



RADIANT GROUPS **BLUEPRINT**

A GUIDE TO
DEEP, LIFE-GIVING RELATIONSHIPS



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DEEP, LIFE-GIVING RELATIONSHIPS

*To the Small Group Leaders at
Radiant Bible Church.*
YOU ARE LOVED.

*I will build my church,
and the gates of hell shall
not prevail against it.*

MATTHEW 16:18

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WHY A BOOK ABOUT RADIANT GROUPS?

A good builder doesn't wing it. He or she follows a *blueprint*. A blueprint is a detailed plan of action. It shows the high-level picture of what you're building and the steps to build it.

Blueprints are essential. They provide clarity on the jobsite. They bring alignment by keeping everyone on the same page. They show what's next and point to which tasks need to be completed. They bring focus to the necessary resources that are required for the job.²

This is our blueprint.

We don't expect you to master everything in this blueprint. Think of this as a tool to answer two questions:

Why small groups? What do small groups look like at Radiant?

This blueprint comes from over a decade of ministry and discipleship. We certainly don't have it figured out. Every day we're learning. Ministry changes and methods adapt. But since day one, we have held onto four guiding principles for small groups. These principles aren't just words on a page. They are core beliefs that we hold to be true.

How these ideas fit together and work in your small group can change based on various seasons and group dynamics. The *how* can look different in each small group according to the gifts and passions of each group member.

Together, these four principles lay the foundation for why we're a church of small groups and what groups look like at Radiant.

FOUR PRINCIPLES OF RADIANT GROUPS

#1. PEOPLE NEED COMMUNITY

Relationships aren't a nice add-on to the Christian life; they are essential to our soul. Let's not settle for relationships a mile wide and an inch deep. We want deep, life-giving relationships. As a church, we're devoted to meaningful relationships where God is working for His glory, our growth and the good of others.

#2. GROWTH NEEDS SIMPLICITY

Discipleship doesn't have to be complicated. We are committed to four simple practices that are conducive to spiritual growth. Together, these godly habits provide a clear framework to help group members connect relationally and grow spiritually.

#3. GROUPS NEED MUTUAL MINISTRY

In order to cultivate deep, life-giving relationships and grow in spiritual maturity, the ownership of the group must shift from the leader to each member. Mutual ministry was the driving force of the early church and it's the glue that holds groups together.

#4. LEADERS NEED CLARITY

Healthy small groups are critical to the ministry of Radiant. As a leader, we want to help you manage expectations so you can serve faithfully and effectively. Ministry is a joy, it doesn't have to be overwhelming.

THIS IS OUR BLUEPRINT

The first words recorded in Scripture display God as creator and master builder. God laid the foundation of the world when He commanded the universe into existence. By Him, all things were created. There isn't a star in the universe or square inch on the earth that God did not make. He is the architect who planned, designed and built everything out of nothing.

When God created mankind, Adam was formed from the ground in the same way a potter molds clay with His hands. Eve was different. Eve did not come from the ground like Adam. Instead, God took a rib from Adam and used it to make Eve. In the original language, the word *make* is the same word as the english word *build*. This means God built woman from man. God is the master builder and architect over all creation and everything that is good—including mankind. Building is in the very nature of God.

If God is a builder, it's not a coincidence that Jesus was born to a carpenter. From the little we know about the life of Joseph, we know he was a father to Jesus and had a reputation for being a carpenter. He, too, was a builder.

Unlike His first building project in Genesis 1, which only took six days, Jesus spent much of His life as a carpenter. As a boy, Jesus most likely worked in the family business as soon as He could pick up a broom. Over the years, Jesus would have worked on many projects and built many homes. This wasn't a hobby. This is how Jesus lived. He had an eye for creating. By the end of His twenties, He probably had calloused hands and a strong back.

Around the age of thirty, Jesus switched from construction to ministry. Instead of carpentry, Jesus began working on people. For three years, he built into the lives of twelve disciples. He repaired broken men and women. Jesus rebuilt and restored lives that had fallen apart.

Near the end of His life, Jesus made a promise to His disciples that He would build His church. Although today we tend to think about church as a building, the word *church* in the New Testament means “called out ones” or “assembly”. Without exception, this word refers to people, not a place. When Jesus promised to build His church, He was not talking about a brick building with four walls and a slanted roof. Instead, He envisioned people who would continue His ministry. For over two thousand years, Jesus has been building His church.

One day, Jesus will return and His final job will be building a new heaven and new earth. As a master builder, He will make all things new. Like Jesus, you’re called to be a builder. We’re called to build into people.

To join this construction crew, you don’t need a hammer or miter saw. You don’t need to know how to pour concrete, frame a wall or install a door. This project is not DIY; this is something we do together. Our mission is to build into the lives of men, women, children and families as we continue the ministry and work of Jesus.

Are you ready to roll up your sleeves and build something that will last for years? Something strong and beautiful. Something living and eternal. Something that matters and will make a difference. Are you ready to build into people?

The goal of this blueprint is to provide a clear vision and direction for Radiant Groups so that you know what we are building and how everything fits together.



1

People Need Community

PEOPLE NEED COMMUNITY

We are a fast and efficient society, but we're not great at relationships. We wear ear buds when we travel and exercise. We communicate by email and texting. We work remotely. Our front porch has been moved to the backyard with a privacy fence to separate us from our neighbors. And most of our friends on social media are people we rarely see.

We are living in the most connected society in history, but when it comes to relationships, many of us are disconnected. Is this what God intended?

We don't just need others; we're created for one another. At our best, we want to experience relationships as God intended. We want deep, life-giving relationships as God calls us out of our comfort zones and challenges us to step into the lives of one another.

We're created for community. Together, we're a family. This means no more settling for superficial relationships where everything is always fine.

Relationships aren't a nice add-on to the Christian life; they are essential to our soul. Let's not settle for relationships a mile wide and an inch deep. We want deep, life-giving relationships. As a church, we're devoted to meaningful relationships where God is working for His glory, our growth and the good of others.

CIRCLES A MILE WIDE BUT AN INCH DEEP

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

But times have changed. We're more mobile and life moves at a faster pace. Think of all of 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 and scratch away at limited time, attention and energy.

Not only do we have more relational circles than ever before, but within these groups there is seldom overlap. Each circle is a group of people who at best have one or two things in common. While former generations had only a few circles, people today are trying to manage 30 or more 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 count. This is why many relationships tend to be shallow. What God made to be life-giving has become stressful, overwhelming and exhausting. But 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 and authentic relationships? What if these relationships were life-giving? Sound too good to be true? That is the goal of Radiant Groups.

ONE CIRCLE WITH A COMMON PURPOSE

If many of our relationships tend to be shallow and many of us struggle trying to keep up with all of the different groups we're connected to, what's the solution? Simple. We don't need to add one more circle to our overcrowded schedule and overwhelmed life. That won't help. Instead, we need to re-center our lives around the right circle. We need a circle that is devoted to depth and one that shares a common purpose.

At Radiant, we want to reclaim the priority of relationships based on Christ and rooted in biblical values. We want to experience deep, life-giving relationships in the way God intended.

