growing relationship with God. You can do this in different ways such as:

- Ask willing group members to share 5 minute life stories in your group time. Listen to determine gospel clarity.
- Have a personal conversation and simply ask, “tell me about your spiritual journey.”
- Ask if you can share how they can know for certain that they are a child of God.

Share the gospel with them using a tool such as the **Three Circles Gospel** (next page) or **The Bridge**. See grace-bible.org/disciplemaker for explainer videos and pdfs of these tools.

- If they become a believer or need establishing in their relationship with Jesus, make plans to take them through **Rooted: 9 Conversations to Establish Your Faith**. See grace-bible.org/resources



WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The Gospel is the good news of how we can be reconciled to God through Jesus.

God's Design

Out of God's great love, He created a world that was good. He made people to enjoy a deeply connected relationship with Him and to represent Him through our lives. (Genesis 1:26-28, 31) As a loving Father, He communicated boundaries to protect us and to allow us to fully enjoy our relationships with Him and with other people (Genesis 2:15-17).

Brokenness

Yet, when we look around our world, brokenness and evil are evident everywhere - war, famine, disease, corruption. If we are honest, we also see brokenness and evil inside ourselves - deceit, hatred, greed, lust.

This is because we have rejected God's design and chosen to follow our own way.

- Our rejection of God and His ways is what the Bible calls sin. (Romans 3:23)
- Our sin results in separation from God which the Bible calls death. (Romans 6:23a)

Unless our sin is forgiven, we will remain separated from God forever.

Jesus

God does not want to leave us in our sin and brokenness!

God graciously provided a way to forgive our sin and to freely give us eternal life - a life connected to God both now and forever. (Romans 6:23b; John 17:3)

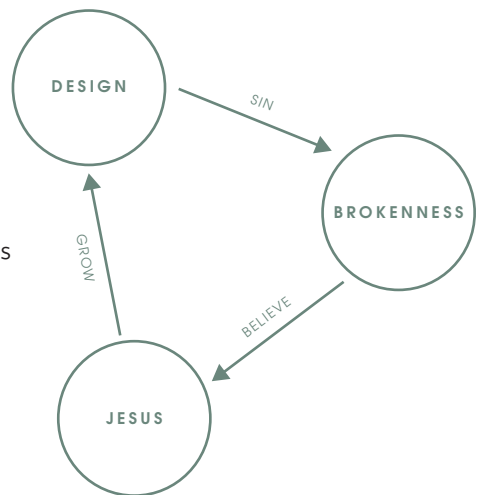
God's only Son Jesus died in our place. He took upon Himself the penalty that we deserve because of our sin. Then, Jesus rose from the dead, and forever defeated the power of sin and death. (Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3-5)

Believe

We respond to Jesus by believing in Him for the forgiveness of our sin.

To believe in Jesus means that you no longer try to earn God's approval through what you do, nor do you deny that you need forgiveness and rescue. Instead, you accept God's free gift of eternal life. Belief or faith is simply being convinced or persuaded that something or someone is trustworthy (John 1:12; Ephesians 2:8-9).

Everyone who believes in Jesus is forgiven of their sin and receives eternal life. We can now know God personally and experience the life we were designed to live (John 3:16-17).



Which circle or arrow best represents your life right now?

Have you put your trust (believed) in Jesus alone to be reconciled to God?

ASKING GREAT QUESTIONS

Big Ideas

- Direct questions can solve most group dynamics issues (too much silence, dominant personalities, insecure group members).
- Don't answer any question you haven't first asked (people learn more from discovering truth than simply being taught truth).
- Be okay with silence (avoid the temptation to "rescue the situation" and answer the question too quickly).
- Follow answers with encouragement, even when they are not correct ("Thanks, Blake, for sharing your thoughts" or "that's an interesting way to think about that question").
- Try to mostly ask questions for which you have anticipated the answer and the questions that may follow from it.

Good Questions

INTRODUCTORY Questions that get the discussion rolling & allow everyone to enter in.

- What do you observe in this passage?
- What are the reasons the speaker gave for obeying God?
- How would you define faith?

REDIRECTING Questions that draw the rest of the group into the discussion and keep it moving.

- Jerry, did you have any other observations from this passage that Mark and John haven't shared?
- Jamey, do you agree with what's been said so far? Why or why not?

CLARIFYING Questions that help a group member explain his view more clearly so others can understand.

- Could you explain that more fully?
- What do you mean when you say, ___?
- In your own words, how would you summarize Peter's argument in this paragraph?

