

GRACE GROUP LEADER MANUAL

2023



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VISION FOR GROUPS AT GRACE

Grace Fellowship is not a church *with* groups; we are a church *of* groups! The goal of Grace is to help people live Jesus-Centered lives! We want as many people as possible to Meet Jesus, Follow His Ways, and Share Him with the world. Groups are one of the most important tools our church has in accomplishing this goal!

Grace Groups are not simply a gimmick or fashionable church trend. From the very beginning of Christianity, groups were central to the life of churches.

Acts 2:42-47 (NIV) 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 **All the believers were together** and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread **in their homes** and **ate together** with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

OUR GROUP MODEL FOR GRACE GROUPS

While every group is a little different, the hope is that Grace Groups would provide *shepherding*, *discipleship*, and *community*. Grace Groups are focused on using group time to create discussions where group members share vulnerably and learn collaboratively, rather than “teach” a Bible study or listen to another sermon. Our hope is that groups will utilize a *Team Leadership Model* where the *4 Core Competencies* of group leadership are effectively executed. Grace Groups meet throughout the school year and can be coed with single or married people. They can also be gender-specific.

**For more information on the core competencies of group leadership, review the Building A Team to Lead Group handout.*



DISTINCTIVES OF GRACE GROUP FORMAT

Grace offers a lot of groups. Grace Group sessions and a leader's energy should be equally distributed between *Shepherding*, *Discipleship*, and *Community*. This breaks down as follows:

33.3% Shepherding - Care for people as they walk through life and deal with its challenges.

33.3% Discipleship - Coach people to grow and take their next step spiritually.

33.3% Social/Relational - Help people connect relationally with others who call Grace home.

Grace Groups also focus on two important group functions.

1. **Action Step.** Groups should discuss how the action step from the previous weekend's message has gone. Even if you are doing a different study, always check in on the weekend message's action step.
2. **Application.** Whatever content you choose as a group leader, make sure you focus not only on teaching theology, but also practical application for how to live a Jesus-centered life.

PHILOSOPHY OF GRACE GROUPS

There are three important elements of our Group Philosophy. These three ingredients are crucial for creating healthy and effective Grace Groups.

Discussion Format - We don't want people to sit back and passively consume content. We want them to actively participate and engage in conversation during group time. Focus on engaging people where they really are regardless of their spiritual background or maturity. Leaders should refrain from always giving the answer and leading people to discover the truth through participation.

In Homes - The goal of groups is to be in people's homes as much as possible. This kind of relational environment helps produce the best outcomes in the group. There are seasons where the size of a living room might not work for the group size. In the event that a group can't meet in a home, a church facility can be an appropriate backup.

Spiritual Friendships - While everyone in the group might not be best friends, our hope is that meaningful spiritual friendships will be formed. These relationships are where people can do life together and can count on one another when life is hard. Rather than having friendships simply around hobbies and stages of life, we want friendships built around following Jesus together.



WHY TEAM LEADERSHIP?

Group leadership is not a solo sport! The best groups have a team of people that help pull off group life! The most effective Grace Groups are the ones that have given away meaningful ownership of group responsibilities to multiple people in the group. This is different for each group. There are a couple of important reasons why we want every Grace Group to be led by a team of people.

1. **Group Ownership** - The more people own the success and health of a group, the more likely people will engage in the group faithfully and regularly.
2. **Group Effectiveness** - The more leaders invest in the group, the more people grow spiritually.
3. **Leader Longevity** - The more people that carry the load of leadership, the longer leaders last!
4. **Leadership Multiplication** - Team leadership is easier to recruit new leaders to than recruiting an apprentice leader to start their own group. Groups with teams of leaders also have much better outcomes when they multiply because of growth.

WINNING AS A GROUP LEADER

5 LEVELS OF GROUP EFFECTIVENESS

Every group will function at some level of effectiveness. There are 5 Levels of Effectiveness that groups can achieve.

1. **Hosting Group** - gather people together in a comfortable environment where they can engage and connect with one another.
2. **Teaching Group** - a productive group session where content is clearly and applicably communicated. The flow of conversation is often centered around people interacting with the content presenter.
3. **Discussion Group** - an environment where people engage with, learn from, and share vulnerably with the other members of the group during the discussion time rather than just the teacher.
4. **Coaching Group** - help people in the group consistently identify and take the next steps in their spiritual growth.
5. **Discipling Group** - a community of people that provide high-level shepherding for those in their group and produces disciples who disciple others.



