



WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEALTHY SMALL GROUP?

CONSISTENCY

Whether it is every week or every other, small groups need consistency in order to help people connect with each other.

READ ACTS 2:46-47

- What were some factors that helped the early church meet together on a consistent basis?
- What were some factors that may have challenged their consistency to meet?
- How did they benefit from such regular time together?
- The early Church met together regularly because they were devoted both to God and one another. What practices are important for your small group to demonstrate consistent devotion to one another and to God?

READ: HEBREWS 10:23-25

- What does this passage say about meeting together?
- How do you define consistency and how does it contribute to the small group experience?
- What practical things will help your small group meet consistently?

TRANSPARENCY

Small group should be a place where we feel safe being real with each other. Healthy small groups are marked by a commitment to authenticity and confidentiality.

READ: EPHESIANS 4:25-32

- How does Ephesians 4:25 describe transparency?
- How can your small group model and create a safe atmosphere of authenticity with each other?
- What are important factors that foster transparency in a small group?

READ: JAMES 5:13-18

- From this passage, what areas of our life should we share with each other within a small group?
- From this passage, what are the different ways of responding to what is shared?
- From James 5:16, what are the benefits to being vulnerable with each other?

READ: ROMANS 12:9-21

- What are the markers of Christian community described in this passage?
- In reference to Romans 12:15, what are some practical ways for your small group to make time to celebrate and support each other?

SERVICE

As people grow in their faith through small group, they will begin to discover more about what it means to love others. We encourage small groups to look for different ways to serve together within StoneBridge as a means of growing closer together and making a difference.

READ: 1 PETER 4:7-11

- There are many ways to serve. How does this passage describe serving?
- From 1 Peter 4:11, why is it so important that we serve in God's strength for God's glory

READ: PROVERBS 11:25

- Serving is not just a gift to those being served, it is also a gift to the one serving. How have you been encouraged through opportunities to serve?

READ ROMANS 12:3-8

- What are some of the spiritual gifts mentioned in this passage?
- Which of these spiritual gifts relate best to who you are and what you enjoy?
- How might your small group work together with your giftings and serve within StoneBridge

For more info on serving at StoneBridge visit www.sb.church/volunteer

PRAYER

Healthy small groups pray with and for each other. Not everyone is comfortable with prayer, so leading with patience and sensitivity will help our groups begin to see prayer for what it is – an honest conversation with God.

READ: MATTHEW 6:5-15

- How does Jesus teach us to pray?
- What is the heart and focus of the Lord's Prayer?
- How could you incorporate these elements of prayer into your small group?

READ: MATTHEW 7:7-11

- How is prayer described by Jesus in this passage?
- Share a time when you were "asking," "seeking," and "knocking" in prayer and God provided for you?
- What are the promises given to faithfully praying?
- How does Jesus describe the Father's heart toward us as we pray?
- What are specific ways that your small group can prioritize prayer for each other?

Consider this simple model for prayer:

1. ADORATION: Telling God how good He is.
2. CONFESSION: Agreeing with God about my sin and receiving His forgiveness.
3. THANKSGIVING: Thanking God for what He has done.
4. SUPPLICATION: Asking God to meet my needs and praying for others.

SCRIPTURE

You will access to thousands of small group resources that can be helpful to you and your group. We also encourage you to focus on the Scripture references that are offered within them. In healthy small groups, people should develop a hunger for God and His word.

READ: 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

- From this passage, what makes Scripture, the Bible, different from other literature?
- From this passage, what are four of the benefits of Scripture in our life?
- From this passage, what is Scripture meant to produce? ie: "so that..."
- How will your small group prioritize focusing on Scripture together?

READ: COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

- What does Colossians 3:16 tells us to do with the word of Christ?
- Why is it important for Scripture to "dwell richly within you individually and collectively as a small group?"
- What are some ways that you have been encouraged or challenged by Scripture in your life?
- What are some passages or topics of Scripture that your small group would like to explore together?

READ: EPHESIANS 6:10-20

- What is the purpose of the armor of God? see Eph. 6:11
- Which piece of the armor is the word of God?
- What might be some reasons for the word of God to be this piece of the armor?
- Share with your small group some things that will help you "take up the sword of the Spirit" daily.

