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# **WHY SMALL GROUPS?**

*Admit your faults to one another and pray for each other so that you may be healed...*

**JAMES 5:16 TLB**

We believe God wants every person to experience abundant life here on Earth, and that He designed us to find freedom and healing in relationship with others. Small Groups are the “Find Freedom” component of our vision to help every person Know God, Find Freedom, Discover Purpose, and Make a Difference. While we go to God for forgiveness, it is in authentic relationships that we experience healing and life-change. The community found in Small Groups is part of how we experience God’s best for our lives.

## CONFIDENCE AS A SMALL GROUP LEADER

*For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.*

**2 TIMOTHY 1:7 NLT**

God’s best is often found outside our comfort zone. Trust in that as you serve God and people by leading a Small Group, He will equip us and give us the strength and wisdom to lead well.

When we feel uncertain about leading a group, we use Scripture to overcome the lies of the enemy:

**01.** When we feel like we don’t have time, remember God has created us for this, and His timing is perfect.

*If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done.*

**ECCLESIASTES 11:4 TLB**

**02.** When we feel unqualified, remember God has Equipped us.

*It is not that we think we are qualified to do anything on our own. Our qualification comes from God. He has enabled us to be ministers of His new covenant...*

**2 CORINTHIANS 3:5-6 NLT**

**03.** When we feel like our past disqualifies us, remember God uses imperfect people.

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.*

**2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4 NIV**

**YOUR  
LIFE IS  
YOUR  
GROUP.**

*Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.*

ACTS 5:42 NIV

## CITY HILLS CHURCH SMALL GROUPS MODEL

We base our Small Groups model on the early church as described in the Bible. In the book of Acts, we read about the tremendous growth of the first church in Jerusalem, where small groups of people meeting in homes helped lay the foundation.

For this to happen, our church must grow larger and smaller at the same time. We grow larger to reach as many people as possible with the life-giving message of Jesus. We gather in Small Groups to build community, care for people, and help them on their journey to freedom.

We are a church of Small Groups, not a church with Small Groups.

## FREE-MARKET APPROACH

*...Yes, whatever a person is like, I try to find common ground with him so that he will let me tell him about Christ and let Christ save him.*

1 CORINTHIANS  
9:22 TLB

At Highlands, we use a free-market approach to Small Groups. Our Small Group Leaders take their gifts, interests, and the activities they're already doing and form a group around those things. This means our Small Groups are as varied as we are. We have groups that play sports, meet for lunch, study the Bible together, and so much more.

Small Groups are *not* a place for:

- Business/Politics
- Offerings
- Unapproved materials or speakers
- Controversial topics



# **YOUR ROLE AS A SMALL GROUP LEADER**



Meaningful relationships can be hard to find, and Small Groups make life-changing relationships accessible. As Small Group Leaders, you come alongside the pastors and staff of City Hills to help care for people by facilitating small groups of community.

### **CONNECT - PROTECT - GROW**

*As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.*

**PROVERBS  
27:17 NIV**

The community found in Small Groups is an important part of God's plan for each of us to experience abundant life. As we walk alongside those that God has placed in our Small Group, we are able to find connection with others, protection through prayer, and growth through taking our next steps. Simply put, we are better together.

#### **01. Connect Relationally**

We were not made to do life alone. God created us for community, and as a Small Group Leader, you are providing a place to connect relationally!

*Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.*

**ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10 NIV**

# MAKE IT PRACTICAL

No matter which type of free-market group you lead, each meeting should consist of fellowship, an activity or discussion, prayer, and a spiritual component. Each action can help your group connect relationally.

- **Fellowship** - This is a time for group members to talk and get to know each other.
- **Activity or Discussion** - This will vary based on what kind of group you're leading. It could be an activity like Frisbee or outreach, or a discussion about a book or Sunday message.
- **Prayer** - This is an opportunity to ask for prayer requests from group members and pray at the beginning and/or the end of each group meeting.
- **Spiritual Component** - This is what differentiates your Small Group from your neighborhood supper club. Whether it's through activities or discussion, always find a way to include the Word of God. This can be as simple as sharing something God is teaching you with the group or talking about a verse you read that week.

## Group Dynamics

Being aware of your group dynamics can help you provide the best environment for everyone to connect relationally.

- **Set Expectations** - Setting expectations is key to helping people feel comfortable in your group. Take time to share how the group will flow from week-to-week. Confirm the times you will begin and end the group, how discussion or group activities will happen, and how group members can share prayer requests or best engage in the group.

