



**2023**

# **Small Group Leader Training**

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# WELCOME TO THE TEAM

We take it seriously that God has given you a desire to lead others. So we want to help you clarify your vision, then give you space to pursue it. We're committed to empowering and developing you. You are the pacesetters at our church. On your campus and beyond, you are the energy behind our purpose to Share Christ and Build Believers! It is because these things have been true in the lives of our past and current Small Group leaders that our church has continued to grow. God has now chosen you to play a role in perpetuating the vision.

Thank you for taking the step to help others grow in their faith. We are here to support you and to help you grow as a leader and to continue to develop others. Let's continue to grow and multiply our groups, so we can make room for one more!

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# MISSION & VALUES

*...to win as many as possible. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.*

**1 CORINTHIANS 9:19b, 22b-23**



## SHARE CHRIST

We are passionate about making room for one more! We are organized to welcome the unbeliever, for the person who is not yet here, but will soon step through the doors at StoneBridge campus. Our services - music and messages - are structured for a new person.

*God has given...some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of ministry, so that the Body of Christ may be built up until we all become mature like Christ.*

**EPHESIANS 4:11-13**



## BUILD BELIEVERS

We believe our church must grow larger and smaller at the same time. How does this happen? By being a part of a serving team or small group! By learning to share our story. By inviting others to know Jesus, by inviting them to worship with us. By loving each other. By getting involved in serving others.

All Christ followers are to be the ministers. Church leaders are to be the administrators, preparing and equipping all to Share Christ and Build Believers.

# STONEBRIDGE VALUES

## **Creativity: We'll do whatever it takes to reach people for Jesus.**



We want to remove any barrier people have from hearing about Jesus. Sometimes this means reaching people in creative ways such as:

- Fireworks Bonanza
- Classic rock or country songs
- Opening a coffee shop
- Starting a Christian daycare
- Launching Church Partnerships initiatives

## **Community: Authentic relationships create on-going life change.**



We understand we are a big church. One way we grow smaller is through groups and serving teams. Group opportunities include the Rooted Experience, small groups, Celebrate Recovery, and GriefShare. By joining a serve team, you are automatically put in a community of others who are serving and growing in their faith together. We know community is important for EVERY age, so we offer small group experiences in our kids and youth ministries as well.

## **Excellence: Honor God, Inspire People**



In all of our worship services and programming, we want to do everything to the best of our abilities to honor God. Through the excellence we seek, we hope to inspire people to choose to follow God and use their gifts and talents to honor him.

# STONEBRIDGE VALUES



## **Service: Serving others with the gift and abilities God has given us.**

Everyone has gifts and abilities to serve God through our time, talent, and giving. Serving happens in teams in many areas of ministry, such as building & grounds, worship & tech, kids, youth, first impressions, and security. We also want to keep serving with local serving partners as well as global mission trips. God calls us to give and he continues to fulfill our mission of Sharing Christ, Building Believers through your giving.



## **Advancement: Not only in our lives, but in the life of our church.**

A question we are asked a lot is, "Why do we need to keep building new buildings or launch new campuses?" The answer is simple; we need to make more room for your family and friends. If people don't know Jesus, we need to create space for them to hear about him! We are a growing church for this very reason.



## **You: Organized for the people who aren't here yet.**

StoneBridge is not designed to serve the members; it is oriented and organized to serve new people that walk through our doors. Sharing Christ is first in our mission statement because we understand the call we have to continually Share Christ.



# WHY SMALL GROUPS EXIST

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.

**We believe life change happens in the context of \_\_\_\_\_**

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**

## StoneBridge Christian Church Small Groups Model

**At StoneBridge, we believe our church must grow \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ 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.

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**

## Small Groups Offer People:

### 1. A Place to \_\_\_\_\_.

*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 \_\_\_\_\_.

*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 care about what is happening in your life and want to support you in your spiritual journey.

