

small**groups**

LEADER GUIDE



TABLE OF CONTENTS

SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE	3
Why Small Groups?	4
What a Small Group Looks Like	6
Your Role as a Small Group Leader	8
How to Start Your Small Group	16
 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS	 17
 LEADERSHIP AGREEMENT	 21
 HELPFUL SCRIPTURE REFERENCES	 23

All Scripture is from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.

A photograph of three men of different ages (young, middle-aged, and older) sitting at a wooden table, looking down at a small object held by the older man. They are in a room with large windows in the background. A semi-transparent white box is overlaid on the bottom left of the image, containing the text 'SECTION 01' and 'SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE'.

SECTION 01

SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

WHY SMALL GROUPS?

Small Groups have one, simple purpose—to bring people together. We believe God created us to live in community with others, and only then can we experience the full life he intends for us.

At Seacoast, we help people to Find God, Grow in their Faith, Discover their Purpose, and Make a Difference. Small Groups are the Grow in their Faith component of this vision. God wants every one of us to experience freedom while on this earth; the system he uses to accomplish that freedom is people.

We believe life change happens in the context of relationships.

Meaningful relationships can be hard to find, and Small Groups exist to make life-changing relationships relevant and accessible to you.

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. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

—ECCLESIASTES 4:9-12

At Seacoast, we believe 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 and care for people. Seacoast is a church *of* Small Groups, not a church *with* Small Groups.

We base our Small Group model on the early church, as described in the Bible in the book of Acts. In Acts, you can read about the tremendous growth of the first church in Jerusalem, where Small Group meetings in homes helped lay the foundation.

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

On the Small Groups team, our rally cry is: Connect, Protect, Grow. What we mean by this is, Small Groups offer people:

1 A PLACE TO CONNECT

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)

We were not made to do life alone. God created us for community, and Small Groups provide a place to connect with others, share life, and grow in faith together.

2 A PLACE TO PROTECT

We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. —1 JOHN 3:16 (NLT)

It is through life together that our problems become smaller, and God uses others to bring support and encouragement to our lives. Small Groups become a place where others don't just know your name, but also care about what is happening in your life and want to support you in your spiritual journey.

3 A PLACE TO GROW

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. —PROVERBS 27:17

We believe every person is created 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 reach the potential God has put inside you.

WHAT SMALL GROUPS LOOK LIKE

YOUR LIFE CAN BECOME YOUR GROUP

At Seacoast, we want to help you connect with others based on what your interests are. This means we want you to gather together based on your season of life or what you enjoy and find important. Essentially, the things you are already doing in your life can be the starting point for gathering as a Small Group.

Small Group Leaders may form their group around their gifts and interests or through a curriculum suggested by the ministry leader. Our commitment is to help you launch a Small Group that will enrich your faith through community.

GROUP STRUCTURE

Groups meet throughout the year in three semesters. This structure provides rest for the leaders and opportunities to bring new people into the group. In between these seasons, there is an opportunity for people to join another group or lead a group.



Groups meet regularly (weekly/bi-weekly) during each semester.

Groups meet in a variety of places like homes, parks, restaurants, coffee shops and office buildings.

New groups start every semester, making it easy to build community and enjoy different types of groups.

No matter what your group's focus, each meeting should be made up of four things:

1 CASUAL FELLOWSHIP

A laid-back time for group members to talk and get to know each other.

2 DISCUSSION TOPIC

This will vary based on what kind of group you're leading. It could be a discussion about a topic of faith, Sunday message, or a study from Right Now Media.

3 PRAYER

Ask for prayer requests from group members and pray at the beginning and/or the end of each group meeting.

4 SPIRITUAL COMPONENT

This is what differentiates your Small Group from your neighborhood social club. Whether it's through activities or the discussion, always find a way to include the Word of God. This can be as simple as sharing something God is teaching you or talking about a verse you read that week.

Small Groups are not a place for:

- Business networking or advertising
- Offerings or collecting money
- Unapproved material that is contrary to Scripture or the beliefs and values of Seacoast Church

YOUR ROLE AS A SMALL GROUP LEADER

God has a part for all of us to play in the church, and Small Group Leaders come alongside the pastors and staff of Seacoast to help care for people.

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)

The primary role of a Small Group Leader is to help group members take steps forward in their walk with God. Remember: Connect, Protect, Grow!

Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds... — PROVERBS 27:23

People in your group will be at different places in their spiritual lives, and each person will have different next steps to take. Here is a guide of some next steps you can help people take:

- Start attending Sunday services.
- Start reading the Bible regularly.
- Start praying regularly.
- Be water baptized and share your testimony with others.
- Complete the Seacoast Growth Track.
- Join the Dream Team.
- Start tithing.
- Start attending First Wednesday services.
- Attend a Seacoast conference or event.
- Invite a friend or neighbor to church or a Small Group.
- Attend a Small Group Leader Training to become a Small Group Leader.

HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL SMALL GROUP LEADER

- 1 Pray for the members of your group.
- 2 Share about Small Group Champions with your group. Identify and invite them to fill one of the champion roles.
- 3 Consider partnering with a co-leader to help share the responsibility of caring for and leading your group.
- 4 Connect with group members between weekly meetings, face-to-face or phone, email, text, or social media. Encourage group members to connect with each other throughout the week as well.
- 5 Have fun through laughter and by creating an enjoyable environment.
- 6 Respect people's time by beginning and ending the meeting on time.
- 7 Invite group members to attend church services and events with you like First Wednesday services, conferences, or outreach opportunities.
- 8 Rally the group around a member going through a crisis. Use wisdom and be sensitive.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

Prayer is a foundation of our church, and it is important for your Small Group.

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

—2 CHRONICLES 7:14

How to pray for your group:

- Pray for any requests group members share.
- Ask for the presence of the Holy Spirit in your group.
- Pray that God will open people's hearts to hear his truth.
- Pray for authentic community to develop.
- Pray for wisdom and strength to lead your group well.

SMALL GROUP CHAMPIONS

Leading a Small Group is not meant to be a solo effort. Each Small Group is composed of gifted individuals who can play a meaningful role in the health of the group. Why not empower members of the group to actively participate? Let's help them take ownership and apply their gifting. That's what Small Group Champions are all about. Each "champion" takes the initiative for a certain aspect of the Small Group for the semester.



SERVE CHAMPION

The Serve Champion leads the group's efforts to serve together at the campus and in the community. They work with the campus local outreach coordinator and through the Serve app to identify opportunities. Serving together bonds the group and brings Christ's love into action.

Let us not love in word or talk but in deed and truth. —1 JOHN 3:16-18

This champion asks, "How can we serve?"

SUPPORT CHAMPION

The Support Champion ensures that group members are cared for in times of need. They take the initiative by bringing the need to the group and lead the process to provide care. They may also come alongside the leader to assist in practical ways, such as facilitating when the leader cannot be present.

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. —GALATIANS 6:2

This champion asks, "How can we support each other?"

PRAYER CHAMPION

The Prayer Champion ensures that prayer is a priority for the Small Group and assists with tracking prayer needs. This person is responsible for group communication (e.g., email, text, GroupMe) of prayer requests or praise reports throughout the week. They encourage the group to utilize the gift of listening and talking to God in Jesus' name.

Therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one that you may be healed. —JAMES 5:16

This champion asks, "How can we be praying?"

SOCIAL CHAMPION

The Social Champion encourages and plans social outings and fun activities outside of Small Group. Whether it's monthly or bi-monthly socials, having fun together forms bonds and creates community through memorable experiences.

A joyful heart is good medicine. —PROVERBS 17:22

This champion asks, “How can we have fun together?”

HOSPITALITY CHAMPION

The Hospitality Champion helps create a welcoming environment wherever the Small Group meets. They come alongside the host to make the space inviting and enjoyable. They may create a schedule for snacks or meals for the group to share and follow up with newcomers to invite them to return. Hospitality takes different forms but always pays attention to what helps put people at ease so they can relax and enjoy their time.

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. —1 PETER 4:8-9

This champion asks, “How can I help make the space inviting and comfortable?”

CONFIDENCE AS A SMALL GROUP LEADER

If you only do what you feel comfortable doing, you don't need God. God's best is often found outside your comfort zone.

When you serve God and people by leading a Small Group, he will equip you and give you the strength and wisdom to lead well.

For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength. —PHILIPPIANS 4:13 (NLT)

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. —2 TIMOTHY 1:7 (NLT)

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

- 1 When you feel like you don't have the time, remember God has created you for this, and his timing is perfect.

If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done. —ECCLESIASTES 11:4 (TLB)

- 2 When you feel unqualified, remember God has equipped you.

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)

- 3 When you feel like your past disqualifies you, 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

When you feel like you don't know how to help someone in your group, remember ESPN:

E: Encourage

S: Share Scripture

P: Pray

N: Next Steps

LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

As a Small Group Leader, you are never alone in creating community. We have pastors, staff, and the Small Groups Team who are all working alongside you to invest in great Small Groups at Seacoast.

