

GOLDEN HILLS



**Small
Groups**

LEADER RESOURCES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1 - Purpose, Process & Expectations

Small Group Leader Purpose & Process 3

Small Group Leader Expectations 4

SECTION 2 - Small Group Dynamics

Standard Group Guidelines 6

Small Group Ministry Norms 7

Small Group Ministry Group Values 8-9

Active Listening Skills 10-11

Helpful Responses for Difficult Discussions 12-13

Ice Breakers 14-15

SECTION 3 - Notes



WELCOME!

We are so excited to have you joining us as part of our Small Group Leadership Team!

We just wanted to thank you for stepping up to serve with us, you are an important part of the effective disciple-making ministry of Golden Hills. We believe small groups are essential to maintaining a sense of Christian community where we worship, grow, and serve together.

Christ committed the work of world evangelism and discipleship to the care of a small group of disciples. They experienced His love, His grace, and His life in an intimate way that transformed them into a community that changed the world. They learned to worship wholeheartedly and to grow in their knowledge and experience with Jesus. They witnessed and experienced His power and grace, and they learned to give and serve each other and their communities together. Our small groups desire to reproduce Christ in each other to impact the world for Him.

No one is meant to do life alone! The Scriptures indicate that the Christian life is to be lived out in community with other believers. Within that community, we are instructed to encourage one another, serve one another, rejoice and weep with one another, correct, instruct, build up, accept and love one another. Small Groups provide a wonderful context to facilitate involvement in one another's lives.

This online resource is constantly being updated. As we come across information we feel can help you be a more effective leader, we will pass it on to you.

Thank you again for your willingness to serve our Lord Jesus Christ.

- The Small Group Leadership Team

SECTION 1

PURPOSE, PROCESS & EXPECTATION

SMALL GROUP PURPOSE & PROCESS

SMALL GROUP PURPOSE

*THE PURPOSE OF OUR
SMALL GROUP MINISTRY
IS TO GLORIFY GOD
BY MAKING DISCIPLES
WHO ARE COMMITTED
TO FACILITATING SAFE AND
CARING, DISCIPLE-MAKING
ENVIRONMENTS WHERE
GOD'S WORD IS CLEARLY AND
ACCURATELY COMMUNICATED.*

WORSHIP

Christ-Centered – Small Group Leaders are committed to declaring God's worth by seeking to treasure Jesus above all else. Your desire should be to bring honor to the name of Christ by living a life of purity, integrity, and truthfulness. Your ambition is to be conformed into His image more and more each day.

GROW

Word-Saturated – Small Group Leaders are committed to growing in the knowledge of God. You are surrendered to the authority of the Bible, making it the supreme authority over your life. You are compelled to grow in your knowledge and understanding of His Word by allowing it to shape your attitude, perspective, thoughts, and beliefs.

SERVE

Missional-Focused – A Small Group Leaders are well aware of the life-changing power of the gospel, and through their own personal encounter with Jesus, they are always ready to cultivate God-honoring relationships both inside and outside the church. These relationships serve as opportunities to reflect God's glory through genuine love and care.

SMALL GROUP LEADER EXPECTATIONS

We realize we're all in the sanctification process, whereby Jesus is making us more and more like Himself each and every day. With that said, as the leader of your group, your responsibility is always to seek to provide a model for others to imitate. Use the following leadership expectations as attainable goals, knowing that each leader may be in different stages of his/her development.

PROVIDE A SAFE & CARING COMMUNITY

- > Model how to provide appropriate practical, relational and spiritual care for each other.
- > Lead your group to become increasingly committed to and skilled at relating to one another in God's love and God's truth as brothers and sisters in Christ.
- > Commit to personally praying for each member of your small group on a regular basis.

MAINTAIN A DISCIPLE-MAKING ENVIRONMENT

- > Seek to help your group members understand where they are spiritually, what their calling and gifting is, and how they can use those gifts within the group and beyond.
- > Use approved study materials that will help your group progress in spiritual maturity.
- > Regularly pray that God would rise up new Small Group Leaders (SGLs) from within your group and then work with any potential SGL's to take the necessary steps to help them follow their calling into the Small Group Ministry.

PARTICIPATE IN LEADER TRAININGS

- > SGL's will do their best to attend all three annual SGL Trimester Training events or assign another group member to attend.
- > SGL's will do their best participant in our weekly Sunday Leader Training opportunities and invite all New Leader Prospects (NLPs) to attend as well.

