

Community Groups

Mission and Vision



The book of Acts says of the disciples:

- *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 any had need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. (Acts 2:44-46)*
- *All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. (Acts 4:32)*

When the church was birthed in the power of the Holy Spirit, transformation happened. The disciples were one in heart and mind — their lives touched. They continued to meet together in the Jerusalem temple, but they also met together in smaller groups — in homes.

At Faith Bible Church, we believe in gathering together for the proclamation of the Word, for corporate worship and prayer, and for celebrating baptisms and the Lord's Supper in our Sunday meetings. We want everyone in our fellowship to make that a priority.

But we also encourage involvement in a small group. We do this because small groups are a practical context for encouraging deeper relationships and growth in our Christian lives. In fact, people gathering together in a small group is not an optional, sub-ministry of our church, it **IS** the church in its smallest unit.

While the Bible does not command us to organize a small group ministry, the Scriptures do indicate that the Christian life is to be lived out in community with other believers (Rom. 12:4-5; Eph. 2:11-22). Within that community we are instructed to encourage one another, serve one another, be devoted to one another, correct, instruct, build up, accept, and love one another (just to name a few!). Our small groups provide a wonderful context to actually live these out.

Small Groups Facilitate. . .

- The application of the Word to our lives
- Belonging, friendship, and healthy accountability
- Caring for one another
- Serving one another
- Evangelism
- Fellowship
- The development of leaders

Our Mission

We believe it is important that we are continuously growing in our relationship with the Lord as well as in relationships with one another. Small groups meet regularly to study the Bible, pray and care for one another, and offer opportunities for building lasting relationships.

Our Vision

The “One-Anothers” of the New Testament

- Be at peace with one another (Mk 9:50)
- Love one another (Jn 13:34)
- Belong to one another (Ro 12:5)
- Be devoted to one another (Ro 12:10)
- Honor one another (Ro 12:10)
- Rejoice with one another (Ro 12:15)
- Weep with one another (Ro 12:15)
- Live in harmony with one another (Ro 12:16)
- Accept one another (Ro 15:7)
- Instruct one another (Ro 15:14)
- Greet one another (Ro 16:16)
- Agree with one other (1 Co 1:10)
- Wait for one another (1 Co 11:33)
- Care for one another (1 Co 12:25)
- Serve one another (Gal 5:13)
- Carry one another's burdens (Gal 6:2)
- Be patient, bearing with one another (Eph. 4:2)
- Be kind and compassionate to one another (Eph 4:32)
- Forgive one another (Eph 4:32)
- Submit to one another (Eph 5:21)
- Bear with one another (Col 3:13)
- Teach and admonish one other (Col 3:16)
- Encourage one another (1 Th 5:11)
- Build up one another (1 Th 5:11)
- Spur one another on (Heb 10:24)
- Offer hospitality to one another (1 Pe 4:9)
- Minister gifts to one another (1 Pe 4:10)
- Be humble toward one another (1 Pe 5:5)
- Confess your sins to one another (Jas 5:16)
- Pray for one another (Jas 5:16)
- Fellowship with one another (1 Jn 1:7)

Our Mission and Vision Applied

Within our small groups, our shared life and ministry will be marked by these six aims:

1. Know and serve one another persistently. (1 Thessalonians 2:7–8; Hebrews 3:12–13)

Week-in and week-out, we will work to know each other more and more deeply — sharing our hearts and lives, praying for one another, asking questions, and bearing each other's burdens. We will be persistent learners of one another. And with everything we learn — good, bad, or otherwise — we will strive to love and serve one another — meeting each other's needs, encouraging growth, and helping one another thrive.

2. Depend on the Lord prayerfully. (Philippians 4:6–7; Hebrews 4:14–16)

Prayer will be the regular, visible engine of our community. We need God every hour, every minute of every hour, so prayer will be our means to everything. We will look to God for everything we need, never taking his provision for granted. When we're alone and when we're together, we will be a people of prayer — always adoring, always confessing, always thanking, always asking.

3. Meet God through his word faithfully and expectantly. (Psalm 19:7–11; 2 Peter 1:3–4)

The Bible will play a central role in our community because it holds the words of life. We need those pages more than we need food, and there are always more riches to be seen, enjoyed, and applied in our lives. We read faithfully — meaning regularly and with the eyes of faith — and we read expectantly — anticipating God to speak and move each time we open his book.