YOUR COACH

As a Small Group Leader, you have a Coach paired with you to help as you need support throughout the semester.

Your Coach's highest priority is to pray for you. Reach out to your Coach if you have a need, prayer request, or concern.

HOW TO CREATE GOOD GROUP DYNAMICS

SET EXPECTATIONS

A key to helping people feel comfortable in your group is to let them know what to expect. Take time to share how the group will flow from week to week. Explain the times you will begin and end, 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

Give the members of your group room to speak up instead of doing all the talking yourself. About 70% of talking should come from members and 30% from the leader.

KEEP THE DISCUSSION POSITIVE

If conversation takes a negative or destructive turn, guide it back to a healthy place. If someone needs to talk about a sensitive or complex issue, you can follow up with them after the group or call your Coach to help you respond well.

KEEP THE CONVERSATION RELEVANT TO EVERYONE

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 churchgoers.

RESPECT BOUNDARIES

Men should minister to men, and women should minister to women. A couple may minister to a single person. We want to maintain integrity and purity in our Small Groups. These boundaries will help protect the leaders and group members from uncomfortable or inappropriate situations.

STAY CONNECTED

Throughout the semester, respond to your Coach and the Small Groups Team about group attendance, potential new Small Group Leaders, and ways members are taking next steps.

PREPARING TO LEAD

All Small Group Leaders complete the following steps before leading:

- ☐ Complete the Inside Track.
- ☐ Attend a Small Group Leader Training.
- ☐ Complete a Small Group Leader one-on-one interview.
- ☐ Complete the Small Group Leader Leadership Agreement.

HOW TO START YOUR SMALL GROUP

- 1 Ask God for direction about what group to lead and whom to invite.
- 2 Once you decide on a topic or activity for your group, choose a place and time to meet.
- 3 Register your group in the online form sent by your Small Groups Pastor so people can find it and contact you to attend.
- 4 Invite people you know or meet to come check out your group.
- 5 Pray for God to do great things through your Small Group.

Preparing for your group meetings:

- Send a reminder message to group members about the first meeting.
- Arrive early to set up a welcoming environment.
- Consider having name tags available for the first few weeks to help everyone learn names.

CONVERSATION

Here are a couple conversation starters to help get people talking as your group gets 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?

SECTION 02

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW CAN I RECRUIT PEOPLE TO COME TO MY GROUP?

- Start with people who are already in your sphere of influence (co-workers, friends, and neighbors).
- Find people around you who are new to the church, are new believers, or have shown interest in getting involved.
- Look for people you think you can help to realize their potential.
- Ask God to send the right people to your group.

WHERE CAN I HOLD MY SMALL GROUP?

We encourage Small Groups to meet outside the church building, in places where you like to spend your time. Common meeting places are homes, restaurants, parks, coffee shops, and office buildings.

WHERE CAN I FIND SMALL GROUP CURRICULUMS?

We have a variety of curriculum suggestions available to you at RightNow Media. You may also use the Small Group Discussion Questions from the Sunday message. Download the Seacoast app or access online.

DOES MY GROUP HAVE TO MEET WEEKLY?

We encourage meeting weekly each semester in order to build genuine relationships.

HOW SHOULD WE HANDLE CHILDCARE?

Every group is different. Some groups share the cost of a sitter during the group time, others welcome the kids to join and play during group time. Talk it over with your group to see what will be best.

HOW DO I MEASURE IF GROUP MEMBERS ARE TAKING NEXT STEPS?

Ask! Make it part of your discussion, whether in a group setting or individually. Here are some great questions to guide your conversation:

- How did you get connected to this Small Group?
- What are you most looking forward to in the group?
- What brought you to Seacoast?
- Have you ever been part of a Small Group before?
- What do you feel like God has been doing in your life lately?
- What areas of your faith are you hoping to grow in the coming months?
- What are you focused on in your life right now?

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; it’s to help identify where they currently are spiritually and offer a practical next step to help them grow.

Here are some examples of next steps you can share, depending on where a group member is spiritually:

- Invite them to attend a Sunday service with you.
- Share your personal testimony of coming to faith in Jesus and what God has been teaching you.
- Invite them to a Seacoast conference, First Wednesday service, or 21 Days of Prayer service.
- Share how the Growth Track can help them discover their purpose and invite them to join a Rooted or Freedom group.
- Invite them to consider being water baptized. Invite your Small Group to be there to celebrate anyone getting baptized.
- Share how you find time regularly to pray, worship, and read God’s Word, and encourage them to make their own plan for time with God.
- Tell them about the Seacoast app and One-Year Bible-reading plan.
- If they are ready to receive Christ, share the simple Gospel and offer to pray with them. The Gospel is as simple as ABC.