SMALL GROUPS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

When the New Testament was written, the typical church was a handful of families crammed into a living room. As believers met in homes, the church was their small group.³

The early church didn't have a choice of how it gathered. Everything in their culture was neighborhood based. Without vehicles, they couldn't drive to a different church across town.

Beyond the challenges of travel, the early church was also a persecuted minority with no social standing or wealth. So, it's no surprise the church gathered in homes.

What's most fascinating is that these homes did not stay small. As the church grew, so did the home. Can you imagine adding a courtyard or expanding the walls of your house because your living room became standing room only?

Ancient archeology discovered these churches weren't closed communities. These early Christians added onto their homes so they could welcome more people. These early believers were builders.

The idea of Christians meeting in homes isn't a new concept. For two thousand years, believers have gathered together and met in the homes of one another. This means that small groups aren't the latest fad for discipleship. They aren't a trendy way to structure the church or streamline pastoral care. They're not a new strategy to promote church growth or create a network of holy huddles, golf buddies or book clubs.

There is something special about a home. A home is personal. It's real and relatable. When you invite someone to your home, you're inviting them into your life. It is where people feel most comfortable.

Ever since the beginning of the church, believers have gathered in homes. What we're doing isn't new, it's simply biblical.

WHY SMALL GROUPS?

A lot of churches have small groups. There are a lot of positive outcomes that happen through small groups. As we think about the small group ministry at Radiant, there is one primary reason that we are committed to small groups. We want to grow in *spiritual maturity*. Becoming more like Jesus is our number one priority.

Sustained spiritual growth does not happen on its own. It takes the Word of God, Spirit of God and the people of God.

Think about this for a moment. There are an infinite number of ways that God could reach the world, but He chose to use people as the primary means to carry out His ministry. This is incredible! This is humbling. There are bigger and better ways that are more miraculous and spectacular. But God chose to use people. People like us.

Small groups are more than friend groups, interest groups or support groups. More than having a place to belong, small groups are a community of people who are committed to the same goal. We want to connect relationally so we can grow spiritually.

Do you have someone who encourages you? Prays with you? Do you have someone who holds you accountable? Do you have people who are helping you become more like Christ? This doesn't happen when you walk alone. This is why we're a church of small groups.

SIX REASONS WE'RE COMMITTED TO SMALL GROUPS

- #1. **They are biblical.** (Acts 2:42–47)
- #2. **They foster love.** (John 13:34–35)
- #3. **They promote fellowship.** (1 Thessalonians 2:8)
- #4. **They shepherd the whole church.** (Ephesians 4:11–12)
- #5. **They develop spiritual gifts.** (1 Corinthians 12:14–27)
- #6. **They multiply ministry leaders.** (2 Timothy 2:1–2)

We're not just a church with small groups, we're a church of small groups. Since day one, small groups have been the primary source of care, prayer, discipleship, relationships and leadership at Radiant. More than going to church, we want to be the church.



2

Growth Needs Simplicity

GROWTH NEEDS SIMPLICITY

In one word, Jesus summed up His ministry and unleashed a mission that changed the world. He said, *make disciples*. Although English translates this as two words, in the original language, it is one word. It's not an invitation or request. It is a command. It's an order. This word is also plural. Jesus wasn't just speaking to Peter, James and John. This is for you, too. Jesus is speaking to all of us. "*You all, make disciples.*"

This is the mission Jesus lived out with His disciples on the dusty roads of Galilee and it's the same mission for us today. Together, we're called to make disciples.

This isn't the first time you've heard the call to make disciples. The question is, "How?" How do we make disciples? How do we build into the lives of others?

The answer is easier than you think.

Just as people need community, they also need *simplicity*. Sanctification is a big word, but we don't need to make discipleship harder than it is.

Follow me. Love God. Love others. Make disciples. This is what Jesus commanded us to do.

We are committed to four simple practices that lead to spiritual growth. These godly habits provide a clear framework to help group members connect relationally and grow spiritually.

FOUR ESSENTIALS OF RADIANT GROUPS

Whether you are new to small groups or have been in a group for many years, there are four simple practices most critical to small groups. This is what we call the *Four Essentials of Radiant Groups*.

Since the goal of small groups is to grow in spiritual maturity and become more like Christ, the four essentials provide a simple and tangible framework for small groups to achieve this goal.

While every small group has its own unique dynamics, the *Four Essentials* are intended to provide cohesion for every small group at Radiant. As a church of small groups, we want every group moving in the same direction.

HERE'S WHAT THE FOUR ESSENTIALS LOOK LIKE

- #1. **Share Our Lives** (Philippians 2:3–4)
- #2. **Serve One Another** (Galatians 6:9–10)
- #3. **Apply God's Word** (Matthew 7:24–27)
- #4. **Depend on God** (1 Corinthians 3:4–6)

Essential #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 deeper relationships. We want to be real.

It's easy to stay on the surface or withdraw when we feel uncomfortable.⁴ Sharing our lives means we are committed to deepening relationships over the long haul.

Being authentic gives us the opportunity to invite people into our lives and reveal our true selves. Although it's challenging, it is 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.

Humility deepens relationships. Through humility, we welcome one another as Christ has accepted us. We can listen and grow in understanding one another with humility. As we carefully listen and care deeply for each other, we can 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. When we are down, we need people around 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 other to the hope of the gospel.

Yes, there are serious moments in small group as we navigate challenges and pursue spiritual growth. But small groups are also where we can celebrate the joys of life together.

Small groups are meant to be life-giving. They should be fun! Small 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.

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 messy, they are worth it a thousand times over. Experiencing moments of honesty is one of the reasons people come back.

Essential #2: **SERVE ONE ANOTHER**

We want to create a culture that pursues mutual ministry.

The first word describing the church in the book of Acts is the word *devoted*. Although the 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 hope to center our lives around a small group of people who are devoted to a common purpose and share similar 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 ourselves 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. It can be as simple as dropping off a meal during an illness or after the birth of a baby. It could be 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 one another in big and small ways. No one person is meant to shoulder the demands of ministry alone.

God works in many ways. Amazingly, we can join in this work as we serve others. He works in us through each other. Serving one another allows us to be a part of His redeeming work.

Essential #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; but also, 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 that His promises are real. His wisdom is beyond this world. His Word has the power to transform and change lives. His truth can bring hope and healing. Life's greatest questions are answered in the pages of the Bible.

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 His Word into one another. This is why Radiant 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 as it 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 lives on the foundation of God's Word, our lives won't fall apart and we won't be wrecked the next time 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.

Essential #4: **DEPEND ON GOD**

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

Small groups help our church grow in spiritual maturity and Christlikeness. Spiritual growth is our number one priority.

We can't do this on our own. We can't generate spiritual growth by simply doing the right thing. We can't manufacture change on our own. It doesn't work that 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.

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. When we depend on God, 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. All things are possible for God.

Although 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.

This should give you immense assurance if you find yourself discouraged with your small group. Growth doesn’t depend on you. More than anything, the people in your small group need God to work in their lives in a supernatural way.

