



Group Leader Playbook

2022

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The Mission of ECC Groups

The Mission of Eagle Christian Church:

To **reach** people with the gospel, **teach** them to be disciples of Jesus, **equip** them to serve the kingdom of Jesus, and **send** them to reach others with the gospel.

The Mission of ECC Small Group Ministry:

To be a community where people can **become followers** of Jesus, **be transformed** by Jesus, and **be on mission** with Jesus.

Matthew 4:19 – And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

A Disciple Follows Jesus – We Will Reach the Lost

Matthew 28:19 – Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 – All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Luke 19:10 – For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

A Disciple is Being Transformed by Jesus – We Will Teach and Equip Believers

Matthew 28:20 – teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

Ephesians 4:11-13 – And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Colossians 1:28-29 – Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may **present everyone mature in Christ**. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

A Disciple Joins the Mission of Christ – We Will Send Believers to Reach Others

John 20:21 – Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.

2 Timothy 2:1-2 – You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

The Vision of ECC Groups

To connect people with God and with other people, to help fulfill the mission of ECC.

Ephesians 4:1-3 – I therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

1 Peter 4:8-10 – Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace ...

ECC Groups are...

A Place to Find Freedom.

Galatians 5:1 – It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.

Groups are a place you can grow with others to become more like Jesus and find the freedom God has for you.

A Place to Connect.

1 Corinthians 27:17 – Yes, whatever a person is like, I try to find common ground with him so that he will let me tell him about Christ and let Christ save him.

We were not made to do life alone. God created us for community and ECC Groups provide a place to connect with others, share life, and grow in faith together.

A Place to Grow.

Proverbs 27:17 – As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

We believe every person is created with God-given potential to make a difference in the world. It is our role in ECC Groups to help people take their next step!

ECC Groups are not a place for...

- Business
- Starting a separate church
- Unapproved materials or speakers
- Controversial topics not relevant to the discussion

The Values of ECC Groups

1. Abide in Christ

Every person at ECC will have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that impacts their relationship with the church, home, and the world.

2. Reach the Lost

Every person at ECC can and will share their faith with those who do not know Jesus. We will celebrate what God has done when people confess Christ as Lord of their life.

3. Connect the Unconnected

Every person is connected to Jesus and His Church as they consistently worship together on the weekends. They are connected in intentional relational environments for the purpose of becoming a disciple of Jesus.

4. Chase the Strays

Every person who has strayed from Christ will be valued, noticed, and pursued.
(Example: not showing up to group or weekend service)

5. Shepherd Toward Spiritual Maturity

We want to know where our people are spiritually and design trainings and intentional personal time with them on their journey towards spiritual parenthood and leadership.

6. Identify, Equip, and Release Leaders

We will fulfill the command in Ephesians 4 to equip all God's people for service and release them to be and do all God has for them.

7. Be a Team Player

Jesus called us to unity (John 17), and we will function and work as a team unified in Christ and in submission to God's plan as a church.

The Goals of ECC Small Groups

Personal Goal: To become more like Jesus

Colossians 1:28 – Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

Church Goal: To become more like God's Kingdom

Matthew 4:17 – From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matthew 6:10 – Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The Components of ECC Groups

A Biblical Foundation

The Bible alone gives a clear and complete picture of what God wants done (His mission) and how He wants it done (His methods). The following three key components of a disciple-maker are built on a biblical foundation. These are applied as we lead in our HOME, GROUP, and CHURCH.

Sermon Discussion and Reflection

ECC features strong biblical preaching. ECC Small Groups leverage that preaching by producing and using what we call a “Discussion Guide.” Each week’s Discussion Guide uses the text of that week’s sermon to facilitate a collaborative study emphasizing personal application. The groups which use this enable and encourage their members to understand God’s word more deeply, and to apply it to their everyday lives.

Acts 2:46 – And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.

An Intentional Leader

An intentional leader understands that part of their role is to reach the lost, make disciples of Jesus, and create Christ-centered environments where disciple-making can happen. They understand where a person is spiritually and what is needed to help them grow.

