

GROWTH GROUPS

Connect & Grow Together

Staying Healthy: practices for remaining healthy in all areas of your life

Church Mission: We exist to guide people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

Airplane Story – put your oxygen mask on first before you attempt to guide those around you who need help.

- To be all you can be as a Growth Group Guide, you need to be healthy and growing in all areas of your life.
 - Relational—How are my interpersonal relationships?
 - Physical—How well is my physical body operating?
 - Mental/emotional—How are my thoughts and feelings?
 - Spiritual—How is my relationship with God?
- We are only as healthy as our least healthy area.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

¹⁹ Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Philippians 4:4-10

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Personal Reflection: How would you rate yourself in each area?

Table Discussion: Think about one of these areas where you have had success, what is one practice that has been helpful to you?

Whole Group Discussion: What practical advice did your table have for growing in each area, Relational? Physical? Mental/Emotional? Spiritual?

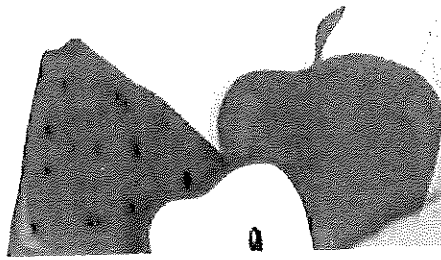
Close: What if you could be at maximum capacity for these 4 areas, what would your life be like? Is there a next step you might want to take?

Tips on Shepherding Your Growth Group

- Listen for needs... and consider how you or your group can reasonably meet them.
- Pray for:
 - Wisdom (James 1:5)
 - Your Growth Group and its direction
 - Your members
- Try and meet with everyone in your group at least once throughout the year individually or as couples (over coffee or for lunch after church).
- Initiate. Look for ways to connect with them, look for them on Sundays, etc.
- Set the tone!! If you don't, someone else will, and it might not be so nurturing. Create a space that is a safe place for people to be real and for people to be cared for.
- Send notes or emails. Make phone calls or send texts. These say you care and are available.
- Don't assume family or friends are available to meet needs like moving, meals provision after surgery, bridal and baby showers. Your group might be the only friends that can provide that.
- Model for potential leaders. Show how to care for people inside and out of the meeting time. Bring people alongside you.
- Consider referring to other resources if needs are outside your training and/or comfort zone.
- **Call when you encounter something that seems too big to handle on your own. Please don't try and deal with it alone. WE ARE HERE FOR YOU!!**
Becky—916-337-5828 Danny – 925-321-4699 or Kelli – 916-835-1904 Cindy – 916-437-8923

Tips on Facilitating a Growth Group

- **Always pray at the beginning of each meeting. Invite the Holy Spirit to come and be the teacher and to speak to the group.**
- **Have ground rules.** It helps keep the climate positive. Some rules I have used in the past:
 - Talkative people wait, look down first
 - Quiet people, push yourself to share each week
 - Look at each other (not just the leader) as we talk and listen to each other
 - Avoid politics or other issues that incite unnecessary discomfort
- **Be okay with silence!** It helps people think.
- **Listen to others as they share.** Don't just think about your next question. (For example, don't re-ask questions that have already been answered in the discussion).
- **Encourage multiple responses.** "Anything else?" or "What else?" Don't just move on when someone answers you.
- **If an answer seems way off....you can ask "Where do you see that in the passage?"**
- **Realize you set the tone.** The group will go no deeper than you. (For example, if you only ask prayer for your neighbor's stubbed toe, then others will stay at the same depth, but if you are honest and real, people will realize that this is a place where they can be honest and real too).
- **Help people be specific and personal in their application**
 - Avoid "we" or "you" statements, encourage them to make "I" statements
 - As often as possible have people verbalize or write-down their action step each week
- **As often as possible, encourage people to verbalize or write down their action step each week**
- **What has worked in your past groups?**



GROWTH GROUPS

Connect & Grow Together

BE A GOOD HOST

BEFORE	DURING
Provide directions to meeting space	Welcome people to meeting space
Make sure space is clean	Start and end on-time
Have food, water and snacks ready on time	Encourage group to participate and help host with snack rotation
Set up enough chairs, extra pens and other materials set out as needed	Offer time after group to fellowship but set boundaries for end-time
Clean bathroom with adequate TP	Keep updated group roster
Have name tags for initial meetings	Email group for reminders
Pets put away	Be sensitive to allergies
Create warm and welcoming environment/adjust room temperature	Learn names – use name tags in the beginning
Allow leader/facilitator to show up early	Be aware and accommodate special needs
Be prepared for the study	Be organized
Discuss child-care and address it	Be honest about anything that needs to be addressed (frustrations etc.)
Reach out to group members prior to meeting	Text or communicate often so everyone is “in the know”
Have a group greeter and a back-up host for emergencies	State expectations up front
Ensure Leader & Host communication in advance of first meeting	Facilitator should ask before bringing special effects or props
If outside, make sure it is well-lit	Refrigerator rights
Have introduction ready and share about yourself	Have appropriate quantity of food and drinks
	Allow members to help with clean up