WINS IN SMALL GROUP

At times it's easy to become discouraged and doubt if God is working in your small group or question if your group members are moving in the right direction. To help you discern how God is working in your small group, use the *Four Essentials* to evaluate the health of your group. As you build momentum and see God work in your group, this is a win.

Use the questions below to monitor progress, set goals and focus on specific areas that need improvement.

SHARE OUR LIVES

- Are people devoted to one another?
- Do conversations move beyond the surface?
- Do group members stay connected during the week?

SERVE ONE ANOTHER

- Are group members taking ownership of the group?
- Do conversations encourage and build up each other?
- Does the group care for one another in big and small ways?

APPLY GOD'S WORD

- Is the group doers of the Word or hearers only?
- Are people engaged in God's Word on their own?
- Do conversations focus on God and apply Scripture?

DEPEND ON GOD

- Is the group growing spiritually?
- Does your group spend time praying together?
- Do group members look for ways to live out their faith?

3

Groups Need Mutual Ministry

GROUPS NEED MUTUAL MINISTRY

Did you know that there are almost eight billion people on our planet? That's a lot of people. But for some reason, the Lord has brought us together. This is not an accident or a coincidence.

If everyone had the same life experiences, shared the same interests and viewed life the exact same way, our world would be boring. The fact that we're not the same is a good thing. God has wired each of us uniquely. He has given us different passions, gifts and experiences. But in Christ, we can be connected and members of the same body.

As you look around your small group, you will probably find that you live in different neighborhoods, go to different schools and come from different backgrounds. But if you look deeper, you will find that you have much more in common. Together, we share the same purpose. We share the same faith, the same Word, the same love for Christ, the same concern for the lost and the same desire to glorify God.

As a small group, you are called to minister to one another. This is what it looks like to be the body of Christ as we live out the "one-anothers" of Scripture: *love, serve, forgive, encourage, pray, care for and submit to one another.*

To cultivate deep, life-giving relationships and grow in spiritual maturity, the ownership of the group must shift from the leader to each member. Mutual ministry was the driving force of the early church and it's the glue that holds groups together.

EIGHT COMMITMENTS

While each group has its own dynamics, we want every small group member to embrace *Eight Commitments*. Together, these commitments are intended to set clear expectations and increase ownership among small group members. Healthy small groups thrive on participation and consist of members who strive to live out all *Eight Commitments*.

HERE'S WHAT THE EIGHT COMMITMENTS LOOK LIKE

- #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 the lives of my group.*
- #7. **Serve Together:** *I will serve with my group and look for ways to permeate the westside of Indianapolis with the hope of the gospel.*
- #8. **Multiply Ministry:** *I will be open to new members and as we grow, we will multiply to advance God's work so more people can experience what we have experienced.*

Commitment #1: **SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

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

Over the years, we have seen that small groups are the most effective environment for sustained spiritual growth. Spiritual growth requires the supernatural work of God and transforming power of Scripture. It takes personal discipline and dependence on the Holy Spirit. It takes abiding in Christ. And it takes the influence and support of others.

To grow spiritually, you need people who are devoted to you and will step into your life and point you to the hope of the gospel. You need people to pray with you, encourage you and call you out when necessary. You need people who will sharpen you and are committed to growing in Christ.

Beyond making friends or having a place to belong, becoming more like Jesus must be the primary goal of each small group. Spiritual growth shapes everything we do in small groups.

Commitment #2: **CULTIVATE RELATIONSHIPS**

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

God brought you to this church and placed you with a particular group of people. We believe God has a reason for your small group.

Maybe these people are like you and it's easy to see you have a lot in common. Or perhaps your group is totally different. The odds are you would not pick these same people on your own, but that's what makes these relationships so powerful.

As a church, we want to experience relationships as God intended. This means we must be willing to risk looking weak and vulnerable. We must open up and be real with each other. We must learn how to self-disclose and support one another. We must extend grace, reciprocate ministry and initiate care. We're tired of settling for shallow and empty relationships. At Radiant, we want deep, life-giving relationships.

Commitment #3: **ACCEPT OWNERSHIP**

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

Sometimes, we can barely manage our own lives, let alone the daunting task of trying to come alongside others. Yet the New Testament commands us to minister to one another.

Rather than having a few highly trained leaders, we want to call each person in every small group to step up in ministry. Imagine hundreds of people who are devoted to ministering to one another. This is what the priesthood of all believers is about. Our whole church can come alongside and minister to one another through small groups. We don't just go to church, we are the church.

In small group, each member is expected to take ownership and is responsible for ministering to the needs of the group. There are no consumers or spectators. Small groups are designed to mutually minister to one another.

Commitment #4: **BE AUTHENTIC**

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

As Christians, it's easy to spend much of our lives hiding our inadequacies and covering failures. But we're tired of fake. Just as Christ accepted us, we need to accept others. We're far from perfect, and that's okay. While authenticity is intimidating at first, it's one of the most life-giving traits in small group. We want to be real and genuinely authentic.

Small group is where we can be known. We share hurts, confess sins, disclose doubts, admit fears, acknowledge weakness, ask for help and seek out prayer. This is where we can reveal our true selves and share the ups and downs of life.

This isn't about sharing our deepest and darkest secrets. We just want to be real. As God's image bearers, we're less concerned with protecting our own image and more focused on reflecting Christ through our imperfect lives.

Commitment #5: **EMBRACE ACCOUNTABILITY**

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

One distinguishing trait of small group is something we call breakout. In breakout, men gather with men and women gather with women for a focused time of accountability and prayer as we bear each other's burdens and passionately pursue Christ together.

Accountability is not about exercising authority over one another. It's also not a sin hunt or interrogation. Rather than piling guilt on one another, we strive to speak truth into each other as we look for opportunities to grow in grace, encourage one another and pray together.

At its core, accountability is being honest with ourselves, real with others and dependent on God. In the fight against sin, having other people in your corner is a powerful motivator.

Commitment #6: **CELEBRATE GROWTH**

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

Spiritual growth is not something manufactured or produced on our own. Although we are involved in the process, each of us are powerless to grow and change ourselves. Because we cannot become more like Christ without God intervening on our behalf, spiritual growth is something we must celebrate. When we celebrate God's work in our lives, we shift the attention off of ourselves and focus on what the Lord is doing.

Spiritual growth is more than a change of behavior. It's a heart change that impacts your attitude, perspective and priorities as you grow in your ability to view life through the lens of God's truth. This includes trusting God when life is hard, prioritizing the wisdom of God's Word when making decisions, being Spirit-dependent and extending grace to people who don't deserve it.

Like physical growth, spiritual growth is often slow and subtle. In small groups, sharing stories and prayer requests is important because sometimes it is difficult to recognize the growth that is taking place. Celebrating God at work is worship.

Commitment #7: **SERVE TOGETHER**

I will serve with my group and look for ways to permeate the westside of Indianapolis with the hope of the gospel.

At Radiant, we want to be a positive influence for Christ. We want to be a church that loves people. We want to be known for compassion and caring for our community. Small groups can play a vital role in accomplishing this .