(See below, “The Stages of Spiritual Growth”)

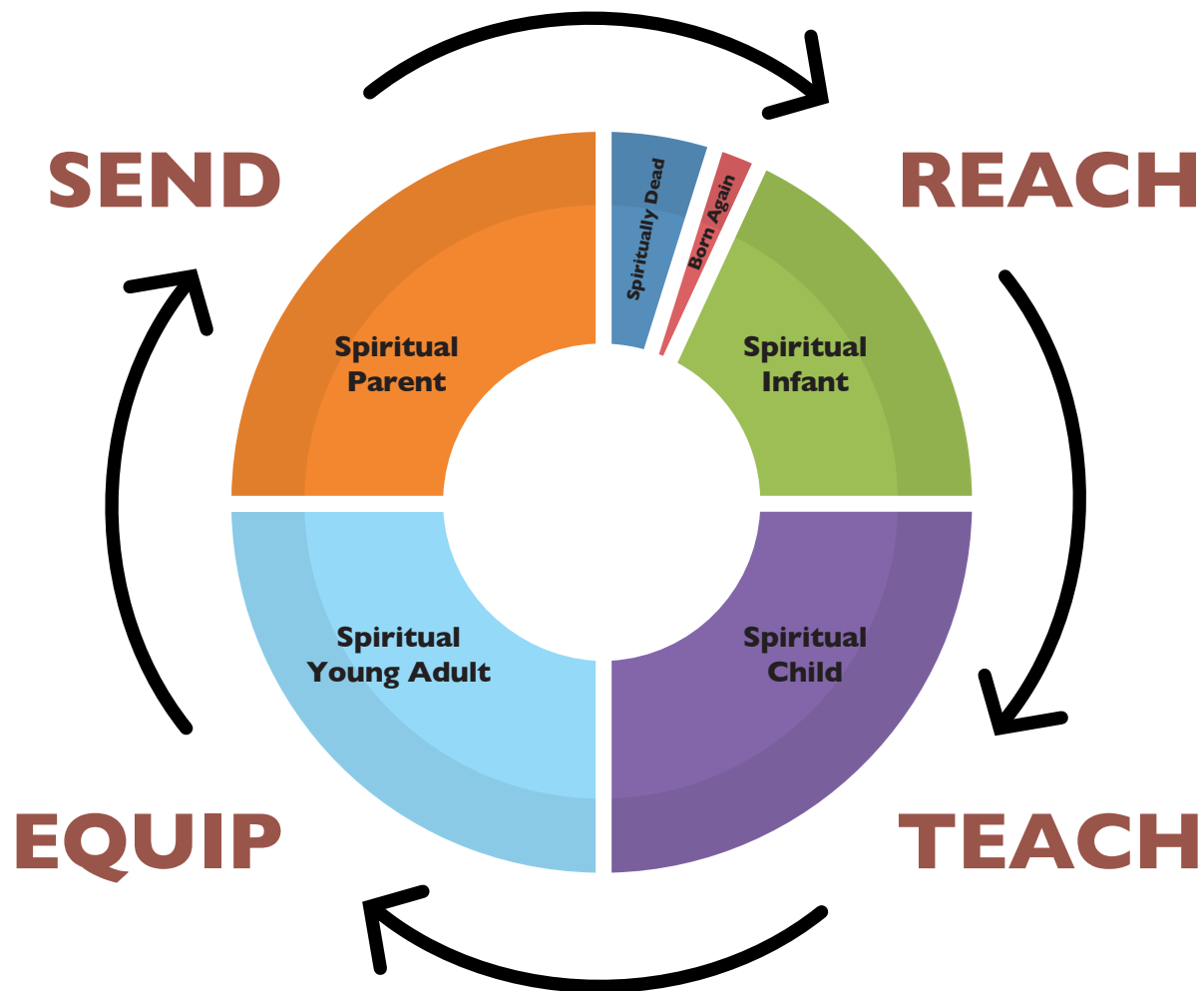
A Relational Environment

We believe in the biblical foundation that we are designed to be in relationship with God first and foremost, and secondly, we are designed to be in relationship with others. This is a group of 3-18 people facilitated by a leader who is intentionally modeling spiritual fruit (love, joy, etc.). The people involved are doing life together with a kingdom mindset. The relationships go beyond just the group time. They move from strangers to friendship. These relationships press into areas of privacy, transparency, and vulnerability.

(See below, “ECC Group Guidelines”)

An Intentional Leader

The Discipleship Process



The Stages of Spiritual Growth

There is a process to spiritual maturity. This process can be seen as a journey, similar to our journey of life. It starts with new birth, and moves through stages until one becomes a spiritual parent. The stages described below are designed to help leaders know where people are spiritually so they can know better how to lead them in the next phase of their journey. They are not designed to label people or put them in a box. We have included some sample “listening clues” – what people in each stage might say.

