



GROUPS

GROW AND MAKE FRIENDS

LEADER HANDBOOK

WE GET TO!

WE GET TO open our lives to others.

WE GET TO partner with God as He transforms people from the inside out.

WE GET TO say as Paul said,
“Follow me as I follow Christ.”

WE GET TO love like never before

WE GET TO be okay with helping people through situations that can be messy!

WE GET TO! Can you believe it? What a privilege!

DEAREST GROUP LEADER,

Thank you for saying yes, we're so grateful for you and your desire to serve God and love people through TFH Groups! It's our prayer that God will strengthen and encourage you daily as you make a great investment into the lives of others. Your impact has eternal value and we appreciate you!

Our vision at The Father's House is: *People Encountering the Reality of God*. This happens during our weekend services, and so importantly - during the week, in our times of community. Thank you for creating a place for life-changing encounters – one person at a time.

Inside this handbook are a few details and tools we hope will assist you as you lead your group.

God bless you as you serve!

Kathi Shaw

TFH Groups Pastor

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. They worshipped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity.

ACTS 2:42, 46

OUR PURPOSE, VISION & MISSION

Groups are for discipleship, growth, fellowship, and pastoral care.

- **PURPOSE** Bringing People Together
- **VISION** People thriving in life-giving relationships where they can discover the full life God has intended for them, and receive the encouragement to walk it out.
- **MISSION** Present Jesus in varied and relevant ways, in the context of community, and see people grow to maturity and effective ministry. (Colossians 1:28)

TFH GROUPS STRUCTURE

We want to see every Group Leader be successful and confident that he/she will not walk alone. This is a diagram of relationships that enable people in ministry:



► DIRECTORS

There are 5 TFH Group categories

- Men
- Women
- Students
- Marriage & Family
- Common

(Adult Co-ed, TFH Business, Military, and Singles)

► ZONE LEADERS

Zone Leaders are within every Group category. A Zone Leader has direct relationship with 5-8 Group Leaders.

► GROUP LEADERS

Every Group Leader will be:

- **MOTIVATED** This is *why* we have Groups.
- **TRAINED** This is *how* we lead our Groups.
- **RESOURCED** Here is *what* you'll need to lead your Group.
- **CARED FOR** I will be walking with you!

Prerequisites for becoming a TFH Group Leader:

- **GROUP LEADER TRAINING**
Completed during week 4 of GROW Track.
- **TFH GROUP LEADER APPLICATION**
All requirements must be met.

Group Leader Job Description:

Gather, connect, and care for people in your group.

Expectations of Group Leaders:

- **PRAY** regularly for the people in your group.
- **MEET** once a week, or bi-weekly, and set a supportive atmosphere where you can accomplish these four elements (which can be easily remembered by the letters **ESPN**):

E *Encourage one another*

S *Share your stories with one another*

P *Pray for one another*

N *Next Steps are identified*

** For possible next steps, see the following section.*

- **GROW** personally as a leader. Take part in leadership development trainings: Group Chats with your Zone Leader, online leader development videos on the Groups webpage, personal reading, etc. Be proactive in personal development.
- **IDENTIFY AND ENCOURAGE** future Group Leaders from within your group.
- **TAKE REGULAR ATTENDANCE** using your MyTFH profile. This will help our TFH staff in monitoring who within our TFH family is receiving pastoral care on a regular basis, and who isn't.

GROUP MEMBER NEXT STEPS

Everyone in your group will be at different places spiritually. The vision of helping them “move one step” is to help group members identify where they currently are spiritually and offer a practical next step to help them grow. You can initiate these ideas in your group setting or individually.

Here are some next steps you can share with your group members:

- **INVITE THEM TO:**
 - Attend the weekend service with you.
 - Pursuit Night, Life Change Retreat, or TFH conference.
 - Consider being water baptized and invite your group to be there to celebrate.
- **SHARE WITH THEM:**
 - Your personal story and what God has been teaching you.
 - That GROW Track can help them discover their purpose and invite them to attend.
 - 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 TFH app and One Year Bible reading plan.
- **PRAY WITH THEM:**

If they are ready to receive Jesus for salvation, offer to pray.

- **ENCOURAGE THEM:**

To learn more about areas like tithing, the Holy Spirit, prayer and fasting by watching past messages at tfh.org/sermons.

FREE-MARKET SYSTEM

We have a free-market Groups system, which means you may choose what type of group you will offer: curriculum-based, activity centered, connection/support-centered groups. Do what you're passionate about. We want our groups to look like our people!

- ▶ **CURRICULUM**

Curriculum is a hook to get people into your group, but the important thing is the relationships that develop within the group setting. If you choose to use a curriculum, here are resources that may help.