Imagine if our church disappeared. Would our community and neighbors notice? We desire to make a difference, not to check the box for good deeds. We believe that God can use our efforts to impact people around us.

Serving is an essential part of small groups because it awakens us to life outside of ourselves and launches us into the world. Serving reflects the heart of God and mobilizes us with a mindset for ministry. It forces groups to move outside the comfortable living room and into the community.

Commitment #8: **MULTIPLY MINISTRY**

I will be open to new members and as we grow, we will multiply to advance God's work so more people can experience what we have experienced.

In some ways, multiplying seems counterintuitive, especially when a small group invests years building deep relationships. *Why end a good thing like that?* Because multiplication is core to our mission. Everything we do in small groups supports our mission as a church to point all people to a passionate pursuit of the radiant God.

The natural tendency in groups is to stay together too long. As we share our lives and minister to one another, a small group becomes a safe and comfortable place. For some, the thought of multiplying is heartbreaking. But, the only thing worse than multiplying is *staying together for too long*.

Over time, people can drift toward complacency. Once this happens, people lose interest and are prone to sit back. The best time to multiply a small group is when everyone in the group is living out the *Eight Commitments* of small group.



4

Leaders Need Clarity

LEADERS NEED CLARITY

As you serve as a Small Group Leader at Radiant, knowing your role will help you manage expectations and evaluate how you are doing. We can't just wing it. Our job is too important. We want to be purposed in everything that we do. Plus, with so many small groups at Radiant, we want to make sure we're all on the same page and moving in the same direction.

The reason Small Group Leaders are prone to take on too much is typically because they don't know what they're called to do. The last thing we want is for you to be overwhelmed with your small group. Ministry is a joy and should be life-giving. Leading a small group should not be a heavy burden.

Of course, ministry is about people, and people are messy. This is why it's important to set boundaries, so you don't become discouraged or burnt out. Knowing what you're called to do will help you say "no" if your group becomes too much. Ministry doesn't have to consume you. This isn't a full-time job.

Together, we have the same mission, same values and serve the same people. Ministry doesn't fall only on your shoulders. We encourage you to partner with coaches, pastors and other ministry teams at Radiant. As a leader, you need a steady stream of people pouring into you. So, who is in your corner? Who's ministering to you?

Healthy small groups are critical to the life and ministry of Radiant. As a leader, we want to help you manage expectations so you can serve faithfully and effectively. Ministry is a joy, don't let it become overwhelming.

LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

At Radiant, we are committed to *plurality*. Plurality means we value multiple people sharing leadership and speaking into ministry areas. No one person is in control. No one person owns or rules anything. This is God's church.

ELDERS

Elders are biblically qualified men who lead, shepherd, teach and equip the flock of God that has been entrusted to their care. The elders set the vision and direction of Radiant while leading or participating in a small group on their own.

PASTORS

Pastors have the authority to carry out their ministry responsibilities with humility. Pastors are expected to teach and train their people, help their people feel loved and keep their leaders informed and up to date.

COACHES

Small Group Coaches are responsible for encouraging and strengthening four to six Small Group Leaders while leading a small group of their own. Capacity for relationships and the availability to build into leaders is critical to this role.

LEADERS

Small Group Leaders are responsible for leading a group of 10 to 14 people by building relationships and facilitating ministry while living in a way that's an example to the church.

MEMBERS

Small Group Members are responsible for coming prepared, taking ownership and contributing to the needs of the group.

QUALITIES WE LOOK FOR

As we consider selecting new Small Group Leaders, there are four qualities that are most important. Rather than focusing on specific strengths or ministry experience, we are most concerned with a leader's heart. We want spiritually healthy men and women who are committed to small groups.

New leaders are typically selected on the recommendation of their existing Small Group Leader along with the input of coaches, pastors and elders.

CHARACTER

Do you have a heart for God? All Small Group Leaders must display a love for God and a desire to grow in community (Matthew 22:37–39).

CONNECTED

Do you have a heart for people? All Small Group Leaders must demonstrate their love for people by participating in a small group prior to leading a group of their own (2 Timothy 2:2).

COMMITMENT

Do you have a heart for ministry? All Small Group Leaders must partner with Radiant and go through church membership as representatives of Radiant Bible Church (Philippians 1:3–6).

COMPETENCE

Do you have a teachable spirit? All Small Group Leaders must embrace the vision and values of small groups while demonstrating the ability to lead, disciple and facilitate ministry (Hebrews 13:7).

EXPECTATIONS FOR LEADERS

It's easy to be pulled in different directions and lose sight of what you are called to do. We want every Small Group Leader to know their role and what's expected of them.

CARE FOR YOUR GROUP

While you are not responsible for meeting every need, you are typically the first person who is aware of what's going on in your group. As you monitor the spiritual pulse and physical needs of your group, we want you to be ready to encourage your small group to respond in appropriate ways.

FACILITATE MUTUAL MINISTRY

You are not a teacher. You're a facilitator. Your job is to ask questions, model mutual ministry and lead your group to spiritual maturity. From discussion to sharing ministry opportunities, your role is to engage your group members in ministry to one another. This is vital to discipleship.

COMMUNICATE & INFORM UP

We expect you to partner with your coach by informing up, sharing prayer requests, letting leadership know how your group is doing and tracking attendance. If something beyond your experience surfaces, reach out to your coach for guidance and help.

STAY CONNECTED & GROW

To help you grow as a Small Group Leader, we provide resources and regular training opportunities to strengthen and encourage you. From email communication and training at church to connecting with your Small Group Coach, we expect you to make all training opportunities a priority.

TWO HOURS TOGETHER

It's easy to become overwhelmed with the pressure of small group. People are counting on you. Week after week, you open your home and pray for God to work in the lives of your group members. You see the weight and burdens people carry through life. When a crisis happens, people look to you as if you have the answers. Whether it's meeting a new member, redirecting group discussion, waiting in silence in breakout, or feeling inadequate, leading a group can be challenging.

But as you lean into the Lord, His strength is made greater through your weakness. This should give you hope as you lead your small group. Ministry is simple: *love God and love others*. God is faithful and promises to work in you and through you to accomplish His will.

To help your group connect relationally and grow spiritually, here are three components to guide your time together.

Opening (30 minutes)

Use this time to reconnect and encourage one another.

Discussion (45 minutes)

Use this time to discuss and apply God's Word.

Breakout (45 minutes)

Use this time to hold each other accountable and pray.

OPENING

USE THIS TIME TO RECONNECT AND ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER.

Your first 30 minutes of small group will set the tempo for the rest of the night. While it's best to keep it casual and unstructured, this time is extremely important. The last thing you want is to have someone leave work or take an evening away from family as they rush to your house only to sit on the couch and not be engaged in a meaningful way.

Regardless of the size of your home, this is the time to practice hospitality and welcome your small group as guests. Have your meeting space ready and don't be finishing your study as group members arrive. Welcome each person by name and thank them for coming. There are many different things people could be doing—but they are at your home. Don't take attendance for granted. Also, don't be discouraged if certain members don't show up. Instead, focus your attention on each person who came. Trust that God will always bring the right people who need to be at small group that night.