Spiritually Dead

Ephesians 2:1-5 – And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

People in this stage have not yet accepted Christ as Lord and Savior. They may reject God, they may be seeking God, they may be spiritual, they may claim to know God, they may even self-identify as Christian, but, in reality, they have not received the life Jesus offers.

Listening clues:

- “I don’t believe there is a God.”
- “There can’t be just one way to Heaven – there are many ways to God.”
- “I’ve been a good person – God will accept me.”
- “I’m spiritual, but I don’t connect with any religion.”

Spiritual Infant

1 Peter 2:2-3 – Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

People in this stage have accepted Christ, but have not yet moved much past that point. They may be new believers or they may be long-term Christians whose growth has stagnated. They will tend to have a self-centered approach to life. They tend to focus on their needs and expect others to take care of them.

Listening clues:

- “What is the Bible about? Church? Tithing? Prayer? Communion? Etc”
- “Why are there so many churches, if we all follow Jesus?”
- “Why do we gather every week?”
- “I messed up; is God angry with me?”

Spiritual Child

1 Thessalonians 2:10-12 – You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

People in this stage are growing in their relationship with God and are also beginning to grow in their relationship with other Christians. They are applying God's Word in their life and allowing others to walk beside them in their journey following Christ. They are still maturing, and they can fall back into self-centeredness.

Listening Clues:

- "Please don't break up my small group. We won't be with our friends."
- "No one said "hello" to me at church."
- "This church is getting too big. Who are all these new people?"
- "I like different music than what we have been singing."

Spiritual Young Adult

Philippians 2:3-4 – Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

People in this stage are making a shift from being self-centered to being God-centered and other-centered. They're beginning to understand their role as a servant, rather than a consumer. They spend more time ministering to others, and often put others first. They are becoming doers of the Word.

Listening Clues:

- "In my devotions I came across something that I have a question about."
- "_____ and _____ missed group this week. I'll call on them and see how they're doing."
- "I see my service to the Lord as _____."
- "I think our Small Group should do a service project."

Spiritual Parent

1 Thessalonians 2:10-12 – You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

People in this stage have a solid understanding of God's Word and a deep, abiding relationship with the Father. They are living out God's Word in their daily life. They are God dependent and other-centered. They are able to reproduce mature disciples of Jesus by inviting others to follow them as they follow Christ.

Listening Clues:

- "I'm serving at church; however, I am also discipling my kids at home."
- "I am amazed at ____; when we started he was brand new in his journey with Christ. Now I'm learning things from him."
- "Who will be my apprentice in this Small Group? I'm committing to fast and pray about three names."
- "I need the fellowship of mature believers from time to time to reenergize me spiritually and relationally."

A Relational Environment: Small Group Guidelines

Relational environments which enable and encourage spiritual growth must be intentional. To help people participate in a process of relational discipleship, ECC Small Group has published a set of Small Group Guidelines. These guidelines remind members of the purpose of their time together, and encourage positive behaviors that will help achieve those purposes. We encourage our leaders to share these guidelines with their groups on a regular basis.

The Purpose of Small Groups

God created us to live in community with others and only then can we experience the full life He intends for us (Genesis 2:18, Galatians 6:2). We believe life change happens in the context of relationships. Meaningful relationships can be hard to find, and ECC Groups exist to make life-changing relationships relevant and accessible to you and to the people around you. Our Aim:

Do life together – We were not made to do life alone. God created us for community and ECC Groups provide a place to connect with others, share life, and grow in faith together.

Apply God's Word to our lives – We learn in rows but grow in circles. ECC Groups will circle around God's Word and discuss its truth and meaning and how we can apply it to our lives today. There is no transformation without application.

Support one another – We will take time to take care of one another. This care will take many forms, such as prayer, encouragement, listening, challenging one another, and meeting real needs.

Serve together – We will explore our gifting as individuals and as a group, and look for opportunities to serve. Together, we can make a difference in our church and in our community.

The Safety of Small Groups

ECC Groups will be a safe place where people can be real, open and honest with their struggles and victories as they follow Jesus. ECC Groups Guidelines

Confidential – What is shared in a group stays in the group. We do not share outside the group without the permission of the one who shared.