KEEP THE GHCC DATABASE CURRENT

- > SGL's will be required to perform all weekly database obligations (attendance, follow up on any new prospects, updating group descriptions.)
- > SGL's will respond promptly to SG Admin as to their group status at the beginning of each trimester.

COORDINATE WITH SG PASTORAL STAFF

- > Work alongside your Small Group Pastoral Staff to resolve any individual or group conflicts.
- > Work alongside your Small Group Pastoral Staff when ending your term as a Small Group Leader.

SECTION 2

SMALL GROUP DYNAMICS

STANDARD GROUP GUIDELINES

SHARE THEIR OWN IDEAS & FEELINGS

Not their spouse's, boyfriend's, family member's, boss's or anyone else, but their own. Focusing on what's going on inside yourself allows you to see where God may be working in your life. Such as changing an attitude, a belief or a behavior.

Failing to pay attention to your own heart and mind limits growth and is a major detriment to personal discipleship. Challenge your group to use "I" or "me" statements, not "you" or "we" statements.

KEEP SHARING TIME BALANCED AMONG GROUP MEMBERS

(this includes you, the leader!)

BUILD TRUST & CONFIDENCE

Confidentiality is a basic requirement for any personal relationship or healthy/safe group. What is shared in the group stays in the group.

We are not to share information with our friends/family/co-workers. This also means not discussing what is shared among fellow group members.

GUARD AGAINST CROSS-TALK

Cross talk happens when two (or more) people engage in conversations while someone else is sharing. Everyone should be free to express his or her comments without interruptions.

Cross-talk is also making distracting comments or asking questions while someone is sharing. This includes speaking to another member of the group while someone is sharing, or responding to what someone has shared during his or her own time of sharing.

REMEMBER TO HELP & ENCOURAGE, NOT TO "FIX"

We do not give advice or solve someone's problem after they have shared or not even during our time of sharing. The main reason for this is because, quite frankly, we most likely don't know all the details regarding the person's situation. We definitely don't know what God may be doing in this person's life. Don't attempt to cut into what the Holy Spirit is doing in someone's life by offering them a solution that is designed to ease their discomfort.

SMALL GROUP MINISTRY NORMS

Group Norms are behaviors and practices (ground rules) a group agrees to in order to help establish a safe, predictable environment. A norm is something we can easily observe in each other. It's easy to see if it is being followed or broken. These are some standard group norms, to which we ask all small group leaders and participants to agree, commit, and hold one another accountable.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Our Small Groups are to be considered CONFIDENTIAL. Group participants and leaders alike commit to maintaining confidentiality of anything shared in the group. Nothing is to be shared outside the group, including sharing others' comments or personal information.

Important Exception Concerning Group Confidentiality:

An exception to the group confidentiality agreement exists with regard to mandatory reporting requirements: facilitators and the local church or Christian organization they are serving must comply with federal and state law.

ATTENDANCE

To create a stable, predictable small group environment that fosters trust, it is of utmost importance that group participants can count on one another attending each week.

NO INTERRUPTING

When someone is talking during a group discussion, we ask that you do not interrupt them.

CONSIDERATE ABSCENCES

If you need to miss a week, please let your group leader know so they can plan accordingly and inform the group of your absence. You also may want to set up a time with your leader to catch up on material they may have missed.

NO FIXING OTHERS

An important element of our small group environment is freedom to safely share and process, creating space and welcome for the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts. We are **not** here to fix each other. We ask participants to agree and commit to gentle and kind interaction with one another, refraining from judging, shaming, or excessively advising others.

BALANCED GROUP SHARING

We ask all group members to be aware of the amount of time they have shared and not to monopolize sharing opportunities. Please allow time for everyone to share.

COMPLETING HOMEWORK

We ask group members to complete all assigned homework. This is an important norm to uphold for everyone to gain the most from the content and discussions.

SMALL GROUP MINISTRY VALUES

Group Values are different than Group Norms. Unlike group norms, group values are not as easily observed or measured. Consequently, they can be more difficult to hold one another accountable to than the Group Norms. They are still vitally important and we desire that these Values become a normal part of our group culture. We ask small group leaders and participants to embrace, commit to, and make every effort to keep these Group Values.

DESIRE TO MATURE

We value the willingness and openness of group members to change their attitudes and beliefs about themselves, others, and God. This comes with the realization that we are all still in a process of maturing and learning what God may have for us. If an individual does not have a desire and need for change, very little can be done to help them mature and grow.

