



 **GROUPS**

QUICK GUIDE TO COACHING

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Adapted from Saddleback Church Small Groups Ministry
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GOD'S PURPOSE FOR RUSH CREEK CHURCH:

To help people far from God become contagious followers of Jesus Christ.

HOW IS THIS ACCOMPLISHED AT RUSH CREEK?

- Encounter God
- Embrace Unity
- Exercise Gifts
- Experience Biblical Community

HOW IS THIS ACCOMPLISHED IN SMALL GROUPS?

- Strengthen Faith
- Apprentice after Jesus
- Experience restoration of heart

WHAT'S INSIDE?

With the large number of groups at Rush Creek, keeping everything manageable and consistent can be a challenge. No matter the number of leaders you care for it can be tough to be able to determine how to speak truth into their lives. Not because you don't know the right answers, but because a relationship with a leader is not static. It's ever-changing, and you want to be able to help them grow and develop no matter what stage they're at.

WE'VE DESIGNED THIS RESOURCE:

- To help you engage others
- To help you build healthy Small Groups
- Not as an exhaustive resource that bogs you down
- To keep as a handy reference
- To be able to quickly diagnose the development that's needed in a leader
- To breathe life into leaders

Part of your role as a Coach is to champion Small Groups on Sundays, so we've included some questions you can ask to engage people on Sunday mornings.

We're in this with you!

-Rush Creek Small Groups Team

THERE ARE THREE PHASES TO COACHING:

PHASE 1: BE A F.R.I.E.N.D.

PHASE 2: BE A L.E.A.D.E.R.

PHASE 3: BE A C.O.A.C.H.

PHASE 1

BE A F.R.I.E.N.D.

As you begin a relationship with a leader, you don't have to jump straight to the deep end of your relationship with them. Just as most relationships start light, ease your way in to their life.

TRUTH = TRUST/TIME

We want to speak into others' lives, and that only comes after we've built trust. And trust is only over a period of time.

SO START OUT BY BEING A F.R.I.E.N.D.

Find common ground

Replenish their soul

Interests they have

Engage and encourage their calling

Notes in-between meetings

Develop relationships

FIND COMMON GROUND

To build a healthy relationship, start by simply finding common ground you share with the leader. This is one of the places where trust begins to form.

Helpful Hints:

- Ask them about their faith story. Or about the story of how they came to Rush Creek. Or what they loved about our church.
- Are they married? Single?
- Do they have kids?
- How long have they been a part of Small Groups at Rush Creek?
- Why do they love their group so much?
- Who brought them to Rush Creek?
- Somehow, some way, find a piece of common ground you can share with them.

REPLENISH THEIR SOUL

It is often the case that a leader is balancing a number of activities in their life. Leading a group is a sacrifice and can lead to burn-out and discouragement. Consider these questions to help a leader think through how to care for their soul.

Helpful Hints:

- What gives you rest?
- How easy is it for you to get uninterrupted time alone?
- What fills you with passion and excitement?
- When was the last time you were able to sit and worship God with nothing else on the agenda?
- Have you ever been on a spiritual retreat? Full day? Half day? Weekend?

INTERESTS THEY HAVE

Remember, these questions about a leader's interests are to help create common ground and build the friendship side of the relationship you have with the leader.

Helpful Hints:

- What do they like to do in their free time? Do they have any hobbies?
- Are they a sports fan? Who's their favorite team?
- What show(s) do they watch on television?
- Where do they like to vacation? Or if they could vacation anywhere in the world, where would they like to go?

ENGAGE AND ENCOURAGE THEIR CALLING

Every leader has a calling, because leading a Small Group is a calling from God. Each leader has a reason why they began leading and why they're continuing to lead. To speak relevant truth to leaders, you must understand their calling.

Helpful Hints:

- What is their spiritual story?
- What trials or hurts are they experiencing right now? What have they experienced in the past that has shaped the calling God has placed on their life as a leader?
- How has God shaped them uniquely for their role?

NOTES IN-BETWEEN MEETINGS

Group leaders are often nervous before their group meets, or afterwards are wondering how things really went. A word of encouragement goes a long way when it comes from you.