Collaborative – Everyone has an opportunity to share. No one is allowed to dominate. WE discourage side-talk and encourage active listening. Respect one another and give your attention to the one sharing.

Transformative – We walk alongside each other as we work through our struggles and celebrate our victories. We do not fix or rescue each other; that is the work of the Holy Spirit. Unsolicited advice makes the one who shared feel unheard.

Authentic – We encourage people to make “I” statements and to avoid “we” or “they” statements. This helps people to be more authentic and transparent.

Aligned – All our groups are aligned with the vision and mission of Eagle Christian Church, and come under the direction, resourcing, authority and protection of ECC’s elders and pastors.

How to Facilitate a Discussion

The Four Questions

- What do we learn about God in this passage?
- What do we learn about humankind in this passage?
- Where do you see Jesus in this passage?
- What do you learn about yourself in this passage?

Preparation

- Be familiar with the lesson
- Make sure that you've spent time thinking and praying about what you'll be discussing.
- Think through important questions and transitions ahead of time.
- Don't depend on your notes but use them to stay on track.
- If you need to look at your notes do it before the next question so you can make eye contact when asking the questions.

Discussion Time

- Avoid asking yes/no questions.
- Lead a discussion – don't preach or teach.
- Allow them to discover the truth for themselves, guiding them as necessary.
- When a person has a question, give other people the opportunity to answer it before you jump in with a response but be prepared to clarify their responses if needed.

Participation

- Ask people who may not be talking to share their thoughts
- Affirm their responses

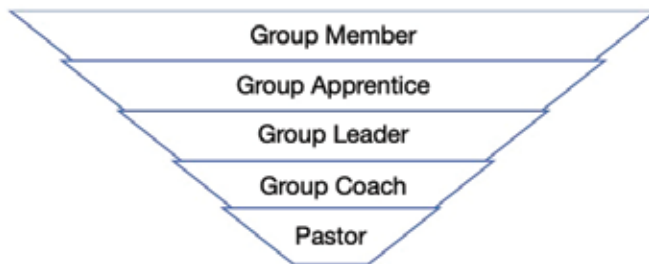
Correction

- Always correct in love. Do not be demeaning in any way.
- Point out the truth of what the text is saying
- Affirm the person personally after the meeting

Group Leader Role Description

As a group leader at ECC, your primary role is to create environments and encourage rhythms that promote authentic community, deepen biblical understanding, and help people find and follow Jesus Christ.

Groups Ministry Support Structure



Successful groups have four key components that set them apart:

- **Intentional Leader**
- **Relational Environment**
- **Reproducible Process**
- **Biblical Foundation**

Group Leader Responsibilities

Spiritual

- Grow in your personal relationship with Jesus through daily devotional time and prayer.
- Care for members by helping them grow in their relationship with God and others.
- When applicable, select biblically based curriculum for your group using ECC's curriculum library.
- Develop as a shepherd of your group through training and development provided by your coach and Group Pastor.

Relational

- Plan a 12-month calendar to establish rhythms for the group that include group time, planned breaks, socials, celebrations and serving opportunities.
- Create authentic community by communicating with your group frequently, ensuring members feel known and cared for.
- Build relationship with your group coach through consistent communication and engagement.
- Identify and develop an apprentice leader within your

Commitment

- Complete the ECC group vitals profile for your group and manage group details.
- Serve for a minimum of one year.
- Commit to three to four hours per week: two hours of group time and one to two hours of preparation and connection time.
- Attend leader huddles and events led by your coach and/or the Group Pastor.

Expectations

God has a part for all of us to play in the church, and Group Leaders come alongside the pastors and staff at Eagle Christian Church to help care for people.

Serve Together

Service opportunities could be anything from helping someone move to serving one service in children's ministry as a group. Find a service opportunity for your group to do together. This responsibility can be delegated to another group member.

Invite Others

Helpful Hint: If you are a new leader, do what you can to invite group members. This includes using social media, personal invitations, and inviting people from school or work who don't necessarily attend Eagle Christian Church. People respond best when they are personally invited.

Follow the ECC Group Calendar

Although any group can choose to meet year-round, the Group Ministry at ECC is comprised of three terms throughout the year (Fall, Winter, and Spring). During the breaks in between, groups are encouraged to meet to serve, connect, and build relationships.

