

Small-Groups Assessment Pack



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Leader's Guide

How to use an "Assessment Pack" by SMALLGROUPS.COM in your regularly scheduled meetings

Welcome to SMALLGROUPS.COM. You've purchased an innovative resource that will help you train and direct the leaders of your small-groups ministry. The material comes from respected thinkers and church leaders, and has been selected by the editors of LEADERSHIP Resources at Christianity Today International.

An "Assessment Pack" is a collection of tools that can be used individually or with a leadership team. Each tool has been designed to help measure some dimension of small-group ministry. This specific pack is designed to provide a broad assessment of your church's overall small-groups ministry.

For example, to see if small groups are assisting in the numerical growth of your church, see "Small Groups That Grow a Church," by W. Charles Arn (p. 4). To explore transforming your church's committees into mission-focused communities, see "From Committee to Community," by Roberta Hestenes (p. 6). Or to see if you are ready for cyber community, use "Consider Forming an E-Group," by Marilyn A. Yocum (p. 9).

We hope you benefit from this resource as you assess the small-groups ministry in your church.

Need more material, or something on a specific topic? See our website at Smallgroups.com.

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Six Small Group Essentials

These 6 steps will help you get started.

2 Timothy 2:2

Many of us feel we don't have the leadership skills to lead a small group. This assessment tool will help you determine what it takes.

	I'm ready	I need more preparation
1. Find a partner. Do you know a neighbor or friend who also may be yearning for a group? A like-minded friend will help you get started.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Size it up. What works best for your schedules? Once-a-week meetings? Every other week? Babysitting provided? Figure out the needs of your potential group, then try to meet them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Banish your inner Martha Stewart. Many people are worried about opening their home. All you really need to do is perk a pot of coffee, and you're in business.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Have a plan. Make sure you have some kind of study material that's grounded in the Bible. If you don't have a clue how to start, ask a trusted Christian friend, your pastor, your local Christian bookstore owner, or go to ChristianBibleStudies.com .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Be real. Life isn't always easy, happy, or tidy. Christians cry, hurt, and get lonely, just like everyone else. So don't be afraid to show your real face to your group, when appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Make it a no-pressure zone. Are the members of your group uncomfortable praying out loud? Then don't make them. Does a member have trouble keeping up with the lessons? Don't make it an issue.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

—JANE JOHNSON STRUCK

Discuss

1. Which of the above is my greatest strength?
2. Which do I need to work on the most?
3. Is there one thing that would stop me from starting a group? If so, what could help me move ahead?



Small Groups That Grow a Church

How open are our groups to newcomers and non-members?

2 Corinthians 5:17–21; Romans 15:7

Most of us recognize small groups as vehicles of care and support. But do small groups contribute to a church's outreach and numerical growth? Not necessarily. In fact, small groups often can inhibit growth in two ways:

1. By failing to seek out non-Christians. Most small groups, in fact, aren't open to non-Christians.
2. By excluding new church attenders. In general, newcomers won't feel welcome in groups that have been together for over two years—which describes 90 percent of small groups in churches today.

Here is a checklist to help your church reach new people through small groups:

	Yes	Usually	Sometimes	No
<p>1. Are we regularly starting new groups? Win Arn (<i>Church Growth Ratio Book</i>) suggests that an ideal ratio is 7 groups for every 100 members. Groups that have been around for two years or more typically become “saturated”—like a sponge that cannot hold another drop of water.</p> <p>A saturated group cannot add new members unless someone else departs to make room for them. Since half of all groups become saturated after only one year, new groups are necessary to provide entry points for newcomers. Some symptoms of a saturated group are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ When it reaches 8 or more (for a more intimate group that focuses on caring and sharing). ◆ When it reaches 15 or more (for a task-oriented group). ◆ When it reaches 35 or more (for a fellowship group). ◆ When it fills 85 percent of the room capacity on a regular basis. ◆ When it's been together for two years without adding any newcomers. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>2. Is at least one out of every four groups in our church open to outsiders? Are they planned and promoted for the unchurched? The success of these particular groups should be measured by how well they involve non-members.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>3. Are we encouraging greater diversity among our groups? When you offer more choices to people, you'll provide them with more ways for involvement. Usually, the more specific the group focus, the better.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>4. Do we evaluate small groups annually? Your goal should be that 70 percent of your new members and 10 percent of attending non-members be involved in small groups. Reach those goals, and small groups will be not only a vehicle of Christ's love, they'll also be a means of growing your church.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

—W. CHARLES ARN

Discuss

1. How many of our groups have reached saturation?
2. What kind of small group would be appealing to newcomers to our church? What group could we offer for non-members?
3. What is one step we can take to help our groups become more welcoming?