How do I prepare as a leader?

Making people feel welcome does not mean rolling out the red carpet or offering an all-you-can-eat buffet. It simply means making your home inviting, clean and comfortable. Scrubbing the floor and washing windows isn't necessary, but tidying up stray items and putting pets in another room will make a big difference. When it comes to providing food and drinks, ask people to rotate snacks or bring a meal. Not only does food help people feel more comfortable and give group members something to focus on, it also helps those who are coming from work and did not have time to eat at home.

What questions should I ask?

The first thing you want to discern is the mood and attitude when people arrive. Over time, these conversations and questions will become natural and relational. Are people coming from a stressful day? Do they have challenges with childcare? Have they been traveling? Did they eat dinner? Are they uncomfortable in a group? Help your small group transition from daily demands into purposed time together. This doesn't have to be a lengthy conversation. The goal is to create an environment where group members can build meaningful relationships and connect in encouraging ways.

The best question to ask during the opening time is, "How was your week?" The reason this question is important is because we genuinely want to share our lives and stay in touch with how people are doing. This is a great question to gauge how people are coming to small group. Plus, asking this question at the beginning allows you to focus on other questions during breakout.

Yes, we want to go beyond the surface, but conversations have to start somewhere. As a leader, use this opening time to connect and encourage one another.

DISCUSSION

USE THIS TIME TO DISCUSS AND APPLY GOD'S WORD.

Each week, we gather together and take time to read and discuss Scripture. This is more than a Bible study. Small groups are designed to press God's Word into one another. We want to help each other apply God's Word as we seek to grow spiritually. We don't base our lives on man's wisdom or the experience of others, though sometimes this can be helpful. We want to know what God has to say. When we study God's Word as a small group, we can challenge, deepen and strengthen each other's faith.

How do I prepare as a leader?

As a Small Group Leader, you are not a teacher or preacher—you're a facilitator. As a leader, it's tempting to share insights and all the things you have learned during the week from your own study. But this isn't the goal. Instead, your job is to ask questions to facilitate a meaningful conversation and draw out discussion amongst your group.

When facilitating your group, be ready to rephrase a question or redirect your question to members who are reserved and need to be drawn out. Affirm what members say and be quick to redirect the conversation when it becomes hijacked, drifts off topic or if it spirals into criticism.

To engage your small group in a dynamic discussion, it's best to limit the number of questions you ask. Ask short questions that are to the point. Allow the conversation to evolve on its own.

Sometimes, people don't see how God is working in their lives until they start talking about it. This is why facilitating discussion and drawing people out is so important.

What questions should I ask?

Asking good questions is a skill you can develop. Good questions start with the heart and help people think for themselves. They are thought-provoking, encourage group members to solve problems and get people excited about what they're learning. Good questions encourage action, increase ownership and make difficult topics safe to discuss. Through questions, you can evoke curiosity and help your small group think differently.

Asking good questions will create an environment that is open to learning and growth. This can be one of the most powerful ways you can influence your group members. We want to create an environment where people are engaged and ready to share.⁵

Open-ended vs. yes/no questions

- Don't ask: *Did you like the sermon this week?*
- Ask: *How has the sermon impacted you this week?*

Simple vs. run-on questions

- Don't ask: *What were two takeaways from this week's sermon and how are you changing as a result, and how can we pray for you this week?*
- Ask: *What were two takeaways from the sermon?*

Heart questions vs. behavior questions

- Don't ask: *What can you do to stop blowing up when you're angry at your kids?*
- Ask: *When you yelled at your kids this week, what did you want? Why did you blow up with your kids?*

Redirecting questions

- Don't let one person dominate the discussion.
- Ask everyone in the group to come prepared to share one thing. Preparation leads to participation.
- For those who tend to be quiet, encourage them to say one thing. For those who are talkers, encourage them to say one thing.

Spontaneous questions

- Don't just ask the questions you prepared before group. Make this time conversational as you move from one question to the next.
- Listen to people and ask questions that will draw out and provide more details about their thoughts, attitudes, motives and beliefs.

Extending questions

- Don't settle for simple answers.
- Follow up by asking: *Can you explain that further? Why is this important to you? That's really good, can you share more about that?*

Clarifying questions

- Don't be afraid to follow up or seek clarification. Don't leave things unclear.
- Clarify by asking: *Can you be more specific? Do you have a recent example that you can share?*

Application questions

- Don't just ask "what" questions. These questions tend to generate fill-in-the-blank answers.
- Ask "how" and "why" questions. These questions draw out more than a response. They reveal the condition of the heart and stir up motives.

ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS

Good questions are *simple*. The best questions are short and to the point. Don't confuse people—ask one question at a time.

Good questions are *clear*. The best questions are asked in a way that is easy to understand. You shouldn't need to explain your question or set up your question with additional background information.

Good questions are *urgent*. The best questions promote action and move to application. *Why does this matter? So what?*

CLARIFY THE QUESTION

Sometimes groups struggle with awkward silence if there is a confusing question. If this is the case, clarify your question. But, most often, silence is an indicator that people are thinking. If you have a particular question you want to discuss, share the question ahead of time so your group has time to process. When you have silence, don't answer your question. Give your group time, and if that doesn't help, rephrase the question.

As a leader, have three to five questions prepared for each small group. You don't need pages of notes. You should be able to write all of your questions on a 3x5 card. Fewer notes will keep you from dominating the discussion. If you over-prepare with too many questions, group members will be less engaged and less prepared. Ask your group to bring their own questions. Remember, you are not a teacher, you are a facilitator. But also, if God has given you the gift of teaching, don't shy away or avoid it. Be aware of how much you are talking compared to the rest of the group. Save your teaching for the right moment.

INVOLVE EVERYONE

The most outspoken person doesn't always share the most helpful things. Likewise, the person who is quiet may have the best thing to share. Don't expect everyone to contribute equally to the conversation but do expect each person to contribute. Although the insights of a new believer and a mature believer might vary, both are important. New believers come to small group with a fresh perspective. Mature believers provide deeper insights and make helpful connections that enable new believers to grasp how a specific passage relates to the whole counsel of Scripture.

ELEVATE GOD'S WORD

God's Word is sufficient. It tells us what is right (doctrine), what's not right (reproof), how to get right (correction) and how to stay right (training). Although life experiences and advice can be helpful, it's vital to connect conversations back to Scripture and not rely on man's wisdom. God's Word has the power to transform lives. This is where we see that God's promises are real and His wisdom is beyond this world.

DRIVE HOME APPLICATION

While it's easy to focus your time on trying to understand the meaning of a passage or grasping the author's intent, each small group should work toward creating an environment that results in application. This means some questions need to be cut short so you have time to discuss how these truths impact your life. God's Word is meant to be obeyed, not just listened to or read, studied or discussed. We need to take time to reflect on what God's Word says and ask, *"What does this look like in my life?"* This is the starting point for life change and becoming doers of the Word, not hearers only (James 1:22).

BREAKOUT

USE THIS TIME TO HOLD EACH OTHER ACCOUNTABLE AND PRAY.

