



SMALL GROUP
(TRIUMPH LIFE CIRCLE)
LEADER HANDBOOK

Dear Triumph Church Small Group Leader,

You have this handbook to learn about an important building block of how we minister to people at Triumph Church. As a small group leader, you will join the ranks of those who have been entrusted with the precious gift of caring for the body of Christ.

The relaxed, relational dynamic of our small groups (Triumph Life Circles) make them fun and life-giving. That's because the concept of small groups is Biblical, and deeply Spiritual. Our model is the early Church, when the disciples of Christ devoted themselves to fellowship and teaching. Zena and I have benefited greatly over the years from our attendance in small groups, and our church has hundreds of testimonies of lives changed in this context of relationships.

As a Pastor over hundreds of people who are gathering weekly in small groups, it makes my job of shepherding them much easier when I know our leaders are providing a necessary Spiritual covering and support to our members.

Dream your dreams. Live your passion. Get creative, and let's see what God will do!

Loving being your Pastor,

Pastor Mike

Section 1: The Heart of Small Groups

SECTION 1: THE HEART OF SMALL GROUPS

What do we do?

"He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me." Colossians 1:28-29

- We proclaim Him: evangelism through weekend Worship Services.
- Admonishing everyone: Pastoral Care through Small Groups
- Teaching everyone: Discipleship through Growth Track
- Present everyone perfect: Ministry through the Dream Team

TRIUMPH CHURCH VISION

To be a thriving church of growing Christians who are becoming more like Jesus, sharing their faith with others, and impacting Vicksburg and the world for Christ.

TRIUMPH CHURCH MISSION

1. Proclaim HIM – reach people (weekend services)
2. Admonish everyone – shepherd/pastor them; care for them (small groups)
3. Disciple them – teach them (Growth Track; Wednesday Bible Study)
4. Equip for ministry (Dream Team)

SMALL GROUPS (TRIUMPH LIFE CIRCLES) PROVIDE THREE THINGS:

1. A place to connect.

"...yes, whatever a person is like, I try to find common ground with him so he will let me tell him about Christ and let Christ save him." 1 Corinthians 9:22

It is easy to feel alone in a crowd. Small Groups are an open door into the life of our church family. When you are in a small group, you experience the love and strength of Biblical community.

2. A place to protect.

"We know what real love is because Christ gave up His life for us. And so we also ought to give up our lives for our Christian brothers and sisters." 1 John 3:16

Imagine someone you can call when you're discouraged, someone to pray with when you are doubting and someone who can teach you more about what God is like. Imagine a loving community of people who notice when you are away, gently sharpen you when you need it and who help you share your faith with others. Small Groups are a place where you are protected and supported.

3. A place to grow.

"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." Proverbs 27:17

Small Groups are a place you can be equipped to become more like Jesus and to live a faith-filled life. We believe that every person is created with God-given potential to make a difference in the world. Small Groups are a place where there are like-minded people who believe in you. This is how leaders are developed. We want to see you grow, flourish and become all that God has called you to be!

Section 1: The Heart of Small Groups

WHY SMALL GROUPS?

1. Life change happens in the context of relationships. We are designed for relationships. Relationships define us, grow us, challenge us, strengthen us, and bless us.

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”
(Acts 2:42-47)

“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” (I John 1:7)

“Two *are* better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him *who is* alone when he falls, for *he has* no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm *alone*? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

Our culture devalues personal relationships, but the scripture requires relationships.

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:25

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (Ephesians 5:2)

2. At Triumph Church, we believe our church must grow larger and smaller at the same time.

- Small Groups are the vehicle through which ministry at Triumph takes place.
- Small Groups provide a setting to build dynamic relationships and facilitate Spiritual growth.

3. Therefore, Triumph is a church of small groups rather than a church with small groups.

- Our model for small group ministry is the early church. The book of Acts records the tremendous growth of the first church in Jerusalem. Small groups meetings in homes were the foundation of the early church. “They met day after day, in the Temple courts and from house to house.” Acts 5:4
- Small groups keep us connected. Small groups are the most effective way of “closing the back door” of our church.
- Small groups are important for handling the pastoral care functions of the church. They provide the personal touch that people need, especially in a crisis.

Section 1: The Heart of Small Groups

How We Do Small Groups

1. Ministry-based Circles

Each ministry team forms a Triumph Life Circle that cares for each other. Once you join the Dream Team, you are automatically in the Circle of the ministry you are working in. Our free-market small group system allows leaders to turn their existing relationships, gifts, interests, passions, and hobbies into disciple-making small groups. The free-market concept incorporates any life-giving activity that is of interest or enjoyment to the group leader and ideally, others as well.