ADMIT

Admit that you are a sinner in need of a Savior. In Romans, it states, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) and “the wages of sin are death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

BELIEVE AND CONFESS: Believe in Jesus as your Savior. “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

- Encourage them to learn more about tithing, the Holy Spirit, prayer, and spiritual warfare by going through the Rooted or Freedom course.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF SOMEONE ASKS A QUESTION I CAN'T ANSWER?

It's okay to not have all the answers. Thankfully, we can find guidance through prayer, God's Word, and the Holy Spirit. Encourage them to spend time reading the Bible and praying. Also, let them know that you will do your best to find the information and get back with them at your next Small Group meeting. Do some personal research and call your Coach, Ministry Leader, or Campus Pastor for advice.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF SOMEONE IN MY GROUP SHARES SOMETHING WITH ME (OR THE GROUP) THAT REQUIRES ATTENTION BEYOND WHAT I (OR WE) CAN PROVIDE?

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, Ministry Leader, or Campus Pastor.

HOW CAN I SHARE STORIES OF LIFE CHANGE FROM THE SMALL GROUP SEMESTER?

We love hearing about lives that are changed through Small Groups. Please share your stories of how God is working with your Coach, Ministry Leader, and Campus Pastor.

You can also share your own personal stories through social media and tag #Seacoastsmallgroups.



SECTION 03

LEADERSHIP AGREEMENT

LEADERSHIP AGREEMENT

Leadership is a privilege, but it can also be a challenge. As we help others grow, we grow, too. Whether it's a business or the church, the standards for those in positions of leadership are always higher. Since we believe that significant life change happens in the context of community, it is important for us to have clear expectations for those who lead Small Groups.

CORE VALUES OF LEADERSHIP

LOVE GOD

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. —MATTHEW 22:37

As we begin to see the depth of God's love for us, we can't help but respond in love. God's love has the power to impact every area of our lives, and as that transformation occurs, we begin to experience the abundant life Jesus promised.

LOVE OTHERS

Love your neighbor as yourself. —MATTHEW 22:39

As we learn to love and follow God, a natural love for others develops. We begin to look for ways to put others before ourselves. Their pain becomes our pain, and their joy becomes our joy.

LIVE CAREFULLY

Be careful how you live, not as unwise, but as wise, making the most of every opportunity. —MATTHEW 22:39

Loving God, loving others, and living carefully are simple, but they are not necessarily easy. We want our lives and our message to be consistent. Only by the power of the Holy Spirit can we begin to live out the spiritual character we are called to have as leaders.

I understand what it means to love God, love others, and live carefully as a leader for Seacoast Church. I will commit to make my relationship with God, my priority, knowing that loving others and living carefully results naturally from that relationship. I understand that the goal of leadership at Seacoast is to help people find God, grow their faith, discover their purpose, and make a difference.

NAME

DATE

EMAIL

A photograph of two women in conversation at a social gathering. The woman on the left is seen in profile, wearing a blue jacket and holding a silver thermos. The woman on the right is smiling, wearing a striped cardigan, and holding a black mug with white text that includes 'MESSIAH', 'LOVE', and 'JESUS'. The background is blurred, showing other people and warm lighting.

SECTION 04

HELPFUL SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

HELPFUL SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

At Seacoast, we believe ministering through the Word of God is the most powerful way to care for people. As you pray over a Small Group member, try inserting that member's name in the Scripture to make it more personalized.

As a leader, we encourage you to find and memorize at least three Scriptures that can equip you to walk with someone through a tough situation and can give you strength as a leader throughout the semester.

Here is a list of powerful Scriptures to apply to any situation:

WORRY

Philippians 4:6-8; 1 Peter 5:7; John 14:1

PEACE

Isaiah 26:3; Colossians 3:15; Psalm 4:8

FEAR

Psalm 27:1-14; 2 Timothy 1:7; Romans 8:15-16; 1 John 4:18

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

1 John 1:9-10; James 5:16

CONTENTMENT

Philippians 4:11-13; Hebrews 13:5

CONFIDENCE

Philippians 1:6; Jude 1:24-25

TRUST

Proverbs 3:5-6; Romans 8:28-31

FAITH

Hebrews 11:1, 6

CONFLICT

Hebrews 12:14; Ephesians 4:1-3