Helpful Hints:

- Send them a quick text message on the day their group meets, letting them know you're praying for them and their group. Or send them a text message the day after their group meets, to check in and see how things went.
- Call them on the phone and pray with them...or leave the prayer via voice-mail.
- Send them a handwritten card. Since handwritten notes are so rare these days, they're viewed as really special.
- Follow them on social media, and encourage them on the platform(s) they use regularly.
- Text them when it's their birthday and anniversary (and their kids and spouse), and send them a card on their big day.

DEVELOP THE RELATIONSHIP

Moving beyond words of encouragement takes intentionality. And it will help the leader feel like you truly care for them, because you're making extended time to develop the relationship.

Helpful Hints:

- Invite them out for a cup of coffee. Or even share a meal together!
- If appropriate, connect with them at their place of business.
- Have them over for an event you're hosting at your house. Consider having more than one leader at a time, this helps build a network of hosts rather than just developing the relationship you have with them.
- Intentionally help connect them with others at Rush Creek through our weekly service or through an event we have.

PHASE 2

BE A L.E.A.D.E.R

Listening Skills - everyone talks

Engage the leadership development plan

Active personal evangelism

Develop subgrouping by gender

Encourage role development

Remember and celebrate their wins

LISTENING SKILLS-EVERYONE TALKS

When it comes to helping a leader develop listening skills, there are a few quick and easy tips you can give them that can help right away.

Helpful Hints:

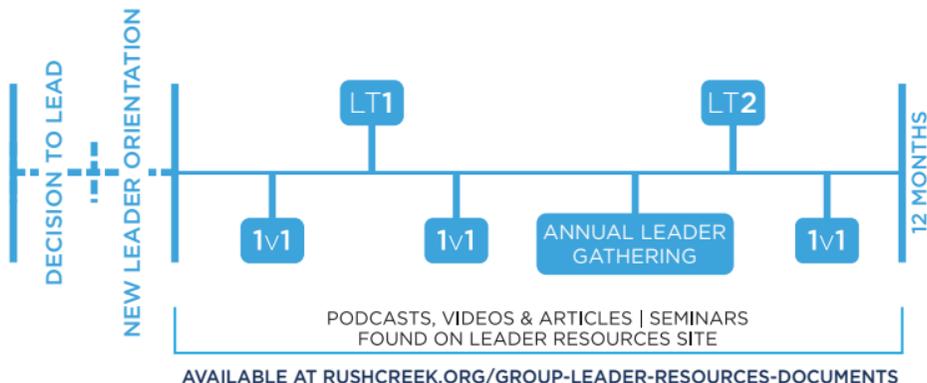
- First of all, remember that the goal of the curriculum is not about getting through the study, but facilitating a discussion.
- God gave you two ears and one mouth. Use them in that proportion.
- As people are sharing answers in the Small Group, work to identify feelings. Look for the emotion behind what is being said, not simply focusing on the words themselves.
- Be aware of body language.
- Ask “why” and “how” questions that spur dialog.
- When a person answers a question, affirm them.
- Learn to be comfortable with silence. Don’t be the first person to answer the questions! Awkward silence helps push people to share more authentically.

ENGAGE THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

We have a leader development plan in place, but that doesn't ensure everyone is on the pathway. Part of being an influence in a leader's life is helping make sure they're progressing through the plan we've created.

Helpful Hints:

- Show them the Leader Development Plan, and find out where the leader is in the process.
- Have a list handy of the different times we're offering our trainings, and offer to attend one of them with the leader.



ACTIVE PERSONAL EVANGELISM

If a leader is going to lead their group well, they have to model personal evangelism. Here are some ideas you can offer your leader.

Helpful Hints:

- Start out by suggesting they think through their 4 circles of influence: friends, family, factory, and frequent contacts. Imagine there are three levels of progress; crawl, walk, and run.
- Crawl step: Help the leader simply identify the name of one person they can pray for. As their Coach, you can offer to pray for that person as well (thus building in accountability). This is an activity the leader can do with their Small Group as well!
- Walk step: Pray for the person (first name only) out loud. Again, this is a great activity for the leader to do with their group!
- Run step: Get to know the story of the person you're praying for.

DEVELOP SUBGROUPING BY GENDER

Instead of staying together in one mixed gender group each and every week, a healthy group subgroup by gender. Here are a few ways you can help a leader lead in this area.

