



**RADIANT
GROUPS**

WHY SMALL GROUPS

Small groups exist to connect people relationally, so they can grow spiritually. While there are many positive experiences that happen, the reason we are committed to small groups is to help our church grow in spiritual maturity. Spiritual growth and becoming more like Jesus is our number one priority. We believe sustained spiritual growth occurs best through the context of purposed relationships that are rooted in biblical values. Relationships aren't a nice add-on to the Christian life; they are essential to our soul. *At Radiant, we are reclaiming the necessity of deep, life-giving relationships. Together, we are committed to growing in Christ.*

CIRCLES A MILE WIDE BUT AN INCH DEEP

In former generations, people belonged to a few relational circles. Family was one circle, while work and church were other circles. In all, a person had four to six total circles that connected them to about 100–200 individuals. There was often significant overlap between groups and relationships. Experiencing community in this type of environment was simple.

But times have changed. We're more mobile and life moves at a faster pace. Think of all the circles you are in. You have family, friends, neighbors and co-workers. If you have kids, you are connected to more circles through school, sports, clubs and endless activities. All of these circles compete relentlessly and scratch away at your time, attention and energy.

We have more relational circles than ever before, and these groups seldom overlap. Each circle is a disconnected group of people who probably have one or two things in common. While former generations had interconnected circles, people today manage 30 or more disconnected circles. No wonder so many of us are exhausted from keeping up with hundreds, if not thousands, of disconnected relationships.

The truth is, most of us are connected to more people than we can possibly count. This can result to many relationships feeling shallow. *What if this could change?*

What if we re-centered our lives around a few people who were committed to a common purpose? What if we were devoted to a small circle that offered deep, life-giving relationships? And what if this group impacted all other relationships?

ONE CIRCLE WITH A COMMON PURPOSE

Relationships are essential to our soul. We don't need to add one more circle to our overcrowded schedule and overwhelmed life. We need to re-center our lives with the right kind of circle. *We need a circle that is devoted to depth. We need life-giving relationships.*

Small groups can connect people in deep, life-giving relationships so we grow in spiritual maturity and become more like Christ. As a church, we want to reclaim the priority of relationships that are based in Christ and rooted in biblical values. We want to be devoted to one another and committed to spiritual growth. We are tired of settling for empty relationships that are a mile wide and an inch deep. *We want to experience relationships as God intended.*

FOUR ESSENTIALS

Every small group has four essentials. These essentials give cohesion to groups and provide a common direction for our church. While these essentials are vital in our approach to small groups, they are not the end goal. More important than what we do is who we want to become. Think of these essentials as the primary means for achieving our goal. Ultimately, our goal is to grow in our walk with Christ. Simply put, we want to grow spiritually and become more like Jesus! *The way we grow in our walk with Christ is by sharing our life, studying God's Word, supporting one another and serving our community.*

1 SHARE OUR LIVES

We want to cultivate deep relationships that are rooted in authenticity.

Small groups are the place where we go beyond the surface. At Radiant, we want to stop settling for shallow relationships by pretending everything is always fine. We want to be real. While it's easy to stay on the surface or withdraw when we get uncomfortable, sharing our lives means we are committed to deepening relationships over the long haul. Ultimately, it's not about us. Greater glory is given to Jesus when we pursue relationships that are rooted in Him.

Authenticity is the opportunity to invite people into our life and reveal our true self. Though it's challenging, it's one of the most life-giving traits of small group. Small group is a safe place where we can open up, acknowledge weakness, confess sin, risk being vulnerable and ask others for prayer and help.

Humility deepens relationships. In humility, we welcome and accept one another as Christ has accepted us. Through humility, we can listen and grow in understanding one another. As we listen carefully and care deeply for each other, we are able to speak truth in love and pray for one another.



Philippians 2:3–4 says, *“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”*

Life has a way of knocking us down. And when we are down, we need people around us to pick us up. One of the greatest joys in small group is the opportunity to share the ups and downs of life and be there to point each another to Jesus.

Yes, there are serious moments in small group as we navigate challenges and pursue the harder path of spiritual growth. But small groups are more than this. We also want to celebrate life together and enjoy the different seasons of life.

