



Equipped

Small Group Leadership Training

Introducing Equipped

Acts 2:46 says of the disciples, *“Day by day they continued meeting together in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house.”* When the Spirit came upon the people, transformation happened. The disciples became one in Christ. After this event they continued to meet together in the Jerusalem temple. But they also met together in smaller groups – in homes.

At NorthRidge Church, we believe in gathering together for the proclamation of the Word, for corporate worship and prayer, and for celebrating baptisms and the Lord’s Supper together in our Sunday meetings. We want everybody in our body to make that a priority.

But we also encourage involvement in a Small Group. This is because Small Groups are a great context for encouraging deeper relationships and growth in our Christian lives.

Small Groups facilitate

- The application of the Word to our lives
- Accountability for living a godly lifestyle
- Caring for one another
- Service to others
- Evangelism
- Fellowship
- The development of leaders

Small Groups at NorthRidge Church

At the heart of our vision for the Small Group ministry at NorthRidge Church is the desire to see a community of believers (relationship) who are growing deeper in their love for Christ and their obedience to him (discipleship).

What is the Purpose of Small Groups?

The Scriptures indicate that the Christian life is to be lived out in community with other believers. Within that community, we are instructed to encourage one another, serve one another, rejoice and weep with one another, correct, instruct, build up, accept and love one another. Small Groups provide a wonderful context to facilitate involvement in one another's lives.

Hebrews 10:24-25 says, *"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching."* As a church, we are hopeful that our Small Group ministry will be one of the significant ways we live out our obedience to this exhortation.

How do Small Groups fit into NorthRidge Church as a Whole?

Though the Bible does not command us to organize a Small Group ministry, it does presuppose that a significant relational life exists within the church. Small Groups are a chosen means of cultivating relational life and discipleship at NorthRidge Church. Because of their foundational role in the life of our church, we hope that a sizable number of NorthRidge Church attendees will be involved in a Small Group.

Two Goals of a Small Group: Relationships and Discipleship

I. Relationships

The Christian Life is not solitary. God calls us to live out our lives with him in the context of relationships—especially those relationships with other members of NorthRidge Church. We are called to work out our relationship with Christ in community with our spiritual brothers and sisters. One of the primary purposes of the Small Group structure is to provide a context where we can establish real and lasting relationships. Relationally, Small Groups provide a context for:

1. Developing friendships.
2. Caring for one another with practical help and personal encouragement.
3. Celebrating joyful occasions, and to have fun together.
4. Serving side by side with group members as we seek to serve others.
5. Encouraging outreach.

II. Biblical Discipleship

A *disciple* is a fully devoted follower of Christ who finds his/her identity in Christ and expresses that identity through loving God, loving others, and obeying the commands of Christ.

The Small Group should be a place which encourages our growth in Christian discipleship. We are called to be disciples and to make disciples. In our meetings, we should strive to encouraging each other through Scripture, praying together, and challenging one another toward growth in Christ-likeness.

Biblical Leadership—

Acts 20:17-35 (ESV) Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. 18 And when they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, 19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; 20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, 21 testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. 24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. 25 And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. 26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, 27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. 28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. 32 And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. 34 You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. 35 In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

Small Group Leaders Lead By—

Principle 1 – We lead by *living as examples*. Paul practiced what he preached. He could tell the Ephesians elders to remember how he lived (v. 18), and he could even say, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). As leaders, our lives ought to reflect the glorious gospel that we proclaim.

Principle 2 – We lead by *servicing*. Paul said he “served the Lord with all humility and with tears . . .” (v. 19). His life was characterized by “laying down his life” in the manner of Christ who had come “not to be served but to serve . . . (Mark 10:45). So, as leaders, we lead by becoming servants.

Principle 3 – We lead by *persevering*. No one said leadership would be easy. Paul experienced “conflicts without” (v. 19, 23) and “conflicts within” (v. 29-30), but he continued to minister faithfully to the end. Leadership is not for the faint-hearted.

Principle 4 – We lead by *teaching*. Paul was faithful to teach both in public forums as well as from house to house (v. 20). He was faithful to tell his disciples whatever would be profitable to them, even if he suspected it might be hard for them to accept (v. 20). He was faithful in teaching “the whole council of God” (v. 27).

Principle 5 – We lead by being *Missional*. Paul said “I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus Christ, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (v. 24). Paul’s life showed that he lived to fulfill the calling given to him by the Lord: giving witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Principle 6 – We lead by *protecting the flock*. Paul called the elders to pay careful attention to (vs. 28) and to be aware of those who would come among the flock and do them harm (v. 29-30). Leaders must seek to protect their people from errant teachings and their harmful effects. This is why we have included our church doctrinal statement in this packet. These are the teachings which we consider it important to ascribe to, to teach, and to defend.

Principle 7 – We lead by being *committed to the word*. Paul commended the Ephesian elders to God and the “word of His grace” (v. 32), so leaders must be students of the Word, always pointing others to the Word.

Principle 8 – We lead by being *hard working*. Paul, could as an apostle, have received his support from those to whom he served, but he chose to work day and night, so as to meet his own needs (v. 34-35). Serving others in gospel ministry always exacts sacrifice.

Principle 9 – We lead by *loving*. Paul exemplified this by loving sacrificially. He reminded his disciples of the Lord’s words, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (v. 35). Leaders who put this in to practice will find that in giving, they will enrich many, while at the same time enrich their own souls.

Building Biblical Community

As stated earlier, we have two goals for our Small Groups ministry: developing biblical community and encouraging Christian discipleship. In this section we are going to look at the value of biblical relationships and how to promote them in your Small Groups.