JUSTIFYING Questions that keep your group tied to the Word.

- Where do you find that in the text?

- Do you have a cross-reference for that?
- What reasons can you give for that?

APPLICATION Questions that move from theory to personal application.

- Motivation questions: From what we've discussed today, why should we want to pursue holiness?
- Method/means questions: How do we pursue holiness?
- Specific questions: What steps can you take this week to pursue holiness?

UNHELPFUL QUESTIONS

CLOSE-ENDED Questions that are often closed ended or yes/no questions will kill discussion.

Generally you want to avoid questions where the answer you're looking for is obvious. Sometimes this is useful for summarizing or bringing a consensus.

Paul says we are to rejoice in everything, doesn't he?

From this passage, do you think we should marry non-believers?

Are there seven key words contained in these three verses?

LONG/WORDY If your question is too complicated, it is usually met with dead silence.

Since the eloquent book of James magnificently renders an exquisite portrayal of our culpability for appropriate mental states when encountering tribulations, what are the vicissitudes relevant to a comprehension of the concept "various" in the essayist's delineation of trials?

DOUBLE-BARRELED You also want to avoid multiple questions within a question.

What are some ways we can "consider it all joy" when we encounter trials, and how is it possible to develop endurance?

EMBARRASSING Never ridicule a group member even if you strongly disagree with their view.

Where in the world did you get that observation?

DEALING WITH GROUP CHALLENGES

TANGENT TAD Compliment him on his question and ask him to relate it to the matter at hand. Talk to him afterwards if it continues regularly.

DOMINANT DELILAH Try not to call on her if there is anyone else who wants to talk. Use redirecting questions to ask another person directly what they think. It is often helpful to have this person sit next to you so that you are not making eye-contact as often. Afterwards, encourage her for her interest and explain how she could help others learn more by allowing them to interact. Be positive!

SILENT SHERRY Try asking Sherry a very simple question. Make it a point to talk to her before and after class. Encourage her. Be interested in what she thinks, even if she's reluctant to share it. Point out how she could be an asset by participating.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN'T ANSWER It's okay! Your job is NOT to have all the answers, and not having the answer is an opportunity to model humility and to teach your group how to find the answers to questions they don't know. So look at it as an opportunity, but don't forget to address the issue the next time (if you forget, it communicates that the question was not really important to you).

ARGUMENTATIVE PERSON Be patient and don't argue back. Remember, a gentle answer turns away wrath. Thank them for their interest and that you would be glad to discuss their concern afterwards. Be on the lookout for an underlying problem that may explain their attitude – perhaps a life crisis or a painful experience related to what you're studying.

PERSON WITH REAL THEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES Don't freak out! This can become a real opportunity for your group to think through what they believe. However, if this person continues to argue with you, diffuse the situation by saying, "right now we're looking at this subject from this perspective." Afterwards, privately explain your position and that of GBC. If needed, direct them to a pastor.

PERSON WITH PERSONAL PROBLEMS Be willing to spend personal time with them, if you can. Be a friend. If the problems are beyond your ability to handle, talk to your coach or to a pastor for advice.

NON-BELIEVER Awesome! Treat them like everyone else, but be sensitive to their presence. Try to meet with them personally. Seek a chance to share the Gospel in an appropriate situation.

BLANK FACES, NO COMPREHENSION Stop, backup, and re-explain in a different way. Ask them questions to see where they misunderstood.

AN ARGUMENT BREAKS OUT BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE When people get excited and upset, they get very interested in the subject being argued. If the argument is genuine and not merely a personal issue between two people, encourage the group to think it through. How many think one way and how many the other? Get them thinking. Have them discuss what is the proper manner by which to decide which position is correct (not which person is correct).

ONE WHO KNOWS MORE THAN YOU DO Speak to them privately and humbly admit that you know less about this subject than they do. Enlist their help. Don't be threatened.

FEW COME PREPARED This happens frequently, so prepare two lesson plans, one for if people come prepared and one for if they come unprepared. If the latter, go through the material together and have fun with it. Help them to walk out with a basic understanding of the material and one concrete application.

One more thing, don't hesitate to strongly encourage your group to do the work. Don't use guilt or punishment, but do try to help them understand the value of time in the Word. If they're too busy to do all the work, highlight just a few things for them to do in the packet each week.

BECOMING A DISCIPLE – MAKING GROUP

Our amazing God is always at work drawing people to Himself! We have the privilege to partner with Him in the work He is doing both as individuals and as a group.