Small groups are meant to be life-giving. They should be fun! Groups are the ideal setting to share experiences, have cookouts, play games and laugh together. These are the people who know you and love you. Through Christ, we have so much in common and we're devoted to the same purpose. This is the reason people come back.

In the end, we want to be people who are committed to each other as we share our lives and grow together. Though relationships are inefficient and messy, they are worth it a thousand times over. Relationships are the glue that hold small groups together.

2 SERVE ONE ANOTHER

We want to create a culture of care that pursues mutual ministry.

The first word describing the church in the book of Acts is the word *devoted*. Though these early Christians were poor, persecuted and had little social influence, they were "devoted to one another" (Acts 2:42). At Radiant, we want to be men and women who are devoted to one another. We want to re-center our lives around a small group of people who are devoted to a common purpose and share the same priorities.

At its most basic level, serving one another is about staying aware of what's going on in each other's lives and caring for one another in big and small ways. This is what we call "mutual ministry."

Mutual ministry is loving, encouraging, praying, forgiving, submitting to and being hospitable to others. As a small group, there are endless ways to minister to one another. Serving starts by stepping outside of yourselves with compassion and entering the lives of others. This can happen by sending a card, text, calling or meeting during the week. This can be planned or spontaneous. Following up with birthdays, anniversaries, and prayer requests are great ways to show genuine care and serve one another.

Mutual Ministry also means being a first responder when life gets rough. This might look like babysitting for a couple over a weekend so they can have a date night. This can be as simple as dropping off a meal during an illness or after the birth of a baby. Or changing plans to travel to a funeral or helping a group member load furniture into a moving truck. There are so many ways, big and small, to serve one another.



Galatians 6:9-10 says, *"And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."*

Mutual ministry is about everyone in the group ministering to one another. There are no consumers or spectators in small groups. This means ministry doesn't just fall on the leaders. Small groups are designed to share the care of each other in big and small ways. No one person is meant to shoulder the demands of ministry alone. Small groups are about the group.

God works in many ways. But above all, He works on us through each other. In the end, mutual ministry is what makes the presence of God personal and satisfying. Serving one another allows us to be a part of His redeeming work.

3 APPLY GOD'S WORD

We want to be doers of the Word because Scripture is our authority.

We worship a God who speaks. God not only spoke in the beginning of time to create all things out of nothing; He continues to communicate with us through Scripture. God is not silent. By reading God's Word, we know His character, what's important to Him, how He has moved in this world, how people have interacted with Him and what will happen at the end of time. Through Scripture we can know God.

In small group, we want to gather around God's Word and know what the Bible says. This is where we see His promises are real. His wisdom is beyond this world. His Word has the power to transform and change lives. And His truth can bring hope and healing.

But we don't want to just talk about God and what He has done. We want to get to know Him through His Word and press the truth of God's Word into one another. This is why small groups are more than a Bible study. We want to help each other apply the truth of God's Word to everyday life.

As God's Word, we believe the Bible is trustworthy and the final authority over our lives. The Bible is the lens by which we want to view all of life and informs how we should live. We don't want to base our life on man's wisdom or the experience of others. While that can be helpful at times, we want to know what God has to say. Ultimately, God's opinion is what matters most.

As a church we want to be people who apply God's Word. We want to be people who turn to Scripture first, Scripture most. As we build our life on the foundation of God's Word, our lives won't fall apart, and we won't be wrecked when a storm comes crashing down.



In Matthew 7:24–27 Jesus says, *“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”*

When we read and apply God's Word as a small group, we multiply the riches of the Bible. Together we can challenge, deepen and strengthen the faith of one another as we grow in our love for the Lord. There's no replacement for the Bible. It's sufficient for all of life. Scripture is our authority.

4 DEPEND ON GOD

We want to lean on God's supernatural work to bring spiritual maturity.

While there are many positive outcomes that happen through small groups, the reason we are committed to small groups is to help our church grow in spiritual maturity and become more like Christ. Spiritual growth is our number one priority.

In the end, God is more concerned with our sanctification than any sort of success. Sanctification is the goal of life.

