

VILLAGE BIBLE
CHURCH



SMALL GROUP HANDBOOK

villagebible.church/smallgroups

Welcome to Small Group!

We're so glad you've joined a small group - they are essential to our church!

We hope that everyone at Village would be engaged in 3 ways: 1) Worshiping together on Sunday morning; 2) Growing together in a small group; 3) being a steward of their time, talents and treasures – giving back to God.

We're called together to worship and celebrate God's goodness in our lives – we do that on Sunday morning. But we're also called to care for one another – to encourage, to challenge to walk alongside each other. If someone just comes and goes on a Sunday morning, it's difficult (if not impossible) to care for one another – to become part of the family. That happens in small groups! Small groups are our primary channel of care and discipleship – that's why they're so crucial.

Our small group format is focused on studying God's Word together, praying together and having fun together. The Bible study portion of the evening is designed to help you dig deep into God's Word and apply it to your life – today! Here's how we do that:

1. **Study God's word on your own.** The questions in the lesson each week are designed to help you understand what the scripture is saying and to get you to think about how it applies to your life. Rather than rushing through the lesson the night before small group, I would encourage you to spread it out over several days. Use it as your daily time in God's Word, if you don't have another plan. It takes most people 2 hours to thoroughly complete the lesson. You can do it more quickly, but like anything - you'll get the most out of it if you invest the time.
2. **Talk about it in small group.** When we come together, we'll talk about what God has been teaching each of us through our study the previous week. This helps us to gain a greater understanding as we hear how others have applied the scriptures to their own lives.
3. **Hear it taught on Sunday.** The sermon on Sunday will then focus on the text that you've already studied on your own and talked about in your small group. When you come to church, you'll have a great foundation for the sermon that will be shared. It will be more relevant and applicable because you've already spent time allowing God to teach you.

We're praying that God works powerfully in your life through your small group this year.

Logistics

Our small group lessons are written by Pastor Tim and will be picked up each Sunday by your small group leader. You can also pick one up yourself at the small group table on Sunday if you're going to be out of town for your small group – and if you prefer the digital version, you can download it at www.villagebible.church/smallgroup.

Childcare Costs

Some of our small groups have childcare available. The cost is relatively small per family but does add up when carried churchwide. Accordingly, if you're able to offset our costs, that is much appreciated. Your small group leader will have an envelope to collect contributions for childcare.

If you're experiencing financial hardship, however, we don't want costs to be a barrier. It's more important that you are in a group than to collect a donation from you to offset our costs. God always takes care of the money one way or another!

For those who are able to assist with the costs, the suggested donation is \$5-10 per family per week, for those who utilize childcare at the small group.



Community

God is relational, so He created us to live in relationship with Him and each other.

Authentic community involves sharing life together and connecting on many levels with others in our group.

Healing best occurs within the context of community and relationships. It's vital to see ourselves through the eyes of others, share our stories, and ultimately find freedom from the secrets and lies that enslave our souls.

Bible Study

Gain a deeper knowledge of God's Word

Interactive: God gave the Bible as our instruction manual for life. We need to deepen our understanding of God's Word. People learn and remember more as they wrestle with truth and learn from others. Bible discovery and group interaction enhance growth!

Sermon-Based: In effort to focus our study efforts and to “master” sections and themes of scripture, our small groups are typically tied to the Sunday morning sermons, which provides an opportunity to take a passage of scripture and study it individually, discuss it with others and then experience it taught from the pulpit.

Experiential Growth

Beyond solely reading, studying, and dissecting the Bible, being a disciple of Christ involves reunifying knowledge with experience. We do this by taking questions to God, opening a dialog with our hearts, and utilizing other ways to listen to God speak (other people, nature, circumstances). Experiential growth is always grounded in the Bible as God's primary revelation and our ultimate truth-source.

Power of God

Processes and strategies will be ineffective unless we invite and embrace the presence and power of God. To experience community and growth, Jesus needs to be the centerpiece of our group experiences and the Holy Spirit must be at work.

Mutual Ministry

Each member of the group is looking for ways to minister to the other members of the group, helping to meet each other's needs. This care will take many forms, such as praying, listening, meeting needs, encouraging and even challenging one another as needed.

Multiplication

All groups should also be prayerfully considering a way to extend the ministry of their Small Group through Multiplication. This means eventually forming two or more groups so that others who are not yet in Small Groups can continue to find places to connect with a Small Group.

Shepherding

Small groups are the main channel for shepherding within our church. An elder is partnered with each of the small group leaders who together work to shepherd the people in the group and its “extended family.”



SMALL GROUP COMMITMENTS

I Will Prioritize

While we are in this group, we will give the group meetings priority in our schedules and will also arrive on time. Obviously, allowances are made for sickness, vacation, work conflicts and other special events — but not much more! This commitment is the key to a healthy group. If I am unable to come to a meeting, I will contact the small group leader to let them know.

I Will Attend with Completed Homework

Joining a small group requires a commitment to attend each week and to do the homework ahead of time. Most weeks, the homework will require about 60–90 minutes to adequately prepare for the group study and discussion.

I Will Participate

Everyone is encouraged to participate, and no one dominates.