### 3. A Place to \_\_\_\_\_.

*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 A SMALL GROUP LOOKS LIKE

## Your Life is Your Group

**At StoneBridge, small group leaders form their group around their \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.** This means we want people to gather together based on the things they enjoy and are important to them. Essentially, the things you are already doing in your life are the things that can make up your Small Group!

From sports groups to lunch groups, mom groups to student groups, Bible study groups to creative arts groups, our groups are as varied as we are. All groups fall within one of seven hubs.

- Men
- Women
- Men & Women
- Young Adult
- Rooted
- Outreach
- Care & Support

## Group Structure

Groups meet throughout the year in three semesters. New groups start every semester making it easy to build community and enjoy different types of groups.

- **FALL SEMESTER: 13 WEEKS (Early September - Early December)**
- **WINTER SEMESTER: 13 WEEKS (Early February - Early May)**
- **SUMMER SEMESTER: 6 WEEKS (Early June to Mid-July)**

**Groups meet \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ during each semester.** Groups meet in a variety of places like homes, parks, restaurants, coffee shops and office buildings.

## No matter what your group meets about, each meeting should be made up of four things:

01

\_\_\_\_\_

Laid back time for group members to talk and get to know each other.

02

\_\_\_\_\_

This will vary based on what kind of group you're leading. It could be an activity like Frisbee or outreach or a discussion about a book or Sunday message.

03

\_\_\_\_\_

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

04

\_\_\_\_\_

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

Small Groups are not a place for:

- Business
- Offerings
- Unapproved materials or speakers
- Politics

# GROUP DEVELOPMENT PLAN

## Roadmap for Group Success

If you want people to follow you, you must first know where you're going. The Small Group Leadership Development Plan will become your personalized roadmap to a successful small group. Make it your own and get started as soon as possible. Feel free to reach out to your Campus Pastor or Omaha Campus Team if you need help getting pointed in the right direction.

### My Vision for our Small Group is:

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Need help filling in the blank space? That's okay. Your vision is God-inspired, important to StoneBridge, and vital to your group. It's worth getting right. Take some time now to pause, pray, and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Remember, groups are all about helping others make connections, find freedom, and take next steps in their faith. Use the questions below to prayerfully discover your vision. After you do, write a brief vision statement in the space above.

### What are my unique experiences, passions, and gifts that can be used to help others take next steps?

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### What do I think relationships should look like in my group?

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**How will people in my group become better versions of themselves?**

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**What impact will my group have on StoneBridge and the community where we live?**

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**When we get together, my small group will:**

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The foundation of Groups at StoneBridge is built on the **ESPN** model: Encourage, Scripture, Prayer, and Next Steps. Below are some common elements that make up a Small Group and some information to help you fill in the space above. The format for your group is up to you. Mix and match the parts to write a brief description of what you will do when you get together.

**Eat Together** - Some groups enjoy coffee, a light snack, or even a meal together. What will that look like for you? Are you meeting at a restaurant or coffee shop where people can treat themselves? Will you be meeting at your home (or someone else's) and ask people to bring something to share? Eating together leaves room for casual conversation and personal relationships to grow.

**Have Fun** - Some groups are activity-based and participate in things like bike riding or ultimate frisbee. Even Bible study and discussion groups can engage in an icebreaker or game before digging into the content. These activities open the door for folks to let down their guard and relax.

**Grow Together** - All groups make time to “spur one another on to love and good deeds” (*Hebrews 10:24*) through intentional discussion. What will you discuss?

Discussion options:

- StoneBridge Message-Based Study: [sb.church/stonebridge-groups/study](http://sb.church/stonebridge-groups/study)
- Resources found on Right Now Media

If you want to use a curriculum that is NOT included in one of these resources, please submit it to our Discipleship Pastor or Campus Pastor for approval before beginning.

**Serve Together** - Groups that serve together, grow together. The strongest groups serve together at their campus and with our local mission partners. <https://www.sb.church/missions> There are a number of ways you can make a difference in your community together! See page 22 for serve project ideas.