2. Interest-based Life Circles (“free market” small groups)

Our small groups are called Triumph Life Circles (TLC’s) and are as varied as we are; group leaders use their gifts and passions to create a group that allows others to join with them in serving God. Whatever the age, interest, or location there is a Circle that is just right for you. The “free market” small groups are done in semesters 2-3 times per year.

Small group leaders are co-laborers with God and the five-fold ministry team.

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...” (Ephesians 4:11-13)

Four Features of Free-Market Small Groups

1. Free-market leaders use their gifts with their passions.
2. Built on felt needs & common interests.
3. Meet weekly on a semester calendar.
4. Welcome new people into the group anytime during the semester.

Our groups are as varied as we are. Group leaders use their gifts and passions to create a group that allows others to join with them in serving God. We have groups for all ages, interests, days, times, and locations. We foster an environment where our groups “do life” together with others.

As a leader, be innovative and creative! God has designed each person uniquely, and He can use that uniqueness as a catalyst for relationship building.

Section 2: A Meeting to Look Forward To

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The Unseen Element

“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” (Matthew 18:20)

Think of a recent small group meeting that you really enjoyed. What made it encouraging or helpful, so that you were looking forward to it the next week? Aim to lead a small group meeting YOU want to go to!

It is unseen, yet you know when it is there and when it is not. It is invisible yet it is perhaps the most powerful element of a meeting. It is atmosphere. A positive atmosphere that is full of faith, hope and love inspires people to grow, facilitates healthy relationship-building and importantly allows the Holy Spirit to work. Small groups are an expression of church in your home. There should be a culture of encouragement, blessing, and unity. Your meeting reflects the heart and vision of Triumph Church.

As a leader it is your role to set the tone and culture of your group. Atmosphere does not just happen. How can you create an effective atmosphere that builds others up? Consider the location of your group, your preparation for the meeting, and the example you set as a leader.

Cultivate a life-giving atmosphere. Be a source of encouragement. You do not need to know all the answers or be the source of all wisdom. The Holy Spirit is there to help and guide you. Here are some helpful questions you could ask of someone you wish to encourage in their spiritual growth:

- How is your prayer life?
- Are you reading the Bible daily?
- Have you been water baptized?
- Have you completed Growth Track?

How to Lead a Small Group Meeting

Flow of a Meeting

1. Welcome
2. Topic or Activity
3. Spiritual component
4. Ministry/Prayer

Four Don'ts

1. Business
2. Offerings
3. Unapproved speakers or material
4. Controversial Topics (Politics)

Section 2: A Meeting to Look Forward To

Location

We encourage all small groups to meet outside of the church building.

If you cannot meet in your home, look for a host home (possibly the home of someone in your group). Other possibilities for meeting locations include:

- Library conference room
- Recreation center
- Apartment complex clubhouse
- Outdoors in a park
- Restaurant
- Coffee Shop
- Koinonia House
- Riverfront Park

Group Dynamics

- Give time for discussion. Avoid doing all the talking. A good guideline is the "70/30" rule. Approximately 70% of the speaking should be from the members and 30% from the leader.
- Keep the discussion positive. Carefully lead the conversation back to the topic when tangents occur. Where sensitive issues or complex questions arise in your group, follow up one-on-one after the meeting.
- Men should minister to men and women to women. Couples may minister to a single.

Prepare for the Lost or New Believer

- Steer the discussion in a direction where everyone can participate.
- Remember that new believers may not grasp phrases that are common to us. (i.e., spiritual warfare, washed in the blood, etc.)
- Be prepared to change the direction of the meeting if needed. The primary goal is to create an environment where people feel loved and accepted.

Understand Your Role

Primary goal of a small group: To move each person in your group one step further in their walk with Christ. You will be an able provider of pastoral care because according to Philippians 4:13, "...you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you."

Your capacity to develop healthy relationships will enhance your ability to minister in times of need.

Section 2: A Meeting to Look Forward To

Recruiting

- Start with people that are already in your sphere of influence (co-workers, friends, neighbors)
- Find people around you that are new to the church, new believers, or have shown interest in getting involved.
- Look for people that you think you can help draw out their potential.
- Pray for God to send people to you that you haven't already discovered.

Childcare

Childcare for adult small groups will be the responsibility of each individual group. Of course, this is not a time for children to be unsupervised and is definitely the responsibility of the child's parent should anything be broken or destroyed while in a host home.

Remember: Safety, safety, safety. Supervision, supervision, supervision.

Also, as a small group leader, you may become aware of individual who would like to attend a small group, but do not have the resources to pay for a babysitter each week. At Triumph, we believe that members should not miss the opportunity to participate in a small group due to a financial burden. For that reason we offer reimbursement for childcare that occurs during a small group. The reimbursement is available for group leaders or single mothers.