I Will Show Respect

Everyone is given the right to his or her own opinions, and all questions are encouraged and respected.

I Will Maintain Confidentiality

Information shared in our meetings should not be repeated outside the meeting without permission and should not become a point of gossip. *(In certain cases, the leader may need to seek wisdom and guidance from one of our church elders.)*

I Will Show Care and Support

Permission is given to call upon each other at any time, especially in times of crisis. The group will provide care for every member.

I Will Be Accountable

We agree to let the members of our group hold us accountable to commitments we make in whatever loving ways we decide upon. Unsolicited advice giving is not permitted.

I Will Fill the Empty Chair

Our group will work together to fill the empty chair—either someone in the church who is not in a small group or an unchurched person or couple.

I Will Be Mission-Minded

We agree as a group to reach out and invite others to join us and to work toward multiplication of our group to form new groups.

I Will Minister

We will encourage one another to serve God within the church and also to get outside the walls of the church to serve in a way that impacts the world around us.



COVENANT DETAILS

This covenant is reviewed and signed at the beginning of each year by all groups. Groups that are continuing, still review the covenant during the first meeting of each quarter.

This covenant will help us discuss and clarify our goals, expectations, and commitments as a group. Since healthy groups thrive on trust and participation, a clear covenant is an important starting point toward a successful group experience.

START DATE _____ END DATE _____

WEEKLY START TIME _____ WEEKLY END TIME _____

LEADER _____ HOME PHONE _____ CELL _____

HOST _____ HOME PHONE _____ CELL _____

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

We'll spend about _____ minutes singing (optional), _____ minutes discussing the study, _____ minutes praying and sharing, and _____ minutes chatting and snacking.

REFRESHMENTS

I've signed up to bring snacks on these nights: _____

EXTRA GROUP EVENTS _____

NAME _____ SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____



SMALL GROUP LEADER JOB DESCRIPTION

Leading a small group through loving care and devoted discipleship toward Christlikeness.

Shepherd

Shepherd each member and their families by knowing the facts about them.

- Names, ages
- Personal, family interests
- Where they live
- What they do
- Special needs

Shepherd each member and their families by caring for their spiritual needs.

- Know their faith story
- Know their burdens and prayer needs and shoulder those together
- Identify best “next steps”
- Identify spiritual gifts and potential areas of service
- Plug members into service for the Lord at VBC and beyond

Shepherd each member and their families through the challenging seasons of life. This involves leading your group to care for one another by being involved in funerals, hospital visits, moves, support during loss of employment, etc.

Lead

Plan well for the small group study, discussion, and prayer time.

Model and teach commitment to the Word of God, to the small group, to the preparation and application of the study, and to attendance and timeliness.

Manage well the time spent during the study, drawing out one or two themes from some but not all of the questions.

Pray for your group as a whole and for the individuals who make up the group.

Pray for and actively develop future small group leaders and begin to apprentice them.

Disciple group to increasingly live as followers of Christ.

Ensure administrative tasks are completed or delegated.

Safeguard

Protect the atmosphere of the small group.

- Welcome new and regular members warmly each week.
- Maintain confidentiality and prevent gossiping and controversy.
- Practice zero tolerance for negative or complaining attitudes.

Protect the truth of God’s Word and the doctrine of the church.

Protect one another with unity and strong relationships within the small group.

Protect members with Biblical counsel.

Protect your own walk with the Lord by maintaining a relationship of accountability and transparency with your small group.

Protect the quality of the small group mission to be the main vehicle for discipleship at VBC.

Overall Ministry at Village Bible Church

- Support various ministry efforts and events
- Ensure accurate records through small group reporting
- Support church leadership in special projects, responsibilities, and community involvement



SMALL GROUP APPRENTICE JOB DESCRIPTION

Personal Ministry

Grow in your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ through fixing your mind on things of the Spirit and by seeing Jesus more clearly.

- Spend time in the Bible each day, pursuing personal growth and maturity.
- Have a consistent prayer life that focuses on praise, thanksgiving, personal needs, and the needs of believers, and of the lost.
- Spend time in spiritual fellowship with others for the purposes of mutual love, encouragement, and growth.
- Be involved in fulfilling the Great Commission by reaching out to the lost with the Gospel.

Small Group Ministry

To assist the Small Group Leader in all areas of group life, as appropriate. The Apprentice serves a unique role as a bridge between Group Members and the Group Leader, and the Apprentice's long-term goal should be to gain ministry experience in order to one day serve as a Small Group Leader.

- Pray for the members of your small group.
- Cultivate a teachable spirit and be open to both feedback and instruction from the Group Leader.
- Observe the Group Leader in different ministry situations.
- Coordinate the different aspects of group life as needed and helpful to the Group Leader.
- Under the supervision of the Group Leader, begin leading different parts of the group meeting. This could include leading the group prayer time and the study.
- Under the supervision of the Group Leader, contact and support Group Members outside of the weekly meeting.
- Attend all small group meetings and events as possible.
- Attend church-sponsored training sessions as required at Village Bible Church.

I have read and understand the goals and requirements of a Small Group Apprentice at Village Bible Church.

NAME _____ SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

**Date Answered,
How Answered**

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**Date Answered,
How Answered**

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