DESIRE TO LOOK INSIDE

We value the willingness of participants to focus on their own process and relationship with God, not on the relationships and choices of spouses, children, parents, or others. It can be tempting to believe that if we just help or fix others, or get them to change, our pain and problems will disappear; we invite participants to look seriously and bravely at their own life and how God desires to relate personally to their heart and experiences. Our own relationship with God is the only one we truly have in our ability to let him transform.

HONESTY

We value honesty as a way of life and as a fundamental biblical principle in establishing and maintaining healthy relationships with God, others, and ourselves. We are referring not only to being honest with others about what is going on in our lives, but more importantly being honest with ourselves.

OPENNESS

We value the willingness of each participant to gain new awareness and insight from being open about what is really going on in their life. It is critical to let God, and others who are safe, know what is going on with us. Others cannot enter in, understand, help, or support us in an area of difficulty if they do not know how or with what we are struggling.

TRUE ENCOURAGEMENT

We value building up, affirming, and motivating one another to believe what is true. Recognizing our achievements as we overcome and become new creations in Christ is extremely valuable. However, we do not value giving false praise or patronizing others with shallow Christian platitudes. Often, the most encouraging thing to do is listen and attempt to understand. We value thoughtful, timely encouragement, allowing the other person who is hurting to feel heard, and not simply doing or saying what may make us feel more comfortable (giving advice, giving a solution to their problem, etc.)

WRESTLING

We value wrestling through ideas, thoughts, feelings, and the truth of Scripture with God. God's wrestling with Jacob (Genesis 32:22-32) was a deep expression of respect and a loving growth opportunity for Jacob. God could have simply crushed Jacob or forced his will, but God valued the process for Jacob's sake. We value the same kind of process and learning.

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SMALL GROUP MINISTRY VALUES

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RESPECT

We value showing one another respect as individuals who are uniquely created by God, deserving of being heard and understood just as we are. Please show respect to others by listening to what they are thinking and feeling. We want to practice **active listening**, using our ears, face, body, and posture to indicate our respect and attentiveness. We also value respecting each other's time.

ACCEPTANCE

We value offering to one another the same unconditional love, acceptance, and grace God has shown to us through his Son, Jesus Christ. We make this most evident when someone chooses to share something tremendously shameful to them, and as we listen, we do not turn away; instead, we draw near to them with God's compassion and acceptance.

PRAYER

We value taking all our desires, feelings, thoughts, struggles, and joys to God. Though we may not stop our discussions and pray each time a person in the group expresses struggle or pain, we highly value lifting all our requests to God weekly.

ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

ACTIVE LISTENING

Requires actions and decisions on our part. What we listen to (selective attention) will have a profound influence on how group members answer questions. This demands you fully participate in the dialogue by encouraging, paraphrasing, or summarizing and helping people enlarge and enrich their stories.

OPEN QUESTIONS

Often begin with: *who, what, when, where, and why*. This question can't be answered in a few words. Try to dig deeper into someone's thought. Encourage others to talk and provide the group with maximum info [example: "what are you thinking or feeling right now?"].

CLOSED QUESTIONS

May start with: *do, is, or are*. This question enables you to obtain important specifics and tend to be answered in very few words. These kinds of questions help you obtain important information or help end someone's share so you can move onto to the next person or next question. These are better for ice-breakers when all you're after is short, quick answers.

ENCOURAGING

Encourage with short responses that help group members keep talking. They may be verbal (repeating key words and short statements) or non-verbal (head nods and smiling), and are usually less than 3-words responses [example: "That's so cool! Uh-huh" "tell us more"].

PARAPHRASING

Shorten, clarify the essence of what has just been said, but be sure to use the person's main words when you paraphrase. Paraphrases are often fed back to people in a "questioning" tone of voice.

SUMMARIZING

Summarize their comments and integrate thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Summarizing is similar to paraphrasing but used over a longer time span. It's also a great way to help someone end a thought.

WHAT QUESTIONS

Most often lead to facts. "What happened?" "What are you going to do?"

HOW QUESTIONS

May lead to an exploration of process or feeling and emotion. "That's an amazing experience! How can that even be explained?" "How do you feel about that?"

WHY QUESTIONS

Can lead to a discussion of reasons. "Why did you think you allowed that to happen?" "Why do you think that is so?" **Use why questions with care.** While understanding reasons may have value, a discussion of reasons can also lead to sidetracks. In addition, many group participants may not respond well because they associate why with a past experience of being grilled.

MULTIPLE QUESTIONS

A form of bombardment can be throwing out too many questions at once. This may confuse your group. Be patient, let people think before you ask another question.