You may obtain a Small Group Childcare Reimbursement Request Form from the Information Center. Please use discretion when submitting a reimbursement form – it is intended for those who would not otherwise be able to attend a small group.

For more information on this, please contact Becki Logue, beckilogue@bellsouth.net

Section 3: You the Leader

SECTION 3: YOU THE LEADER

What Small Group Leadership Looks Like

With the privilege of leadership comes responsibility. In his pastoral letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul lists some standards for leadership:

"If anyone wants to provide leadership in the church, good! But there are preconditions: A leader must be well-thought-of, committed to his wife, cool and collected, accessible, and hospitable. He must know what he's talking about, not be overfond of wine, not pushy but gentle, not thin-skinned, not money-hungry. He must handle his own affairs well, attentive to his own children and having their respect. For if someone is unable to handle his own affairs, how can he take care of God's church? He must not be a new believer, lest the position go to his head and the Devil trip him up. Outsiders must think well of him, or else the Devil will figure out a way to lure him into his trap.

The same goes for those who want to be servants in the church: serious, not deceitful, not too free with the bottle, not in it for what they can get out of it. They must be reverent before the mystery of the faith, not using their position to try to run things. Let them prove themselves first. If they show they can do it, take them on. No exceptions are to be made for women—same qualifications: serious, dependable, not sharp-tongued, not overfond of wine. Servants in the church are to be committed to their spouses, attentive to their own children, and diligent in looking after their own affairs. Those who do this servant work will come to be highly respected, a real credit to this Jesus-faith." (I Timothy 3:1-13 Msg)

You are qualified to lead a small group if you can:

- Encourage people
- Share Scripture
- Pray

A Small Group Leader is:

1. Passionate about God and people
2. A person of character and integrity
3. Committed to personal Spiritual growth
4. Supportive of the vision and mission of the church.

This includes:

- Attending Sunday Worship services
- Supporting the church financially through tithes and offerings.

Tips to Being a Successful Small Group Leader

1. Spend time individually with group members between meetings.
2. Foster communication within the group. Encourage them to fellowship outside of the group through phone conversations, e-mail, or sharing a meal or coffee.
3. Pray daily for group members. Tell them you are praying for them and encourage them to pray for each other.
4. Rally the group around a member going through a crisis. Use wisdom and be sensitive.
5. Communicate with your Small Group Coordinator (Becki Logue). Provide a roster to Becki and a copy to each member of your group.

Section 4: Prayer

SECTION 4: PRAYER

It is important that you, as a small group leader develop your prayer life and be able to teach others how to pray and to encourage others in their prayer life. One of your greatest responsibilities will be to pray daily for the people who are in your Small Group. Prayer will be a key to your effectiveness.

In James 5:16, the three key principles for prayer are given, "the fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man avails much."

Fervent – this words means intently, violently, or white hot – gives you the idea of being welded together. God wants us to pray with the kind of intensity that welds us together with His presence.

Effectual – it is not enough to pray; we must learn to pray effectively.

Avails much – you might translate this "gets results." This is where we want to end up... with results.

Prayer is the foundation.

Your small group ministry starts with you.

1. To be effective, you have to have been affected.
2. To be poured out, you have to be filled up.
3. To share Him, you have to know Him.
4. To lead people to Christ, you have to know where He is.
5. To fulfill His purposes for your group, you have to know what those purposes are.

Prayer covers, protects, and enlightens.

You need to spiritually prepare the environment before your meeting.

1. Humble yourself.
2. Pray over your meeting room or area.
3. Invite the presence of the Holy Spirit.
4. Ask God to work in the hearts of those He is calling to be there.
5. Ask God to prepare their hearts to receive what He wants to impart.
6. Pray that the Scriptures read will come alive in their hearts.

Prayer is the connecting point for ministry.

Your group needs to offer an opportunity for the ministry of the Holy Spirit in people's lives.

1. Make ministry available.
2. Ask the Lord for wisdom and discernment.
3. Ask for His compassion
4. Ask for His eyes, ears, and heart.
5. Follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.
6. Involve everyone when possible.
7. The pressure is on God.

BE FILLED WITH HIM. SEEK HIS VISION. PREPARE THE WAY. FULFILL THE CALL.

Section 5: Logistics

SECTION 5: LOGISTICS

The Process

1. Be a member of Triumph Church
2. Complete a Small Group Leader Application
3. Decide on a topic or activity, a place to meet, and a time and day that works for you.
4. Sign up at the Information Center.
5. Attend Small Group Leader Training meeting.
6. Recruit people for your group.
7. Pray and know that God is going to do great things in your group (Triumph Life Circle.)