Relationships should result in Biblical Community.

In the Small Group context, Christian men and women can form relationships that allow them to be known at a personal level, and that enable them to experience care and encouragement.

Relationships are not the inevitable result of meeting together. The most successful Small Groups value relationships: they live out their lives together and they see their Small Group as more than just a social gathering.

Genuine relationships require effort, and leaders play an important part in helping the group cultivate and develop friendships by leading and motivating their people in this direction.

Relationships should aid Transformation.

God has given us the Christian community with all its differences and giftings as the context for change and growth. The truth is, God uses you to help others change and He uses others to help you change. Small Groups are communities where we help one another in the process of discipleship.

The One-Another's of the New Testament

- Be at peace with one another (Mark 9:50)
- Love one another (John 13:34)
- Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10)
- Honor one another (Romans 12:10)
- Live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16)
- Stop passing judgment on one another (Romans 14:13)
- Accept one another (Romans 15:7)
- Instruct one another (Romans 15:14)
- Greet one another (Romans 16:16)
- Serve one another (Galatians 5:13)
- Carry each other's burden (Galatians 6:2)
- Be patient, bearing with one another in love (Ephesians 4:2)
- Be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19)
- Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5:21)
- In humility consider others better than yourselves (Philippians 2:3)
- Teach one another (Colossians 3:16)
- Admonish one another (Colossians 3:16)
- Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18)
- Build each other up (1Thessalonians 5:11)
- Spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24)
- Do not slander one another (James 4:11)
- Do not grumble against one another (James 5:9)
- Confess your sins to one another (James 5:16)
- Pray for one another (James 5:16)
- Clothe yourself with humility toward one another (1 Peter 5:5)

Leading the Group to Relationship — Through Meetings and Activities

- **As the leader of your group, your responsibility is always to seek to provide a model for others to imitate**

Set an example by the way you pursue relationships with those in the group.

- **Take a genuine interest in people**

Draw people out by asking questions about something you know is going on in their life. Seek out opportunities to show an interest in people.

- **New group, new relationships**

New people coming into a Small Group often do not know one another. Wise leaders will seek to help the group get to know one another.

- **Make meetings relational**

Try to provide some relational element in each meeting. This means planning for it. An addendum of possible activities and possible relational questions is provided in appendix of this manual.

- **Be aware of the issues that pertain to season of life**

Keep in mind the realities of each unique season of life and seek to lead in ways that reflect care for your group members. A group comprised of people who do not have children at home typically have more available time and the flexibility to spend time together than a group comprised of parents of young children or teenagers. Understanding the needs of your group will help you to set realistic goals for relating to one another.

Leading the Group to Relationships — Through Care

We all need help with the basic events of life, and sometimes our need is big: at the birth of a baby, a tragic accident and hospitalization, the death of someone close. Typically, your group is going to be relationally closest to the need. As a leader, you lead in coordinating care and in so doing, you help foster deeper relationships.

You may need to talk initially with the person in need to determine whether you should mobilize the group or simply ask another individual to help in the situation.

In a crisis, the leader is responsible to insure that care is being provided. This does not mean that the leader is the one primarily providing the care—or even organizing the care. In fact, if you provide all of the organization and care, you deprive the group of practical ways to help them build relationships.

Some examples of practical service:

- Help a member move.
- Care for the sick or injured with meals, cleaning, errands, child care, or simply a visit.
- Supply money in a time of genuine need.
- Provide meals and support for a family during a time of grief.
- Provide child care to a parent who cannot afford it or has no one to help.
- Help an elderly member or single mom with basic chores.

Leading the Group to Relationships — Through Outreach

One of the great privileges of the Christian life is sharing the Gospel. Yet our relationships with unbelievers are often neglected. Investing in relationships with unbelievers is a part of being a witness of the Gospel. It is in and through these relational investments that we often have the opportunity to share the Gospel or invite someone out to our Small Group or a church activity where they will hear the Gospel.

Leaders who are seeking to build Gospel-centered Small Groups will keep this evangelistic mandate as a non-negotiable element of the group's relational life together.

Groups grow closer as they seek to further the Gospel together.

Find ways in which your group can work together to support the outreach efforts of the church.

Pray for the unbelievers with whom you—as a group—are developing relationships with a goal of sharing the Gospel and inviting them to an appropriate church event.

Sponsor your own outreach activities. In doing this, it is important that the group is excited about the idea, and you encourage maximum participation. One easy way to build group excitement is to ask the group for their ideas for outreach and build enthusiasm for those the group agrees are doable.

Leading the Group to Relationships — Through Praying Together

Suggestions of how you can lead in prayer:

Invite the group to state what they are asking of God.

Solicit the group for *specific* requests:

Encourage the group to form requests around God's promises and purposes stated in the Bible (See Hebrews 6:12-15; 2 Corinthians 1:20-22)

Realize that many times prayer requests become opportunities for us to understand others circumstances and what our responses to those circumstances should be.

