



## **5 Stones Church**

### **Community Group Leader Guide**

**(Acts: 2:42-47) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.**

Community Groups exist to make life-changing relationships accessible to everyone in the church.

Sharing life through community is the way God intended the local church to function.

Community Groups are not a meeting... they have a meeting.

Guidelines for successful small group meetings.

- Center your group around Scripture and Prayer.
- Communicate with group members between meetings each week.
- Have members fill out the Contact Information Sheet.
- Respect people's time.
- Remember that excellence creates comfort in others.
- Avoid the ABC's. (A = Alcohol B = Business C = Controversial Topics)
- Remember the 70/30 rule.
- Record attendance after each meeting using Church Center.
- Help Group Members take their next step in growing their faith.
- Set Expectations. (Clarity is kindness)
- Identify and equip new co-leaders.

**3 things that every small group should provide:**

- Connection
- Care
- Growth

In order to make sure that these three things happen we want to make sure every group has a co-leader and a component designated for connection, care, and growth.

## Co-leaders

Each small group should aim to have 3 leaders.

### ✓ Connect Leader

- (Romans 15:7) Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.
- **Your big win is that everyone leaves feeling like they can belong there.**
- The role of every connect leader is to facilitate the connection of each member to one another as well as the connection time of each group by doing the following:
  - **Introduce**
    - Break the awkward, before it breaks the group.
    - Practical Ways to Do This:
      - Nametags (Yes, even adults. No, it's not weird. It's loving.)
      - Contact info forms so people can connect outside of group.
      - Group text thread so communication doesn't live in one person's head.
    - If someone is new, walk them to people, don't just point and say, "They're friendly."
    - If someone is standing alone, eating alone, or scrolling their phone like it's a life raft, go get them. You don't have to become their best friend. Just connect them to one.
  - **Include**
    - Help everyone feel included by making sure conversation during dinner stays appropriate and doesn't exclude any one.
      - Avoid inside jokes
      - Bring context to past events if necessary
      - If one person is talking for too long, redirect.
    - We want to know who was there but also who was not there so that we can reach out and include and invite them to join the next week. So make sure to keep an updated roster and attendance.
  - **Invite**
    - At 5 Stones, invitation is a huge part of our culture. As the Connect leader you carry a lot of the responsibility in your group to invite others.
    - People don't come back by accident. Community is built not found.
    - Practically:
      - Invite new people into your group.
      - Invite current people to keep showing up.
      - You're the main communicator during the week.
      - Coordinate meals or potlucks (because food is a spiritual gift).

### ✓ Care Leader

- (Romans 12:15) Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.
- **Your big win is that people feel loved, seen, and prayed for - not prayed at.**
  - **Prayer**
    - As the care leader you will facilitate the Care component of community groups. We always begin this with prayer
      - During this time, go around the room and ask for prayer requests and how we can support them. Remind the group that everything that is said is confidential unless otherwise noted. When someone has a prayer request, please stop and pray for them immediately. Take turns praying for one another.

- There is a prayer time guide available on our leader resource page.
- Helpful tip: short prayers are better than impressive prayers
- **Care**
  - Write it down. Follow up. Repeat.
    - Write down prayer requests, pray throughout the week, and follow up on any needs that are brought up.
  - For example: Someone on a Monday night group shares that they are having procedure done on Thursday. Write that down and pray and follow up on Thursday to know how the procedure went.
- **Make Aware**
  - Make the group aware of any needs or prayer requests that arise in the group.
  - Make Church Leadership aware of anything that is serious or we should be aware of.
    - Some people may prefer to keep health issues private, please ask them if you may share it with Church Leadership and assure them of the confidentiality of it with Church Leadership.
  - Care doesn't mean you fix everything. It means you don't let people carry it alone.