Small Group Disciplines

These practices will help change lives.

Hebrews 12:1–3

In community we discover who we really are and how much transformation we still require. This assessment will help your group move beyond polite sharing to disciplines that change lives.

	We're doing this	We need to incorporate this
<p>1. We confess to each other. Everyone wears masks. We hide from each other. Confession is the appropriate disclosure of my brokenness, temptations, sin, and victories for the purpose of healing, forgiveness, and spiritual growth.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>2. We apply what we are learning. A small group is a place for people to look into the mirror, discover who they are, and then ask, “How do I apply God’s Word to my life as it really is?” We may hear biblical instructions like be gentle, loving, faithful—but how do we actually apply that to our boss, spouse, or kids?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>3. We are accountable to each other. Small groups are the place for people to get on the scale and reveal how intentional they have been to pursue transformation into the image of Christ.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>4. We find guidance in our small group. We are helping each other listen to God. Small groups who rely upon God’s Spirit serve as a map for us when making important decisions.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>5. We encourage each other. Small groups have the privilege of loving and accepting human beings for whom Christ gave his life. In these groups we can supply the love, encouragement, and embrace people need to continue their journey of transformation.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

—JOHN ORTBERG

Discuss

1. Which of these disciplines are we doing well? How can I praise my group for this?
2. How can we apply what we’re learning?
3. How can we help each other to hear God’s voice?



From Committee to Community

5 questions to turn a traditional committee into a mission-focused community.

Acts 6:1–7; Hebrews 10:25

Busy schedules often prohibit being able to participate in both a committee and a small group. One solution is to turn your committee into a small group. Instead of simply doing business and going home, take time to focus on each other and the ministry God has called your group to by becoming a “mission-focused community.” Answer these five questions to determine how well you’re becoming a mission-focused community.

	Yes	Usually	Some- times	No
<p>1. Does our commitment level equal the task? For the average committee member, commitment means, “I come to meetings and respond to anything I’m supposed to vote on. If something doesn’t happen, it isn’t my fault.” In addition, the traditional time commitment is usually inadequate. Most committees assume a handful of people meeting once a month can renew a church in areas like worship or Christian education or discipleship.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>2. Does the frequency of our meetings allow the job to get done? A committee usually meets according to a set calendar. A mission-focused community, on the other hand, meets as often as is necessary to get the task done.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>3. Are we living out our callings? “Please tell people,” my banker friends plead, “that bankers don’t necessarily want to serve on the finance committee.” In the traditional system, a nominating committee would have put Saul, the tent maker from Tarsus, on the maintenance committee. Men like Saul will cheerfully do this work, but they need a way to discover other gifts.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>4. Are we keeping responsibility and authority together? In one church, the elder board didn’t like how the Christian education office looked. They reasoned, “We are elders; we have the authority.” So, one Saturday they came in and rearranged it. When the women who ran the program came in on Sunday, they were dismayed, and quit on the spot. Traditional committees often separate authority from responsibility. Mission-focused communities tend to keep responsibility and authority closer together.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>5. Are we inviting the whole person? There are always invited guests at a conventional committee meeting: our brains and our seats. The uninvited guests are our emotions, family problems, and personal concerns. Like little gremlins, they sneak in and mess up a meeting by discharging frustrations in speeches on topics totally unrelated to what is really bothering us.</p> <p>In a community, there are no uninvited guests. We take time to catch up with each other, pray for needs, and then go on to business.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

—ROBERTA HESTENES

Discuss

1. Which of these questions can our group answer with a strong yes?
2. If we polled members from various groups, how would they answer?
3. What is one way we can encourage one another in our committees (Heb. 10:25)?



Building (or Rebuilding) a Healthy Small Group Ministry

7 important questions to consider.

John 15:1–17; Acts 2:42

These seven questions will help you determine whether you've thought through what it will take to launch a successful small group ministry. If you answer these questions clearly, your small group ministry will have a solid start or restart.

