

DECIDE

TO

THRIVE

SIX CHOICES FOR LIFE CHANGE
THAT *REALLY* WORK

SMALL GROUP
LEADER HANDBOOK

Outline of Each Small Group Session

Each week will begin with a video lesson, followed by a discussion. **A free Small Group Guide is available with space to take notes during weekend services, the small group video lesson, and the discussion. These free guides will be available at each NorthRock location, and a digital version is available on our website www.northrocksa.com/decidetothrive.**

Questions? Email nextsteps@northrocksa.com.

HOW TO LEAD A GROUP:

To register your group and to learn more about Decide to Thrive Leader Training, visit northrocksa.com/decidetothrive.

Each small group consists of the following:

STEP 1: Connect

Take the first 5–10 minutes to connect with your group. Give your group an opportunity to build relationships with each other and see how their week went.

STEP 2: Video Lesson

Play Pastor Jonathan's video lesson for the week. Videos can be found at www.northrocksa.com/decidetothrive. Participants can follow along with the video teaching and take notes utilizing the *Decide to Thrive Small Group Guide* or their own personal notebook.

STEP 3: Discussion

The *Decide to Thrive Small Group Guide* offers reflection questions for discussion.

STEP 4: Act

The book includes a weekly action step. Have your group write down what action step they want to take for the week.

STEP 5: Pray

Pray at the end of each group. There is space in the *Small Group Guide* for your group to write down prayer requests. It might be a good idea to have a different person in the group pray each week.

Small Group Guidelines

It is a good idea to begin the small group with clear guidelines and expectations. These guidelines will help each person understand the group's goals and lay a foundation for a healthy group experience. Please take a few moments during the first meeting to review the following guidelines with your group.

COMMUNITY: We grow spiritually and relationally in the context of a small group community.

ATTENDANCE: We commit to attend the group each week.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT: We create a safe, non-judgmental place for people to come and experience the love of God.

CONFIDENTIALITY: We keep everything shared in the group—in the group.

INVITE OTHERS: We invite friends and new people to the group and warmly welcome newcomers.

USE WISDOM: We commit to using wisdom by not serving or consuming alcohol during small group meetings to avoid causing a brother or sister to stumble spiritually. Be sensitive to others' spiritual conscience. (See 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Romans 14:19-21.)

SHARED OWNERSHIP: We create opportunities for each attendee to share a small team role or responsibility over the course of the study.

Leader Tips

- You may want to provide name tags for the first meeting.
- Open your group with a brief, simple prayer. Invite God to open your spiritual eyes and to give you insight as you study. You can pray for specific requests at the end of the meeting, or stop momentarily to pray if a particular situation comes up during your discussion.
- After the opening prayer, review the small group guidelines with the entire group. To lay the foundation for a healthy small group experience, it's a good idea to begin the first session with clear guidelines and expectations.
- Next, get contact information from every person in the group. Start a group message if you'd like so that everyone can connect throughout the week.
- Take attendance by using the email sent to your inbox or through your Rock group profile.

Plan to rotate who leads the group discussion after the first week. Studies have shown that healthy groups share the load. This helps to develop every member's ability to lead a few people in a safe environment. Jesus consistently gave others the opportunity to serve alongside Him. (See Mark 6:30-44.)

Leader Tips (continued)

- **YOU ARE NOT ALONE.** God knows everything about you and called you to lead. Even great leaders like Moses and Timothy felt unprepared. But remember God's promise: "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).
- **PRAY FOR YOUR GROUP MEMBERS BY NAME.** Before each session, pray individually for each member, considering their needs. Review the prayer list weekly, and be open to God's direction on who to encourage or challenge.
- **PREPARE FOR YOUR MEETING AHEAD OF TIME.** Review the session materials and write down your responses. Go over the "Outline for Each Session" to stay clear on each section's purpose.
- **DO NOT TRY TO DO IT ALONE.** Pray for God's help in building a strong team. Involve others by asking them to help, and consider finding a co-leader for a richer experience.
- **WHEN YOU ASK A QUESTION, BE PATIENT.** Give time for responses, allowing moments of silence. Affirm responses with simple encouragement and invite others to share, especially newcomers.
- **ALLOW YOUR EMERGING LEADER(S) TO FACILITATE.** Encourage emerging leaders to lead sessions, giving them support and advance notice. This helps them grow in their gifts and build their confidence.
- **JUST BE YOU.** Lead in a way that reflects your unique personality and gifts. Be open about mistakes and be yourself—your group will appreciate your authenticity.
- **BREAK UP INTO SMALLER GROUPS TO FACILITATE CONNECTION.** If the group is large, divide into smaller circles for discussion and prayer. This helps quieter members engage and creates a more personal environment for sharing.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who should I invite?

- Invite your coworkers, parents from your child's sports or school events, your running club, people you know from church or the gym, post on social media, etc.

Where can I lead the group?

- Meet at your house or ask other group members if they will host the group at their home.
- Hold your group at church, coffee shops, your workplace, etc.
- Lead a group online using Zoom, Hangouts, Skype, or other apps.

What if my schedule is inconsistent?

- Plan your meeting dates and times in advance to share with your invitees.
- Ask someone to co-lead with you. Your co-leader can lead the meetings you can't attend.
- Lead an online group. You can keep your meeting times even when you travel.

How can I encourage others to lead a group?

- Identify people in your group who are ready to lead their own group. Encourage them to step out for the six-week *Decide to Thrive* study.
- Ask emerging leaders to co-lead together.
- Turn your group over to the emerging leader, and start another group after the series.
- Remind small group members of the opportunity to reach family, friends, and co-workers.
- Emerging leaders can still participate with your group while leading their own group.