RightNow Media: TFH has a subscription to RightNow Media (RNM) and has made it available to anyone connected with our church. It is often called “the Netflix of Christian curriculum.” There are thousands of resources and studies of every sort available through RNM. Set up your personal profile (free!) via the TFH

Groups webpage www.tfh.org/groups, and explore the site to select your curriculum. There may be some cost involved in the purchase of a book or guide, but video streaming is free.

Other Curriculum: You may decide to use a curriculum not offered through RNM, which is fine. Please get approval for the curriculum from your Zone Leader before advertising your group.

- ▶ **SERMON-BASED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Every Sunday we post a printable copy of the sermon notes and 5-8 discussion questions along with the online video of the weekend message at tfh.org/sermons. On the TFH homepage, scroll down to the latest sermon and you'll see a link on the bottom right called “Notes.” Click this, and you'll have access to this document.

TROUBLESHOOTING ISSUES

Human beings are broken, so everywhere there are people there can be problems. Below are some tips that address some of the challenges that might arise in your group.

- ▶ **CONSTANT TALKER**

- Ask, “What does someone else think?”
- Use body language to address other people.

- Direct questions to other people by name.
- Talk privately with the person and ask them to help get others involved.

▶ **SOME PEOPLE NEVER TALK**

- Ask easier questions.
- Direct easy questions their way.
- Enlist the help of other group members to draw them out.
- Express appreciation (publicly and privately) for the contributions they make.

▶ **THE GROUP IS NOT ENGAGING IN THE DISCUSSION**

- Ask “Why?” questions.
- Simplify your questions.
- Play “Devil’s advocate.”

▶ **A GROUP MEMBER REACHES AN OBVIOUSLY WRONG CONCLUSION**

- Ask, “What does someone else think?”
- Redirect their attention to Scripture which leads to a correct conclusion.
- Speak with them one-on-one if the wrong conclusion is still held.

▶ **THE GROUP DRIFTS INTO IRRELEVANT TANGENTS**

- Be flexible; sometimes the issues need to be discussed even though they are not scheduled.

- Explicitly bring the discussion back on topic.
- Agree to discuss the topic at a later date.

▶ **A DIFFICULT QUESTION IS RAISED:**

- Don’t be afraid to say, “I don’t know.”
- Agree to research the question and bring an answer next time.

▶ **A CONTROVERSIAL QUESTION IS RAISED:**

- Set ground rules before the discussion begins.
- Acknowledge that Christians hold different views on a variety of topics.
- Scripture must substantiate all viewpoints.
- We are not going to settle this question for all Christians for all time in this one discussion.
- Focus on what the divergent opinions have in common.

6 WAYS TO BETTER LISTENING

Listening skills are critical for TFH Group Leaders. Make sure to exercise the following skills when you are meeting with your group. As you utilize them they will become habits, and you’ll be an even better leader!

- 1. STOP TALKING** You can’t talk and listen at the same time.
- 2. DON’T INTERRUPT** Interrupting people discourages them and makes it less likely that they will contribute to your group’s conversations in the future.

3. **USE BODY LANGUAGE** Sit or stand up straight and look the other person in the eye.
4. **ACTIVELY LISTEN** Don't think about what you're going to say while the other person is talking.
5. **LISTEN FOR THEMES** Try to identify and understand the speaker's main idea.
6. **BE ALERT** Watch for nonverbal cues that indicate a speaker's mood.

FACILITATING BETTER DISCUSSION

While curriculum is a great place to start with group discussions, it is also helpful to know these tips in order to keep a good discussion going as well as to handle awkward or difficult questions that may arise.

1. **ASK OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS** Ask questions like "How does that make you feel?" or "What would you do if ...?"
2. **AVOID "YES" OR "NO" QUESTIONS** They tend to stop discussion rather than promote discussion.
3. **ASK "WHY" QUESTIONS** These make people evaluate their feelings and thoughts. For example, "Why do you think Jesus said that?"
4. **DON'T BE AFRAID OF SILENCE** Let the group think through what has been said or viewed.

5. **BE READY TO SHARE FIRST** As the leader, be prepared to be the first person to share. Keep it brief. Your openness will encourage others to open up as well.
 - Thank people for sharing. This will encourage them to share again.
 - Preview the video or printed materials beforehand. Being familiar with the discussion material beforehand is a key to keeping the group focused during the discussion period and should be a part of leader preparation.
 - Be flexible. Sometimes other issues need to be discussed even though they are not scheduled.
 - Keep the discussion on topic when needed. Say something like, "Let's refocus and talk about this week's topic."
 - Treat others with respect. Treat everyone's comments and questions with consistency. Keep in mind that there's no such thing as a "dumb" question or comment.
 - Don't think you have to be an expert. Remember, leading a Group does not require you to be a Bible scholar, theologian, counselor or any other kind of expert.
 - Be willing to say, "I don't know." No one expects you to know everything so be prepared to admit when you don't have an answer.
 - Look it up. When you don't know an answer to a question, tell the group you will do a little research and attempt to bring an answer next week.
 - Ask for help. Don't hesitate to ask your Zone Leader or a TFH staff person for advice or insight.