Offer Next Steps

The primary role of a Group Leader is to help group members take one more step in their relationship with Jesus Christ. Keep it simple. Listen to them and help them discern their next step. People in your group will be at different places in their spiritual lives and each person will have different next step to take. For some, the first step is to surrender to Christ as Lord.

Here is a guide of some next steps you can help people take:

- Start attending weekend services
- Start reading the Bible regularly
- Start praying regularly
- Be immersed in baptism
- Attend Starting Point Classes
- Start serving at church
- Start giving or tithing
- Go on a mission trip
- Invite a friend or neighbor to church or an ECC Group
- Attend a Group Leadership Training to become a Group Leader

The Rhythms and Roles of a Small Group Leader

Pray for members of the Group

Remind members two days before meeting (e-mail, text, group Facebook page)

Facilitate weekly discussions

Report ASAP after meeting: attendance, praises, prayer requests

Communicate regularly with group members outside of group

ECC Group Components

Welcome - A warm welcome establishes a foundation for relationships, sets expectations, and brings focus to the group. This begins with your group texts, phone calls, or emails and continues as they arrive for group and throughout group time.

Open in Prayer - Invite the Holy Spirit to take part in the group. This will prepare hearts for what God wants to do and shifts people's attention from themselves to the group.

Share Our Purpose - Life Groups are communities of people who help each other connect with God, become better followers of Jesus, and fulfill the church's mission of making disciples of Jesus. Remind the group of the purpose behind meeting as a Life Group and thank them for being a part of this group.

Go Over the Guidelines - Life Group must be a safe place where people can be real, open and honest with their struggles and victories as they follow Jesus. Remind people of the group guidelines every week.

Lead an Icebreaker / Warm-up - Do an activity or ask a question that prepares people to engage in the group. This will serve to help people get comfortable and set the stage for a fruitful discussion time.

Facilitate Time in the Word - Spend time reading God's Words together and going over the discussion questions. This should be the bulk of the group time.

Recap & Celebrate - Paraphrase what happened in the group's discussion time and how it can be applied to the lives of group members. Recognize what God accomplished in the group and spend time thanking God and encouraging each other.

End in Prayer - Plan ahead to spend some time here. Use this time for personal prayer requests, group needs and to praise God.

Making Your First Meeting Great

Goals of the First Meeting

- Reconnect with continuing members and connect with new members
- Clarify the group's purpose / expectations / commitments using the covenant and guidelines
- Pray for the building of relationships and spiritual growth of the group

Items Needed for the First Meeting

- Refreshments
- Growth Group Guidelines
- Nametags (written out ahead of time)

3 Essential Parts of Your Evening Agenda

1 – Welcome, mingle and talk while you eat

- Greet people as they arrive
- Have refreshments available

2 – Think through the uniqueness of your first group discussion

- Give people a 5 minute warning before you start, and then start on time
- Let them know why this meeting is unique: getting to know each other, setting expectations

Sharing

- Spend some time getting to know each other. Use a crowd breaker question
- Share the guidelines

Cast Vision and Set Expectations

- Distribute the ECC Group Guidelines
- Walk everyone through it

Prayer

- Everyone participates, if comfortable
- Brief, sentence prayers, one topic at a time
- Pray as many times as you wish
- Ask your host to close in a brief prayer dedicating the season to God
- Have someone keep track of prayer requests and answers

3 – Know that your conversations before and after the meeting are just as important as your meeting discussions

The Group Leader Covenant

A Faithful Christ Follower

- I believe that Jesus is the Christ, and I have received him as my Lord and Savior.
- I have repented of my sins and have been made a new creation in Christ.
- I have been baptized to personally identify with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, and to publicly demonstrate my commitment as a disciple of Jesus.
- I am committed to an intimate, growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

A Conscientious Church Member

- I commit to embody and reflect the vision, mission, values and leadership of ECC
- I commit to faithfully attending ECC Worship Services and contributing to the ministry of the church through service, giving, and inviting others

An Available Group Leader

- I will lead an exemplary Christian lifestyle and will be a positive influence on group members.
- I will share openly with the group to promote transparency and authenticity
- I will identify, recruit and train an apprentice small group leader and provide on the job training so he or she can develop to lead a group
- I commit to provide front-line pastoral care to all members of my group by helping myself or referring them to someone else who can help
- I will strive to build authentic relationships with those in the group by showing care, providing encouragement and praying for their needs
- I will endeavor to handle conflict in the group with love and patience
- I will endeavor to keep the spirit of the group positive by squelching gossip with truth and avoiding a negative or critical spirit

Group Leadership Tips

Don't be afraid of silence even if it seems awkward.

