

Small Group Leader

A ministry description for local church leaders

Introduction

Fundamentally the church is a fabric of relationships. Jesus gives a clear command to love each other (John 13:34, 35), with His love for us being the standard.

Throughout the New Testament there are specific suggestions about church relationships. Congregations are to care for each other and give attention to the needs of each other: (I Cor. 12:25; Phil. 2:4), forbear and forgive (Eph. 2:2, 32), defer to one another (Eph. 5:21), bear each other's burdens (Gal. 6:2), teach and admonish each other (Col. 3:16, 17), encourage and build up one another (I Thess. 5:11), confess and pray together (James 5:16), and love each other (I John 3:22, 23; 4:4, 11).

To be a Christian is to join a body whose head is Jesus Christ. It is a theological contradiction to become a Christian and then live in isolation and independence.

Since building relationships is a primary function of the church, it must provide settings and structures that give opportunities for this to happen. Experience has demonstrated that the small group is one of the best vehicles for the church to become what God intends it to be—a people sharing Christ, meeting each other's needs and reaching out in love to the world.

Duties of the Small Group Leader

There are some basic tasks for you when you take the responsibility of leading a small group:

- 1. Preparations.** Before the meeting the leader should pray specifically for the people who are coming. Pray also for yourself as a person and as leader. Specific preparations must be made prior to each meeting:
 - a. Arrangements.** What needs to be done to care for details such as location, seating, Bibles, temperature, food, child care, music, materials, etc.?
 - b. Relationships.** How will you help people to feel cared for and caring? What will you do to help people get to know each other and build positive relationships among the members of the group?
 - c. Study topic or task.** What steps will you follow to accomplish the task or go through the study? You will want to make a list of questions you will use and estimate the time each will take. What are your goals for the praying time? What will be your prayer format? Who will pray?
 - d. Time.** How much time is available and how will you divide it? Block out the time into major segments and jot down the activity to be done in each segment. What is your "real" starting time? Your firm closing time? How will you open and close each segment? Are you attempting too much? Too little? Do you want to ask other people to take responsibility for some segments at this meeting?

2. **Facilitator.** During the group meeting the most important function of the leader is to ask questions. As group leader you are not the expert lecturer but the facilitator for discussion and sharing. Be sensitive to individual needs. Try to create a climate of openness and acceptance through affirmation and encouragement. You will direct the flow of discussion by making sure everyone has an opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings. Try to keep the discussion on the subject. Make sure everyone in the group can see each other by arranging the chairs in a circle and removing the empty chairs. The leader helps the group members to be personal by sensitively asking questions that enable them to share openly without feeling coerced, intimidated or put on the spot. You will also need to deal with the problem of those who talk too much. Help the group focus on solutions rather than only problems. Ask questions that help people be positive and affirmative about themselves and other group members.
3. **Caring for individuals.** Outside the group meetings the leader stays in touch with group members by phone. You are the lay pastor of the people in your group. Watch for those who seem to be hurting or have questions during the meetings. A prime time to offer care and support is during the informal conversation immediately following group meetings. Try to plan your time so you can stay by, but don't let troubled people consume your time and energy. Be free to say, "You seem to be hurting a lot. How can I assist you in getting help?"
4. **Outreach.** A healthy group always "keeps an empty chair" for new people. One of the tasks of the leader is to find likely group members, invite them to try the meetings, and help the group to make them feel comfortable and safe. You should watch for visitors on Sabbaths, newcomers in the community, individuals going through lonely times in their lives and especially unchurched friends and acquaintances who seem to be opening up to spiritual things.

Resources

For a list of recommended resources, free downloads and websites visit MinistryKits.AdventSource.org

For a complete list of resources visit AdventSource.org, select the store tab and then your ministry.

You can call *AdventSource* at 402.486.8800 for additional information or if you have questions about ministry. For ministry-related articles, videos, and free downloads visit AdventSource.org.

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