Restrict your prayer time, at times, to giving thanks for specific help or to praising God for His character and His deeds. It can help to begin a time like this by looking at a particular passage of Scripture. For example,

- The extent of His love (John 3:16)
- His remedy of our need (Romans 5:6; Eph. 2:1-3)
- The blessings associated with salvation (Romans 8:32; Galatians 3:14; 4:6; 5:22)
- Our access to His throne of grace (Heb. 4:14-16; Eph. 3:11-12)

As an aid, the 'ACTS' outline is helpful:

Adoration (praise and worship)

Confession of Sin

Thanksgiving

Supplication (making requests for others and yourself)

Some examples of prayer in Scripture:

- Luke 11:1-13
- Philippians 4:6-8
- Psalm 5:1-3
- John 14:13-14
- Romans 8:26-27
- 1 John 5:14-15

Leading a Small Group Discussion

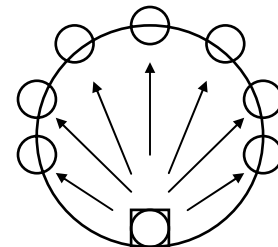
As mentioned earlier, a key element for building a Small Group into a community of disciples of Jesus Christ is having effective discussions. Discussion leading involves asking good questions and helping the group grapple with these questions and their answers—as a group. Your role is to keep the discussion biblically focused in order to lead men and women in greater understanding of Scripture and application of its principles to their lives.

Leading Discussions

One of the main jobs of the Small Group leader has is to facilitate discussion. There are times when the facilitator might do more talking to explain something in the material, but then they must transition to open discussion. Leaders must create an open atmosphere that invites participation of group members and values their input. The following diagrams show two negative examples of Small Group dynamics to avoid and one positive example of Small Group dynamics.

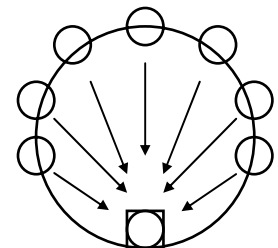
Not This:

Leader doing all the talking



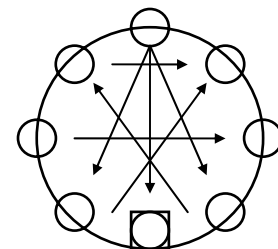
Not This:

Group responding only to the leader



But This:

Group interacting as the leader **guides** discussion



Leading Discussions

The following suggestions will aid you in leading discussions and fostering healthy group dynamics:

- Arrange the group in a circle, if possible, so that everyone can see each other. If someone separates him/herself from the group, encourage them to join in (“Make some room so John can squeeze in here.” etc.).
- Let the group know that you don’t have all the answers. If a question is asked to which you do not know the answer, tell the person you don’t know. Offer to do some research (or ask a member to research the question) and come back the next time with a response for that person.
- Let the group know that it’s okay to interrupt you at any time if they have a question and that there is no such thing as a dumb question.
- Ask for input and feedback to what you have shared.
- Direct responses or questions back to the group when they are initially directed only to you (“*Let me hear what some of the rest of you think about that first. Anyone care to respond? Betty, what would you say?*”).
- Try to include everyone. Ask a more reserved person what they think about the topic you are discussing. Let them know they don’t have to share if they don’t want to (“Let’s hear from someone who hasn’t had the chance to share yet... Linda, how about you?” etc.).
- Ask “open-ended” questions as opposed to “yes or no” questions. Not, “*Did you like the Bible passage for this week?*” but, “*What did you like about the Bible passage for this week? or What did you get out of it?*” Open-ended questions tend to promote discussion.
- Ask for clarification or dig deeper into an answer to make it come alive (“*Does that work in a different situation too?*” or “*That’s a good answer, but how easy is it to really do that?*” or “*Do any of the rest of you find that hard to do?*” or “*How does that work in everyday life?*”).

- Allow tangents, but refocus if necessary. The group may wander off from the material, but the discussion may be what's on the heart of the group at that time. If the tangent is trivial, refocus the group back to the material (*"Well, let's get back to our material... what do you think..."*).
- Acknowledge everyone who participates (a nod, eye contact, or verbal encouragement, etc.).
- Refer back to a point that someone else made (*"That's similar to what Jane said a little while ago about letting God have control..."*).
- Use summary statements to clarify discussion (*"So, what I hear you saying is..."* etc.).
- Ask questions in a conversational tone. Do not simply read them out of a book, or say, *"What did you put for question number five?"* Rephrase the question to ask the same thing in a different way.

Guarding Discussions

While leaders are not to dominate discussions, that does not mean they are to back out of them. Appropriate input at appropriate times can help the discussion stay on track, add depth to the discussion, or tie the discussion back in to the lesson for that evening.

It is the leader's responsibility to guard the discussion—stepping in to stop inappropriate sharing. Below are a few situations to watch for...

- *Don't allow people to confess anyone's faults* (particularly their spouse's) but their own. Gossiping or griping about another person is not appropriate.
- *Don't allow doctrinal discussion to become divisive or argumentative.* Healthy discussion, even disagreement, regarding the tenets of the faith is to be encouraged, but must always be attended with charity.
- *Don't entertain negative attitudes toward the church.* The Small Group leader is expected to support the mission of NorthRidge Church, its philosophy of ministry, and its leadership. Encourage anyone with a specific concern to bring it to church leadership. Concerns for the church can be talked about by the Small Group in a healthy, positive way that encourages ownership ("Is there something we could do to help in this area?" etc.).
- *Don't allow one person's continual problem to be the focus of the group.* There are bound to be persons in groups that require extra care. Some of these people can be cared for and ministered to within the context of a Small Group; others may need help from someone professional or someone outside the group. Sound judgment is required here.

The Goal is Application

The goal of discussion is not simply to get new information or have a stimulating conversation about someone's ideas. We want the discussion to move from gaining a basic grasp of the material to allowing each member of the group to make personal application to his or her life. When leading the discussion in your Small Group, think of two simple steps:

Assess and Apply

Assess

Start with the author's purpose. Help the group organize discussion around the big picture of the message. Ask questions like "*What is the author's purpose in writing?*" "*What is the speaker's main point?*" Try to answer it in a few simple sentences.