In small group breakout, men gather with men and women gather with women for accountability and prayer to bear each other's burdens and pursue spiritual growth. It's a place to be known, accepted and have opportunities to minister to one another. Deep relationships and discipleship happen during breakout.

Something special happens when people are a part of something bigger than themselves. Breakout isn't a support group or social club. It's a place to pour yourself into the lives of others and look for ways to contribute to the group and walk alongside one another.

How do I prepare as a leader?

The purpose of breakout is to set up the rest of the week as you look ahead and anticipate God working in the lives of your small group. The biggest reason breakout falls flat is when groups are focused on the past and rehash what's already happened. The problem with this is you can't change the past. Going around and sharing about your week isn't enough. Rarely does this build momentum or lead to change.

Breakout should look ahead and anticipate what is coming up. These conversations have the potential to affect change as group members can proactively support and pray for one another. This shift in your conversation will empower mutual ministry and help group members stay connected throughout the week. If your group is struggling with accountability, focus on what's coming up instead of what's already happened. Breakout is a core part of Radiant Groups.

What questions should I ask?

What's coming up this week? As a group, how can we pray for you? How can we support you or follow up with you this week?

As a leader, it's your job to model authenticity and discern the needs of the group. Don't feel pressure to provide each person an equal amount of time. It's okay to spend more time with one person when you sense God is working in their life. Also, don't be afraid to seek clarification and follow up with questions. Don't leave things unclear. People often hide behind fuzzy generalities. Ask hard questions and push the discussion deeper. If your small group doesn't have the courage to challenge each other to grow spiritually, who will?

HELPFUL BREAKOUT TOOLS

What character quality do you want to grow in?

How can we support you as a small group?

Boldness – not afraid to share your faith with gentleness and conviction

Compassion – empathy for someone and courage to act on their behalf

Contentment – at peace rather than worry, fear, anxiety, envy or jealousy

Even tempered – not reacting with sinful anger or a quick temper

Faith – unswerving confidence in God and His promise of good regardless of present circumstances

Forgiveness – releasing someone from a wrong that has been done and not dwelling on it

Honesty – truthful and above reproach in all things; not deceptive

Initiative – inviting people into your life and taking an interest in others through hospitality and service

Joy – supernatural delight in the Lord that overflows into a love for others

Kindness – putting the needs and well-being of others first

Patience – a spirit of mercy, humility and trusting that God is in control

Peace – fulfillment and confidence that comes from being rightly related to God and others

Purity – thinking and acting in Godly ways while fleeing sexual immorality

Self-controlled – bringing thoughts, emotions and actions under the control of the Holy Spirit

Truth in love – willing to speak what's right while not being harsh

Wholesome speech – build others up with words that edify; not vulgar, gossip, slander, lying or sarcasm

What spiritual discipline do you want to grow in?

How can we support you as a small group?

Accountability – to be honest with yourself, honest with others and honest before the Lord

Bible study – desire for God's Word; regular time of reading, studying, meditating and applying Scripture

Corporate worship – engage with God and other believers by participating in weekend worship

Fasting – take a break from food, media or activity to use this time to meet with the Lord through prayer, focus and dependence on Him

Giving – cheerfully and generously giving to the Lord and others through your time, talents and treasure

Prayer – a regular time of praise, confession and intercession for others

Rest – setting aside time to slow down and stop the busyness of life as a reminder that our final rest is in heaven

Scripture memory – hiding God's Word in your heart and reflecting on Scripture

Serving – looking for big and small ways to care for the needs of others

WEEKLY GAUGE:

This week was great. My high was ...

This week was bad. My low was ...

This week was the same. I am stuck in a rut ...

VICTORY AND FAILURE:

What is one win from this past month?

What is one failure from this past month?

How are you being recharged?

What has been most draining?

MORAL GUARDRAILS:

Am I aware of any unconfessed sin in my life?

Who do I need to forgive or ask for forgiveness?

Have I been jealous, lying or complaining?

Have I been with a man or woman in an inappropriate way?

Have I exposed myself to any explicit materials this week?

Have I looked for opportunities to point others to Christ and the hope of the gospel?

How have I demonstrated love and respect to my spouse?

Have I sought to have spiritual input with my family?

What is one relationship I want to focus on?

How can my small group support me?

LEADERSHIP VALUES

We want to see your gifts, passions and personality show up in your small group. We want you to make your group your own. But as you put your fingerprints on your group, it's also important that we share common values as a whole.

LEAD YOURSELF FIRST

One temptation is to allow the activity of ministry to replace your abiding relationship with Christ. First and foremost, we want your "Worship of Christ" to drive your "Walk with Christ", which overflows into your "Work for Christ".

TAKE THE LONG VIEW

Though God can instantly transform lives, break addictions and make all things new, the pattern we typically see in Scripture is that God works over extended periods of time. Both discipleship and relationships take time. It is critical that you remain patient and keep your eyes on the long view of ministry so you do not become discouraged or burnout.

GIVE MINISTRY AWAY

We want every Small Group Leader to look for ways to facilitate mutual ministry in their small group. This includes: hosting, praying, bringing food, leading breakout, facilitating the discussion, planning a social event, organizing a service opportunity and ultimately multiplying your group.

PARTNER WITH OTHERS

Leadership can be lonely, but you are not alone. In addition to your small group, we encourage you to come alongside other leaders, coaches, pastors and ministry teams as you seek to lead your small group.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

There is no silver bullet for equipping leaders in all of the different facets of ministry and group dynamics. Instead, we provide training that is anchored in God's Word, accessible across multiple platforms and opportunities for leaders to come alongside one another for prayer and encouragement. Unless you have a prior commitment, we expect you to make all training opportunities a priority so you can develop in your gifts as a leader.

REGROUP | OFFERED IN AUGUST & JANUARY

The purpose of this gathering is to cast vision and set a clear direction for the year as we build momentum in Radiant Groups.

REFRESH | OFFERED IN OCTOBER & MAY

The purpose of this gathering is to strengthen and encourage leaders through relationships, prayer and coaching.

ROUND TABLES | AS NEEDED

The purpose of these roundtables is to engage leaders on specific topics that are relevant to their small group. At key times throughout the year, specific leaders are invited to a round table discussion with other ministry leaders.

RADIANTGROUPS.ORG

The purpose of this website is to provide a centralized platform to support the small group ministry at Radiant. This site is designed to strengthen and encourage small groups with resources, God@Work stories and ministry tools.

MULTIPLYING LEADERS

Rather than having a few highly trained leaders, we want to mobilize people in every small group to step up in ministry. *What would happen if 80% of our church began ministering to the 20% who were most in need?* Imagine hundreds of people fully engaged and devoted to ministering to one another. Imagine how lives would change. Imagine the level of spiritual growth that would take place. Imagine the impact this would have in our community and for generations to come. This is the mission that Jesus entrusted to His disciples on the dusty roads of Galilee, and it's the same mission He commands today.

SMALL GROUP DISCIPLESHIP 101

This class is designed to encourage small group members to step up as disciple-makers with the goal of releasing them back to their group with a renewed mindset for *discipleship*.