**Pray Together** - Prayer is the foundation of everything we do at StoneBridge and so it should be in our groups as well. Healthy groups share their needs with each other and pray together each time they meet. Not everyone needs to pray out loud, but that would be a great goal as you grow together.

**Are we open to having children attend our group? If so, what will that look like?**

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**Our small group will meet at a great place:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Our small group will get together on these days at this time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Our group will not be empty because we are going to:** \_\_\_\_\_

Here are some tips to fill in the space above and your connect group.

- Invite people you already know.
- Sign up to serve for the small group launch at your campus and personally invite people.
- Invite people with shared interests. People you serve with, work out with, pick up kids from SBKids with, or share a hobby with.
- Register your Group at our website and respond quickly and personally to people who inquire.
- Post it on all of your social media outlets: FaceBook, Instagram, LinkedIn, NextDoor, etc.

### **I'm going to own my growth. Here's my development plan:**

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Our personal growth is essential. We have provided some ideas to help you fill in the space above. But you must take ownership of your growth first. You will grow most when you get into the game and begin to lead your Small Group. As you encounter challenges and opportunities, we want you to have access to the resources you need.

- Commit to daily spiritual habits: prayer, worship, Bible reading, journaling, sharing your faith
- Make use of our leadership tools available at our website
- Make arrangements to meet with your Campus Pastor regularly
- Commit to discover who God created you to be:
  - Personality Type
  - Spiritual Gifts Assessment
  - Strengths Finder

### **I need to follow up with my Campus Pastor concerning:**

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# 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 StoneBridge 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  
\_\_\_\_\_ in their walk with God.**

*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 below. More examples are listed on pages 24 & 25 in this booklet.

- **Start attending Sunday services**
- **Start reading the Bible regularly**
- **Start praying regularly**
- **Be baptized**
- **Complete the First Steps Class**
- **Join a Serving Team**
- **Go on a mission trip**
- **Sacrificial Generosity**
- **Invite a friend or neighbor to church or a Small Group**
- **Attend a Small Group Leadership Training to become a Small Group Leader**



## How to be a successful Small Group Leader

01

\_\_\_\_\_ for the members of your group

02

Partner with a \_\_\_\_\_ to help share the responsibility of caring for and leading your group.

03

\_\_\_\_\_ with group members between weekly meetings through phone, email, text, social media, or face-to-face. Encourage group members to connect with each other throughout the week as well.

04

Have \_\_\_\_\_ through laughter and by creating an enjoyable environment.

05

Respect people's \_\_\_\_\_ by beginning and ending your group on time.

06

\_\_\_\_\_ group members to attend church services and events with you, like worship nights, mission trips, or community and outreach opportunities.

07

\_\_\_\_\_ the group around a member going through a crisis. Use wisdom and be sensitive.

08

\_\_\_\_\_ responsibilities to other group members.

## The Importance of Prayer

Prayer 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.

## 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 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 \_\_\_\_\_ 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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*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 \_\_\_\_\_

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*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** - Demonstrate compassion, inspire them with courage, and let them know that there is hope.

**S: Share Scripture** - Show them Biblical truth concerning their situation.

**P: Pray** - Don't just say you will pray for them. Take a moment and do it right then.

**N: Next Steps** - Help them put feet to their faith by coaching them to discover what their next step can be

## How to create good group dynamics:

01

### **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. This can include things like explaining the times you will begin and end the group, how discussion or group activities will happen, and how group members can share prayer requests or best engage in the group.

02

### **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.

03

### **Keep conversations in a healthy place.**

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.

04

### **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 church-goers.

05

### **Respect boundaries.**

We want to maintain integrity and purity in our Small Groups. Boundaries will help protect the leaders and group members from entering into an uncomfortable or inappropriate situation.

# HOW TO START YOUR SMALL GROUP

1. Ask God for direction about what group to lead and who 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 Small Groups Directory at [www.sb.church/groups](http://www.sb.church/groups) 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 message to group members reminding them about the first meeting. If meeting virtually be the first to join the video call and welcome participants as they arrive.
- Arrive early to set up a welcoming environment.
- Consider having name tags available to help everyone learn names for the first few weeks. If meeting virtually, invite everyone to put their full names on the screen and keep their cameras on.
- 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?