Grace's long-term kingdom impact is directly linked to our ability as a church to have as many level 5 groups as possible. You are winning as a group leader when you and your group are taking next steps toward becoming Level 5.

Here are three simple ways to gauge if you and your group are heading in the right direction:

1. **Maturing** - Are the people in your group taking their next steps toward becoming mature disciples?
2. **Connecting** - Are the people in your group connecting to one another and to Grace Fellowship as a whole?
3. **Caring** - Are the people in your group working to meet the needs of group members who are hurting, discouraged, or going through a trial?

**For a more detailed picture of what a mature disciple looks like, please reference Grace's Discipleship Profile.*

WHAT ARE YOU COMMITTING TO AS A GROUP LEADER?

Grace Group leaders are making a high level of commitment for one year to do the following:

1. **Weekly Prep** - Plan to spend 30-60 minutes each week preparing for group discussions with a lead-learner mindset. This includes prayer, reflection, reviewing that week's message, discussion planning, and question writing.
2. **Ongoing Shepherding** - Regularly meet with the people in your group for dinners, coffee, church events, breakfast, and fun. Also, regularly pray with and for the people in your group.
3. **Ongoing Training** - Complete occasional online training and/or in-person training assigned by your campus ministry leader.
4. **Semi-Annual Training Events** - Attend the fall and winter group leader training events.
5. **Model Partnership** - Be a Partner and faithfully model Partner-level commitment to your group. When it comes to church-wide initiatives, champion unity and support.
6. **Models a 5-Star Volunteer** - Exemplifies a 5-Star Volunteer while serving as a group leader.
7. **Group Development Plan** - Work with your campus ministry leader to create a development plan for yourself as a leader and your group as a whole.
8. **Caring For Group Members** - Coordinate with staff and your group leadership team to care for group members as needs arise.
9. **Be Discipleship-Minded** - Take personal ownership of the spiritual well-being of group members. As a group leader, you do so much more than "teach a Bible study."
10. **Taking Attendance** - Take five minutes each week to complete group attendance. Grace's attendance tool is a crucial part of our church's ability to measure someone's growth and engagement.



USING GRACE FELLOWSHIP TOOLS & SYSTEMS

Grace is a big church. We have hundreds of groups and thousands of people who participate in them. Systems are an important way we make sure we care for and keep people from falling through the cracks. Our systems help us spot when a group needs help, when families are in crisis, when Christians are drifting, and so much more. The following are important systems and tools we use at Grace:

GROUP LEADER RESOURCE PAGE

You will find Message Guides, important information, announcements, and resources for your group on Grace's website at www.gracefellowship.cc/groupresources. Make sure to check in weekly as you prepare for your group, even if your group is not using the Message Guide. It is the best place to stay up-to-date on information pertinent to your leadership.

FILLING GROUPS

There are two primary ways you can fill your group with people.

1. **Networking.** As you and people in a group meet others at Grace, extend invitations for people to join your group. If your group has openings, utilize your time at a weekend service to seek out and connect with new and unconnected people. *This is the best way to fill your group.*
2. **Group Launches.** Twice a year, Grace creates a coordinated campaign to promote groups in our church. During these seasons, the staff will connect you with people at Grace looking for a group.

YGC - YOUR GRACE CHURCH

YGC is our church's database. It manages your group calendar as well as your group roster. You use this tool to track the attendance of people in your group. This is a critical part of being a group leader. By collecting attendance, you ensure that a dozen other tools that help care for people can function. While boring, it is not an exaggeration to say that this is one of the most critical weekly tasks you do as a leader. You can manage your roster and attendance through the LEAD app from your phone.

RIGHT NOW MEDIA

This resource is paid for by Grace for you as a group leader to use. It is filled with hundreds of video studies for your consideration. It also has information related to leadership development and training.

RIGHT NOW MEDIA ONLINE TRAINING

This is an ongoing online tool for training leaders. You can log in to complete your training as a new leader or for ongoing training that we hope all leaders at Grace will participate in.



SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

All listed materials can be provided upon request or found on the group leader resource page at www.gracefellowship.cc/groupresources.

- Checklist For Launching Group
- Grace Fellowship Discipleship Profile
- 5 Levels Of Group Effectiveness
- How To Lead A Great Group Discussion
- Best Practices For Child Care
- You Can Count On Me (Group Covenant)
- Building A Team to Lead Group
- Dealing with Difficult Participants
- Developing An Apprentice/New Leader
- Setting Up & Using CCB
- R Factor Discipleship Cheat Sheet
- R Factor Discipleship Worksheet
- R Factor Discipleship Curriculum
- Signing Up & Using Right Now Media