GROWTH GROUPS

Connect & Grow Together

DEVELOP A NURTURING GROUP THAT ENGAGES ALL PEOPLE

INDIVIDUALLY	AS A GROUP
Ask how person is doing (conversation)	Pray from a weekly prayer list
Draw out quieter people	Assign tasks to involve everyone (prayer journal, coffee, snacks, etc.)
Teach by example in areas that people need to grow in	Don't feel the need to fill the silence
Invite people to read Bible verses aloud	Provide opportunity for others to facilitate
Connect with quieter people before group and ask privately if they would share something	Make confidentiality important
Go to each person with one question	Break into smaller groups and have each group report back
Be aware and sensitive to diversity in group (political views, etc.)	Encourage positive responses instead of negative
Listen well	Use low-stress ice breakers
Individual follow-up during the week	Practice sentence prayers
Learn each group members interests	Provide index cards for prayer requests
Give individuals time to share	Ask open-ended questions
Be aware when people are spiritually troubled	Take turns reading
Be sensitive to individual faith journey	Prevent dominant talking
Relate with individual experience	Allow for adequate fellowship time without letting it dominate
Encourage insight and value differing opinions	Rotate prayer leaders
Allow people to meet one-on-one outside of group	Reassure members of group confidentiality
Follow through on prayer requests or meeting someone's need	Change meeting style once in a while

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HELP PEOPLE FEEL LIKE THEY BELONG

INDIVIDUALLY	AS A GROUP
Know their name, interests, bio	Meaningful introductions at start of group or when new people join
Be open to their ideas	Create a roster with contact information
Encourage open sharing	Meet a need of a group member
Smiles, handshakes, hugs	Keep group informed through email about upcoming events
Don't exclude newcomers by talking about old subjects	Touch base during the week – meet for coffee individually
Deal with over-talkers by setting time limits on talking	Use ice-breaker exercises
Follow up prayer with phone call	Celebrate birthdays, anniversaries or special occasions
Encourage each to share/get quieter people engaged in conversation	Include members by assigning roles or jobs
Look people in the eye when talking with them	Build trust in the group with "safe" community
Do not force people to participate	Promote inclusiveness and comfort
Ask questions about opinions, interests, personal application, global application	Consider using the same Bible translation in group
Don't judge or offer quick solutions	Utilize small teams for prayers and tasks
Validate every stage of faith journey	Create group rules so everyone knows expectations
Compliment & affirm their input	Use name tags until everyone knows names
Use person's name when asking them a question	Give each person a voice by allowing written prayers as well as spoken
	Go to church and sit together at least once



Growth Group Agreement

The purpose of this agreement is to discuss and clarify our group's goals, expectations and commitments.

Purpose: We agree to connect with God and each other for a prescribed time for spiritual challenge and encouragement.

Attendance: We agree to give priority to the group meetings and communicate to the host or leader if we will be late or absent.

Preparation: We agree to come prepared to group meetings; for example, listen to the sermon on-line, work through discussion questions or spend time in the passage.

Safe Environment: We agree to help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved without quick answers, snap judgments or simple fixes.

Confidentiality: We agree to keep anything that is shared in confidence within the group.

Shared Ownership: We agree to participate but not dominate the group discussions.

Serve: We agree to spur one another on to love and good deeds, while using our gifts and resources to care for each other. Hebrews 10:24

Worship Together: We will do our best to see and greet each other on Sundays.

Meeting Day: _____ Start Time: _____ Ending Date: _____

Group Signatures:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

13. _____

14. _____

My Growth Group Information

Welcome to your Growth Group! We hope that you grow deeper in your relationship with God through weekly study and the relationships that will develop in this Growth Group.

GROWTH GROUP PURPOSE

Growth Groups exist to promote spiritual maturity and personal growth through meaningful Christian relationships and study of God's Word (Romans 8:29 & Hebrews 10:24, 25). We'll do this by focusing on several formational activities:

Prayer

Each week we'll take time to share what is happening in our lives and then consider the care of one another as Christ commanded (John 15:9-13). This care can take many forms such as prayer, encouragement, listening, challenging one another and meeting real needs.

Study

Each week we'll study God's Word and how it relates to the previous Sunday's sermon. The goal is transformation and learning how to live out our Christianity in everyday life. (Romans 12:1-3).

Service

Spiritual growth and maturity are fostered by taking action through service. The role each of us fills is important to the overall health of the church and our group. We are all members of one body and are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus to our community both large and small (Ephesians 4:11-16). Throughout our meetings, we hope to find ways to serve one another. Our group is encouraged to serve others outside the group at least once per year.

Friendships

Setting aside time to enjoy one another and reflect on life is essential to the health of a group. During each meeting, time will be set aside for casual conversation. This works best when paired with food. Occasional fun and fellowship beyond the normal meeting time is also encouraged.

FIVE MARKS OF A HEALTHY GROUP

- 1) Make spiritual growth a priority (Romans 8:29)
- 2) Accept one another (Romans 15:7)
- 3) Take care of one another (John 13:34)
- 4) Treat each other with respect (Ephesians 4:25-5:2)

5) Keep commitments to the group (Psalm 15:1-2, 4b)

Agreement Review

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Things to Remember

Dates: We'll meet on _____ nights for _____ weeks
Our final meeting will be on _____

Time: We'll arrive between _____ and _____
And begin the meeting at _____

Childcare: Group members are responsible to arrange childcare for their children. Nursing newborns are welcome provided they are not a distraction.

I'm supplying refreshments on: _____ and _____

Socials: _____

Service Projects: _____

Study: We'll study the same topic(s) covered in the previous weekend's sermon.

Prayer: Our group will be praying each week for one another and the church.



GROWTH GROUP LEADER & HOST TRAINING BRAINSTORM IDEAS

A compilation of ideas from various training events

HELP PEOPLE FEEL LIKE THEY BELONG

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