Consider how the author accomplishes his purpose. This second step helps determine how the author has organized his thoughts and developed his material.

Ask the group why they think the author makes these points. Why is he so concerned about this subject?

Encourage participants to put the author's points into their own language. This enables the group to begin the process of engaging the material on a deeper level. It also helps you, as the group leader, to know whether or not group members understand the material at a basic level.

Apply

Application questions should encourage the group to grapple with how these ideas make a claim on their own lives.

Application is the goal of your discussion. Make sure you get your group to this stage early enough to allow for significant discussion.

Remember, application is the goal. Before you can get to this step, you must listen to what people are saying—how they are processing the material. Do they understand the main points and their implications?

If the group gets the sense that you are only looking for a “right” answer— i.e. the answer *you* want—they typically will not explore the topic together but rather they will seek to tell you what you want to hear.

Questions that only require a “yes” or “no” answer are usually ineffective. For most people, they lead the discussion nowhere.

To move a discussion forward, build on the comments of the group:

Clarification: *“Could you restate what you said?”*

Re-direction: If someone is leading the discussion on a tangent, bring it back, *“Thanks for your thoughts on that. I wonder if anyone else...”* (restate your question).

Extension/open-ended: *“Could you expound on that?” “What do you think about what Heather said?” “Has anyone else ever felt conviction in this area?” “What did you do?” “How did you respond?”*

Some sample application questions:

- What do the truths taught mean to you here and now?
- How does knowing this truth about God make a difference in your life? How can you apply this truth?
- What are the implications of this to you and me?
- What must change in your life now that you understand this?
- Is there a command in this passage that we are required to obey?
- What example can we follow here?
- Where have you seen yourself fall short in these areas and how should you cultivate change?

Helpful Questions

Group leaders should think through the following five matters in preparation for group meetings:

Observation – *How can I effectively and creatively lead the group to observe what the text says?*

Interpretation – *How can I lead the group to understand what the text means?*

Application – *How can I lead the group to apply the text to their life?*

Dynamic – *How can I facilitate effective discussion which leads to understanding and application?*

Practicalities - *How can I facilitate the group meeting time in order to encourage deepening relationships?*

Small Group Agenda/Schedule

The schedule below provides a sample way a group may wish to order their time for a 60-90 minute session. Each group is free to determine its own agenda and make adjustments as would best suit the shepherding needs of the group.

- **Fellowship and Refreshments (15 – 20 minutes)**
(This time may be devoted to informal discussion, meeting new-members, ice breakers, etc.)
- **Opening Prayer (2 minutes)**
(This time may be devoted to praying for God’s Spirit to help the group understand and apply the truths of Scripture.)
- **Bible Study / Discussion (30 – 40 minutes)**
(This time may be devoted to an interactive study of the truths of Scripture.)
- **Prayer and accountability (15 – 20 minutes)**
(This time may be devoted to prayer and addressing the personal needs of the group.)
- **Planning/Follow-Up (10 minutes)**

Life Cycle of Small Groups

You can expect your Small Group to go through various relational stages, which inevitably affect group dynamics.

BIRTH (first 1-3 meetings) – A new group will go through an initial time of discovery and development of trust. It will undoubtedly need extra nurturing and encouragement during this phase. It is helpful in this stage to let group members share their testimony and become acquainted with one another.

CHILDHOOD (next 2-6 weeks) – As groups meet together and reality sets in, there may be some conflict and issues to work through. Skillful leadership is required to navigate through conflict and lead toward understanding and respect.

TEENAGE (next 6 weeks) – At this stage, the group is becoming more settled. It is important that you encourage members to seek out one another relationally and offer support.

ADULT (next 10+ meetings) – Personal growth and ministry to others peaks during this time period. Group members have gotten to know each other quite well and know what the needs are within the group. The goal is group health. The leader must work to keep relationships deep and honest, as well as maintain the group's outward focus.

BIRTHING (last 4 meetings) - Whether a group “multiplies,” reforms, or closes, it should be seen as natural progression – not a negative outcome! Take time to celebrate what the Lord has done in and through the members of the group. Prepare and pray for new groups that are being birthed.

Apprentice Development

At NorthRidge, we desire to be continually developing leaders in our church. One of the ways we do this is through our Small Group ministry is encouraging apprentice leaders. You as a group leader should consider how you can be developing and apprentice within your group.

1. *Identify a potential apprentice.* Ask God for the wisdom and discernment to do this. Characteristics and qualifications to look for:

- Loves Jesus (John 14:15), loves the Church (John 15:12), and loves the lost (John 17:8)
- Listens to others, includes others in conversation (James 1:19; Romans 15:1)
- Holds Scripture as their ultimate authority for truth and life (2 Tim. 3:16)
- Eager to serve the needs of others (Rom. 12:1-13)
- Humble (James 4:6)
- Able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2)
- Not a recent convert (1 Tim. 3:6)
- Regularly attends church services

2. *Invite the potential apprentice to consider it.* Ask your potential apprentice to consider coming along side you to train for potential future group leadership. Most people will have some reservations and may even fear that they are unqualified or unprepared for the responsibilities of leadership. Discuss any of their concerns with them and make sure they also understand that you will help them develop their skills and confidence as a leader.