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ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

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COULD, CAN, WOULD?

Are considered maximally open and also contain some advantages of closed questions. People are free to say, "No, I don't really want to talk about that." *Could* questions release leader control, which may not be a bad thing. "Could you tell us more about your situation?" "Would you give us a specific example?" "Can you tell us what happened after that?" Use these kinds of questions when you're trying to draw someone out who doesn't tend to share much.

QUESTIONS AS STATEMENTS

Some leaders unknowingly use questions to sell their own points of view. "Don't you think it would be helpful if you studied more?" This question clearly puts the group member on the spot. Consider alternative and more direct routes of reaching those in your group.

A useful standard is this: If you are going to make a statement, do not frame it as a question.

HELPFUL RESPONSES FOR DIFFICULT DISCUSSIONS

When this happens...

1. DOMINATING

> TALKING TOO MUCH:

Someone keeps going on and on as they give their answer.

> SAME PEOPLE ANSWERING:

You have the same one or two people jumping in and answering the question before others get a chance to answer.

> DEBATE GOING ON AND ON:

Two members pursue a topic at length while everyone else observes . . .

> INTERRUPTING:

Someone keeps interrupting others as they are answering.

2. WRONG ANSWER

> WRONG ANSWER GIVEN:

A participant has shared inaccurate or misinformation.

you might do or say this...

STEP IN: (break in) and summarize what they've said and then ask the group their thoughts

"So, let me see if I'm following what you're saying ... (repeat back) Is there anyone else who had any thoughts on this?"

DIRECT: Before you open up the question to the group state the question to be answered then say:

"... and I'm wondering if we might hear from one of you that haven't had a chance to share much yet."

STEP IN: (break in) and state: *"So as I'm listening to you both, what I think I'm hearing is (summarize both views). I'm wondering what the rest of you are thinking about this subject?" ... or ...*

I'm thinking this seems important to you both but I think we need to move on at this point and if you'd like to continue this conversation you guys can pick it up at the end of our time together.

STATE: *"It's wonderful how you are really tracking with the lesson today, it seems like you have a lot of input on this. I was wondering if it would be ok if we may be let _____ finish what she was saying and then we can come back to what you have if you'd like."*

REDIRECT: *"Thank you for sharing. I'm wondering what the rest of you are thinking about that."*

If no one corrects the misinformation. . . *"As I think about this my understanding of this is . . ."*

HELPFUL RESPONSES FOR DIFFICULT DISCUSSIONS

When this happens...

3. SILENCE

> NO ONE IS ANSWERING:

The group is silent and not answering the question you just asked.

> SILENT PARTICIPANT:

There is someone in the group that hasn't spoken up at all that evening.

4. OFF TOPIC

> TANGENT:

The discussion goes off on an apparent tangent . . .

> FOCUS ON OTHERS / GENERAL:

They talk about the impact to others rather than focusing on the impact to themselves.

> NOT RELATED TO TOPIC:

They begin sharing a personal situation that really has nothing to do with the subject that is being discussed.

5. EMOTIONAL REACTION

> TO A QUESTION OR COMMENT:

A person's emotional response seems disproportionate to the question asked.

> STRONG VIEW EXPRESSED

Without a reason or illustration given.

you might do or say this...

ASK: "So I'm curious what's going on for you as you are thinking about this question?"

CHECK IN: "I wanted to make sure everyone has a chance to share. So I just wanted to check in with you - no pressure - I was just wondering if you had anything you'd like to share?"

REDIRECT / STEP IN: "I'm unclear how that connects to what we've been saying. Can you share how you see it connecting?"

"It seems like you are able to see how this impacts those around you. I'm wondering if you might be able to take a minute and check in with yourself and see how this might be impact you personally?"

"It sounds like you've had a difficult situation that you had to deal with." **or** "This sounds like it is really hard for you." **or** "This sounds really important . . . **but** . . ."

"I'm wondering if we might be able to re- focus on (subject) right now - if you feel like you'd like to talk further about that situation we can talk more at the end tonight or we could work on setting up a time to talk together. Because I can see this is really impacting you."

"This seems like a very hard situation for you, I'm curious . . . how do you see this relating to the question we looking at right now?"

RESPOND: "I'm noticing that you feel very strongly about this questions/issue. Do you know what this is hitting for you?"

"You might be right, but I'd like to understand more. I'm curious, what led you to arrive at that viewpoint?"

