



Horizon West Groups

Group Leader Guide

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For additional resources visit:
www.HorizonWestChurch.com/Groupleaders

Who is a Horizon West Group Leader and What do they do?

Group leaders are group *shepherds* who carry out the vision of Horizon West Church Groups to cultivate community, build friendships, and grow disciples. An effective group leader has a front-row seat to lives being changed through safe and caring relationships with each other and with Christ.

The Core-Values of a Group Leader

Gospel-Centered: a group leader centers their personal life and their group life around the truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To be 'Gospel-Centered' means to value the gospel of Jesus as the key unifying purpose for group meetings.

Relationally – Driven: a group leader values the people of their group and pursues opportunities to build relationships with each member inside and outside of group time.

Hospitable: a group leader exhibits a posture of humility, intentionality, and hospitality. It is the responsibility of a group leader to help all members feel welcome and safe to share, regardless of the topic.

Transformative: as the group shepherd, a group leader is constantly looking for ways to encourage their group toward growth in their spiritual and personal life.

The Primary Practices of a Relationally-driven Shepherd

Know the Sheep – Look for ways to know your group members on a personal level. Example: Share and encourage members to share meals outside of group meeting.

Lead the Sheep – Create a compelling group environment where everyone is welcome to participate. Example: Encourage everyone to share, help guide conversation away from the 'dominant' member, Introduce Biblical passages based on the needs of the group, ect.

Protect the Sheep – look out for 'cultural wolves' that can divide the group. Seek and promote discipleship against outside distractions. Example: Major in the gospel majors, minor in the cultural minors.

Essential Outcomes of a Relationally-driven Group

Groups devote time to cultivate community. This could include regular time spent sharing a meal or snacks, doing groups activities, or serving together. Our goal is that a group is not simply something you *do*, but a community to which you *belong*.

Groups devote time to intentionally build friendships. This means you allocate time for *deeper sharing* and *specific prayer*. This may take place in the larger group setting, or breaking off into smaller, gender-specific groups for time of sharing and prayer.

Groups devote time to grow disciples. This could include discussing a sermon, doing a Bible study, and discussing approved books/series found on Right Now Media. Most weeks we provide a Sermon Discussion Guide to help facilitate the discussion. We encourage this approach because it can promote unity when our whole church is studying the same passages of scripture together each week. However, based on the specific needs in each group, Group Leaders will have the freedom to tackle different areas of study in different seasons based on the needs of the group.

Healthy Group Rhythm

All great groups have a regular rhythm to them. This rhythm meets the three primary purposes of all groups which align with our Horizon West Vision statement. These purposes are good friends, good works, and good news. ‘Good news’ being Bible study and spiritual growth, ‘Good friends’ being relational community, and ‘Good works’ being missional activity.

Recommended Groups rhythm:



Good Friends	Good Works	Good News
2-4x per semester	1-2x per semester	6-8x per semester
This rhythm creates informal time around a table or activity to allow the Holy Spirit to bring unity and deep relationships in the group.	This rhythm creates intentional time to serve in the church, in your neighborhood, or in the community.	This rhythm creates time studying scripture together and centering all of your lives on the Word of God.

Why Do Groups Need A Healthy Rhythm?

Transformational Discipleship - By living in a healthy rhythm, we encourage our groups to avoid falling too far in to a single area of discipleship (bible study, community, missions), instead more toward a holistic discipleship approach. Again, group is not just an event to attend, but a lifestyle to grow.

Accountability and Intentionality for community, friendship, and discipleship - By sitting down and planning the group's rhythm, you are preparing your group to participate in every facet of discipleship. This can also help evaluate a small group's health and identify areas of additional investment, coaching, or encouragement.

Shared Ownership - By enlisting the help of group members, you create ownership that permeates throughout the group. As a group leader, you should open up opportunities for group members to volunteer to take the lead on a "Good friends" event and a "Good works" coordinator. This allows group members to operate in their giftings and bring value to the overall health of the group.

Use the space below to list the names of the people who will have/share responsibility in each rhythm.

Good News Coordinator(s): _____

This person(s) is responsible for overseeing/facilitating group bible study and discussion.

Good Friends Coordinator(s): _____

This person(s) is responsible for making suggestions and planning fun group outings, etc.

Good Works Coordinator(s): _____

This person(s) is responsible for making suggestions and initiating a group service project.

*Note: coordinators do not do the work alone. They simply are the ones responsible for seeing that each rhythm takes place and enlist help when needed/necessary.

Group Leader Resources

Our calling as pastors is to “...equip the saints for the work of the ministry, to build up the body of Christ,” (Ephesians 4:12). Below are a few tools we believe will **equip** you to become an effective group-leader.

Horizon West Statement of Faith



YouVersion Bible App Link



Right Now Media

Scan the QR code to the left to access and create a free profile on RightNow Media. RightNow Media is full of video studies covering entire books in the Bible, specific topics, and other beneficial discipleship tools.

Spiritual Coaching Guides

To the right is a QR code to access a link found at First Orlando’s website with a few different resources for being a Spiritual Coach/mentor. The website has a video with Pastors David Uth and David Loveless, as well as a coaching guide that helps provide clarity around leading people spiritually.



