

Equip Yourself to Lead

**First Mount Zion Baptist Church
Small Groups Leader Training**

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Small Groups Defined

Small Groups are relational communities that join together and connect through like interest, fellowship, study, praise and prayer as we share each other successes and bear each other's burdens while we grow together in Jesus Christ.

Vision:

To model Jesus's character, path, and mission to the world through approaching life and each meeting through the Great Commandment and Great Commission Principles

Mission:

Make the Connection, Make Disciples, Make a Difference

Theme:

Celebrate Jesus

Small Groups at First Mount Zion

Based on Relationships and Discipleship

At the heart of our vision for the Small Group ministry at First Mount Zion is the desire to see a community of believers (**relationship**) who are growing deeper in their love for Christ and their obedience to Him (**discipleship**).

What is the purpose of Small Groups?

The Scriptures indicate that the Christian life is to be lived out in community with other believers. Within that community, we are instructed to encourage one another, serve one another, rejoice and weep with one another, correct, instruct, build up, accept and love one another. Small Groups provide a wonderful context to facilitate involvement in one another's lives.

Make the Connection

At First Mount Zion, we believe each member of the body of Christ is created in His own image. We are not complete until we are in community with other believers. A church cannot be who they are and carry out that task unless they are in relationships with each other. As our church grows larger, we grow smaller. We were meant to do life together, and we believe that community happens best around shared interests and passions, so we have a variety of groups—from discipleship groups and sports groups to service, support and book groups for all ages.

Make Disciples

Regardless of the type of group, the main purpose of each one is to create a place where we can grow to become more like Jesus: to model His character, ways, and mission to the world through approaching life and each meeting through the Great Commandment and the Great Commission Principles.

Make a Difference

The Great Commission was a personal instruction not a suggestion. Jesus gave His disciples these instructions.

“Go into all the world and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you”. Matthew 28:19-20

Jesus came with a mission and He charged his followers with continuing that mission to take specific action while on this earth. Small Groups are connected units of the church body on a mission to share the light and love of Christ to those around them.

Hebrews 10:24-25
Matthew 28:18-20

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” **Hebrews 10:24-25**

As a church, we are hopeful that our Small Group ministry will be one of the significant ways we live out our obedience to this instruction.

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen. **Matthew 28:18-20**

That was a commandment given to us, not a suggestion.

Two Goals of a Small Group

1. Relationship:

The Christian Life is not solitary. God calls us to live out our lives with him in the context of relationships—especially those relationships with other members at First Mount Zion. We are called to work out our relationship with Christ in community with our spiritual brothers and sisters. One of the primary purposes of the Small Group structure is to provide a context where we can establish real and lasting relationships.

Relationship (Continued)

Relationally, Small Groups provide a context for:

- Developing friendships
- Caring for one another with practical help and personal encouragement
- Celebrating joyful occasions, have fun together, and provide support during difficult times
- Serving side by side with group members as we seek to serve others.
- Encouraging outreach.

Two Goals of a Small Group

2. Biblical Discipleship:

- A *disciple* is a fully devoted follower of Christ who finds his/her identity in Christ and expresses that identity through loving God, loving others, and obeying the commands of Christ.
- The Small Group should be a place which encourages our growth in Christian discipleship. We are called to be disciples and to make disciples. In our meetings, we should strive to encourage each other through Scripture, praying together, and challenging one another toward growth in Christ-likeness.

Biblical Leadership

Small Group Leaders Lead By

Principle 1 – We lead by *living as examples.*

Paul practiced what he preached. He could tell the Ephesians elders to remember how he lived (v. 18), and he could even say, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”

(1 Cor. 11:1). As leaders, our lives ought to reflect the glorious gospel that we proclaim.

Biblical Leadership

Small Group Leaders Lead By

Principle 2 – We lead by serving. Paul said he “served the Lord with all humility and with tears . . . ” (v. 19). His life was characterized by “laying down his life” in the manner of Christ who had come “not to be served but to serve ... (Mark 10:45). So, as leaders, we lead by becoming servants.

Biblical Leadership

Small Group Leaders Lead By

Principle 3 – We lead by *persevering*. No one said leadership would be easy. Paul experienced “conflicts without” (v. 19, 23) and “conflicts within” (v. 29-30), but he continued to minister faithfully to the end. Leadership is not for the faint-hearted.

Biblical Leadership

Small Group Leaders Lead By

Principle 4 – We lead by teaching. Paul was faithful to teach both in public forums as well as from house to house (v. 20). He was faithful to tell his disciples whatever would be profitable to them, even if he suspected it might be hard for them to accept (v. 20). He was faithful in teaching “the whole council of God” (v. 27).