SMALL GROUP ICE BREAKERS

BEST / WORST

Have each person share their best and worst moments from the previous week. This icebreaker is an easy one to use at first and gives you good feedback concerning their life at the moment. Some veteran groups do this several times a year... the answers become more honest as you go.

MOST UNIQUE

Go around the room and have each person share something that makes them different from anyone in the group, like, "I've never left the state I was born in" or "I am one of 10 kids."

2 TRUTHS & A LIE

Have each person make three statements about themselves: two true statements and one lie. For example, "I've never broken a bone. I have 5 sisters. I was born in Yugoslavia." The group tries to guess which statement is the lie.

DESERTED ISLAND

Ask, "You've been exiled to a deserted island for a year. You are told you may take three things you want, apart from the essentials. What would you take and why?"

SCAVENGER HUNT

Take 5 minutes and find the following items in your wallet or purse: Something that . . .

- (A) You've had a long time or something you're proud of.
- (B) Reveals a lot about you or reminds you of a fun time.
- (C) Concerns or worries you.

Have each person share the first item. Go around again on the second item, and again until you have gone through each one. Don't feel like you have to use the whole list because it will take too long.

GET TO KNOW YOU

1. What do you do for fun?
2. What would be your ideal vacation?
3. What is the most memorable activity you did with your family as a child?
4. What quality do you appreciate most in a friend?
5. What is one characteristic you received from you parents that you want to keep, and one you wish you could change?
6. What is a good thing happening in your life right now?
7. If you knew you couldn't fail and money was no object, what would you like to do in the next 5 years?
8. When, if ever, did God become more than a word to you, and how did it happen?

DID YOU KNOW?

This is great for a group that doesn't know each other well. Find interesting facts about individual group members before the group meets. Try to discover information that sets each person apart from the others, such as "I have a tugboat named after me" or, "I once wrecked the same quarter panel of my car four times" or, "I have a twin."

Then make a sheet with one fact from each person and a blank beside this fact. Give everyone in the group a sheet and 5-7 minutes to find who goes in each blank. When they find the right person, they must also learn one other fact about that person. At the end, introduce everyone in the group in the order on the list.

CHART YOUR LIFE

Thinking back as far as you can, draw a line graph to represent your life. Consider the high points, the low points, moments of inspiration, moments of despair, leveling off times, and where you are now. The line will probably be a mixture of straight, slanted, jagged and curved lines. After you've drawn it, share what it means to you with the group.

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SMALL GROUP ICE BREAKERS

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M&M'S GAME

Pass a bag of M&M's around and tell everyone to take a few. Then, before they eat them ask them to share something for every M&M. For example, something about their family for every red one, something about their plans for the future for every green one, etc.

MOST DEPRIVED

Buy a large bag of M&M's and give each person the same amount (try 10 M&M's). Start by stating something you've never done that you think everyone else has done (thus the name "Most Deprived"). For example, you might say, "I've never had a birthday party," or some other true statement about yourself that you think everyone else has surely done. Then, everyone who has had a birthday party pays you an M&M. You pay everyone who has not had a party. Keep playing until everyone has a turn or until someone runs out of M&M's. Obviously the idea is to come up with the most M&M's and be most deprived (this activity takes longer).

LIFE IN PICTURES

Bring a newspaper or magazine. have each person tear out a picture, article or anything they think tells something about themselves. If there's enough time they can make a collage that tells more about themselves.

WRITE A QUESTION

Give each person a 3x5 card. You pick the topic and let them write the questions. For example, you choose "friendship" as a topic, and they each write out a question for anyone in the group to answer about friendship. For example, "What do you value most in a friend?" or, "Who was your best friend growing up and why?" Then pile all the cards face down in the middle of the group and let people draw. Topic ideas: jobs, life goals, funny stories, hobbies, family, fears, dating issues, significant relationships, relationship with God, etc.

HOUSE ON FIRE

Ask, "Your house is on fire, and everyone is safe. You have 30 seconds to run through the house and collect three or four articles you want to save. What would you grab? Why?" After everyone has done this, the group can discuss what they learned about the things they value.

MAKE BELIEVE

If you could go anywhere in the world now, where would you go and why? If you could talk to anyone in the world, who would it be? Why? If you could talk to any person who has died, who would you talk to and why? If you could wish one thing to come true about your upcoming summer, what would it be?

HEROES

Ask each member to name three people, past or present, they admire. Why? Or, ask them if they could interview anyone in history, who would that be and why? What one or two questions would you want to ask?

NOTES