# LAUNCH NIGHT

## Preparation

We firmly believe that everything begins and ends with the foundation of prayer. However, we also need to prepare for what happens in between those moments. You must prepare yourself spiritually (heart), physically (body), and mentally (mind). A failure to plan is a plan to fail. Flying by the seat of your pants is not a spiritual gift.

Now that your roster is being filled, you need to communicate with them about the details - the when, where, why, how, and who. Here is StoneBridge's standard for accomplishing this: Join Requests.

Next, you need to prepare for your participants by thinking ahead about how you will engage their five senses. It's about the atmosphere. How will you cater to their 5 senses: sight, sound, smell, touch, & taste? Think about what they will see as they approach your driveway: is your location visible? What will they hear, see, and smell as they walk into your home (or location)? Who will greet them at the door? What refreshments will be offered (taste)?

### Goals for the First Meeting

- Connect & Build relationships
- Review vision, purpose, expectations, and commitments
- Have fun

### Items Needed

- Refreshments
- Copies of the Small Group Commitment
- Name Tags
- Pens
- Icebreaker Game

# PASTORAL CARE

As a Small Group Leader, you are never alone. The Pastoral Care Team is available to minister to people who need more help than what they can get in a prayer line or Small Group. We help people who are going through a personal crisis with problems such as:

- Marriage & family problems
- Financial issues
- Domestic violence & abuse (current or previous)
- Employment
- Counseling referrals
- Inner healing
- Trauma
- Mental health
- Substance addictions - sexual addictions
- Senior services

They are not here to replace the Small Group Leaders but are here to come alongside them. Should you have an emergency and need to speak to a pastor, call the church office at [402.571.2038](tel:402.571.2038) or email [care@sb.church](mailto:care@sb.church) and a pastor will be in contact with you. During the evenings and weekends, call the same number and you will receive instructions on how to contact a pastor. We love you and we are here for you!



# MAKE A DIFFERENCE

There are a number of different ways you can make a difference in your community. Start by asking yourself these questions:

- Who in your community or neighborhood has a need?
- What individuals, ministries or organizations around you could benefit from your skills?
- Are there any needs in your community that stand out?
- What project types best suit your group's ages and abilities? (physical labor, prayer, outreach, worship, teaching, etc)

## Local Partners

- Open Door Mission
- Heartland Hope
- Abide Omaha
- Lifehouse

Schedule a Serve Experience with any of these organizations or join StoneBridge when we serve! Check out upcoming opportunities here:

<https://www.sb.church/events>

## General Ideas

- Provide yard clean up/beautification for elderly, widowed, or single mom
- Bring free lunches to service people in your area
- Give out free bottled water
- Kids host a free lemonade stand
- Provide home repairs for elderly or disabled
- Kids host a free toys and games giveaway/garage sale

## Remote and Virtual Ideas

- Decorate lunch bags for your local Meals on Wheels program
- Create fidgets/sensory toys for local organizations
- Write/Decorate a hope note or card for nursing homes, hospitals, etc
- Create quarantine kits for your local community center or homeless shelter
- Host a Shoe Drive (Samaritan's Feet)
- Create no-sew blankets for hospitals, homeless shelters, care facilities, or pet shelters
- Put together goody bags for service members

**Community Outreach**

- Assemble and deliver hygiene packs to people experiencing homelessness in your community
- Do a community prayer walk and trash clean up
- Renovate a run-down park or playground in the area
- Host a clothing drive for a local shelter
- Trash pick up in your community or neighborhood
- Volunteer at a local food pantry

**Landscaping and Minor Home Repairs**

- Adopt a block/trail in your neighborhood, local park, or community
- Clean and decorate for a single parent, elderly, or widower
- Indoor or outdoor painting project for elderly, disabled, single parent, or community partner

**Skilled Construction**

- Home renovation projects for single parent, elderly, or widower
- Fence repair for single parent, elderly, or widower
- Built a wheelchair ramp for elderly or disabled

# 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. Some of the most common meeting places are homes, restaurants, parks, coffee shops, and office buildings.