Biblical Leadership

Small Group Leaders Lead By

Principle 5 – We lead by being *Missional*. Paul said “I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus Christ, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (v. 24). Paul’s life showed that he lived to fulfill the calling given to him by the Lord: giving witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Biblical Leadership

Small Group Leaders Lead By

Principle 6 – We lead by being committed to *the word*. Paul commended the Ephesian elders to God and the “word of His grace” (v. 32), so leaders must be students of the Word, always pointing others to the Word.

Biblical Leadership

Small Group Leaders Lead By

Principle 7 – We lead by being *hard working*.

Paul, could as an apostle, have received his support from those to whom he served, but he chose to work day and night, so as to meet his own needs (v. 34-35). Serving others in the gospel ministry always exacts sacrifice. It's not of convenience.

Biblical Leadership

Small Group Leaders Lead By

Principle 8 – We lead by loving. Paul exemplified this by loving sacrificially. He reminded his disciples of the Lord's words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (v. 35). Leaders who put this into practice will find that in giving, they will enrich many, while at the same time enrich their own souls.

Building Biblical Community

- As stated earlier, we have two goals for our Small Groups ministry:
- Developing biblical community and encouraging Christian discipleship.

We are going to look at the value of biblical relationships and how to promote them in your Small Groups.

Building Biblical Community

- Relationships should result in Biblical Community.
- In the Small Group context, Christian men and women can form relationships that allow them to be known at a personal level, and that enable them to experience care and encouragement.

Building Biblical Community

- Relationships are not the inevitable result of meeting together.
- The most successful Small Groups value relationships
- They see their Small Group as more than just a social gathering or club
- Genuine relationships require effort, and leaders play an important part in helping the group cultivate and develop friendships by leading and motivating their people in this direction.

Building Biblical Community

Relationships should aid Transformation

- God has given us the Christian community with all its differences and giftedness as the context for change and growth. The truth is, God uses you to help others change and He uses others to help you change. Small Groups are communities where we help one another in the process of discipleship.

Building Biblical Communities

The One-Another's of the New Testament

- Be at peace with one another (Mark 9:50)
- Love one another (John 13:34)
- Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10)
- Honor one another (Romans 12:10)
- Live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16)

Building Biblical Community

The One Another's of the New Testament

- Stop passing judgment on one another (Romans 14:13)
- Accept one another (Romans 15:7)
- Instruct one another (Romans 15:14)
- Greet one another (Romans 16:16)
- Serve one another (Galatians 5:13)

Building Biblical Community

The One Another's of the New Testament

- Carry each other's burden (Galatians 6:2)
- Be patient, bearing with one another in love (Ephesians 4:2)
- Be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19)
- Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5:21)

Building Biblical Community

The One Another's of the New Testament

- In humility consider others better than yourselves (Philippians 2:3)
- Teach one another (Colossians 3:16)
- Admonish one another (Colossians 3:16)
- Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18)
- Build each other up (1Thessalonians 5:11)

Building Biblical Community

The One Another's of the New Testament

- Spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24)
- Do not slander one another (James 4:11)
- Do not grumble against one another (James 5:9)
- Confess your sins to one another (James 5:16)
- Pray for one another (James 5:16)
- Clothe yourself with humility toward one another (1 Peter 5:5)

Leading the Group Through Relationship

Through Meetings and Activities

- As the leader of your group, your responsibility is always to seek to provide a model for others to imitate
- Set an example by the way you pursue relationships with those in the group.
- Take a genuine interest in people
- Draw people out by asking questions about something you know is going on in their life. Seek out opportunities to show an interest in people.
- New group, new relationships
- New people coming into a Small Group often do not know one another. Wise leaders will seek to help the group get to know one another.

Leading the Group Through Relationship

Through Meetings and Activities

- Make meetings relational
- Try to provide some relational element in each meeting. This means planning for it. An addendum of possible activities and possible relational questions will be provided
- Be aware of the issues that pertain to season of life
- Keep in mind the realities of each unique season of life and seek to lead in ways that reflect care for your group members.
- A group comprised of people who do not have children at home typically have more available time and the flexibility to spend time together than a group comprised of parents of young children or teenagers.
- Understanding the needs of your group will help you to set realistic goals for relating to one another.