DISCIPLE - MAKER TOOLS

Plan to spend time during the Engage section of your meeting to intentionally lead your group through learning and practicing the Disciple-Maker Tools found here: grace-bible.org/disciplemaker

Every Neighbor Map - creating a list of people in your spheres of influence who don't yet know Jesus.

Starting a Spiritual Conversation - how to identify yourself as a spiritual person and transition conversations toward spiritual things.

Sharing Your Story - craft a short and simple testimony of how you came to follow Jesus.

Sharing the Gospel: 3 Circles or The Bridge - learn to verbally explain the basics of the gospel.

Discovery Bible Study - a method for reading the Bible with someone new or unfamiliar with it.

PRAY BIG! For specific people who don't yet know Jesus and for opportunities to share His love in word and deeds.

Here are two more resources available on our Become a Disciple-Maker webpage: grace-bible.org/disciplemaker

Disciple-Maker Quick Start Sheet

This is our concise (two page) overview of Grace's Disciple-Making process.

Disciple-Maker's Guide

This is a fuller explanation of Grace's Disciple-Making process with FAQ's.



ROOTED *Nine Conversations to Establish Your Faith*

Download full study at grace-bible.org/resources

Below is an overview of Rooted and the big ideas in each of the nine conversations.

Target Audience For new believers, for those never grounded, for mature believers to equip them for disciple-making.

Putting Down Roots Introduces the purpose of the book: to establish believers in the foundational theology and practices of following Jesus for a lifetime.

How to use this book Describes ideal meeting format - Connect, Grow, Engage.

Gospel Have you believed in Jesus? - use as a checkpoint to confirm belief in Jesus.

In Christ (*inward*)

1. Identity Who am I?

Topics: Eternal Security, Assurance of Salvation, ask about baptism

Key verses: John 1:12, John 10:27-29, Ephesians 2:8-10, 1 John 5:13

Practice: Identity in Christ - 24 New Testament descriptions of believers

2. Belonging Who are my people?

Topics: The Church - universal and local, Biblical Community, ask about church membership

Key verses: John 13:34-35, Acts 2:44-47, Hebrews 10:23-25

Practices: Reading the Bible, ACTS Prayer Model - teach basics of quiet time with God

3. Purpose Why am I here?

Topics: Imago Dei, Great Commandment, Great Commission

Key verses: 1 Peter 2:21, Romans 12:2, Matthew 22:37-40, Matthew 28:18-20

Practices: Habit Check, Rhythms of Grace - use to assess priorities and establish life rhythms

Love God (*upward*)

4. Trinity What is God like?

Topics: Trinity defined, attributes of Father, Son, Spirit

Key verses: Genesis 1:26, John 1:1, 14, Colossians 2:9, Ephesians 1:13-14

Practice: Solitude + Silence - use to deepen time with God

5. Bible How does God reveal Himself?

Topics: What the Bible is/is not; Jesus and the Bible

Key verses: 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Hebrews 4:12, Psalm 1:1-3

Practice: Discovery Bible Study - beginning to study God's Word

6. Prayer How do I connect with God?

Topics: Praying like a child, praying like Jesus, walking and talking by the Spirit, confession

Key verses: Matthew 11:29, Philippians 4:6-7, Romans 8:26-27, 1 John 1:9

Practice: Lord's Prayer Model - expanding prayer practice

Love People (*outward*)

7. Mission What is God doing in the world?

Topics: Story/worldview, Kingdom of God, metanarrative: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration

Key verses: John 3:16, 2 Corinthians 5:20, Colossians 1:13-20

Practice: Sharing Your Story - how to craft basic testimony of believing in Jesus

8. Gospel How do I introduce people to Jesus?

Topics: Gospel defined, showing and telling the Gospel, partnering with God

Key verses: 1 Corinthians 15:1-5, Matthew 5:14-16, 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, Romans 1:16, John 14:6

Practices: Sharing the Gospel - how to share 3 Circles gospel,

Every Neighbor Map - creating a list of people in your spheres of influence who don't yet know Jesus

9. Design What is my unique contribution?

Topics: Unique context and design, dependence on HS, compassion, courage, gifting

Key verses: Ephesians 3:16, Romans 12:4-6, 1 Peter 4:10-11, Colossians 1:28-29

Practice: Designed to Serve, Spiritual Gifts Survey - use to help identify gifting and potential areas of impact/service

NOTES



We help people find & follow Jesus

