

PATHWAYS

DISCIPLESHIP FOR SMALL GROUPS

Setting Up Your Small Group

Groups should have at least four, but no more than twelve members. Ideally strive for eight to ten members. In our congregation, we simply assigned people to their groups, but others, depending on their culture and congregation dynamics, may choose other ways in which to form their groups.

Group Leaders: While it's helpful to assign a leader, leadership can also rotate from one member to another each time the group meets. If no one in your group wants the responsibility of leading all the time, the rotating method might work well. The primary responsibility of leaders is to simply organize the meeting time/place and facilitate the discussion. The video element takes care of the teaching for you so no one is expected to "teach" in this setting. Most of the time there will not need to be a lesson prep, but every once in a while some items/materials may be necessary for the exercises.

Determine where and when you will meet: Given many of the lessons require quiet, contemplative time, we do not recommend using a public setting such as a restaurant or coffee shop. (Now keep in mind, we recognize that some congregations have seasonal members. Don't rule out the idea of meeting virtually via zoom or through some other video conference software). Once you get past the introductory portion, you may choose to change that depending on the focus of your group, but initially finding somewhere quiet where you can easily talk, pray, and concentrate will be important. We recommend an hour and a half, but realize groups may need to make theirs longer or shorter depending on how they set their groups up. Perhaps your group would like to meet for dinner prior to or after the lesson. Maybe rotate from one home to another each time you meet. Will it be weekly or monthly? Perhaps you are activity focused and your group all likes to go kayaking before or after your meet. These are all things you can determine as a group.

Finding Your Purpose: At the end of these sessions our hope is that your group can find a common interest or passion within your group to focus on: Prayer group, study group, service group, fellowship group, etc. While the introductory lessons will be the same for all group types, as you become more focused on what you hope to accomplish with your group, you can tailor the types of lessons or activities you want to "specialize" in. More content and modules that will delve more deeply into Bible Study, etc. will be added to the Pathways program over time.

Now it's quite possible that through this process, your group may decide that you're not all united in a vision and will want to break off and form a separate group. That's absolutely fine. The primary point is to find out where you connect with the congregation as a whole. At the end, you will meet with your pastor and may discover you fit better with another small group that shares your passions that may have been previously unknown.

Be committed. Part of becoming a disciple of Jesus is committing yourself to the discipline. If you haven't quite been able to commit to a daily spiritual practice, start by at least committing to making meeting with your group at the appointed time a priority rather than an afterthought or if you have nothing better to do that day. We've included a covenant that may be printed out that you and the members of your group can sign as a symbol of your commitment to each other as a group to learn and grow together in faith. Now your group may not choose to meet indefinitely and will only be set up for a specific amount of time. That's fine as well.

How to Use The Study Guides with Each Lesson

Each lesson will have a similar format:

- centering moment (you may adapt as necessary for your particular small group);
- scripture reading
- reflection on the reading
- an opening prayer & if desired singing of a hymn
- a review of the previous week and discussion about the individual work (where appropriate);
- a video lesson;
- a group exercise;
- closing prayer;
- exercises to work on individually throughout the week.

You may work at your own pace. Some groups may work faster, others slower, depending on how frequently you choose to meet.

We recommend watching the videos together as a group, but if your group does not have a lot of time together, they may also be watched individually prior to your group meeting if you wish to use your time together solely to discuss the week's lesson. We recommend an hour and a half for each meeting, but if you can only find time for one hour at each meeting, then perhaps watching the videos on your own time before you meet would work best for your group. You can decide that at your first meeting together.

If you are not participating in a small group and would still like to use this resource on your own, you of course are welcome to do so, though we strongly encourage the group dynamic as others tend to give us insights into areas we might not necessarily go on our own. Everyone's faith journey is their own that is shaped by their life experiences and encounters with the divine. These experiences are of course unique, and yet many times we find that our own experiences have shared elements and commonalities with the experiences of others.

Jesus reminds us that wherever two or more are gathered in His name, He is present and group settings offer us an encounter with the Holy Spirit that helps open up and broaden our views and perspectives that we might not otherwise contemplate individually.

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SUGGESTED SESSION ORDER

Introductory Session

Module 1: Prayer

Session 1: Why We Pray

Session 2: Impediments to Prayer

Session 3: Spiritual Types

Session 4: Prayers of Petition & Intercession

Session 5: Praying the Psalms

Session 6: Contemplative Prayer

Module 2: Bible Study

Session 1: Introduction to Bible Study

Session 2: Historical Study

Session 3: Literary Study

Session 4: Theological Study

Session 5: Formational Forms of Study

Session 6: Meditative Study

Session 7: Directing Imagination

Module 3: Service

Session 1: Discerning Your Gifts

Session 2: Being Christ in the World

Session 3: Your Calling

Small Group Covenant

Knowing that God calls me to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, I desire to practice the following disciplines in order that I might know God's love, forgiveness, grace, guidance, and strength. I desire to transform my life so that God's will becomes my will. I desire to bear fruit for the Kingdom of God.

Therefore, I will...

COMMIT—I will commit to meeting with my small group on a regular basis.

WORSHIP—I will worship regularly by attending weekend services either in person or online at least once a month.

DEVOTION—Take time to meditate and pray each day by doing one or more of the following:

- remember each member of this group in my prayers
- read scripture or a passage from a Christian devotional each day.
- take time for silent reflection
- pay attention to God's presence, promptings and warnings in all aspects of my daily life

JUSTICE—I will seek to be an agent of God's justice and reconciliation in the world by:

- upholding human dignity
- speaking out or acting to alleviate injustice wherever I see it
- practicing responsible stewardship of the world's resources in the context of my personal life and community commitments.

COMPASSION—I will practice love for all people:

- including self, family, friends, colleagues
- including my enemies and strangers

I make this covenant, trusting God's grace to work in me, giving me the strength to keep it. Whenever I may fail in my efforts, I will trust God's grace to forgive me and sustain me.

Name

Signature

Date