Let the people in your group sit for a moment to think and reflect.

Don't feel like you must know all the answers.

We are human, and it's good for the people in your group to see that you are limited.

Don't read questions word-for-word.

Understand the questions and ask them in your own terms. Ask follow-up questions. Create a climate where people feel the freedom to ask questions themselves.

Don't talk more than the people in your group.

Ask follow up questions to generate discussion. Allow multiple students to respond even if the first person gets the "right answer."

Paraphrase long responses.

If a person's answer or comment is long-winded or unclear, repeat it back for clarity. This proves you are listening, and it keeps the attention of the rest of the group. Don't move onto a new question too quickly though. After a person answers a question, ask, "Would anyone like to add to that?"

Keep the group focused and on purpose

Don't go down a rabbit trail and leave the topics and/or scripture passages unless something "big time" comes up (i.e. Family Crisis). Be sensitive to the Spirit, but don't let the group wander. This is an opportunity to be an intentional leader.

Require and maintain confidentiality.

This allows people to open up because they feel their environment is safe. However, don't keep potentially dangerous information to yourself. (i.e. abuse, suicidal, homicidal, destructive intentions, etc.) When in doubt, please tell a staff member.

Dealing with Bad Attitudes

- Pray for them and be compassionate- Hurt people hurt people
- Build a relationship with the person, seek to understand.
- Don't be afraid to confront them in love
- Seek help from your coach or a pastor if you are unsure.

Dealing with Sensitive Situations

- Never promise to keep a secret.
- It's better to be safe than sorry; always talk to a coach or pastor about any situation you're not sure how to handle.

Helping People Dealing with Adversity

Understand that someone's suffering and pain is highly subjective. Never minimize it and always show empathy. Instead of rescuing, be the voice of reason. We are not the rescuers, but we are the representatives of the God who rescues them. We are to be the agents of truth and their friend and are to journey with them through their pain.

How do we help hurting people? Realize that we are in danger of being pulled under or drowning with the individual that's dealing with adversity. Try to get a biblical understanding of that person's situation. Ask, "Is that person's struggle from the World? Is their struggle of the Flesh? Is their struggle coming from the Enemy (Spiritual Warfare)?" The answer to these questions will help you determine how to move forward with an individual.

Be cautious. Be careful of using pet verses. Remember that an individual is completely overwhelmed when they are first going through a negative experience. Words need to be very few and be there as a presence for the Holy Spirit to come in and do his work. Demonstrate the love and grace of God. Remember that grace qualifies and characterizes our response.

Ephesians 4:29 – Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them."

Accept their words. Be ok with letting them say what they need to say instead of feeling the need to correct their thoughts.

Ecclesiastes 3:7 – A time to be quiet and a time to speak ...

Dealing with People Problems

*(Condensed from the online Article: *Small Group Detours* by Karl Leuthauser)

Dominators

Definition: have an answer for every question and every answer seems to go on forever. Dominators are usually very knowledgeable and kind-hearted. They just don't always have the social skills needed to help you keep things on track. Some dominators are able to talk for a long time. You need to have the courage to help the dominator wrap things up. One of the best methods is to simply finish the dominator's thoughts for him or her then quickly allow someone else to speak.

What a Life group leader can do: The secret to dealing with dominators is to remember that the group is usually desperate for the facilitator to do something. You should begin by working to draw others out. Look for a quick breath, no matter how short, to jump in and allow others to contribute. Dominators aren't the enemy. In fact, dominators will bring profound points to the conversation. Turn dominators into allies by talking to them after the get-together. Compliment the dominator's quick thinking and openness, explain the goals for drawing everyone into the discussion, and ask the dominator to help draw out everyone during future discussions.

Scoffers

Definition: have the greatest potential to ruin a life group. Criticism is contagious and it can paralyze an inexperienced facilitator. The secret to dealing with scoffers is to remember that their bark is always worse than their bite. Some scoffers are in such a habit of being negative that they criticize things they actually enjoy. Remember that the complaints of scoffers are usually more about their own perceptions and hurts than the events they're criticizing. Don't ever let a scoffer derail an activity, and never take the complaints personally.