Helpful Hints:

- For fellowship time, have a “guys night out” one week, then a “girls night out” the following week.
- During the discussion time (or prayer time), send the guys to a different spot than the girls. You’ll often find a different level of sharing when this happens.
- Each group should also identify a men’s “point lead” and a women’s “point lead.” That person that will remind the group that to be healthy, you need to subgroup. These point leaders will also facilitate the discussion or prayer time when subgrouping happens.

ENCOURAGE ROLE DEVELOPMENT

There are so many different aspects to a healthy Small Group. If the leader chooses to do each and every detail, everything might get done, but group development and ownership won't happen. The leader should be sharing responsibility along the way.

Helpful Hints:

- Start by ensuring each leader has filled out their group roster in Planning Center.
- Encourage the leader to empower group ownership of group tasks, both big and small. Share things like:
 - Opening discussion
 - Closing prayer
 - Meeting location
 - Managing group roster
 - Coordinating socials
 - Keeping the group aware of missions opportunities

REMEMBER AND CELEBRATE THEIR WINS

Leaders easily forget their wins as they focus on areas where they need to develop. Being a leader in their lives means you help remind them of what God's done through them.

Helpful Hints:

- Help them define what the win is. Are they pursuing health as a Small Group? If they don't know the target, there's no chance they'll know if they're hitting it or not.
- Help them to track, or measure, that "win."
- Write these "wins" down.
- Week after week, stories of life change are happening. It could be a dream someone finally realized, an obstacle that's been overcome, or a miracle that God performed. Help the leader (and their group) capture these stories and share them at rushcreek.org/stories.

PHASE 3

BE A C.O.A.C.H.

As a coach, you have become the expert on Small Groups in the life of your leader. You've built trust over the course of time, and you've earned the right to speak truth to them. But the relationship is far from over! Now you're positioned to help the leader, and their group, thrive for the long haul.

Class progress

Open up their next steps in leadership

Affirm their personal and group plan

Curriculum strategy

Host a small group gathering

CLASS PROGRESS

Part of the spiritual development at Rush Creek is cognitive, and one of the ways we accomplish that is through our Leader Development Plan. Over time, we provide resources covering group issues, doctrine, and leadership development topics. We do this through our Group Resources page: rushcreek.org/group-leader-resources-2

Helpful Hints

- Check out the leader resources section of our website to read and listen to informational blogs & podcasts.
- Check with your campus Groups Pastor for dates on new resource release dates.

OPEN UP THEIR NEXT STEPS IN LEADERSHIP

Every leader has a next step. To help, encourage leaders where they are developmentally so they can take a step towards where they need to go. The best kind of encouragement is one that's informed by potential steps.

Helpful Hints:

- A few “next step” ideas you can work with a leader through:
- Raise up co-leaders and future leaders-this is a step that they can take within their group , but that takes great leadership. Lead leaders to embrace this concept, and indicate their decisions to your campus Groups Pastor.

Coach - is this leader one that could help us get groups healthy? Could they speak hope and life into other leaders, and help connect people on the weekend services? Recommend them to your campus Groups Pastor to join our Coaching team!

Ministry leader - does the leader regularly participate in their leader development plan?

Vocational ministry calling - does this person have a calling to be on a church staff?

AFFIRM THEIR PERSONAL AND GROUP PLAN

Has the leader taken the Groups' health assessment? Has the group taken the group health assessment? Then this is a great coaching moment you can have with them.

Helpful Hints

- Find the Groups' health assessment online at surveyMonkey.com/r/57BQLGT
- If the leader has completed the Groups' health assessment, ask your Groups Pastor to see your group leader's results. Then, discuss points of celebration and areas to strengthen.

CURRICULUM STRATEGY

A healthy group is one that has a strategy in place for how they're going to progress through curriculum. Here are a few diagnostic questions you can ask to find where a group needs to go:

Helpful Hints

- Does your group have a strategy?
- Have you seen the Groups Curriculum Catalog? Ask your campus Groups Pastor to share it with you!

The important part of curriculum is that a group has a strategy in place.