- **Follow the 70/30 Rule** - As the leader, it can be tempting to want to drive most of the conversation, but it is important to give your group members room to speak. A good rule of thumb is that about **70%** of talking should come from **members** and **30%** from the **leader**.
- **Keep Discussions Healthy** - Small Groups should maintain a life-giving environment. If conversation takes a divisive, negative, or destructive turn, guide it back to a healthy place. If someone needs to talk about a sensitive or complex issue, connect with them after the group. You may also want to call your Small Group Coach for help.
- **Keep the Conversation Relevant** - Remember people in your group will be at different places in their spiritual journey. Be thoughtful when you talk about spiritual concepts or church terms that might be unfamiliar to new Christians or new church attendees.
- **Respect Boundaries** - We want to maintain integrity and purity in our Small Groups. Men should minister to men, and women should minister to women. A couple may minister to a single person. These boundaries help protect both leaders and group members from entering uncomfortable or inappropriate situations.
- **Have Fun** - Create an enjoyable group environment with lots of laughter. Carry the life-giving culture of Jesus throughout your group.
- **Support Each Other** - Rally your group around a member who may be going through a challenging time. Use wisdom and be sensitive.

**SMALL  
GROUPS  
ARE HOW  
WE CARE  
FOR EACH  
OTHER.**

## Getting Started

Here are a couple conversation starters to help get people talking as those in your group get to know each other:

- How did you learn about our group?
- What are your hobbies?
- What are you looking forward to this year?
- What brought you here?
- What are you hoping to get out of this Small Group?

## Do Life Together

- Connect with group members between weekly meetings through phone calls, email, text, social media, or in-person. Encourage group members to connect with each other throughout the week as well.
- Invite group members to attend church services and events with you like First Wednesday services, conferences, or outreach opportunities.

CONNECT - PROTECT - GROW

## 02. Protect Through Prayer

Prayer is a foundation of our church, and an important part of every Small Group. As a Small Group Leader, you will help create a space where members don't just know each other's names, but also care and pray for each other daily. Never underestimate the power of prayer. Make the most of every opportunity to support and care for your group through prayer.

*"Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in Heaven."*

**MATTHEW 18:19 NIV**

# MAKE IT PRACTICAL

- Pray that God would give you the wisdom and strength needed to lead your group well.
- Pray that authentic community develops within your group.
- Pray before every group and ask the Holy Spirit to guide your time together.
- Pray daily for every group member and any specific requests they share.
- Pray that God will open people's hearts to hear His truth.
- Pray for protection over your group and be aware of spiritual warfare that may come your way.
- Incorporate prayer into every Small Group gathering.
- Encourage your group members to participate and lead prayer during the group.

# LIFE CHANGE HAPPENS IN THE CONTEXT OF RELATIONSHIPS.

CONNECT - PROTECT - GROW

## 03. Grow Through Next Steps

We believe every person is created in the image of God with God-given potential to make a difference in the world. Small Groups are a place you can grow with others to become more like Jesus and fulfill the potential God has put inside you.

Everyone in your group will be at different places spiritually. The vision of helping them take next steps is not to get them to do everything at once, but to help identify where they are spiritually and offer a practical next step to help them grow.

*Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds...*

PROVERBS 27:23 NIV

# MAKE IT PRACTICAL

There are various next steps depending on where a person is in their spiritual journey. Below are just a few examples of next steps available to your group members:

- Invite them to attend a Sunday service with you.
- Invite them to a First Wednesday, or a 21 Days of Prayer service.
- Identify leaders in the group. If you see individuals who enjoy engaging and praying with others, ask them if they've considered leading a group and encourage them to do so. Continue to focus on this throughout the semester.
- Invite them to attend Next Steps, and remind them that there, they can discover their unique gifts and how God wants to use them.
- Encourage them to consider being Water Baptized. Invite your Small Group to be there to celebrate anyone from your group who is taking this step.
- Share how you find time regularly to pray, worship, and read God's Word, and encourage them to make their own plan for spending personal time with God.
- Tell them about the City Hills App, the Daily Encouraging Texts, and the One Year Bible reading plan.
- If they are ready to receive Christ, offer to pray with them.
- Encourage them to learn more about topics like tithing, the Holy Spirit, prayer, and spiritual warfare by watching past messages in the City Hills App.

The best way to measure if your group members are taking next steps is to ask! Make it part of your discussion whether in a group setting or individually. Here are some questions to guide your conversation:

- How did you get connected to this Small Group?
- What are you most looking forward to in the group?
- Do you attend City Hills? If not, where do you attend?
- What brought you to City Hills?
- Which campus do you attend?
- Have you ever been part of a Small Group before?
- What do you feel like God has been doing in your life lately?
- Are you familiar with 21 Days of Prayer?
- In what areas of your faith are you hoping to grow during the coming months?
- What are you focused on in your life right now?
- Have you been through Next Steps? If so, do you remember what your personality type is or what your spiritual gifts are?
- Have you ever served on a City Hills Serve Team? If not, would you like more information on serving?
- How can I pray for you?

One of the best ways to encourage and care for your group members is using the acronym ESPN.

**E:** Encourage - Bring hope to any situation they may be facing.

**S:** Share Scripture - Offer them a tangible truth they can read and study in God's Word.

**P:** Pray - Pray over their needs or concerns.

**N:** Next Steps - Offer a practical next step for them to take.



# **SMALL GROUPS TEAM**



# STAY CONNECTED

As a Small Group Leader, you are never alone. We have pastors, staff, and the Small Groups Team serving alongside you to invest in Small Groups at City Hills. You will also have a Small Group Coach to support you throughout the semester.