## **Where can I find Small Group curriculum?**

You can visit our website to use one of our featured curriculums. We have a variety of curriculum suggestions available to you on RightNow Media as well as our small group leader resources page on our website.

## **Does StoneBridge offer childcare during Small Group meetings?**

You are welcome to choose to offer childcare at your Small Group. Most groups coordinate within the group to recruit someone to watch the kids and pay him/her.

## **How do I measure if group members are moving one step?**

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

### DAILY DEVOTION

- What has God been teaching you recently?
- What have you been reading in your Bible?
- What is God doing in your life right now?
- What areas are you wanting to grow in? How will you achieve this? How can I best support you in that?
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### PRAYER

- How can I be praying for you?
- Have you seen God answer any prayers in your life recently?
- Pray together

### FREEDOM FROM STRONGHOLDS

- What are some things you are struggling with right now?
- What are some of the hard things in your life right now?
- What can I be praying about for you? (specifically about the individual)

### SERVING THE COMMUNITY

- Have you been a part of serving anywhere in our community?
- Have you been on a mission trip before?
- Have you thought about going on one with StoneBridge? (Mexico, Israel, Ecuador)

### SACRIFICIAL GENEROSITY

- What is your experience with giving?
- What gets in the way of you being a regular, faithful giver?
- Have you seen God provide for you recently?

### SHARING YOUR STORY

- Have you invited anyone to join you on a Sunday?
- Tell me about your story?
- How did you start coming to StoneBridge?
- Where was the turning point for you with Jesus?
- How has Jesus changed your life?

### CELEBRATION

- What have you seen God do in your life recently?
- How have you grown in the last several months?
- What can we praise God for today?
- Have you been baptized?

### COMMUNITY

- Do you feel like you are a part of a community here at StoneBridge?
- Who are your people? Where do you feel like you have the most support?

### SERVING

- Do you know what your spiritual gifts are? What are they?
- Do you think you are using the gifts God has given you to best serve?
- Notice the strengths you see in this individual, tell them what you recognize and help them see how they can use these gifts to further God's kingdom and serve in their sweet spot!

**Everyone in your group will be at different places spiritually. The vision of helping them “move one step” 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 where a group member is spiritually:**

- Invite them to attend a Sunday service with you.
- Share your personal story and what God has been teaching you.
- Share how First Steps can help them discover their purpose and invite them to attend.
- Invite them to consider being 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 YouVersion Bible app and RightNow Media resources.
- Encourage them to learn more about areas like tithing, the Holy Spirit, prayer, and relationships by going through a Rooted group.

**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 get some information and get back with them at your next Small Group meeting. Do some personal research and call your coach to get advice.

**How can I share stories of life change from the Small Group semester?**

We love hearing about lives that are changed through Small Groups. You can share your stories with your Campus Pastor or submit them at our website.

**Do you consider a “ministry team” as a Small Group?**

We consider all of our Volunteer Teams as Small Groups; however, we still encourage people to be in a Small Group that meets outside of their serve team. On Sundays, the main focus is serving others; in a Small Group, the main focus is to get refilled and build relationships with one another, and both are needed.

In addition, we also try to make Small Groups the focus of every area of our church. Every event or conference will always point people to join a Small Group. Regardless of the team one serves on, he/she is also representing a Small Group and the Small Group culture of relationship.

**Can new people jump into groups in the middle of the semester?**

Yes! Some groups are more conducive to that than others and so we point people to those groups. The Small Groups Team at each campus usually has some great groups to point new people to once the launch season is over. Leaders can “close” their groups once they are full or cannot accommodate new group members.

**What should I do if someone in my group shares something with me (or the group) that requires attention beyond what I 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 Campus Pastor or staff member.