What a Life group leader can do: Humor is a great tool for reaching scoffers because it diffuses the power of their complaints. For example, if a scoffer complains that he or she is sick of pair shares, a skilled facilitator might say something like, "We're doing it anyway, so get ready. For an extra treat, you can be my partner." With consistent care and nudging, a scoffer can actually become an excited and motivated group participant. If the scoffing is extreme, have an honest conversation with the scoffer away from the group that helps him or her see the effects of the negative comments and how they interrupt your efforts for the group.

Hiders

Definition: are easy to ignore because they never bother the other group members. In fact, they seem to be quite good at being ignored and missed. Hiders need very gentle coaching and encouragement to start allowing others to get to know them.

What a Life group leader can do: Most hiders feel afraid of speaking in front of groups, so help them break the ice by sharing in pairs. Mix the pairs up so the hiders have a chance to get to know everyone in the group. Remind the group often that it needs everyone's contribution to grow.

Over Sharers

Definition: Individuals who have a tough time knowing how much information is too much. People who over share often bring details to their stories that leave group members feeling embarrassed or unsure of how they should respond.

What a Life group leader can do: The secret to facilitating with over sharers is to help them find the proper context for the things they'd like to share. You could respond to them by saying something like, *"That must have been very painful for you. That's the kind of thing we should discuss one-on-one. Let's talk after group so I can pray for you."* Known for being needy, people who over share work best with facilitators who are very direct and very gentle at the same time.

Problem Solvers

Definition: Have a tough time seeing others in pain or confusion. With great intentions, the problem solver tries to fix other group members, often offering pat answers and solutions. Remind your group that each friend is in the process of discovery and needs time to work out his or her questions.

What a Life group leader can do: If a problem solver gives a pat answer that's received as judgmental or insensitive by a group member, don't panic. Quickly respond by showing empathy for the person with the problem or question. You might say, *"I'm sorry you're going through that. Keep sharing and struggling forward. We'll do our best to support you along the way."* If a problem solver doesn't seem to catch your hints and redirection, talk to him or her after group. Tell the problem solver that you appreciate his or her wisdom. Then remind the problem solver that you want everyone to have the freedom to talk, discover, and even struggle through things.

Dealing with Trauma and Crisis

Validate their loss – Remember whenever someone is expressing grief or loss, it must start with validating their loss.

Allow people to cry – It expresses feelings openly and offers a release. Don't immediately start praying and "cheering them up." Give them a little space to be upset.

Walk with them – To "Walk" with someone is to be "Available". You don't always need to have a good word, and you don't want to not have a good word. Just letting them know you're praying for them and checking on them helps.

Stay Available – Most of the time, people don't need advice. They just want someone to sit with them. There is more power in what you do for an individual and that the person knows they are loved by you.

Be Humble - Don't assume a person's situation. Be patient with an individual. Enter in, live with, observe and learn. Ask "What can I help you with?" or "What do you need?" You are putting yourself into the middle of their lives. It's not about you, it's about them and more importantly it's about Jesus.

We must enter their World. You cannot pull people or instruct them out of their suffering. Meet them where they are before you bring them into the light. This is exactly what Jesus did.

Ephesians 4:2 – Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.

Healing takes place in community. Seek out those who have demonstrated God's character of justice, truth, love and mercy and teach them how to cling onto those characteristics when moving forward. When you go into someone else's adversity, remember and pray, *"Don't let me go into their hardship without your presence and only let me go if I'm going to be successful"*. If any of the following occurs within your group, please report immediately to both your coach and the ECC Group Pastor: Hospitalization / Hospitalizations/ Abuse / Self-Harm / Endangerment/ or Death.

The Healthy Growth of a Group

All Groups should strive to maintain an open-door policy. This is how existing groups continue to REACH new people. If a group does decide to close, it should only be for a limited amount of time and for the purpose of maintaining a good group dynamic and raising up a leader from within who will launch a new group in the near future.

Managing Growth Pains

When groups are healthy, dynamic, and Christ-centered, they are going to grow!