## **SMALL GROUP LEADER/COACH RELATIONSHIP:**

- Your coach's number one priority is to pray for you daily and connect with you relationally.
- Throughout the semester, respond to your coach and the Small Groups Team about group attendance, potential new Small Group Leaders, and how members are taking next steps.
- Invite your coach to visit your group at least once a semester to get to know you, your group, and to help you in any way they can.
- When your members ask difficult questions, it's okay to not have all the answers. Thankfully, we can ask the Holy Spirit to guide us through prayer and in God's Word. Encourage group members to spend time reading the Bible and praying. Also, let them know that you will do your best to get some information and respond at your next Small Group meeting. Do some personal research and call your coach to get advice.
- If you encounter a difficult situation within your Small Group, please know that you are not alone. If a member is going through a crisis, you can rally the group around them to provide prayer, encouragement, and support. Use wisdom and be sensitive to the situation. If you are unsure of what to do, don't hesitate to ask your coach. Also, remember you can fill out a Care Form for a member in need.
- Reach out to your coach if you have any need, prayer request, or concern.
- We love hearing about lives that are changed through Small Groups. You can share your stories with your coach, the Small Groups Team or in the end of semester survey.

**READY  
TO  
LEAD**

If you are a member of City Hills, have completed Next Steps, attended Small Group Leader Orientation, and have completed a Small Group Leader one-on-one conversation with our team, then you are ready to lead a group! Here are some things you need to know.

### **HOW TO START YOUR SMALL GROUP:**

- Ask God for direction in what group to lead and who to invite. Think outside the box.
- Once you decide on a topic or activity for your group, choose a place and time to meet. We encourage Small Groups to meet outside the church building in places where you like to spend your time. Some of the most common meeting places are homes, restaurants, parks, coffee shops, and office buildings.
- We encourage meeting weekly each semester but you may meet biweekly or monthly as well.
- Consider partnering with a co-leader to help share the responsibility of caring for and leading your group.
- Register your group.
- Invite people you know or meet to come check out your group. Start with people who are already in your sphere of influence (co-workers, friends, neighbors, etc.), then invite those who are new to the church, are new believers, or have shown interest in getting involved. Participants do not have to be a member of City Hills.
- As people request to join your group, be sure to respond to each one. Remember to take attendance.
- Pray for God to do great things through your Small Group!

### **PREPARING FOR YOUR GROUP MEETINGS:**

- Send a message to group members reminding them about the first meeting.
- Prepare a welcoming environment.
- Consider having name tags available to help everyone learn names over the first few weeks.
- Create a form of group communication to share prayer requests and details about the group.



# HELPFUL SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

At City Hills, we believe that ministering through the Word of God is one of the most powerful ways to care for people. As you pray over a Small Group member, try inserting their name in the Scripture to make it more personal.

As a leader, we encourage you to find and memorize at least three Scriptures. This will help equip you when you are walking someone through a tough situation, and it will also give you strength as a leader throughout the semester.

Here is a list of Scriptures that you can apply to any situation:

*“And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”*

**MARK 12:30-31 NKJV**

*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

**PHILIPPIANS 4:13 NKJV**

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.*

**PROVERBS 3:5-6 NIV**

*“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD. “And My ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts higher than your thoughts.”*

**ISAIAH 55:8-9 NLT**

*This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him.*

**1 JOHN 5:14-15 NIV**

*“No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is from Me,” says the LORD.*

**ISAIAH 54:17 NKJV**

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.*

**EPHESIANS 6:10-18 NIV**

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.*

**ROMANS 8:28 ESV**

*For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.*

**EPHESIANS 2:10 NLT**

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

**JEREMIAH 29:11 NIV**

*You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.*

**MATTHEW 5:14-16 NLT**

*No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**ROMANS 8:39 NLT**

*Stay away from the love of money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never, never fail you nor forsake you." That is why we can say without any doubt or fear, "The Lord is my Helper, and I am not afraid of anything that mere man can do to me."*

**HEBREWS 13:5-6 TLB**

*"Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with My victorious right hand."*

**ISAIAH 41:10 NLT**

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

**PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7 NIV**

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

**JAMES 1:2-4 NIV**

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

**1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7 NIV**

*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ.*

**ROMANS 10:17 ESV**

*One day the apostles said to the Lord, "We need more faith; tell us how to get it." "If your faith were only the size of a mustard seed," Jesus answered, "it would be large enough to uproot that mulberry tree over there and send it hurtling into the sea! Your command would bring immediate results!"*

**LUKE 17:5-6 TLB**

*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.*

**HEBREWS 11:1 NIV**

*If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.*

**JAMES 1:5 NIV**

*Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.*

**PROVERBS 11:14 ESV**

*So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to Him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.*

**ROMANS 8:1-2 NLT**

*"Come now, let us settle the matter," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."*

**ISAIAH 1:18 NIV**

*Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him.*

**1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-14 NIV**

*Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do His work and build up the church, the Body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.*

**EPHESIANS 4:11-13 NLT**