## ✓ **Grow Leader**

- (Romans 12:2) Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
- **Your big win: People leave changed, not just informed.**
  - **Clarify**
    - Clarify the goal and set expectations of discussion.
    - Key Expectations:
      - Everyone participates
      - There are no "right answers", but there *is* honesty.
      - This is not Bible trivia night.
    - We want everyone to participate in the discussion. It's not about knowing the right answer but about honesty and a genuine desire to grow in our faith.
      - People shouldn't leave thankful they learned more information, but that they look and act more like Christ.
  - **Confess**
    - Discussion should always be around God's word as we confess to the truth of what it says. Conversation should remain biblical and grounded in truth.
    - We don't just sit around and talk about how much we know about the Bible, we open up our hearts to God's word and each other and share the points in our life where scripture is convicting, challenging, or encouraging us.
      - We confess to the point where The Holy Spirit through His word is shining a light onto our unchristlikeness
  - **Challenge**
    - As we confess and share there should always be a practical next step or takeaway for the group.
    - Challenge the group with a practical way to live out what was discussed.
    - If there's no application, there's no transformation.
    - This could be forms of repentance, new rhythms or routines to establish, or relationships to invest into.

If you don't have 3 leaders make it your goal this semester to find someone in your group who can help you with one of the 3 components.

If you do have 3, look to add a 4th. As leaders we should always be looking at ways to develop and encourage other leaders.

## Components

### ✓ Connect Time

- Share a meal together
- Introduction of members and sharing your stories.
- Discussion starters questions

### ✓ Care Time

- Take prayer requests and ask how the group can support each member.
- Allow whoever wants to share to share and pray as requests are presented.
- Review the Care Time guide on our resources page.

### ✓ Grow Time

- This is when discussion around scripture or the sermon is to take place.
- Should not be a sermon, but should be interactive with the members of the group.
- We recommend using our sermon discussion guide.

For example- for a 90-Minute Community Group Gathering that runs from 6:30-8:00 PM the agenda would be as follows:

### **6:30-6:40 Arrival**

This is the time for everyone to arrive and get settled. Have everyone wear a name tag. Make sure they fill out the Contact Information form (available on our small group leader webpage) when they arrive.

**6:40-7:10 Connect Time** During this time, members will enjoy a meal together and connection. On our leader resources page we have some options for spreading out the responsibility for dinner so that no one feels like everything falls on their shoulders.

The first session that everyone meets together should start with 3-minute introductions. Use a timer to keep things moving- so someone doesn't start rambling.

**In their introduction have people share:**

*Their name*

*Where they are from*

*Where do they live in town?*

*Family?*

*Career? Hobbies?*

*What brought them to 5 Stones?*

*Which service do they attend?*

**Then, answer one light Conversation Starter. The list of these are available on our leader resource page.**

\*Note: TheConnection Leader should be on the lookout for if a new member joins a group after the start of the semester. If there is a new member that joins the group EVERYONE should re-do their introduction at the start of the gathering.

You can limit introductions to 2 minutes if necessary based on time. Introductions are very important to ensure that all members feel like they belong!

In subsequent events- where everyone has already gotten the basic introduction- this is the format for fellowship:

- (1) Name
- (2) Praise Report or something you're thanking God for today
- (3) Answer one or both conversation starters (we will offer one light and one deep. Participants can answer one or both)

\* This should take 2-3 minutes max per person. Use a timer!

### **7:10-7:30 Care Time**

During this time, go around the room and ask for prayer requests and how we can support them. Remind the group that everything that is said is confidential unless otherwise noted. When someone has a prayer request, please stop and pray for them immediately. Take turns praying for one another.

There is a prayer time guide available on our leader resource page.

### **7:30-8:00 Grow Time**

This is the time when discussions take place. We want the Grow Time to be very interactive. Avoid a lecture/teaching format if possible to allow members to ask questions and engage in meaningful discussions.

### **8:00 Conclusion**

- Make sure everyone has had a chance to take a picture of the contact information sheet.
- Confirm next meeting date/time.
- Who is bringing food?
- Any church announcements that need to be made

Remind people:

“Friendship comes from following up! I want to challenge you to text a group member in the next 24 hours and invite them to coffee/lunch or go on a walk...don't wait for someone to text you!”

**You can access all Leader resources and videos by going to [www.5stoneschurch.com/groupleaders](http://www.5stoneschurch.com/groupleaders).**

**If you have any questions or need anything at all as the semester goes along please email Jonathan Ward at [jonathan@5stoneschurch.com](mailto:jonathan@5stoneschurch.com).**