3. *Once there is agreement by the individual to become an apprentice, share with the group that this individual is being recognized as being the group co-leader and is being trained for future Small Group leadership.* Encourage the apprentice leader to take advantage of church sponsored training events. Incrementally increase the level of responsibility for the apprentice. At the appropriate time, encourage the apprentice to take responsibility for their group by starting a new one or reproducing one with members of the existing group.

Keeping the Gospel Central

Toward the end of his letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul reminded those there in the city of Corinth of the message that he preached to them. He says this:

*“Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the GOSPEL I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this GOSPEL you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: **that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures**” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).*

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to this message of the GOSPEL (which means literally “Good News”). But why exactly is this GOSPEL message good news? It is because it addresses the following questions:

1. Who made us, and to whom are we accountable?
2. What is our problem? In other words, are we in trouble and why?
3. What is God’s solution to that problem? How has He acted to save us from it?
4. How do I come to be included in that salvation? What makes this GOOD NEWS for me?

These points have been helpfully summarized by Mark Dever as—

God, man, Christ, and response.

GOD:

God is our all-wise, all-powerful Creator and Lord to whom we are accountable. He created us to glorify Him and enjoy His goodness forever. We’re made to know Him personally.

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being (Revelation 4:11).

From our first parents, Adam and Eve, all the way to you and me, we have rebelled against God by breaking His law (what the Bible calls sin) and pursuing the things of this world for our own selfish purposes, rather than for the purposes that God designed them. Our sin separates us from God and exposes us to his righteous judgment.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

CHRIST:

Christ is our savior. God sent His own Son to earth to live a sinless life (the life that we should have lived) and die the death that we deserve. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, our debt is paid and our relationship with God can be restored in this life and for all eternity.

But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

RESPONSE:

The only saving response to this greatest of GOOD NEWS is to repent of our sin and believe. That means turning away from what we know is wrong and turning to God, to trust and obey – professing that Jesus is our salvation and our Lord.

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).

NorthRidge Church Doctrinal Statement

I. SCRIPTURE

The Bible, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is God's written revelation, divinely given through human authors who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Its content is entirely true and is to be the supreme and final authority for faith and practice in the church and in the life of the Christian.

II. GOD

The Bible reveals God to be the one and only true and living God. He is perfect in all his attributes, and thus truly omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, timeless, and self-existent. God exists, in his being, as one God revealed in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These Persons are co-existent, co-equal, and co-eternal, yet distinct in office and activity.

III. GOD - THE FATHER

God the Father is a personal being, who is perfect in His holiness, power, knowledge, love, and wisdom. He concerns himself mercifully in the affairs of his creation, hearing and answering prayers, saving from sin all who come to him through Jesus Christ. He is worthy to receive all glory and adoration.

IV. GOD - THE SON – JESUS CHRIST

Jesus is both fully God and fully human, in undiluted and unconfused union. He is Christ, the Son of God. Born in the flesh of a virgin, lived a life without sin, in perfect obedience to the Father, died on the cross to provide people the appointed means of forgiveness of sin and eternal salvation, rose bodily from the dead, ascended to the right hand of the Father, and will return in power and glory.

V. GOD - THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine and equal with the Father and Son. In Him all true Christians are baptized into Christ, indwelt beginning at the moment of salvation, empowered for bold witness and effective service as they yield to Him, and uniquely gifted for the building up of the church. The Holy Spirit convicts individuals of sin, progressively grows believers into the likeness of Christ, and secures them until the final day of redemption.

VI. HUMANITY

God created human beings, male and female, in His image and for His glory. Yet every human being has willfully disobeyed God—an act known as sin—thus inheriting both physical and spiritual death. All human beings are born with a sin nature and are inclined toward sin. Only by the grace of God through Jesus Christ can they experience salvation.

VII. SALVATION

All human beings are born with a sin nature, relationally separated from God, under the just condemnation of God, and in need of a Savior. That salvation comes only through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, as a person repents of sin and receives God's grace of the forgiveness of sin and eternal life. Salvation is instantaneous and is wholly of God by grace, on the basis of the finished work of Jesus Christ, and not on the basis of human works.

VIII. SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification, which is a setting apart unto God, is positional, progressive, and ultimate and begins at the moment of salvation. Positionally, it is already complete since the believer is in Christ and is set apart unto God as Christ is set apart unto God. Since the believer in this life retains their sinful flesh, there is need for progressive sanctification as the believer grows in the likeness of Christ by the power of the Spirit. Ultimately, the child of God will be set apart from sin in their practice as they are now in positionally, when they are joined with Christ for eternity.

IX. THE CHURCH

The church consists of all true believers of Jesus Christ who are brought into the fellowship of Christ's body, with Christ as the Head. As members of the body of Christ, all believers are called to join themselves to a local church. The local expression of the church is an assembly of believers in Jesus Christ who voluntarily join together in one locale for the purpose of worship, biblical instruction, prayer, service, fellowship, all to the glory of God.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances to be valued and observed in the local church. They are visible signs representing spiritual truths; they do not accomplish salvation. Baptism is a one-time ordinance where the believer is immersed in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Baptism signifies the believer's union with a crucified, buried and risen Savior, and the believer's death to sin, burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. The Lord's Supper is a repeated ordinance, which memorializes the meaning and significance of the death of Christ, and anticipates his return.

