



Small Groups

Purpose/Goals

- To build loving, supporting, Christian community by investing in relationships with God and each other.

Acts 2:42-47 *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

- To disciple each other, encouraging our fellow group members to grow in their personal relationships with Christ, gain a deeper love for and knowledge of scripture, discover their spiritual gifts, develop a heart for people (including unbelievers), and provide an opportunity for confession and accountability.

Hebrews 10:24-25 *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.*

James 5:16 *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*

- To help keep our growing church "small" by providing opportunities for us to pray together, share life together, and bear one another's burdens.

Galatians 6:2 *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*

- To give members a context in which they can serve the Body of Christ in a variety of ways (e.g. CARE projects, community outreach, etc.)

Matthew 25:40 *'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'*

Design

- Groups ideally made up of 8-10 members to allow opportunities for all to participate in discussion and prayer time. Groups consistently exceeding 10 members are encouraged to develop new leaders and split off to create new groups.
- Gender-specific groups and co-ed/couples groups are offered.
- Groups should meet weekly for fellowship, prayer, and study of scripture.
- Groups are encouraged to periodically get together outside the normal, once-a-week, Bible study routine for meals/socials.

- Participate in quarterly CARE projects or serve together in some capacity.

Guidelines for Groups

- Regular attendance by all members
- Confidentiality regarding group discussions
- Active participation in lives of group members
- Welcoming attitude to new group members
- Love for others (Philippians 2:3-4)
- Avoidance of gossip and slander (Proverbs 16:28)
- Confessing our own faults and not the faults of others
- Prayerful commitment to one group and to actively participating in that group's study and discussion
- Willingness to be held accountable (Proverbs 27:17)
- Taking turns speaking to allow all members the chance to participate
- Avoidance of quibbling over minor issues (major on majors and minor on minors)
- Groups are encouraged (but not required) to meet somewhere other than the leader's home to help ease the burden on the leader

Guidelines for Leaders

- Must be members of Eternal Church (or actively pursuing membership)
- Must be spiritually mature (Galatians 5:22-23)
- Willingness to facilitate a focused discussion (not expected to know everything or be a pastor)
- Must have a love for people and a willingness to invest in the lives of group members
- Must meet/train with Eternal Leadership prior to leading a group
- Co-leadership encouraged to share burden of leading and protect from "burn-out"
- Must be committed to supporting the Purpose/Goals for Small Groups and the overall Mission of Eternal Church
- Willingness to commit to a minimum amount of time (i.e. a semester or a year) in order to ensure continuity among groups