We want to mobilize men and women while creating a mindset that is hungry for ministry. The purpose of *Small Group Discipleship 101* to build a culture of discipleship from the ground up by equipping small group members as disciple-makers.

SMALL GROUP DISCIPLESHIP 201

Building off of *Small Group Discipleship 101*, the purpose of 201 is to walk through the *Radiant Groups Blueprint* to multiply leaders. This class is designed to strengthen and reinforce what God is doing in small groups as it challenges group members to consider what it might look like to be a Small Group Leader and multiply their group.

MULTIPLYING GROUPS

Multiplying a small group is never easy. Whenever groups change, relationships change. This can be hard. But discipleship is more than a decision to follow Jesus—it's the process of teaching others how to obey the commands of God. The heart of discipleship is about equipping and sending out more people to carry out and continue the ministry of Jesus.

Rather than viewing multiplication as something done to small groups, we see it as a vital part of fulfilling our mission. This means that everything we do in small group must point to the larger mission of our church as we seek to point all people to a passionate pursuit of the radiant God. Therefore, Radiant Groups must begin with a vision for more and a mindset of multiplication.

HERE ARE FIVE WAYS TO PREPARE YOUR SMALL GROUP TO MULTIPLY:

Address It Early

From day one, the goal of small group isn't to stay together. As a leader, it's important to communicate that a critical part of every small group is the process of multiplication. This is something you should communicate early to help manage the expectations of your group.

Take Ownership

Multiplication is something every group should own for themselves. Multiplication is more than adding new groups to make room for new people. It's about raising up and developing new leaders and engaging more people in ministry opportunities. When a small group multiplies, people step up and take on new roles in the group.

See the Benefits of Change

While some groups are afraid to multiply, the reality is, most groups become stronger and healthier as new members join. Multiplying is a time to reset the culture of your small group. Multiplication can breathe new life into small groups. Not only does this serve the larger mission of the church, it creates fresh environments where God can work in new ways. Plus, it is a great way to meet new people at Radiant.

Celebrate With Your Group

Multiplication doesn't happen on its own. It takes work. When small groups multiply and create new opportunities for more people to grow as disciple-makers, it is a visible fulfillment of the Great Commission and the mission of our church. This is worth celebrating.

Make it a Group Goal

Small groups should work toward the goal of multiplying leaders approximately every three years. This allows groups sufficient time to move through the different stages of group dynamics, while multiplying when the small group is thriving.

Don't think about multiplying as splitting your group in half, because there are a lot of ways that small groups can multiply. Think about handing off ministry opportunities and raising up new leaders. When you multiply, you have a front row seat to watching God work in new ways in and through your small group.

PARTNERING WITH RADIANT MINISTRIES

Sometimes, ministry can be difficult, but you are not alone. Beyond your small group, we encourage you to partner with other leaders, coaches, pastors and ministry teams. Together, we have the same mission and serve the same people. Here are three ministries that you can partner with at Radiant:

COMPASSION MINISTRY

We want to care for people who are in need.

As a Small Group Leader, you are on the front line of ministry. Although you are typically the first person to know about moments of crisis and compassion needs as they arise, we do not expect you to care for every need that might come up. Some needs are beyond the ability of your small group.

If a situation comes up in your small group where you are overwhelmed or would like additional support, reach out to the Compassion Team.

The Compassion Team is available to help your small group minister through changes in life or difficult situations like:

- Loss of family members
- Hospital visits
- Long-term illness
- Job loss
- Financial assistance

OUTREACH MINISTRY

We want to serve our community partners.

We believe that something powerful happens when small groups get outside of their living room and serve together.

Each year, we ask groups to participate in one or two serving opportunities. If your group needs help with ideas or ways to get involved in our community, we want to help. There are various opportunities for serving with your small group with our local outreach partners. Groups that serve together, grow together.

Our local ministry partners include:

- Westminster Neighborhood Services
- Sheltering Wings
- Hope Healthcare Services
- Mary Lee Maier Community Pantry

SOUL CARE

We want to help people live Christ-centered lives.

If a situation comes up in your small group where someone, or a couple, would benefit from meeting with a counselor, please reach out to the Soul Care Team.

As a Small Group Leader, we do not expect you or your group members to handle every issue that comes up in small group. Some needs will be beyond the ability of your small group. Please do not hesitate to ask for help.

The Soul Care Team is available to either give you practical advice or assist your group as you navigate challenges like:

- Marriage
- Parenting
- Singleness
- Addictions
- Depression
- Grief
- Anxiety
- Identity
- Finances

CARING FOR YOUR SMALL GROUP

Although Small Group Leaders are not responsible for caring for every need that comes up, you are often the first to know about a situation in your small group members' lives. The key to caring for them is to ask questions to better understand the situation prior to offering advice or support. Getting the facts and discerning the context for what's going on is vital for evaluating the next steps.

SOS ASSESSMENT

The following questions are a guide to help you discern when you should come alongside someone in your small group and when a situation might be too much for you to handle on your own. A high score on the SOS Assessment⁶ is an indicator that you should partner with your coach, pastor or seek additional help from the Soul Care ministry. Ask for permission from your small group member before reaching out for help.

Severity: How bad is the problem?

- How difficult is this for you right now?
- How long has this been going on?
- Is it getting better or worse?

Ownership: How teachable is the person?

- How have you contributed to this situation?
- Where have you sought counsel regarding this?
- When was the last time you talked to someone about this? Did you try to implement any of their advice?

Support: Who can help in this situation?

- Do you have godly people helping you?
- Do these people know about this?
- How have they helped you?

SEVERITY	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
	Wisdom issue	Moderate conflict	Crisis situation
	Mild distress	Moderate distress	Severe distress
	Everyday problem	Complex problem	Significant suffering
OWNERSHIP	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
	Repentant	Sees sin	Blame-shifts
	Openly humble	Makes excuses	Defensive
	Highly teachable	Somewhat teachable	Denial—not teachable
SUPPORT	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
	Close to family	Some family support	Distant from family
	Willing to be authentic	Somewhat open	Mostly isolated
	Willing to be accountable	Few close friends	No friends

WHAT'S NEXT?

Identify the level of care. Use the SOS Assessment to discern the level of care that will be required to help your small group member. This is just a starting point.

Get additional input. Ask your Small Group Coach or pastors to help you discern the situation accurately and objectively.

Discern the next step. When dealing with difficult situations, consider these two questions: What's the main thing and what's the first thing? The main thing is the root issue that is causing the situation. The first thing is simply the first step to take.

SOS SCORE

After you understand the situation by asking questions related to Severity, Ownership and Support, assign a number that corresponds to the level of care between 1 and 10.

Smaller numbers mean the person's struggle with the problem is probably not life-altering and the Small Group Leader should be equipped to handle the situation on their own. High numbers mean a greater depth of struggle. These are the areas that need the most focus and will likely require additional support beyond the small group.

If the score is between...

3–15 | Seek to provide care within your small group and encourage mutual ministry amongst the group. If additional help or direction is needed, ask your coach for guidance.

16–24 | Inform your Small Group Coach and discern if you are equipped to help this person within the group or if they need additional help from the Soul Care ministry.