Leading the Group Through Care

- We all need help with the basic events of life, and sometimes our need is big: at the birth of a baby, a tragic accident, hospitalization, the death of someone close.
- Typically, your group is going to be relationally closest to the need. As a leader, you lead in coordinating care and in doing so, you help foster deeper relationships.
- You may need to talk initially with the person in need to determine whether you should mobilize the group or simply ask another individual to help in the situation.
- In a crisis, the leader is responsible to insure that care is being provided.
- This does not mean that the leader is the one primarily providing the care—or even organizing the care.

If you provide all of the organization and care, you deprive the group of practical ways to help them build relationships.

Leading the Group Through Care

Help a member move. Care for the sick or injured with meals, cleaning, errands or simply a visitation.

Provide meals and support for a family during a time of grief.

Provide child care to a parent who cannot afford it or has no one to help.

Help an elderly member with basic chores

Leading the Group Through Outreach

- One of the great privileges of the Christian life is sharing the Gospel.
- Investing in relationships with unbelievers is a part of being a witness of the Gospel.
- It is in and through these relational investments that we often have the opportunity to share the Gospel or invite someone out to our Small Group or a church activity where they will hear the Gospel..

Leading the Group Through Outreach

- Find ways in which your group can work together to support the outreach efforts of the church.
- Pray for the unbelievers with whom you—as a group—are developing relationships with a goal of sharing the Gospel and inviting them to an appropriate church event (The empty chair).
- Sponsor your own outreach activities. In doing this, it is important that the group is excited about the idea, and you encourage maximum participation.

Ask the group for their ideas for outreach. It builds enthusiasm and promotes maximum participation. Please advise the Small Group Director of your outreach project as approval by Pastor Torian is needed to move forward.

Leading the Group Through Prayer

- **Invite** the group to state what they are asking of God. Solicit the group for *specific* requests
- **Encourage** the group to form requests around God's promises and purposes stated in the Bible (See Hebrews 6:12-15; 2 Corinthians 1:20-22)
- **Realize** that many times prayer requests become opportunities for us to understand others circumstances and what our responses to those circumstances should be.

Leading a Small Group Discussion

- A key element for building a Small Group into a community of disciples of Jesus Christ is having effective discussions.
- Discussion leading involves asking good questions and helping the group grapple with these questions and their answers—as a group.
- Your role is to keep the discussion biblically focused in order to lead men and women in greater understanding of Scripture and application of its principles to their lives.

Leading a Small Group Discussion

- One of the main jobs of the Small Group leader has is to facilitate discussion.
- There are times when the facilitator might do more talking to explain something in the material, but then they must transition to open discussion.
- Leaders must create an open atmosphere that invites participation of group members and values their input.

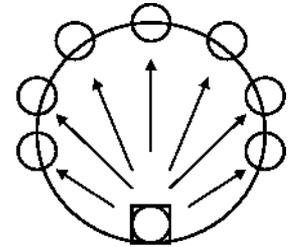
Leading a Small Group Discussion

- The following diagrams show two negative examples of Small Group dynamics to avoid and one positive example of Small Group dynamics.

Leading a Small Group Discussion

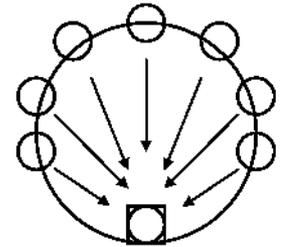
Not This:

Leader doing all the talking



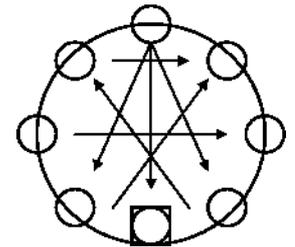
Not This:

Group responding only to the leader



But This:

Group interacting as the leader **guides** discussion



Leading a Small Group Discussion

- Arrange the group in a circle, if possible, so that everyone can see each other. If someone separates him/herself from the group, encourage them to join in (“Make some room so John can squeeze in here.” etc.).
- Let the group know that you don’t have all the answers. If a question is asked to which you do not know the answer, tell the person you don’t know. Offer to do some research (or ask a member to research the question) and come back the next time with a response for that person.
- Let the group know that it’s okay to interrupt you at any time if they have a question and that there is no such thing as a dumb question.
- Ask for input and feedback to what you have shared.

Leading a Small Group Discussion

- Direct responses or questions back to the group when they are initially directed only to you (*“Let me hear what some of the rest of you think about that first. Anyone care to respond? Betty, what would you say?”*).
- Try to include **everyone**. Ask a more reserved person what they think about the topic you are discussing. Let them know they don’t have to share if they don’t want to (*“Let’s hear from someone who hasn’t had the chance to share yet... Linda, how about you?”* etc.).
- Ask **“open-ended”** questions as opposed to “yes or no” questions. Not, *“Did you like the Bible passage for this week?”* but, *“What did you like about the Bible passage for this week? or What did you get out of it?”* Open-ended questions tend to promote discussion.