X. LAST THINGS

God has appointed a set time for the consummation of the present age, though He has not revealed its exact time. Allowing for diversity of end-time views, we believe the following are essential: Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. A solemn separation will take place: the unrighteous will be assigned to endless punishment and the righteous to endless joy in a new heaven and new earth. This judgment will fix forever the final state of people in heaven or hell in accordance with God's righteousness. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Appendix

(Helps for the Leader)

Ideas for — Building Your Group Relationally

Ice Breakers

Who Am I?—Make up stickers (enough for everyone in your group) with the names of famous people or characters. They can be real, historical, cartoons, muppets... whatever. They should be ones that would be familiar to most of the people in the group. Have people pair up, pick out a sticker without showing their partner, and put it on their partner's back. The object then is for everyone to figure out who they are. Initially they can ask two questions of another person, such as, "Am I alive today?" or "Am I on TV?" After a while allow them to ask more questions. If people are still struggling to figure it out, tell the others they can start giving clues. This activity is a good one to get people who may not know each other that well to mix and talk with each other.

Things In Common—Have the group pair up (if there is an odd number of people in the room, the game leader can sit out). Give each pair a small piece of paper and a pencil. Give them three to five minutes to list as many things as possible that they have in common... things like, they were born in the same month, or they both live on streets that begin with 'P,' or they both wear size 8 shoe... the more interesting or odd, the better. Tell them when there is 30 seconds left. When time is up, have them count the number of things in common. Then start with one group and have them share their lists. Have the group vote thumbs up or thumbs down on questionable items. Continue to allow all groups to share. If you are pressed for time, ask each group just to share the most interesting one or two things they discovered they had in common. If you would like, have a prize for the winners.

Psychiatrist—Send one person (who has no clue what this activity is about) to leave the room and wait somewhere where they cannot hear the rest of the group. Then inform the rest of the group that they have a

problem... each one of them thinks they are the person to their left. Give them a few minutes to find out as much as they can about the person to their left (where they were born, what they like to do, where they work, etc.). Then bring the other person back in the room and tell him/her that he/she is a psychiatrist and need to find out what the group's problem is by asking questions of the individuals in the group. You may need to help the individual get started with some suggestions for questions, like... "Joe, what do you like to do?" or, "Where were you born?" You may want to encourage him to ask the same question to others in the group. If a group member does not know the answer to the question or the answer would give it away too easily, the group member simply can answer, "I don't know." After a while you can help the psychiatrist with more clues or more direct answers if needed.

Group Games—There are a number of fun games that are great group games. Taboo is a word game where a person describes a word in order to try to get their team to say it. The trick is there are a number of other words they cannot use to describe the main word. Guesstures is a quick charades-type game where a person acts out things for their team to guess. Pictionary is a drawing game where teammates guess what is being drawn. Other similar games are also out on the market. If the group is fairly evenly mixed, you could play the men against the women. Otherwise, get creative and mix the group up.

Getting To Know You—Have everyone in the group fill out a paper with these questions on it: What is your favorite food, animal, TV show, hobby, color, place you've been on vacation, etc. Make sure names are on the papers and have them handed in to the leader. The leader then reads each paper to the entire group. The group members jot down who they think each paper belongs to. Once all have completed guessing, the leader reveals who's who. The one who guessed the most right wins.

Show and Tell—Have group members bring something for show and tell that has some spiritual significance to them... (perhaps a necklace or bracelet which reminds them to think about Christ, or an object that represents a significant decision or time of spiritual growth, or a Bible or

book given to them by a Christian friend, etc.). Have them share their object and its significance.

Statistical Treasure Hunt—Make a list of things for people to find out about each other... such as how many miles they travel to church, how many phones they have in their house, how many bones they have broken, etc. Divide into groups of four to six people. Add the responses of each group member for each question (if all four people have two phones in their house, they put down eight for that item). Add up responses from all the questions and see which team came up with the highest total.

Questions in a Hat—Make a list of questions. Cut them into individual questions and put them in a hat. Pass the hat and have people pick out a question. They can answer it or give it to another person in the group. Another way to do it is pass out a sheet with all the questions and pick corresponding numbers out of the hat. You could also have the option of referring that question to another group member. Give people the opportunity to pass if they truly do not want to address their question.

Two Truths/One Lie—Have group members write down three things on a piece of paper (two things that are true about them and one thing that is a lie). Tell them not to make it obvious. Then read each person's paper having people guess which item was the lie.

Timeline—Have group members draw a timeline of their life, recounting five major life events. Have each person share his or her timeline.

Three key material possessions—Explain to the group that they have just discovered a major fire in their home. Assuming that they have been able to get their family out safely, what three material possessions would they take with them from their burning home. Have them explain what and why.

Getting to Know You—Questions

PERSONAL

- What day of your life would you most like to re-live and why?
- In what area of your life would you like greater peace and why?
- What do you find yourself praying about recently?
- What is the most important decision facing you in the near future?

PARENTS AND SIBLINGS

- Where were you born?
- Where were you raised?
- How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- Tell a story from your childhood or adolescence that gives insight into your family.

SPOUSE AND CHILDREN

- How did you meet your spouse?
- How does your spouse “complete” you?
- How many children, if any, do you have and what are their names and ages?
- When your children are grown, what would make you think you were successful in raising them?
- If your spouse and children could write your epitaph, what would you want it to say?
- What creative things have you done to cultivate romance in your marriage?
- What creative ways have you created memories with your children?
- What dreams do you have for your future as a couple or as a family?

VOCATION AND EDUCATION

- Where did you go to school?
- What did you study or what do you now wish you had studied?
- Where do you work, and how do you spend your waking hours?
- If you could do anything but what you do now, what would it be?

HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

- What do you enjoy doing with your spare time?
- If rich Uncle George died and left you \$50,000 that you had to spend and you had one month off, what would you do with the money and time?
- What have you never done that you wish you could do?