But we can't do this on our own. We can't generate spiritual maturity in ourselves by doing the right thing. We can't manufacture change on our own. It doesn't work this way. Only God can transform our lives. This means we need the power and presence of God to show up and work in our lives.

And His work is supernatural.

This is why prayer is a vital part of small groups. Through prayer, we can lean into the Lord and ask God to work on our behalf. Prayer shifts our perspective from the things we can do to what God can do. And all things are possible for God. When we are Spirit dependent, we are not trusting our own wisdom or abilities. Instead, we are placing our trust in the Lord regardless of the circumstances we are facing.

Though sin drives us to hide from each other, God calls us to enter in with one another and influence the people around us. While we can't change each other, we can encourage one another and hold each other accountable. Small groups are more than friend groups, interest groups or support groups. This is a community of people who are committed to the same goal. Together, we want to become more like Christ.



1 Corinthians 3:4–6 says, *For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.*

As a small group leader, leaning into the Lord and remaining God dependent removes a ton of pressure from your role. In the end, only God can transform lives, save those who are lost and give hope to those who are hurting. In humility, we acknowledge that we're helpless without God. We serve Him. He is the One who works in us and through us.

EIGHT COMMITMENTS

*At Radiant, we want every small group member to embrace eight commitments. These commitments are based on the biblical mandate of *mutual ministry*, which is the driving force behind small groups. While each group has its own dynamics, these commitments are intended to set clear expectations and increase ownership among each group member. *Healthy small groups thrive on participation and consist of members who strive to live out all eight commitments.**

1

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

I will pursue spiritual growth and encourage my group as they grow in their walk with Christ.

2

CULTIVATE RELATIONSHIPS

I will be present and make it a priority to know and stay connected with the people in my group.

3

ACCEPT OWNERSHIP

I will look for big and small ways to contribute and care for needs that come up in my group.

4

BE AUTHENTIC

I will trust, be transparent and strive to be open while maintaining respect and confidentiality in my group.

5

EMBRACE ACCOUNTABILITY

I will invite my group to speak into my life while extending grace to my group.

6

CELEBRATE GROWTH

I will encourage and celebrate when God is working in my group.

7

SERVE TOGETHER

I will serve with my group and look for ways to be a witness for Christ.

8

MULTIPLY MINISTRY

I will be open to new members and as we grow, we will multiply to fulfill our mission of making disciples.

COMMON QUESTIONS

When and where do small groups meet? Small groups meet in various homes on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday evenings. We currently have groups in Avon, Brownsburg, Plainfield, Danville, Pittsboro and Indianapolis.

How often do small groups meet? Groups meet three times a month and typically have one week off each month. Most groups meet a total of 24 to 26 times a year.

How long do small groups last? Each small group semester lasts around 12 weeks. The fall semester runs from mid-August to December. The winter/spring semester goes from mid-January to early May. Groups do not meet during the summer.

What does each small group look like? Most groups have 10–14 members and gather together for two hours. This time revolves around group discussion and breakout, where men gather with men and women gather with women for prayer and accountability.

What is the commitment? Joining a small group requires a 12-week commitment to attend the weekly gatherings and coming prepared to participate in group discussion. Commitment is key to building group momentum and deep relationships. We understand that illness, work commitments and family trips come up; however, the depth of each small group depends on the commitment of each member.

How important are small groups at Radiant Bible Church? Small groups are the heartbeat of our church. They're the place where the discipleship of the church takes place during the week as groups study God's Word, support one another and share their lives. Over the years, 70% or more of our adults have been involved in our small group ministry.

Is childcare provided? No. Small groups are for adults only, but exceptions can be made for newborns who are nursing. Parents are responsible for arranging childcare during small group. This can include hiring a babysitter, coordinating childcare with other families in your group or swapping childcare with someone from another small group who meets on a different night.

How are groups selected? While there is no specific formula for assigning members into groups, some factors include: group size, available openings, stage of life, location, requested person(s) and the dynamics of each small group.

Do I have to be a member of the church to join a small group? Membership is not required in order to join a small group, but we do expect every person in a small group to consider our church to be their church home.

