Community Group Leader Guide & Expectations

Leading a community group is a huge honor. God entrusts us with the spiritual care and growth of people within His Church. At Front Range, we believe that life-change only happens within the context of relationships, and we place a huge value on community groups. Community groups at Front Range help people:

- **Build Community:** (*Genesis 1:26, John 17: 21*)
    - God exists in community, and life is better in community. Life change doesn't happen outside the context of relationships with God and others. We are there for each other in good times and bad, we hold each other accountable, and we share our lives together.
- **Discover Purpose:** (*Ephesians 2:10, Matthew 20:26, Luke 10:1-9)*
    - Everyone was created with a purpose and gifts to make a difference, shape the culture around us, and bring glory to God. As we grow in our relationship with Jesus, every area of our lives is transformed and shaped to the image of God. This transformation works itself out in public ways that shape homes, churches, and communities.
- **Grow in Faith:** (*Matthew 28:18-20, Hebrews 10:24-25*)
    - We believe that every follower of Jesus should be growing in their discipleship, which means growing in three areas of their spiritual lives: Biblical Knowledge, Holy Obedience, and Spiritual Intimacy.
    - Leaders can choose their own studies to help people connect with the Bible or use a resource like RightNowMedia.org. Studies with reproducible materials can be purchased by Front Range and used for multiple groups.
    - A natural growth of making disciples is multiplying a group to make room for more growth and connection for more people. Leaders develop leaders to take over or start new groups.

Quick Start to Leading a Group

<u>Before launching a group:</u>

1. **PRAY!**
    a. Pray for people to join and continue to pray for the people who attend regularly
    b. Pray for God to work in your group and through your group
2. **Invite people to your Group & Follow up!**
    a. Think through who you can invite. (family, coworkers, friends at church, etc…) What's your target demographic and who do you know that is not already involved in a community group?
    b. After initially inviting them, follow up by phone, email or text
3. **Create a welcoming environment**
    a. Clean up, but your home doesn't have to be perfect
    b. Make space for seating
    c. Don't assume everyone is a Christian or has been in a group before

    d. People matter more than the curriculum, so make space for God-interruptions and moments of real life.
4. **Think through ways to break the ice before your group starts**
    a. Look up some fun icebreaker games to get to know each other, or questions you can ask to get to know people. Examples: https://www.smallgroups.com/meeting-builder/icebreakers/
5. **You don't have to know all the answers!**
    a. Sometimes it's ok to say "I don't know" and follow up later.
    b. Don't be afraid of some silence after asking questions. People need time to think.
    c. Facilitate by asking open ended questions.

Training and Tips

The best training and preparation we've found has been provided by Northpoint Church at https://groupleaders.org/new-leader-training. These resources are amazingly helpful and we highly recommend you spend time going through them!

With these videos and some of our specific suggestions below, along with any help you may need from our pastoral staff, we believe you can get started on the right path to launching a healthy group. Reach out to JonnySharp@frontrange.org if you have any questions or need any help.

Meeting Locations

- Ideally, community groups meet in homes or coffee shops. A home environment allows people into the real life of each member. A home setting also allows people to let their guard down, relax, and open up about what's really going on.
- Many groups rotate homes throughout the members. It may be helpful to include a meal in your group time, and one option is for the host home to provide the main meal while other members bring other courses to compliment.

Sample Meeting Format – Connect, Learn, Apply, Pray

- Opening of the group/starting with a meal or snack
- Ice breaker questions
- Highs and Lows (usually over dinner to get conversation started)
- Transition to the study (Kitchen to Living Room)
- Study and Discussion
- Prayer Requests and Prayer to close

Meals:
Meals can be important because people relax and open up when there's food in front of them. This helps create a sense of community, and who doesn't want to come back to group when food is involved! **If your group meeting is over a meal time, it would be unhospitable and unwise to skip food!** Here are a few different options for how this could work:

- The host plans the entire meal
- The host plans the main dish and other member supplement with sides and drinks
- Desserts only
- No meal and people eat before or after the meting

Ice Breakers

- Ice breakers don't have to be as cheesy as they sound. An ice breaker can be any question or discussion topic that will get people more comfortable while also revealing something interesting about them that's below the surface level.
    - One of my favorite ice breakers is to ask people their favorite movie. I love movies and feel like I can learn a lot from this question. You can easily Google questions and find a ton of them, and sometimes you can even relate the ice breaker to your discussion later in the meeting.

Highs and Lows

- What this means is that each person shares 1 "high" from their week (or since the last meeting) and 1 "low." We've found that this discussion, usually over dinner, can really lead to creating authentic community as people share what's really going on in their lives.
- The hardest part about Highs and Lows is…ending Highs and Lows. People usually love to talk about themselves, so this time can often go forever. It may be helpful to put a **time limit** on this part of your group, otherwise you'll never get to your study! It can also be helpful to remind the group that you only need 1 high and low, and that they have 2-3 minutes to share. If you have 10 people in your group, that's 20-30 minutes (which is why it's best to do this over the meal)!

Study and Discussion

- This is arguably where the real meat of a community group lies. This is the opportunity to study God's Word and apply it to our lives.
- Groups can study a wide variety of topics and use many different formats.
    - One of the most popular is to use video studies from **Right Now Media**. This is an easy way to offload the teaching portion of the group and allow a leader to facilitate discussion afterwards. This is a great tool with teachings from gifted communicators and is very easy to use with access to an Internet connection and a computer or television. Email JonnySharp@frontrange.org for an account.
    - We also write and post message discussion guides to every series hub, which you can find at www.frontrange.org
- Many studies come with study guides and discussion questions provided. These are often excellent ways to facilitate a group. Usually, these studies will provide you with way more options and questions than you will have time for, so it's best to spend some time ahead of the group to comb through the options and come up with a discussion plan that you believe will work best for your group.
- One of the greatest ways to lead a community group discussion is to **avoid answering the questions first**. If you have all the answers or always talk first, it can stifle the discussion and not allow other people to offer their opinions and

thoughts. A great way to lead a discussion is to lean on this question: "What do you think?" You can ask this to the group or an individual, but it's a great way to help people open up and start talking. Be okay with silence. It gives the group time to think and lets them know you are going to wait until someone else speaks.

- Here's another way to think about it: **Consider Silence to be a member of your group.** When it's silent, you're letting silence have it's turn to "speak," and that's okay!

Prayer Requests and Prayer

- Use the Church Center App to help track attendance and prayer requests for your group. This will also allow you to send an email to your members with the prayer requests attached.
- It may be helpful to attach a time limit to prayer requests, just like Highs and Lows.
- Take all of the requests from your group and you can pray for them, or a great way to help develop another leader is to have them pray. You can also have people take turns each week praying if you'd like.

Multiplying Your Group

Groups grow as people see healthy growth and community. It's natural to feel the tension of having "too many" people in a group when you're large enough that it's hard for everyone to contribute to the discussion, or when you have lots of kids in the group. Multiplication allows for 2 things to happen:

1. Your group continues a healthy rhythm of disciple-making and growth
2. More people in the community have the opportunity to get involved in groups when we multiply and make room.

Here's a simple process for developing a leader to take over or start a new group:

1. I do. You watch. We talk.
2. I do. You help. We talk.
3. You do. I help. We talk.
4. You do. I watch. We talk.
5. You do. Someone else watches.

What happens when we talk? That's where the training really occurs! We talk through these questions:

1. What did you observe?
2. How did this step make you feel?
3. What could be done better or differently next time?
4. What can I do to help you successfully lead through the next step?
5. How can I pray for you?