



small
groups
@RBCC

LEADER NOTEBOOK

Group leader(s):

Coach's name:

Coach's e-mail:

Coach's phone number:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Introduction	2
Our Goal Must be His Goal: Make Disciples	2
Our Method Must be His Method: Intentional Relationships	3
Our Power must be His Power: God's Grace	3
Pray More than You Prepare!	4
6 C's for Healthy Small Groups	5
CHARACTER - Character of the Leader	5
CONTENT - Biblical and Conversational	6
CONSISTENCY - Healthy Rhythms Matter	6
CARE - Carrying One Another's Burdens	6
CELEBRATION - Celebrating Life (Having Fun!)	7
COMMISSION - Living Sent as a Group	7
Practical Small Group Tips:	8
Stay Connected to Your Coach	8
Know How Big is Too Big!	8
Maintain Group Rosters	8
Child Care Reimbursement	9
Let's Go Make Disciples!	10

Introduction

You are embarking on an incredible journey to love and obey Jesus by making disciples. Thank you for your willingness to serve, to give of your time, and to invest in others for the glory of God. We believe that small group community is one of the best environments to help people find the transforming love of God, and ultimately life in Christ!

When Jesus left this earth, he gave his church a mission:

Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." - Matthew 28:18-20

Our Goal Must be His Goal: Make Disciples

Our passion must be our Savior's passion. We must strive to reproduce followers of Jesus who love God and obey Him out of love! Anything less is failing to obey Jesus' command to us.

At Rock Bridge, we say that a follower of Jesus does three key things:

Loves God

A disciple has a personal and intimate relationship of love with God, where love is expressed as well as received. Spending time in God's word and in prayer becomes a key habit, because we should love to hear the thoughts and desires of the One we love, and love to communicate back to Him!

Loves Others

A disciple desires to share God's love with others through authentic relationships. These relationships help others discover and follow Jesus and become disciple-makers themselves. A disciple also recognizes that we are called to be a family, and therefore God has given us one another to help each other.

Lives Sent

A disciple understands the heart of God is for the world, and for those far from Him. A disciple lives "on mission" to take the Gospel to those who don't have it and to make disciples who also multiply and make other disciples. Our heart must be to make disciples who make disciples!

Putting it together:

A disciple of Jesus follows Jesus by loving God, loving others, and living sent and teaches others to do the same.

Our Method Must be His Method: Intentional Relationships

Jesus' life was one of deep investments in people, through loving, teaching, modeling, encouraging, and correcting. We cannot shortcut discipleship by skipping the relationships. Love is our call, and love cannot be shown to one another without real, authentic relationships.

Jesus demonstrated incredible intentionality with his disciples. We must model and follow his ways if we want to see more disciples fill his Kingdom. Jesus demonstrated what all effective disciple-makers must do.

Disciple Makers:

Go with Gospel Love

Disciple makers pursue to love those they disciple in the same way Jesus would love them. This love is self-less and helps others see their true identity as a treasured child of God.

Share God's Truth

Disciple makers teach those they disciple to live obedient to God's Word. Obedience is a key indicator that we trust God, and have surrendered to His leadership in our lives. Disciple makers understand that God's Word is the life-giving truth that sets us free.

Commit to their Kingdom Future

Disciple makers walk selflessly with those they disciple to help them multiply the Kingdom of God. They make sacrifices where necessary to see followers grow and mature and fulfill God's loving design and purpose for their lives.

All of these things happen in relationships, and all of these things should happen in a small group!

Our Power must be His Power: God's Grace

Jesus demonstrated a *radical* trust in God the Father that releases unprecedented peace and energy to his disciples. Jesus said it this way:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." - Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus calls all of his disciples to trust in God's love and power that is freely given. It's the grace of God that empowers us to obey and do what God asks and to make disciples!

So... your greatest preparation for leading a small group and making disciples:

Pray More than You Prepare!

A Ph.D. student did extensive research trying to answer the question: *What is the most important part of leading a small group?*

- The research involved more than 3000 small group leaders in over 200 churches
- The research found that there was zero correlation between how much time the leader spent preparing and whether the group was growing in any way
- The research found that group effectiveness was connected to the leader's prayers for the group!

This is good news!!

A small group's success depends less on the leader than one might think and more on God and the working of His Spirit! Therefore it's not about our abilities, our personality traits, or getting extensive training. It is about what Jesus said,

"I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without Me." [John 15:5]

As you can see, small groups are central and essential to our mission of *"glorifying God by connecting people from all walks of life to life in Christ."* We have the Holy Spirit to help us with this incredible privilege of participating in God's purpose for us (see Matthew 28:20); we have one another; and we have a framework for groups at Rock Bridge that is biblically-based.