Growth means:

- We will struggle to have enough groups for the demand.
- We will always be pressed to have enough leaders to lead
- We must always be looking for apprentices to raise up
- We get uncomfortable
- We struggle to maintain good group dynamics

Identify an Apprentice

Look for someone who:

- Loves God and is committed to Jesus as Lord
- Is others centered
- Is willing to submit to authority
- Is Faithful - Teachable - Humble - Available - and Willing

Raise Them Up

- Give them a place to play. Hand over various responsibilities of leading a group to give them experience.
- Have them watch you lead group and meet with them right after to debrief what they saw.
- Have them lead group with you and debrief the experience with them right after group.
- Have them lead group and you watch. Then debrief with them right after group.
- Have them lead group in your absence. Follow up with them to see how it went.

Launching a New Group

Launching new groups is how the church has always grown. In order to successfully launch new groups, you must start with the end in mind. When to discuss the need to launch a new group:

- Cast vision for this at the very first meeting and continue to do so every couple weeks.
- Once your apprentice is ready, set a date (at least 30-60 days out) for when the launch will happen.
- Continue to cast vision for the launch periodically throughout the process.
- Always make the launch part of your prayer time at every group.
- Set a date for a celebration party prior to the launch. Use this time to pray over the new leader and the new group.

WAYS TO LAUNCH

Leader Leaves:

- Pro: Apprentice gets to stay with the group he or she is familiar with.
- Con: Apprentice does not learn what it is like to leave and start a new group. Sometimes it is hard as a leader to recognize when the group is used to someone else.

Apprentice Leaves:

- Pro: Apprentice learns all the challenges of starting a new group.
- Con: It's difficult to step out from what is familiar. Strong coaching is a necessity.

Core Group leaves:

- Pro: Supports the new group leader, may provide a host home and makes room in existing group for new members. This option also supports the discipleship process.
- Con: Some of the core group might be the unofficial leaders of the current group. It's important to make sure both groups have a solid foundation.

FAQs

How do we handle childcare needs in our group?

- Work together as a group to find what options best suit your needs. A few options to consider:
- Option 1: Have the group meet in the living room/dining room and the children meet in a separate room. This keeps the kids close by, but also provides some privacy for those in the group during discussions.
- Option 2: Select a home that is in a central location for those in the group, and pool finances to hire a babysitter to stay with the children. At the end of the night, the parents are free to go pick their kids up at the agreed upon time.
- Option 3: Recruit a baby-sitter who is willing to work on a donation basis. Encourage group members to donate every week as they feel led, but not to feel pressured to do so if finances are too tight.
- If you find an option that works for your group that is not listed above, go for it! The key is communication. As long as everyone feels comfortable and can agree, the group can be successful.

What should I do if someone asks a question I can't answer?

- It's okay to not have all the answers. Sometimes the best answer is, "I don't know." Thankfully, we can find guidance through prayer, God's Word, and the Holy Spirit. Encourage them to spend time reading the Bible and praying. Also, let them know that you will do your best to get some information and get back with them at your next Small Group meeting. Do some personal research and call your coach to get advice.

What should I do if someone in my group shares something with me (or the group) that requires attention beyond what I (or we) can provide?

- If you encounter a difficult situation within your Life Group, please know that you are not alone. If a member is going through a crisis, you can rally the group around them to provide prayer, encouragement, and support. Use wisdom and be sensitive to the situation. If you are unsure of what to do, don't hesitate to ask your Life Group Pastor or coach.

How does ECC try to maintain consistency, integrity and control of small groups?

- Curriculum: we want to provide oversight and direction for approved curriculum that we feel agrees with the Mission, Core Values and doctrinal teachings of Eagle Christian Church. We ask that all curriculum be approved by the Adult Discipleship Team.
- Leadership Training: we want all leaders to attend our Leadership Training and be familiar with the ECC Groups Playbook. This provides consistency between groups and provides direction for agreed upon rules, guidelines and outcomes.
- Consistent Schedule: we typically have 3 times per year that we ask ALL of our groups to be open to new members. This allows for a predictable time for groups to “relaunch” which allows new people to join groups and also allows a graceful opportunity for someone to potentially leave a group that isn’t a right fit. This schedule also allows an appropriate time for a leader to “reboot” a group that has possibly gone off track and you can re-establish the guidelines and ask for individual agreement to the guidelines. This allows a graceful way for someone to exit a group if the guidelines aren’t something they want to abide by.
- Group Guidelines: we produce some simple cards which have our stated small group guidelines as well as the Core Values of ECC. This handy tool can work very well to help guide a group back on track or re-establish the specific boundaries of a group. These are available at any time from the church office.