- 1. What is the vision for small groups at our church?** This question is fundamental. Answering it requires asking two more questions. First, what is our overall vision for what small groups can and will do in our church? (And, what is our biblical basis?) Second, what kinds of people in our church can and must be reached by the small group ministry?
- 2. What kinds of groups will we start?** Will our groups be Bible-study oriented, prayer oriented, service oriented, recovery oriented or a combination of all of these?
- 3. How will we fill these groups with people?** People will go to the kind of group that best meets (and continues to meet) their needs. Consider how to recruit the people whose needs these groups will meet.
- 4. Who will lead these groups?** Will we have a program of “apprenticing,” where leaders-in-training get hands-on training? How will we discover and begin nurturing leaders?
- 5. How will we ensure the growth of this ministry?** What goals do we have for six months? How will we deal with a group once it has 12 members (or, how can we help groups to effect positive group splits)? How will we continue to recruit members and leaders for this ministry?
- 6. What kind of accountability will we require of leaders?** What kind of ongoing training will we provide our leaders? What kinds of reporting will we require, and how often? What about periodic meetings? Who will oversee the ministry in general?
- 7. How can we communicate our unique ministry desires with potential leaders and members?** Many churches with dynamic small group ministries will sit down with their answers to the above questions and codify them into a small group manual or a philosophy statement.

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Discuss

1. How can we become more like the church in Acts 2:42 and devote ourselves to teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer?
2. Which is the most important question for our church right now? Why?
3. How would you suggest we answer that question?

Pray

Commit to follow Jesus' command in John 15:12, and thank Jesus that he has made us his friends (v. 14).



Handling Difficult Personalities

It starts with knowing your heart.

Colossians 3:12–14; Ephesians 4:29–32

There will always be some personalities with whom the leader struggles. This exercise can help you to work through your feelings toward some different types of people.

1. What kind of person do you struggle with the most? Look over the following list and mark the three types of people who aggravate you the most. You have complete freedom to define what is meant by the following:

- _____ a male or female chauvinist
- _____ a self-assured person
- _____ a genuinely spiritual person
- _____ an expert
- _____ a person who is always happy
- _____ an obvious hypocrite
- _____ a complainer
- _____ a racial bigot
- _____ a selfish snob
- _____ a self-taught theologian
- _____ other:

2. Answer these questions for each type of person you checked:

What makes you dislike this person so much?

In what ways are you like and not like this person?

3. Imagine you have a small group with four people plus yourself. Included in the group are all three of the personality types you marked. Your role as small group leader is to provide an environment in which each individual is ministered to, yet you struggle with the people that you have in your group. List five things you can do to face the situation in a positive way.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

If you can put the five steps above into practice, then you can give each individual in your group the same opportunity for growth that you have.

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Discuss

1. Do you need to forgive a “difficult personality” who has hurt you?
2. What does Colossians 3:12–14 say to the leader of a group that includes a difficult personality?
3. When does a difficult personality need to be asked to change? How would you go about that?



Consider Forming an E-Group

If you don't have time for a small group, consider this alternative.

Hebrews 10:24

If you can find no convenient time or place to meet, don't abandon your dream of forming a group. Why not form an e-mail small group? An e-group offers the same benefits as a traditional group. In some ways, it's even better: no need to coordinate schedules, members participate at a time most convenient to them, and nobody misses a meeting because of illness, vacation, or lack of a babysitter. Use this assessment tool as a checklist to prepare for this kind of group.

- | | I am
doing
this | I need to
incorporate
this |
|---|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. I have gathered the participants. I've contacted at least four people. These should be people who not only have e-mail capability, but also regularly read it and respond. People who never check the messages you send them are not good candidates for an e-group. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I have designated a moderator. The moderator initiates discussion, stimulates insightful threads of discussion, and redirects tangential conversations. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I have initiated discussion. Post a short devotional thought, quote, or anecdote followed by a question to get the discussion going. Address the initial thought to everyone in the group. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I have directed replies to be addressed to the entire group. When participants send replies to the whole group, it duplicates the atmosphere of a traditional small group in which all present hear the response. It also helps to avoid confusion and the danger of factions. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I respect everyone's privacy. What's shared in a small group should stay within the group. No member should forward a message or cut-and-paste what someone in the group has written to someone outside the group without the expressed permission of the person who wrote it. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I clearly label subject lines. Subject lines of the e-mails should give a hint of the topic and the time frame; for example: "Psalm 1/Sept 1-7" or "Baptism/June 15-21." Replies will automatically contain the same subject line, making it easier for members to follow a thread of discussion. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I have limited the group's size. An e-group should be limited to five or six participants. In-depth discussion and relational interaction in a large group is not only difficult, it overstuff's participants' inboxes. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. I exercise leadership. Ideally, members will encourage each other to stay on the subject. But someone needs the authority to redirect when the ideal breaks down. Invite people to move off-topic discussions to private correspondence. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

—MARILYN A. YOCUM

Discuss

1. What are the advantages of an e-group?
2. When would be a good time for me to start this?
3. Would it be possible to set up e-groups for the entire church?