6 C's for Healthy Small Groups

Over the years, we've seen successful and fruitful groups display similar habits and practices. We call these the 6 C's and these are all derived from Acts 2:42-47. We believe that by practicing these 6 C's your group can and will see God move through community! Remember God Himself is part of an eternal community--the Trinity!!

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers. Then fear came over everyone, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as anyone had a need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple complex, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with a joyful and humble attitude, praising God and having favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved. - Acts 2:42-47

CHARACTER - Character of the Leader

We cannot give others what we do not have ourselves. If we want others to experience life in Christ and the fullness of God's plan, we must be active participants in that as well. This doesn't mean we won't have dry seasons, but as a small group leader, we should all be setting an example of pursuing Jesus in our day to day lives.

Key areas where I need to be "walking with Jesus" in order to lead a successful group:

- Loving God by having a regular personal "quiet time" of Bible study & prayer.
- Regular church attendance to participate in the body of Christ and remain under clear biblical teaching.
- A life that is "above reproach" with no serious moral issues that could cause damage or harm to the body of Christ. (Ex: Sexual misconduct, drug or chemical dependency, etc.)
- **Church Membership!** If I haven't joined Rock Bridge, I should sign up as soon as possible to demonstrate commitment to the mission of the local church and obedience to Jesus Christ.
- Putting my marriage and family first. If my marriage and family are suffering, all efforts in my life should be directed in that area to restore health.

If any of these areas are significantly deficient (not just a rough patch!), as a group leader I should talk to my coach about someone else leading the group for a season while I focus on these foundational areas and move back to a place of being a spiritual example for others.

CONTENT - Biblical and Conversational

We believe that engaging the Word of God is the single greatest contributor to growth, life change, and experiencing life in Christ. Therefore, we equip groups to study, engage, and have conversations centered around Scripture. The Bible is God's primary method to lead us and change us (2 Timothy 3:16). We love God when we grow in obedience to Him (John 14:15) and as we grow in obedience we grow closer to Him (John 14:23)

- **All Rock Bridge small groups should use approved, Biblically centered curriculum.** Coaches should always be notified of curriculum BEFORE it is used. This is one way our Elders protect the church as commanded in Scripture (Acts 20:28-30).
- Small Groups should be conversational, not lecture. Our goal is two-way relationships of sharing and listening.
- **LEADER GOAL: A small group leader should "talk" no more than 25-30% of the time.**
- For activity-based groups or special interest groups: a time of prayer and devotion that reminds the group of God's love and truth is crucial. Don't skip this step! Keep God in the center of your activity, and He will draw the lost to Himself!

CONSISTENCY - Healthy Rhythms Matter

Groups must meet on a regular basis and group members must know the rhythm for meetings (i.e. 2nd & 4th Mondays; every Tuesday). Love for others can only grow if we spend real time with one another!

- The best small group frequency is weekly, which provides the optimum chance for community to make a real impact. Minimum frequency should be 2 times per month, except during seasons such as summer or holiday seasons, when one meeting per month may be all that could occur. **A great target: meet 3 of every 4 weeks.**
- **Small groups should never take time off or cease meeting for longer than 4 weeks.** Small groups may need to change their meeting rhythm for the holidays or summer, but this should be communicated.

CARE - Carrying One Another's Burdens

Small groups care for one another, support one another, and serve one another. This care is especially important when "life" happens, such as the death of a loved one, job loss, relational strife, etc. However, care is also important when good things occur, such as the birth of a child, a new job, or when someone gets married. Care is also helping one another defeat sin through accountability & confession. Ultimately, care can only occur with transparency, grace, and trust.

- Small groups should develop a "care plan" for how the group will respond in times of need in each other's lives. A "care plan" includes: communication with other group members,

mobilization to meet a need/bear a burden (i.e.-meals, help pay a bill, watch the children, handle chores, etc.)

- Leaders should notify the church staff immediately when serious pastoral care situations arise so the church can respond accordingly. These include deaths and tragedies in families as well as serious illnesses and hospitalizations.
- **GOAL:** Group members know specifically how to pray, encourage & care for one another

CELEBRATION - Celebrating Life (Having Fun!)

Celebration is a way we both love God and others. God desires our praise and in the Gospel, we have much to praise Him for. We can also praise Him when life change occurs as people respond to His grace. Additionally, celebration is about having fun together.

- **GOAL:** Groups should do something “fun” together at least once a quarter, such as a cookout or dinner out together, bowling, visiting a park, etc.
- Some other ways to celebrate God and life within group life include: Communion; Worship songs; sharing praise reports and ‘snapshot’ stories of times when God really worked in your life; reading a psalm out loud together; etc.
- Many groups attend 1st Wednesday services together as an act of fellowship and celebration.