25–30 | Connect with Soul Care for this level of care and support. In this situation, the role of the small group will shift to become a place of encouragement and prayer.

NEXT STEPS

Ask the person, *"What do you think is your next step?"* Your goal in this question is to evaluate ownership of the situation with the person involved and discern their level of commitment.

Ask the person, *"Would you like me to check on some other resources?"* Point them to possible resources that include other people who are available to help but ask them to initiate the call. This might include your Small Group Coach, a pastor or a ministry team at church like Compassion or Soul Care.

GOING DEEPER WITH YOUR SMALL GROUP

As a small group stays together for months or years, the tendency for most groups is to grow comfortable with one another. The same is true of any relationship. Familiarity breeds complacency. As the newness and curiosity fades, group members are prone to sit back and be less engaged. But we want more. We don't want to settle for shallow relationships a mile wide and an inch deep, we want to experience relationships as God intended. We want deep, life-giving relationships. As a leader, it's up to you to set the tone for your small group and create an environment where your group members go deeper with one another and the Lord.

GO DEEPER IN ACCOUNTABILITY

- Model transparency with your own temptation and sin.
- Be real and don't let anyone hide behind vague answers.
- Don't settle for superficial sharing about work or family.
- Thank people for taking risks and being vulnerable.
- Commit to practicing spiritual disciplines as a group.
- Talk about spiritual growth inside and outside of group.
- Commit a third of your time to prayer not just requests.
- Participate in communion and confess your sins.
- Practice the one-anothers of Scripture.

LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND

- Don't make assumptions or think others are like you.
- Text questions to your group members prior to group.
- Be patient and allow members to process their thoughts.
- Ask clarifying questions and ask for specific examples.
- Don't settle for easy answers, draw out the heart.
- Pray often and in the moment, and ask for godly wisdom.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS BEYOND GROUP

- Stay current on what's happening in each other's lives.
- Plan a social event every six to eight weeks.
- Serve with your small group two to three times a year.
- Call or text to follow up with those who missed group.
- Attend worship services together.
- Show up at various events for each other.
- Meet with people one-on-one or as a couple.
- Go out for dinner or share meals together.
- Plan a weekend getaway or retreat together.
- Create fun and memorable experiences.

SHARE LIFE-GIVING ENCOURAGEMENT

- Share Scripture with each other throughout the week.
- Change things up and don't let your group get into a rut.
- Celebrate milestones, holidays and wins in your group.
- Celebrate small steps of obedience and answers to prayer.
- Share prayer requests and God@Work stories.
- Take time to share testimonies and pray over each other.
- Commit to following up with each other outside of group.
- Practice hospitality and rotate homes for group meetings.
- Text your group whenever you are praying for them.
- Give small gifts and share random acts of kindness.

SHARING YOUR STORY

Sharing your story is one of the most important things you can do in your small group. Stories give us the opportunity to open up and reflect on what makes each of us unique. This includes where you come from, challenges you have endured, formative experiences that have shaped you, ways you have grown, people who have influenced you and ultimately how God is working in your life. Sharing your story, or spiritual testimony, is one of the best ways to grow deeper with your small group. Plan ahead and be proactive with sharing stories as a group. Just be careful to not put anyone on the spot. Ask individuals ahead of time so they're ready to share their story and know how much time they have.

HELPFUL TIPS WHEN PREPARING YOUR STORY

- Share a story, not a sermon. This is not a full inventory of your life, but a focused expression of God's work in your life.
- Don't give the cleaned up, polished version of your story. God's grace shows up best in weak and broken people.
- Make Jesus the hero of your story, not yourself or the people who influenced you or the person who led you to Christ.
- God@Work stories are different than how the world speaks of changed lives. Anyone can tell a story about how they used to _____, but now I do _____. These stories emphasize, "Look at how I have changed." But a God@Work story boldly proclaims, "Look at how God changed me!" A secular story is focused on self, a Christian story is all about Christ.
- Don't be intimidated or overwhelmed in sharing your story. The Holy Spirit promises to empower you as a witness and will give you the words to speak about God's work in you.

HOW TO SHARE YOUR STORY

Sharing your story helps you relate to the people in your small group as you grow in authenticity and empathy. Listening to each other helps you accept one another and appreciate where group members are coming from. When you share your story, you are putting yourself out there and this builds a deeper level of trust and humility in your group.

What makes a God@Work story distinct is the specific way God has transformed your life. Your God@Work story is all about Him.

Before Christ

- What did my life revolve around before following Christ?
- Where did I get my security, identity or happiness?
- What about my life related most to non-Christians?

Come to Christ

- What were my initial reactions to the gospel?
- When did my view toward the gospel change? Why?
- Looking back, how did God prepare me for this moment?

After I received Christ

- What are some recent ways that God is working in my life?
- How has following Christ changed my relationships, priorities, attitude and outlook on life?
- How have I seen God to be BIG in my life?

Stories are real, relatable and personal. Stories are powerful. When we tell the story of God@Work in our lives, we join our lives with the work of God, which points to a larger story. As followers of Christ, we're a part of the greatest story ever!

THANK YOU FOR SERVING

Thank you for serving as a ministry leader and disciple-maker. We are grateful for your heart for people. It's a joy to serve alongside you at Radiant.

As Radiant has grown, we have worked hard to connect people into deep, life-giving relationships where God works for His glory, our growth and the good of others. Together, we want to point all people to a passionate pursuit of the radiant God.

Over the years, two things have remained constant: First, Jesus is the One who builds His church. This is His thing, and He loves it more than anyone can possibly imagine. Second, God works in all sorts of ways, but above all, He works through people. He works in us and through us. And He has done exceedingly more than we can think or imagine.

Thank you for pouring out your lives to love and lead your small group. May this book reinforce your passion for people, solidify your commitment to small groups and strengthen your love for God's church.

You are loved!

ENDNOTES

1. The structure of this Blueprint is adapted from the book *Creating Community: Five Keys to Building a Thriving Small Group Culture* by Andy Stanley & Bill Willits.
2. The idea of creating a Blueprint is adapted from the book *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples* by Tom S. Rainer & Eric Geiger.
3. The importance of small groups since the time of the New Testament comes from the book *Sticky Church* by Larry Osborne (page 45).
4. The idea of mutual ministry comes from the leadership training of Harvest Bible Chapel and the book *Uncommon Community*.
5. These questions are adapted from the leadership training of Harvest Bible Chapel and the book *Uncommon Leadership*.
6. The SOS Assessment tool is adapted from the leadership training of Garrett Higbee and the book *Transforming Small Group Leadership*.

WE'RE CALLED TO BUILD INTO PEOPLE.

*Are you ready to roll up your sleeves and build
something that will last for years?*

*Something strong and beautiful
Something living and eternal
Something that matters and will make a difference*

Are you ready to build into people?

*The goal of this blueprint is to provide a clear vision and
direction for small groups so that you know what we are
building and how everything fits together.*



RADIANT
BIBLE CHURCH

420 Gable Crossing Dr, Avon, IN 46123
radiantbiblechurch.org