SUPPORT

As small groups grow closer together, we look for ways to care for group members. That means we notice when someone stops coming and we reach out. That means we offer our help where we can. Essentially, healthy small groups are attentive to each other.

READ: GALATIANS 6:1-5

- How does Paul describe supporting each other in this passage?
- How does Galatians 6:2-5 relate to supporting each other within small group?
- What helps a small group get to the point of supporting each other well?

READ: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-22

- How does 1 Thess. 5:14 describe supporting each other?
- Of the categories of people Paul mentions in 1 Thess. 5:14, which do you most identify with right now?
- Share a time when you received support and it made all the difference.

READ: PHILIPPIANS 2:1-5

- How does Phil. 2:3-5 relate to supporting each other in small group?
- Why do you think support is a key element of a healthy small group?
- What are some practical ways that your small group can support each other?

PLAY

A healthy small group should find opportunities away from the group meeting to connect with and enjoy each other.

READ: PROVERBS 15:13

- What are some practical ways that your small group can connect outside of group time to have fun together?
- Take time to share with each other things that you enjoy doing.
- What would be a good rhythm for your small group to meet and to play?

READ: PROVERBS 17:22

- How is a joyful heart good medicine?
- What activities bring you joy?
- Why is it important for small group to connect with each other and have fun beyond just the group meetings?
- Share a time when you were part of a group that really bonded and become closer after enjoying a fun outing or activity together.
- How can your small group make having fun a priority?

SHARE RESPONSIBILITIES

When groups are healthy, responsibilities are shared. No one person should have to think about the food or the childcare or the location. Groups work best when everyone contributes.

READ: ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10

- How does this passage describe the benefits of working together?
- What are some downsides of one person carrying the load of the group?
- Share a time when you experienced the benefit of someone helping you with a task?
- Are you the type of person who finds sharing responsibilities easy or difficult?

READ: EPHESIANS 4:11-16

- How does Eph. 4:12 relate to sharing responsibilities and working together in the small group?
- How does sharing responsibilities contribute to the health and growth of the small group?

READ: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-7

- From this passage, where does the gifting and strength to serve come from?
- From verse 7, what is the purpose for the gifts that God gives us?
- What are the specific responsibilities that your small group can share?

A SIMPLE PLAN

Healthy small groups are simple. It should feel like a casual gathering with friends instead of an event you are hosting. Together, you can decide on the plan for the semester so that everyone knows where and when the group will meet and what to expect.

READ: NEHEMIAH 2:17-20

- When Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem after captivity and inspects the city walls, what type of plan does he give to the people with him?
- Why do you think Nehemiah's plan isn't complicated?
- What is the benefit of keeping the plan simple for small group?
- What elements of small group do you want included in the simple plan?

READ: 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-7, 13

- Based on this passage, your group could excel in many things, but what is the most important thing?
- How will you include showing Christ's love to each other and others in your small group plan?

READ: PROVERBS 16:3, 9

- What do these passages say about making plans?
- What would be a simple plan for your small group that helps each other grow in the faith?
- Take time to create a simple small group plan praying and inviting God to provide direction and to establish His plan. (Refer to the Group Development Plan in your Small Group Leader Guide if you need some direction for this.)

VISION

Healthy small groups understand where they are today, but they also have a vision for where they hope to be tomorrow. As leaders, we should look for people in the group who can step into a co-leader role where they can be equipped to lead on their own someday.

READ: PROVERBS 29:18

- What does this passage say about vision?
- In Prov. 29:18, “cast of restraint” carries the idea of being discouraged or without purpose. Share a time when you were part of something that did not have clear vision? How did you feel?
- Share a time when you have been part of something that did have clear, compelling vision? How did you feel?
- Imagine what it would look like for your small group to have these healthy characteristics. What would be the impact on your life and faith?

READ: ACTS 16:1-5

- Who did Paul choose to accompany him and become a co-leader with him?
- Eventually, Timothy is trained and assigned to lead a church. What do you think were some things that Paul did to help prepare Timothy for this role?
- Healthy small groups grow, expand, and multiply. Doing this requires leaders to multiply as well. How will your small group intentionally invest in other group members to become co-leaders?
- The best teacher is often experience. How can your small group share the opportunities to facilitate group discussion?