HOST A SMALL GROUP GATHERING

Organize a gathering of leaders (and their groups)! This is a great way to help leaders, and groups, network together for growth, problem solving, and fellowship. You can do this anywhere! This will further solidify the group of leaders, and group members, that God has entrusted to your care.

Helpful Hints

- Organize a gathering based on geography. For instance, gather all of the groups that meet in a particular area of town.
- Organize a gathering based on affinities. For instance, have a gathering by gender, by age demographics, or by “likes,” as in gathering all of the runners, golfers, etc. The possibilities are endless!

HOW TO CARE FOR LEADERS

Caring for leaders is a vital part of the Coaching role. Here are some helpful hints on how you can connect with a leader using their preferred method of communication.

Vary your communication with leaders. Using different mediums is a great way to engage them, instead of simply relying on one form.

Primary ways:

Text messages | Emails | Phone Calls

Social Media | Face-to-Face

Part of caring is finding out which method each of your leaders uses most effectively and efficiently. When you find this out, the truths you're working to communicate have a better chance of reaching the leaders you're trying to lead!

TEXT MESSAGES

Many people prefer the speed and efficiency of text messaging, especially when it comes to personal things like small group life.

Try sending a few of these texts:

- “Praying for you and your group today!” (Best if sent on the day their group meets)
- “I know your group met yesterday, and wanted you to know I’ve been praying for you. Hope it went well!”
- “Was just reading this verse and was super encouraged, so thought I’d pass it along! Thanks for all you are doing for your Small Group!” (Include a short verse)
- “Thanks for caring for your group! I’m here to support you so don’t hesitate to contact me if you need anything!”
- “I’ll be praying for you and your group this week! Let me know if there’s anything specific I can be praying for!”

EMAILS

There are plenty of times when we have information to share with leaders: dates, details, etc. But to further the relationship, try sending some of these encouraging emails:

Subject: 2 Quick Questions For You!

“Hey (their name), I wanted to say THANK YOU for all you’re doing for your group, and check in with 2 quick questions. #1: What’s been a highlight for your group in the last month? #2: How can I be praying for you? Hope everything is going well!”

Subject: Rush Creek Small Groups

“Hey (their name), I wanted to say THANK YOU for all you’re doing for your group. I’m committed to praying monthly for all of our Small Group leaders, so please know that you’ve got a great support team in place that wants to help you and your group be healthy! Let me know if I can ever do anything to better support you.”

PHONE CALLS

Try leaving a voice-mail, or ask some of the following questions:

- “Hey this is (your name). Just wanted to see if you had any questions, or if there was anything I could do to help you with your Small Group. Call (or text) me back if I can help with anything, and thanks for caring for your group!”

If they pick up, take the time to connect relationally and then ask the following:

- “What has been a highlight for your group in the last month?”
- “What has been a struggle for your group in the last month?”
- “Is there anything you need from me at this time?”
- “How can I be praying for you or your group?”

SOCIAL MEDIA

Remember, your relationship with your leader is beyond a simple transactional “How’s your group” conversation. Utilize a few of these strategies to help build a trusting relationship:

- Follow/friend your leader on any of the social media that you use
- “Like” their posts
- Comment on their posts
- Take a picture with one of your leaders and post it on social media (making sure you have their permission first)
- Try Facebook Messenger or Twitter Direct Message as another channel instead of email

FACE-TO-FACE

When you do get to meet in person, here's a few questions to ask:

- What's been a highlight of your group the past few weeks?
- How can I be praying for you or your group? (And if its appropriate take a minute to pray with them before you end the conversation!)
- What's something you're looking forward to in your group in the next few weeks?
- Is there anything you need from me or from the Small Groups Team right now?

WEEKEND CHAMPION

Part of the role of Coach is to champion Small Groups as you go about your Sunday morning. Promoting Small Groups is vitally important because you are a leader of the Small Groups ministry on your campus. You're the "expert" on finding, joining, and building healthy Groups. Your Groups staff members serve in this capacity as well, but they're just one person. You help extend the mission and vision as you relationally connect with people.

HELPFUL HINTS:

As you're serving, here are a few questions you can keep handy to engage others

- How long have you been coming to RC? Who invited you?
- How did you first hear about RC?
- Are you feeling connected here?
- What did God challenge you with today?
- Which Small Group are you in?
- Can I help you find a Small Group?