TIPS FOR PREVENTING CONFLICT

- 1. ADDRESS ISSUES QUICKLY.** If you have an issue with someone, talk to them quickly rather than allowing the issue to grow.
- 2. USE “I” STATEMENTS WHEN TALKING ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE FEELING AND EXPERIENCING.** Say, “I get angry when . . .” rather than saying, “You make me mad.”
- 3. LISTEN CLOSELY FOR UNDERLYING MESSAGES.** Remember tone and body language communicates as much - if not more - than the words.
- 4. TRY TO COMMUNICATE IN PERSON.** Try to avoid the use of email or phones when conflicts occur.

TIPS FOR MANAGING CONFLICT

Conflict is the natural result of people spending time together. In TFH Groups, conflict should be embraced rather than avoided. Conflict may occur between group members. Group members will definitely experience conflict with people outside the group. When properly handled, conflict can spur groups to a deeper level of intimacy and community.

Use the following questions to gain perspective when working through conflict in your group:

- Who is involved?
- What is the issue or concern?
- What are the needs of the individuals involved?
- What are the needs of the whole group?
- How can this be an opportunity for growth in the following areas?
 - Relationship with God
 - Relationship with one another
 - Relationship with self
 - Relationship with the world
- What Scripture(s) are relevant to this situation?
- How can I pray for this situation?

TIPS FOR RESOLVING CONFLICT

While dealing with conflict is difficult to do at times, when handled properly, conflict can build intimacy within your group. Matthew 18 serves as our guide for conflict resolution within groups.

► STEP ONE: ONE-ON-ONE MEETING TO SEEK RECONCILIATION (MATT. 18:15)

If you have a conflict with someone, go to him or her one-on-one to seek reconciliation. If someone in your group comes to you to talk about a conflict they have with someone else in the group, your first question should be “Have you talked to them about it?” If they say no, don’t listen to the issue before they go and attempt to make it right. If they have talked to them, then you can move to step two.

► STEP TWO: MEDIATOR IS INCLUDED (MATT. 18:16)

Someone should be included if the problem is not resolved in a one-on-one meeting (or several one-on-one meetings.). You, the leader, should serve as mediator for unresolved conflict for your group members. If you, the leader, are involved in the conflict, then the mediator should be the TFH Groups pastor, Director or Zone Leader.

► STEP THREE: OFFENSE IS MADE PUBLIC (MATT. 18:17)

In the rare case that the problem cannot be resolved with outside mediation, the offense should be brought out into public. This can be a discussion among the group as a whole. This should be considered as a last resort to restore the relationship, and this step should not be taken without gaining consent from a TFH pastor.

LEADING SOMEONE TO JESUS

It’s very possible that you will have someone join your group who has yet to invite Jesus into his/her life. This will be a wonderful opportunity. We want unsaved people to find a home in our Groups, and experience the love of God in community and hear about what Jesus has done for them.

Although there is no specific formula in leading someone to Jesus, below are some truths and verses that may help as you walk someone through a salvation decision.

1. RECOGNIZE THAT I’M A SINNER.

- Romans 3:9-12, 23

2. THE CONSEQUENCE OF SIN WILL BE ETERNAL SEPARATION FROM GOD.

- Romans 6:23

- Revelation 20:11-15

3. JESUS CAME TO SAVE US FROM SIN.

- John 3:16
- Romans 5:8
- Hebrews 2:9

4. IN LOVE, GOD TOOK OUR SIN AND PLACED IT UPON JESUS, SO THAT JESUS BECAME SIN FOR US.

Because of this, we can have forgiveness of sins and receive His righteousness.

- 2 Corinthians 5:21

5. GOD'S GIFT OF LOVE AND LIFE COMES BY PLACING MY FAITH IN JESUS.

He died on the cross for my sin, and arose from the grave to live – defeating sin and death on my behalf.

- Romans 10:9-10, 13
- Ephesians 2:8-9

To call upon the name of the Jesus means simply to ask in prayer. To receive the gift of salvation – the forgiveness of our sins, and eternal life with Him – we do not have to know more, do better, clean up our lives . . . just receive by faith what Jesus has done on our behalf.

A simple prayer of salvation:

Dear God, I confess that I am a sinner and I am sorry. I need a Savior. I know I cannot save myself. I believe by faith that Jesus died on the cross to be

my Savior. I believe He arose from the grave to live as my Lord. I turn from my sin, and I ask you, Jesus, to forgive my sin and come into my heart. I trust you as my Savior and receive you as my Lord. Thank you, Jesus, for saving me.

Thanks again for opening your life to serving the people God brings to TFH. Thank you for doing the colossal job of loving - on the good days and through the difficult ones. My prayer for you is from Ephesians 3:18-21:

And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

TFH.ORG/GROUPS