COMMISSION - Living Sent as a Group

We are all commissioned by God to make disciples, demonstrate His kingdom values & love, and declare His gospel to people from all walks of life. Life in Christ means living sent as a missionary in the places we find ourselves.

- 3 basic ways to do this in group life (in general, groups should always be practicing at least one of these 3):
 - “Open chair”: inviting new people into the group
 - HOPE expression: serving locally together with an RBCC strategic partner
 - **Establishing a Co-Leader** that will learn to lead, and in the future could help launch new groups and reach more people!
- **GOAL:** Every group should be working to develop another leader who could take over if needed, and eventually could help lead other groups.

Practical Small Group Tips:

Stay Connected to Your Coach

At Rock Bridge, all of our small group leaders have a coach. Your coach is there to help encourage you, be a resource for leading your group, and pray for you and your group. You will want to contact your coach when a problem arises or you have a question. Additionally, your coach will meet with you several times a year and may occasionally attend one of your meetings.

Know How Big is Too Big!

We encourage all groups to maintain a missional mindset that embraces that God might send them new people that need their group and therefore resist labeling any group as “closed.”

However, groups that have over 12-15 people on the roster may be considered “full” and should be careful of adding new people. Why you might ask?

- Smaller groups give the members a sense that they are truly needed, and their presence will be missed.
- A full group can leave members feeling like they can't invite others.
- Larger groups tend to give the members a sense that it is OK if they skip, and therefore commitment level tends to drop as group size moves over 8-10.

If your group is moving past the 12-15 member mark:

- Please prayerfully consider launching another group from your group!
- Increase effectiveness by moving to sub-groups in your home or meeting place (men or women break off) to encourage intimacy and commitment.

There is no group that is too SMALL. As long as there are two people encouraging and spurring each other on toward Jesus, that is a small group! Smaller groups for 3-5 can be outstanding in fostering growth.

Maintain Group Rosters

Every life matters to God, and as a church family, we should be concerned about who is engaged in discipleship and who is not. Accountability is a real part of pastoring and shepherding the church.

Each month at Rock Bridge we email our small group leaders an email that asks them to “Update Small Group Roster”. This is an opportunity to let the church know who is actively participating in the small group.

- It is not critical if people attended a specific meeting, but rather, are people attending and participating overall.

- If someone has stopped attending for several months, they should be removed from the roster.
- If new people begin attending, they should be added.
- If there are any stories or prayer requests to share with the campus leadership, this is an opportunity to do that as well!

Child Care Reimbursement

A frequent barrier to small group participation is the availability of childcare in the home. Some try to avoid using homes and prefer church buildings, but we believe the home is an incredible, engaging environment that fosters community. Also, allowing your children to see you prioritizing community & spiritual growth is a good thing and sets an example for them.

Rock Bridge will reimburse childcare expenses. We will either reimburse the group leader who covers childcare for their group OR individual parents who arrange for childcare in their home while they attend group.

Rock Bridge Policy: All Rock Bridge Small groups will have the option to submit for reimbursement for paid childcare on a monthly basis according to these guidelines:

- The small group must be an official Rock Bridge small group.
- Reimbursements will be issued in one of the following ways:
 - To the PARENT(S) for the cost of an individual childcare provider in the home while the parent attends a Rock Bridge small group away from home.
 - To the SMALL GROUP LEADER for childcare provider(s) shared by the small group.
 - Checks will only be made out to parents or leaders, NOT to providers.
- We reimburse at a set rate for the cost of a childcare provider.
- RBCC does not select, hire, or pay childcare providers. Childcare provider selection is the responsibility of the Group participants and/or parents.
- A childcare reimbursement online request must be submitted to the church once per month, by the 7th day of the following month.
- Our financial staff will issue childcare reimbursement checks once per month.

Reimbursement Rates:

- Reimbursement rate of \$10 per hour for a maximum of 3 hours per meeting.
- Maximum amount reimbursed: \$30 per group meeting.
- If group or parents believe more than one child care provider per meeting is required, then prior approval must be obtained. Contact RBCC financial department (email: jill@rockbridge.cc) for special arrangements.

How to Submit Reimbursement:

Visit <http://rockbridge.cc/childreimbursement/> and submit requests electronically.

If you plan or need to utilize the church facilities for child care - this must be requested and approved by church staff (Small Groups pastor/Director and Children's Pastor Director)

Let's Go Make Disciples!

Thank you so much for leading a small group!

Know that we are praying for you and are here to serve you in any way. We can't wait to see how God uses YOU and your group in making disciples who bring glory to God and change our world with the Gospel of Jesus!