4. Pursue disciples for Jesus boldly and globally. (Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 1:8)

Our commission from Jesus is clear: Go, and make disciples. God saved us in order to send us. We are lights in a world of darkness that is desperately in need. We are God's chosen means of spreading good news and winning worship for himself in every corner of this earth. Therefore, we are to be bold where we are, and we are to be behind what God is doing among the nations. We will witness for Jesus where we are, and send and support witnesses where we are not.

5. Rest in the gospel confidently and humbly. (Romans 8:1, 32, 37–39; 1 Corinthians 15:1–4)

Everything we think, say, and do as a small group stands on the firm foundation of the gospel. We have been saved by grace through faith, wholly apart from anything we have done or earned. We do not deserve God's love, but in Christ we have it. We want our relationships, our meetings, and our ministry together to be shaped by and soaked with the gospel. This message should produce the boldest confidence and courage, and it should produce the most tender and compassionate humility.

6. Work out our salvation soberly and joyfully. (Philippians 2:12–13; Galatians 5:1, 13, 25)

Lastly, we are committed to living more and more like Christ. It is the joyful privilege of God's people to be conformed to the image of his Son. It is not pretty or easy, but it is undeniably good and important. Year by year, week by week, even day by day, we will be identifying areas of

weakness or failure, receiving forgiveness because of the finished work of Christ, and then working together for change.

Segal, Marshall. (2015, February 26). *Every Small Group Needs a Vision.*

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

— Hebrews 10:19-25

The key to maturity is time and community. Discernment and godly wisdom develop in a community that spans generations. The church is called to be this place where the [God's] Spirit uses normal patterns and rhythms of the Christian life in a community, so that we may bear fruit like a well-watered tree. Despite common appearances, the church is the place where God's new creation is coming into existence and being sustained by the Spirit like a great vineyard.

— Michael Horton

The Christian community demonstrates the effectiveness of the gospel. We are the living proof that the gospel is not an empty word but a powerful word that takes men and women who are lovers of self and transforms them by grace through the Spirit into people who love God and others. We are the living proof that the death of Jesus was not just a vain expression of God's love but an effective death that achieved the salvation of a people who now love one another sincerely from a pure heart.

— Tim Chester

Real fellowship is coming together like grapes—crushed—knowing each-others sins and failures and weaknesses—with skins of ego broken—the rich, fragrant exhilarating juices of life mingling with the wine of sharing, understanding, accepting, forgiving, and caring. Fellowship is the fusing of personalities in the Presence and Person of Jesus Christ.

— Jamie Buckingham

Small Group Guidelines

While we do not require any of our small groups to adopt an official “small group covenant,” we do provide the following practical guidelines that you can use to communicate expectations and build unity. These are especially helpful when new groups are being formed.

- The purpose of our small group is to encourage and strengthen one another's faith through fellowship, Bible study, prayer, and mutual service.
- I will do my best to make attending this group a priority.
- I will do my best to do any assignments or reading in order to be prepared for discussions.
- I will maintain confidentiality with regard to anything shared in our group, and seek to cultivate an atmosphere of mutual trust and vulnerability. Under no circumstances will I gossip about anyone or anything.
- I will be respectful to the other members of our group, to encourage them, and pray for them each week.
- I give permission to other group members to speak the truth in love into my life as we pursue mutual accountability with one another.
- I will strive to be sensitive to the needs of others in the group and commit to seeking ways to serve one another with the love of Christ.

Summing Up. . .

Key Idea: Servant Leadership — “*Leader*” is not primarily a title or a position. It is a function and that function is humble service. According to Jesus, true leadership is taking the lead in serving.

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:25-28)

Twice in 2 Corinthians, Paul spoke of “...*the authority the Lord gave me for building you up rather than tearing you down...*” (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10)

*“True power, the power Jesus consistently demonstrated, is power **under**. True power never devalues, dehumanizes, coerces, or controls. Instead, it serves, gives sacrificially, and acts for the good of the other. Power under is the way of the cross, the way of humility. . . We are called to live out our legitimate power with responsibility and humility.”*

— Michael John Cusick