# ABUSE POLICY

When someone talks to you about their experience of abuse they are giving you a high compliment. This kind of disclosure is risky and vulnerable. The level of trust they are investing in you speaks to how much they trust you and value your friendship. *Because God loves the oppressed* (Ps. 9:9), we must take seriously our call to be both God's ambassadors and part of His refuge.

*Because God calls us to honor our governing authorities* (Rom. 13:1-6), we must understand the laws that define our obligation to report abuse. In our country, this understanding begins with knowing the difference between when reporting abuse is mandated and when the victim must press charges. This requires us to understand the difference between abuse against a minor and an adult. **Reporting abuse is mandated when it is against a minor.**

**What is abuse?** Any of these six actions:

1. Inflicting or allowing non-accidental, serious physical injury
2. Creating or allowing a substantial risk of non-accidental, serious physical injury
3. Using or allowing cruel or grossly inappropriate procedures or devices to modify behavior
4. Committing, permitting, or encouraging the rape of the child or other sexual crimes
5. Creating or allowing serious emotional damage to the child
6. Encouraging, directing, or approving delinquent acts involving moral turpitude committed by the child

**What is neglect?** Any of these five criteria:

1. Does not receive proper care, supervision, or discipline
2. Suffers from abandonment
3. Is not provided necessary medical care
4. Lives in an environment injurious to the child's welfare
5. Has been placed for care or adoption in violation of the law

You may think, "What if I'm not sure that abuse is taking place?" As citizens, we are not asked to be investigators; the criterion is "reasonable suspicion." Each report to Child Protected Services (CPS) is vetted by the social worker taking the initial information and their supervisor before any action is taken. Your next question may be, "Who do I call?" The answer to this question is the *child protective services office in the county in which the child has residence*. Too often when we have legal obligations, we can become sloppy in how to execute our responsibilities. We think about protecting ourselves (i.e., liabilities) more than caring for the person.

- Abuse & Neglect Hotline: (800) 652-1999



# HELPFUL SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

At StoneBridge Christian Church 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, which will equip you when you are walking someone through a tough situation, as well as give you strength as a leader throughout the semester.

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

*"And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*

**MARK 12:30-31 NKJV**

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

**PROVERBS 3:5-6**

*My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the LORD. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.*

**ISAIAH 55:8-9 NLT**

*This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.*

**1 JOHN 5:14-15**

*No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me," Says the Lord.*

**ISAIAH 54:17 NKJV**

*“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.*

**EPHESIANS 6:10-28**

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

**ROMANS 8:28 ESV**

*For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago*

**EPHESIANS 2:10 NLT**

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

**JEREMIAH 29:11**

*You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.*

**MATTHEW 5:14-16**

*No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**ROMANS 8:39 NLT**

*“Stay away from the love of money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, “I will never, never fail you nor forsake you.” That is why we can say without any doubt or fear, “The Lord is my Helper, and I am not afraid of anything that mere man can do to me.”*

**HEBREWS 13:5-6 TLB**

*Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.*

**ISAIAH 41:10 NLT**

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

**PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7**

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

**JAMES 1:2-4**

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

**1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7**

*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

**ROMANS 10:17 ESV**

*One day the apostles said to the Lord, “We need more faith; tell us how to get it.” “If your faith were only the size of a mustard seed,” Jesus answered, “it would be large enough to uproot that mulberry tree over there and send it hurtling into the sea! Your command would bring immediate results!”*

**LUKE 17:5-6 TLB**

*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.*

**HEBREWS 11:1**

*If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.*

**JAMES 1:5**

*Where there is no guidance, a person falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.*

**PROVERBS 11:14 ESV**

*“So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.*

**ROMANS 8:1-2 NLT**

*“Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.*

**ISAIAH 1:18**

*Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.*

**1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-14**



# THANK YOU

Thank you for your YES! Small Groups are foundational to StoneBridge, and they don't happen without people like you. You have boldly stepped up to open your hearts, homes, and schedules to those around you. We believe in you and will be with you every step of the way.

*Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track.*

**PROVERBS 3:5-6 MSG**