Leading a Small Group Discussion

- Ask for clarification or dig deeper into an answer to make it come alive (*“Does that work in a different situation too?”* or *“That’s a good answer, but how easy is it to really do that?”* or *“Do any of the rest of you find that hard to do?”* or *“How does that work in everyday life?”*).
- Allow various thoughts, but **refocus** if necessary. The group may wander off from the material, but the discussion may be what’s on the heart of the group at that time. If it becomes of very little value (trivial), refocus the group back to the material (*“Well, let’s get back to our material... what do you think...”*). Acknowledge everyone who participates (a nod, eye contact, or verbal encouragement, etc.).

Guarding Discussions

- It is the leader's responsibility to guard the discussion—stepping in to stop inappropriate sharing. Below are a few situations to watch for...
- *Don't allow people to confess anyone's faults* (particularly their spouse's) but their own. Gossiping or griping about another person is not appropriate.
- *Don't allow doctrinal discussion to become divisive or argumentative.* Healthy discussion, even disagreement, regarding the opinions of the faith is to be encouraged, but must always be attended with love.

Guarding Discussions

- *Don't entertain negative attitudes toward the church.* The Small Group leader is expected to support the mission of First Mount Zion, its philosophy of ministry, and its leadership.
- Encourage anyone with a specific concern to bring it to church leadership and the Small Group Director. Concerns for the church can be talked about by the Small Group in a healthy, positive way that encourages ownership (“Is there something we could do to help in this area?” etc.).
- *Don't allow one person's continual problem to be the focus of the group.* There are bound to be persons in groups that require extra care. Some of these people can be cared for and ministered to within the context of a Small Group; others may need help from someone professional or someone outside the group. Sound judgment is required here.

The Goal is Application

- Application questions should encourage the group to grapple with how these ideas make a claim on their own lives.
- Application is the goal of your discussion. Make sure you get your group to this stage early enough to allow for significant discussion.
- Remember, application is the goal. Before you can get to this step, you must listen to what people are saying—how they are processing the material. Do they understand the main points and their implications?
- Questions that only require a “yes” or “no” answer are usually ineffective. For most people, they lead the discussion nowhere.
- To move a discussion forward, build on the comments of the group

The Goal is Application

Some sample application questions:

- How does knowing this truth about God make a difference in your life? How can you apply this truth?
- What are the implications of this to you and me?
- What must change in your life now that you understand this?
- Is there a command in this passage that we are required to obey?
- What example can we follow here?

Helpful Questions for Group Leaders

Group leaders should think through the following five matters in preparation for group meetings:

- **Observation** – *How can I effectively and creatively lead the group to observe what the text says?*
- **Interpretation** – *How can I lead the group to understand what the text means?*
- **Application** – *How can I lead the group to apply the text to their life?*
- **Dynamic** – *How can I facilitate effective discussion which leads to understanding and application?*
- **Practicalities** - *How can I facilitate the group meeting time in order to encourage deepening relationships?*

Small Group Agenda/Schedule

The schedule below provides a **sample** way a group may wish to order their time for a 90-120 minute session. Each group is free to determine it's own agenda and make adjustments as what would best suit the needs of their group.

Fellowship and Refreshments (20—30 minutes)

This time may be devoted to informal discussion, meeting/greeting members, ice breakers. etc.

Opening Prayer

This time may be devoted to praying for God's Spirit to help the group understand and apply the truths of the scriptures and the study.

Interest/Study/Discussion (60 minutes)

This time may be devoted to an interactive study of the Word of God

Closing Prayer and Applications (15-20 minutes)

This time may be devoted to prayer, addressing the personal needs of the group and application of the study

Next Meeting/Follow up

In Summary

At First Mount Zion, we believe each member of the body of Christ is created in His image. We are not complete until we are in community with other believers. A church cannot be who they are and carry out that task unless they are in relationships with each other. As our church grows bigger, we grow smaller. We were meant to do life together, and we believe that community happens best around shared interests and passions, so we have a variety of groups from discipleship groups, sports groups, service, support and book groups for all ages. There's a group for everyone , including YOU!

Small Groups Defined

Small Groups are relational communities that join together and connect through **like interest**, fellowship, study, praise and prayer as we share our successes and bear each other's burdens while we grow together in Jesus Christ.

How Do We Get There?

Small Groups

Biblical Strategy:

**Lived out Through the Vision, Mission and
Theme**



God Bless You For Your Service