GOD AND CHURCH

- In what church/denomination, if any, were you raised?
- What were you taught about God as a child?
- What has been your most significant encounter with God?
- Describe the state of your relationship with God now.
- Tell us how you experienced conversion?
- What has helped you grow in your walk with God?
- Who has been the most significant influence in your relationship with God, and why?
- What would you like your relationship with God to be five years from now?
- When you die and stand before God, what would you like for his first words to you to be?
- How are you serving in the church? Is there another ministry in which you would like to be involved?
- What has God been teaching you?
- What are you reading?

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- What area of growth in your (or your spouse's) character (in the last 3-6 months) have you been most encourage about?
- How have you seen the Lord at work through you in the past several weeks?
- What things are you most thankful for in your (church, spouse, friends, workplace, family)?
- What have you been giving thanks for as you have walked with God this week?

Getting to Know You—Group Ideas

- Start the group off by doing an activity together that will help break the ice. Having dinner together is always an easy way to start. Begin by telling your stories. You don't have to get to everyone the first week. You may want to ask two or three people to share about their lives. As the leader, you can set the tone and an example by sharing first.
- Have group members bring a few photos from their childhood and introduce us to their family members.
- Sit together at church.
- Ride together to special church events like conferences or retreats.
- Room together at events involving hotel stays. Arrange for the group to eat meals together at these events.
- Establish ways the group can be together outside of a meeting, like a supper (or dessert) club.
- Couples: Have group members bring photos of their weddings and tell the story of their courtship and engagement.
- Thanksgiving Dinner: Prepare a Thanksgiving dinner and then play a game after dinner.
- Semi-formal Dinner: The guys make an elegant dinner for the ladies. Then they honor each woman individually with each receiving flowers.
- Take a retreat together (or just as men or just as women) to seek God together.
- Spend an evening playing board games together.
- Small group Cook-Outs: Have cook-outs at different homes or parks. Play group games or just hang out and fellowship.
- Christmas Party: Exchange "white elephant" (i.e. silly or old) gifts, play games, sing carols, and worship.
- Go camping together.
- Go out for breakfast as a group, or as men or as women.
- Plan times to have the group together when their children are able to participate in the activities.
- Take a group photo and make sure everyone has a copy for their refrigerator.

Childcare Options for Small Groups

Childcare is an important and sometimes difficult area for Small Groups. Here are a few possible options and ideas on how to approach the childcare issue...

- Participation model: Children attend the Small Group and participate with the group throughout the evening.
- Individual sitters: Group members leave their children at home with their own sitter. Everyone in the group with children finds and hires their own sitters. Some groups that choose this option also plan a quarterly family time where all the families meet together around a meal and a time of study and prayer.
- Rotating childcare responsibilities: All the children come with their parents to the Small Group. Parents rotate the responsibility of watching the children in a different room of the house at each meeting.
- Group sitter (same location): All the children come with their parents to the Small Group and a sitter watches them in another room while the group is in session.
- Group sitter (different location): All the children are dropped off at one of the group member's homes (preferably near to the meeting location) where a sitter watches them during the group time.
- Alternating weeks between spouses: The women of the group get together the first and third week of the month while the children stay at home and have special time with Dad. The men get together the second and the fourth week of the month while the children stay at home and have special time with Mom. Periodically or possibly on months when there is a fifth week for Small Group night, the entire group comes together.

Recommended Small Group Resources

BOOK BIBLE STUDIES

LifeChange Bible Studies – Each study includes scene-setting historical insights, helpful word definitions, discussion questions, and mini-leader guides.

LifeGuide Bible Studies - Workbook-style guides with solid biblical content and application to everyday life.

LifeGuide Topical Studies - Topical Approach to Biblical themes.

Navigators' Design for Discipleship Series—

- Your Life in Christ
- The Spirit-Filled Follower
- Walking with Christ
- The Character of the Christian
- Foundations for Faith
- Growing in Discipleship
- Our Hope in Christ

John Stott Bible Studies – Studies which feature Stott's exposition of key Scripture passages, plus inductive study questions.

- Jesus Christ
- The Beatitudes
- Acts
- Romans
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- 1 & 2 Thessalonians
- 1 Timothy & Titus
- 2 Timothy
- Revelation

MacArthur Old Testament and New Testament Study Guides

NavPress Life Bible Study – 6 Week, In-Depth, Topical Studies

- No Matter What
- Darkest Hours
- Jesus
- How to be Human
- Awestruck

- Sealed
- Uncommon
- Flawed
- Collision

Redeemer Presbyterian Church's Small Group Materials

- Praying with the Psalms
- Studies in Prayer: Developing a Strong Prayer Life
- First John: Christian Holiness and Love
- Galatians: Living in Line with the Truth of the Gospel
- Genesis: What were we put in the World to Do?
- The Gospel of Mark
- Romans: A Study Course in the Gospel
- 2 Timothy
- James: The Gospel in Action
- Evangelism: Studies in the Book of Acts
- Living in a Pluralistic Society: Judges, Daniel & Joseph

DVD –BASED STUDIES

Faith Lessons with Ray Vander Lann – Set on location of biblical sites to illuminate the context in which the biblical events happened and then Vander Lann aims to apply the biblical truths to our contemporary setting.

