

# Journey Group Facilitator Field Guide

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## Table of Contents

- 1) Introduction
- 2) The Purpose of Groups
  - a. Connect
  - b. Care
  - c. Outreach
  - d. Coach
- 3) Journey Groups Defined
- 4) Group Facilitator Job Description
- 5) Ingredients of a Successful Group
  - a. The Semester System
  - b. Meeting Time/Frequency
  - c. Location
  - d. The 3 F's – Fun, Food, Fellowship
  - e. Childcare
- 6) Getting Started – How to market and Facilitate a Successful Group
- 7) Group Facilitator Application
- 8) Groups Directory Information
- 9) Background Check Form
- 10) Appendix
  - a. Other Ideas
  - b. Icebreakers
  - c. Caring for group participants
    - i. Good Week Bad Week

## **Introduction:**

This Journey Groups Facilitator's Field Guide is part of an ongoing series of resources that are part of Journey's Elevate Leadership track. It is highly recommended that anyone desiring to lead a Journey Group take the Elevate 101 course which highlights the overall functions and structures of a leader in the church.

The Elevate Course can be viewed online at: <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/1102633>

Journey has 3 core values from which we live by: Loving God, Loving Others, and Serving the World. Loving God is an expression of Worship, Loving Others captures our heartbeat for groups and connecting people to God, and Serving the World is our desire to touch people through acts of Christian kindness both large and small.

The focus of this "Field Guide" is our Journey Group structure. We believe that groups are where real life happens. They are where real relationships take place and people of all generations, cultures and backgrounds gather together. These small groups and serve teams meet in various locations around the city, volunteer during worship services, or gather together to impact their community. Journey groups are a great way to get closer to God, care for one another, and meet new people.

Thank you for taking the time to read this resource.

In His Service,

The Journey Church Leadership Team

# The Purpose of Groups

## **Connect:**

Groups are a place where real relationships take place and people of all generations, cultures and backgrounds gather together. It's an opportunity for people to find a starting point for developing what we hope might be lifelong friendships. Like the 1980's sitcom "*Cheers*" theme song, they are a place "Where Everybody Knows Your Name"

## **Care:**

The groups are an extension of Journey's pro-active pastoral care system and are a place where people can assist one another through life's struggles.

## **Outreach:**

Some people are much more comfortable showing up to a smaller group setting than showing up to a church for the first time. Groups can be a safe place to bring people who are far from God that they might get a taste of what life as a believer is all about.

## **Coach:**

Groups are a great place for believers to put their ministry gifts into action. Facilitators have the opportunity to use their heart, skills, and abilities in a supportive context where they can make a difference in the lives of others.

## Journey Groups Defined

1. A group in which generally has one of the following categories of emphasis:
  - a. Bible Study
  - b. Recreation
  - c. Recovery and Restoration
  - d. Connection/Fellowship
  - e. The Common Interest of its participants.
2. People choose the type of group they want to attend based on relationships, interest, or need.
3. The number of people in each group is not limited, but left up to the ability of the leader and the interest of the participants.
4. There are clear starting and stopping dates.
  - a. Both facilitators and participants get involved in a group knowing the commitment beforehand.
5. Groups that are thriving will continue on from semester to semester.
6. Facilitators are able to express their gifts in areas that are of interest to them.
  - a. This creates an opportunity for every member of the church to use their God given ministry gifts.
7. They meet weekly (preferred) or at least once every other week.
8. They have 3 or more people attending including the leader.
9. They identify and develop an assistant facilitator.
10. The group meeting includes one or more of the following: Prayer, Worship, Bible Study, and or Testimonies.
11. Unless otherwise specified the group welcomes new people into their meetings.
12. They are supported by church pastors and the Journey Groups Director
13. They encourage participants to invite people who are outside the church.
14. They complete their topic within the semester.
  - a. Some groups like sports, recovery, etc can operate outside of the normal semester basis with approval from the Journey Groups Director.
15. They grow relationally, spiritually, and numerically.

## **Job Description – Journey Group Leader**

**Responsible to:** Journey Groups Director

**Supported by:** Journey Groups Coordinators

### **Prerequisites:**

1. Attend and complete the Journey Groups Facilitator Training.
2. Be a member of Journey Church .( Complete Engage Classes)
3. Complete the appropriate background check.
4. Complete the Elevate 101 course.
5. Complete the Journey Groups Facilitator Application.
6. Receive final group approval from the Journey Groups Director.