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Each of these resources (and more) can be found at
www.HorizonWestChurch.com/GroupLeader

Group Leader Covenant

As a Group leader, I (we) covenant to agree and uphold the following commitments:

Horizon West Statements of Faith

Reading and aligning with the Horizon West Church Statements of Faith found at Horizonwestchurch.com/about/what-we-believe

Vision and Core Qualities Training Videos

Completing all 5 short form video trainings covering the Horizon West Groups vision and four “core-values”

Annual Commitments

Fully committing to one calendar year of Group Leadership (with flexibility surrounding extenuating circumstances) *Completed Annually*

Completing the [Group Member Agreement](#) with our group members *Completed Annually*

Group Leader Engagement

Staying engaged and regularly attending on Sunday mornings

Joining on a quarterly EQUIP Zoom Group Leader Training, when applicable

Proactive Communication

Proactively communicate with HW staff any of the following circumstances:

If an issue of unresolvable conflict has come to fruition within the Group

Any issues of agreement regarding stance/doctrine/theology between group leader and church statement of faith

A change in one’s ability to fulfill these responsibilities has occurred due to a number of unforeseen circumstances

Group Leader Sign: _____ **Date:** _____

Group Leader Sign: _____ **Date:** _____

Group Agreement

Purpose

To create a relational community that is predictable, promotes participation, authenticity, and spiritual growth.

Essentials

Successful Groups...

Stay Connected - While prayer and discussion are key elements, the main emphasis of the groups is to build relationships that foster connection with Jesus and one another.

Provide Care - Group members choose to be fully present and provide care and support for one another.

Share Ownership - Group members agree to encourage one another to participate in broad group ownership.

End Well - Group members recognize that groups have a life cycle. It will take intentionality for a group to end well and help one another take their next step in continuous spiritual growth.

Guidelines

Successful Groups...

Authenticity - The group atmosphere should encourage openness and transparency among members. Our members should feel free to be themselves.

Confidentiality - For authenticity to occur, members must be able to trust that issues discussed with the group will not be shared outside of the group.

Respect - Not all group members are going to agree all the time. Group members should never say anything that will alienate one or more members of the group.

Details

The group will meet from _____ (mm/yyyy) through _____ (mm/yyyy).

The group will meet on _____ (day of week) and begin at _____ (am/pm) and end at _____ (am/pm).

This group will be an open/closed (circle one) group unless all members agree to add members. Group members will attend and participate on a regular basis.

Example 15 Week Semester Group Schedule

Week 1	Good Friends: Group Launch Party
Week 2	Good News: Mark 1-4 Discussion
Week 3	Good News: Mark 5-8 Discussion
Week 4	Good News: Mark 9-12 Discussion
Week 5	Good News: Mark 13-16 Discussion
Week 6	Good Friends Gathering
Week 7	Good News: Right Now Media Study
Week 8	Good News: Right Now Media Study
Week 9	Good News: Right Now Media Study
Week 10	Good Works Project
Week 11	Good News: John 1-3
Week 12	Good News: John 4-6
Week 13	Good News: John 7-9
Week 14	Good News: John 10-12
Week 15	Good Friends Gathering

***Framework and Flexibility:** This is an example that demonstrates a framework of Group Rhythms. Each group has the flexibility to change based on how frequently they are meeting.
If you need further assistance, reach out! We're here to help!

How to Launch a Group

Suggestions for starting a Group

Everyone gets a personal invite - Take the time to call/text each individual or couple with the **launch details** at least one week prior to your launch date! Things to consider sharing: ***is there a gate code? Where can everyone park? Any weird HOA rules? etc.***

Set the room - prepare the setting to show expectations for the group to take place. For example: if you need to rearrange furniture to make room for the group, do so prior to the start of the group.

Food and Ice-breaker - food can help overcome anxiety and enhance fellowship. If you choose to do food at every meeting, recruit the group to participate and bring some of their favorite foods as well. Another helpful tip is to have themed-snack nights: Chips and dips, easy breakfast food, Salad bar, flavored popcorn, etc.

You can also plan an ***ice-breaker game*** prior to group launch that encourages people to move around and meet the other members of the group!

Eliminate Distractions (Childcare, allergies, etc.) - if your group members have little kids, plan to have a babysitter come to the group launch to help entertain the kids during the event! At group launch, you can discuss as a group your approach to childcare. Also, if you have cats or dogs, ensure group members have no allergies prior to group launch.

Introductions - Have each group member/couple introduce themselves (Name tags could help the process). Encourage each group member to share their name(s) where they are from, and something fun (where they like vacation or where's the farthest they've traveled from home, etc).

Establish Expectations - Before the group ends, discuss the following: Regular meeting night of the week (if different than the launch), how frequently will the group meet (every week, every other week, etc.), will the group change/alternate locations (share details here). Communication: how will the group share info? (Text, email, communication app, etc.)

Group Agreement - Take some time to read and review the group agreement found on page 7 of this packet.

If needed, use the following page to help guide you through deeper discussion.

Group Launch

Group Leader Checklist

Meeting Night of the Week : _____
(also on Group agreement)

Meeting Rhythm: _____
(How frequently will the group meet? When will the group rest?)

Group Communication: _____
(How will the group communicate/share info throughout the week?)
An app/email/group-text? (Good text apps to consider: Groupme, WhatsApp, Slack etc.)

Miscellaneous Topics to Discuss

Multiple Group Host? – Share the address where group will take place. (If multiple hosts, share both addresses and speak through rhythm of where meetings will be held). *Is anyone who has not previously indicated, interested in hosting?*

Childcare – Is it necessary? What is the approach? Who will recruit babysitter? Etc.

Closing Prayer Request

Training Notes