- The Promised Land
- The Prophets & Kings of Israel
- The Life & Ministry of the Messiah
- The Death & Resurrection of the messiah
- The Early Church
- In the Dust of the Rabbi
- Walk As Jesus Walked
- God Heard Their Cry
- Fire on the Mountain
- With All Your Heart
- The Path to the Cross
- Walking with God in the Desert

Lee Strobel – Former legal editor for the Chicago Tribune, Strobel uses his investigative skills in uncovering the evidence for the existence of God and the reliability of the scriptural record of Jesus Christ.

- The Case for Christ – An apologetic investigation into the Bible and the life of Jesus.
- The Case for Faith – Biblical apologetic that takes the difficult questions about Faith and the existence of God.
- The Case for a Creator – How the scientific evidence points toward a Creator.

Andy Stanley – Senior Pastor of the campuses of NorthPoint ministries in the Atlanta, Georgia area.

- Guardrails – Avoiding regrets in your life
- Taking Responsibility for Your Life – How to take authentic responsibility for the things in your life.
- Staying in Love – Falling in Love is Easy, Staying in Love Requires a Plan
- Five Things God Uses to Grow Your Faith
- Twisting the Truth – Learning to Discern in a Culture of Deception
- Take It to the Limit – How to Get Most Out of Life
- Go Fish – Because of What’s on the Line
- Your Move – Four Questions to Ask When You Don’t Know What to Do
- Faith, Hope & Luck
- Breakaway – Because You Don’t Set Out to Be Just Like Everybody Else
- iMarriage – Transforming Your Expectations
- Parental Guidance Required – How to Enhance, Advance & Influence Your Children’s Relationships

D.A. Carson – Research Professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

- The God Who is There – What is the Bible Really About and Finding Your Place in God’s Story.

Tommy Nelson – Senior Pastor of Denton Bible Church – Denton, TX.

- Song of Solomon – God’s best for love, marriage, sex and romance.
- Ecclesiastes – A life well lived, in-depth study of the book of Ecclesiastes.

Paul Tripp – Counselor and faculty member with the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation.

- Getting to the Heart of Parenting
- What did you Expect? – Redeeming the Realities of Marriage
- Instruments in the Redeemers Hands
- Changing Hearts, Changing Lives
- Shepherding a Child’s Heart (*Tedd Tripp*)

John Piper – Pastor for Preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, MN.

- Desiring God
- The Pleasures of God
- When I Don’t Desire God
- Don’t Waste Your Life
- Battling Unbelief
- Let the Nations Be Glad

Rick Warren – Senior Pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, CA.

- 40 Days of Love
- 40 Days of Community

Gary Thomas – Author and speaker who emphasizes discipline in the Christian life and frequently cites spiritual material from Christian’s down through the centuries in his writings.

- Sacred Marriage
- Sacred Parenting

Mark Dever – Senior Pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington D.C.

- Church Essentials

J.D. Greear – Senior Pastor at the Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, NC.

- Gospel Revolution

George Guthrie – Professor at Union University, Jackson, TN.

- Read the Bible for Life: Your Guide to Understanding and Living God’s Word

Emerson & Sarah Eggerichs – Husband and wife team who speak and write on male-female relationship matters.

- Love and Respect

Tim Keller - Pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City.

- The Prodigal God
- The Reason for God
- Gospel in Life

Randy Alcorn – Author and founder of Eternal Perspective Ministries.

- Heaven

Max Lucado – Popular Author and Pastor of Oak Hills Church in San Antonio, TX.

- Out Live Your Life

Kyle Idleman – Pastor of Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, KY.

- Not A Fan – Becoming a Completely Committed Follower of Jesus

Francis Chan – Former Pastor of Cornerstone Community Church in Simi Valley, CA.

- Crazy Love
- Forgotten God

Beth Moore – Founder of Living Proof Ministries in Houston, TX.

- Daniel: Lives of Integrity, Words of Prophecy
- Esther: It’s Tough Being a Woman
- Who Will You Trust? How To Move Faith From Your Head to Your Heart
- Living Beyond Yourself: Exploring the Fruit of the Spirit
- A Woman’s Heart: God’s Dwelling Place
- Jesus the One and Only

***Matt Chandler** – Lead Pastor of the Village Church in Dallas, TX.*

- The Explicit Gospel
- Philippians – To Live is Christ & to Die is Gain

***Philip Yancey** – Christian author and columnist for Christianity Today.*

- Prayer – Does it Make Any Difference?
- The Jesus I Never Knew – The Life of Christ
- What’s So Amazing about Grace? – An Investigation of Grace
- The Bible Jesus Read – An Exploration of the Old Testament

***David Platt** – **Secret Church** – Pastor at The Church of Brook Hills, Birmingham, AL.*

- Survey of the Old Testament
- Survey of the New Testament
- How to Study the Bible
- Who is God?
- Exploring the Holy Spirit
- The Body of Christ
- Angels, Demons and Spiritual Warfare
- Crucifixion, Salvation, and the Glory of God
- The Cross of Christ
- The Gospel, Possessions, and Prosperity
- Family, Marriage, Sex, and the Gospel
- The Cross and Suffering

***The Truth Project** - Focus on the Family production.*

- A 12-lesson study designed to equip believers with a comprehensive biblical worldview.

***Modern Parables** – Compass Cinema production.*

- A 12-lesson study which includes short dramatic films that depict and explain Jesus’ parables.

***The Art of Marriage** – Family Life Today production.*

- A 6-session video study which covers topics like God’s purposes for marriage, avoiding the drift into isolation, roles in marriage, communication, romance and sex, and leaving a godly legacy.

Finances

- Financial Peace – Dave Ramsey
- The Treasure Principle – Randy Alcorn