### **Responsibilities:**

1. Pray for and conduct a Journey Group in accordance with the definitions outlined on the previous page.
2. Pray for the church, its leaders, your group participants, and those who you are believing will attend.
3. Be a life coach to your group participants encouraging them to be fully devoted followers of Christ.
  - a. Contact group participants on a regular basis to help them stay connected.
4. Provide a supportive atmosphere where participants are encouraged to cultivate and use their spiritual gifts and callings.
5. Identify and mentor one or more assistant group facilitators enabling them to fulfill their calling in ministry.
  - a. The assistant facilitator should lead one or more of the group meetings during the course of the semester.
6. Maintain unity by representing the philosophy of ministry and theology of Journey Church.
7. Promote the group both inside and outside the walls of Journey church.
8. Participate in any Journey Group Fair's which are typically held 1 week prior to and the week of the start of each group semester.
9. Attend the monthly Journey Group Leader gathering.
10. Furnish required group status reports as requested during the course of the semester.

Journey Group Facilitators exemplify the highest moral commitment and are encouraged to maintain a disciplined lifestyle of prayer, fasting, and bible reading. You must refrain from such things as profanity, smoking, chewing tobacco, gambling, indulging in excessive use of alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, dishonest gain, pornography, sexual immorality, and all behaviors which might cause Christ to grieve or others to stumble.

# Ingredients of a Successful Group

## The Semester System:

The ebb and flow of many people's lives surrounds the calendar year of the local school system. This presents some logical starting and stopping points for the majority of groups. In a typical year Journey Church hosts 3 semesters of groups which generally begin and end in the following manner:

- 1) Spring Semester – Starts around the first week in February and ends the week prior to Easter.
- 2) Summer Semester – Starts around the beginning of June and ends at the end of July.
- 3) Fall Semester – Starts around the beginning of September and ends the week before Thanksgiving.
  - a. The spring and summer semesters typically average 12 weeks and the summer semester is 8 weeks.

Defined start and end dates benefit both the leaders and the participants by letting them know what they are committing to in advance of facilitating or participating in a group. If a group is successful the facilitator will be encouraged to start it back up in the following semester. Participants are welcomed to join one or more groups and can switch groups at anytime. People who choose to become members of Journey Church are highly suggested to attend a minimum of 2 group semesters per year as part of their personal responsibility to grow in their faith.

We realize that there are some exceptions to the semester system. An example might be that of a softball team that is playing in a secular league where the schedule of the league determines the start and stopping time of the group. Another example might be an addiction recovery group where participants really need to meet weekly in a supportive environment to stay sober. These kinds of groups are not only allowed, but encouraged. The only drawback we see is that they may not get the natural promotion opportunities that come at the start of each group semester.

## Meeting Time/Frequency

As indicated earlier the recommended frequencies for the group meeting are weekly or bi-weekly. The general rule is that a group should last no longer than 90 minutes. It is better to leave participants wanting more instead of hoping the group would end. It is best to have a defined start and stop time so that even if there is an opportunity to stay after it becomes a choice so that people don't feel required to stay. As a facilitator be sure to also have a plan should someone want to linger. Come up with a create way to bring the group to a close.

## Location – Location – Location:

Group facilitators are encouraged to meet outside the church building if at all possible. Facility space is highly limited but can be requested for groups where a classroom setting is most appropriate. Since most groups have an outreach component it is advantageous to have the group located outside the church to attract those who might not necessarily be inclined to go to church on their own.

Suggested locations could be but are not limited to a host home, recreation center, subdivision club house, outdoor park, or restaurant. Pray and God will give you a creative idea on where to meet.

Any location chosen should be a safe, clean, inviting environment that is conducive to the type of group that will be hosted.

## **The 3 F's - Fun-Food-Fellowship**

- 1) We have noticed that including one or more of the 3 F's in every meeting helps lead to a more successful group. If a person is having fun at the group they are more inclined to return.
- 2) Food is something that seems to lower peoples guard and creates an atmosphere for fellowship as well.
  - a. Additionally if you can assign people roles of bringing food like something salty or sweet they are more likely to attend that week if they have committed to bringing food to the gathering.
- 3) Since one of the primary goals of the groups is to give people an opportunity to connect be sure to create opportunities for people to hang out and get to know one another. It can start with something as simple as an icebreaker at the start of meetings.

### **Childcare:**

Childcare for groups is left up to each individual group. Some groups have seen great success by delegating the childcare responsibility to other adults within the group on a rotating basis, pooling resources for paid childcare, or by recruiting other older children to serve as a sitter during the course of the meeting.

When considering location for the group in relationship to childcare remember – safety, safety, safety – supervision – supervision – supervision.

## **Getting Started / How to Market and Facilitate a Successful Group**

- 1) Start by praying and seeking God's direction for your group.
  - a. Pray for those you are believing God would have participate as well.
- 2) Be creative in the type of group that you will start.
  - a. Make sure it is something you are passionate about and enjoy doing.
  - b. Make sure the topic is mainstream enough that others would also be interested in participating.
- 3) Complete your group facilitator application and Journey Group Directory Form.
- 4) Start to Recruit, Recruit, Recruit.
  - a. There is nothing better than a personal face to face invitation.
  - b. Use social and electronic media like facebook, myspace, twitter, craigslist, email, and [journeychurchcommunity.org](http://journeychurchcommunity.org) to get the word out and invite friends to the group.
  - c. Pick up some of the Journey Groups Canvassing Cards and use them as a tool to invite friends, neighbors, and acquaintances to your group.
  - d. Design a booth for the Journey Groups fair and attend or have a designee man the booth before and after each service for the duration of the fair.
    - i. Contact anyone via telephone and email who signs up at your table during the groups fair.
  - e. If appropriate and finances permit consider taking out an advertisement in the local paper or contacting appropriate groups to ask for a free Public Service Announcement regarding your group.
- 5) Immediately identify an assistant group facilitator and encourage them assist with the promotion of the group.
- 6) Consider using [journeychurchcommunity.org](http://journeychurchcommunity.org) to facilitate online discussion during the course of the week.
- 7) Consider creating a newsletter or weekly email to keep group members connected and highlight life moments like birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, etc.

## Appendix:

### Other Ideas

It is important to involve your group in other activities outside the settings of a Small Group Meeting. One of the purposes of Small Group is to develop relationships, a sense of community. Therefore, in order to get beyond certain perceived or actual barriers between relationships, you need to periodically have fun, social activities. Below is a list of ideas to use when planning an activity.

1. Barbecue
2. Pool party
3. Games: Outburst, Encore, Pictionary, Charades, Bible Trivia, etc.
4. Go to a restaurant
5. Christmas party
6. Christmas caroling
7. Creative dinners / social gatherings
8. Volleyball, badminton, miniature golf, any sport, watch a sporting event
9. Go to St. Augustine, the movies, the beach, the landing, picnics, etc.
10. Birthday parties, anniversary parties, New Year's Eve party
11. Concerts, symphony, ballet, opera
12. Any activity you can possibly think of!

### Icebreakers

#### Questions to open discussions:

1. Where were you born?
2. What type of family were you raised in?
3. What is the one thing about you that is unique? (That is, what is something that is true about you that probably isn't shared by anyone else in this group?)
4. Who is someone who has influenced your growth as a Christian disciple? What did they do?
5. How did you end up at this Small Group Meeting?
6. What is your favorite childhood memory?
7. What was Christmas like when you were a child?
8. Where did you live when you were growing up?
9. What was your greatest struggle as a teenager?
10. What is your earliest recollection of God?
11. What did you want to be when you grew up?
12. What is the farthest place you have ever traveled to?
13. Who was your favorite teacher, and why?
14. How do you feel the church (in general) has helped you as a person?
15. What is a time during the week that you can relax?
16. What do you most like about your life's calling?
17. What do you least like about your life's calling?

18. What is one thing that gives you satisfaction?
19. Which household chore would you like never to do again?
20. What one thing would you like to change about your life? Why?
21. How do you work on your relationship with Christ during the day?
22. What is your greatest joy in your faith?
23. What is your greatest struggle in your faith?
24. If you could change one thing about your life, what would it be, and why?
25. Where would you live if you could move anywhere in the world, and why?
26. How would you like to see your closest relationship develop in the next year(s)?
27. What area of your faith would you like to work on in the next few years?
28. If you could write one news headline for the whole world to see, what would it be?
29. What is your greatest anticipation of the future?
30. How do you feel God can use you in the next few years?

## **Caring For Group Participants**

### **Good Week Bad Week**

This is a great way to check base with group participants during the course of the week. Give them a quick call and start off with the statement – “Good Week/Bad Week”. If it’s a good week, no need to hang out on the phone too long, but if it’s a bad week, Dig Deeper – pray with them. Ask God to intervene in their situation.