

# SMALL GROUP ROAD MAP

**Make Friends:** We are created for connection and relationship. Whether it is a bible study, book club, or running group, small groups always meet regularly and make friends. We don't anticipate groups will provide everyone with their best friends – that's not the point – but we do believe groups are a place to develop community, a place to know and be known. A group is a place where vulnerability and honesty is not only allowed, but expected.

*First few weeks:* Use nametags the first few weeks. Becoming friends is easier if you know who is in your group. Take time during the first meeting for everyone to introduce themselves and consider developing a group covenant – What can be expected? What are the ground rules for discussion? Share email addresses, create a GroupMe group, or develop another way to stay in touch throughout the week. Use these to share prayer requests, celebrate wins with each other, and drop a quick note periodically. Appoint someone to be the social chair of your group and encourage them to plan social activities periodically throughout the semester.

*Middle of the semester:* The middle part of the semester is a great time to take a break one week for a social week. Have a potluck, go hiking, host a game night – do something that helps build relationship outside of the topic of your group. People will be willing to open up and share more if they've had an opportunity to get to know those in the circle with them each week. Consider this an investment, not a night off.

*Last few weeks of the semester:* Are you planning to continue this group next semester? Let your group members know. If they're planning to stick with the group, ask them what they'd like to focus on next semester. This helps develop buy in and maintains a sense of community. If not, consider planning an end of the semester party to celebrate the time you've spent together! Ask your group members their plan for next semester. Even if your group isn't staying together, consider maintaining your email or GroupMe list – can you still support each other in prayer and check-ins?

**Make Disciples:** Regardless of the type of group, the purpose of a small group is to encourage us on our journey of holiness. Small groups create a place where we can grow in our faith and become more like Jesus. Help your group members find their next spiritual steps – challenge them, call them up, and give them opportunities to use their gifts. Walk with them as they grow more into who Jesus has made them to be. Discipleship isn't a synonym for bible study, so you're not off the hook if you're leading



another type of group. Discipleship is helping others to grow more like Jesus – we’re all called to do that.

*First few weeks:* Find a role for every person in your group because involvement brings commitment. A few suggestions for roles might be someone to organize social events, organize and/or bring snacks, write down and send out prayer requests, serve as the go-to person to get conversation going again when it has stalled or gotten off track, or host the group. If someone seems to have leadership ability, let them take over discussion one week. Be creative and give group members an opportunity to step into a growing level of responsibility.

Take some time to think through how you are helping develop those in your group – consider what has been helpful for you when group leaders you’ve had have done it. Conversely, think about those things you wish a past group leader of yours had done and take this opportunity to lead the charge. Pray through what your role should be and don’t be afraid to ask your group members what they hope to get out of the group – then follow up!

*Middle of the semester:* Once relationship has been established, get to know the faith story of those in your group. When did they get to know Christ? Where are they now? Where can you encourage them or pray for them? Answers to these questions can bring insight into the best way to walk with them to help them grow.

A few questions to consider incorporating into your group, are to ask them about the “4 P’s” of their week: What **praise** do you have from this past week? What **problem** are you facing? Do you have a **plan** for improving your spiritual walk? (If this has already been shared, adjust the question to “how are you doing with the plan you told us about?”) What can we be **praying** for with you this week? Don’t leave it by just listing off answers each week, though! Follow up, encourage, celebrate with, and help your group members grow.

*Last few weeks of the semester:* The Great Commission, found in Matthew 28:16-20, includes the command to, “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” This command is for all of us, so as your group begins to wrap up for the semester, consider asking your group members who they’re called to – who is in their sphere of influence that they feel a burden to pray for, walk with, and invite to join them in a group next semester? Hopefully you’ve been modeling what this looks like throughout the semester.



Also encourage any group members in whom you've noticed a leadership gifting. Ideally you've been giving opportunities for them to develop this throughout the semester, but now is a great time to offer to walk them through the steps of becoming a small group leader and recommend them to our Archdiocesan team. Keep your eyes open for gifts that can be used in their parish or other ministries.

**Make a Difference:** Jesus came with a mission to reconcile the world to God, to restore creation to its intended state, and He charged his followers with continuing that mission. Small groups are not insular communities but help us discover how God is calling us to live out that mission in our daily lives.

*First few weeks:* As you're getting to know your group members, pay special attention to any mentioning of interests, groups, or service organizations they're involved in or drawn to. If you're involved in a cause you'd like to have your small group join around, talk to people about it and see if others care about it, too. Some groups will naturally lend themselves to service projects, missions you could pray for, or religious communities to visit.

*Middle of the semester:* Spend some time in your group discussions talking about the people and desires that God has placed in our lives, the gifts he has given to us, and how God is asking us to live differently. Small groups are places where people begin to recognize and discern the mission that God has given to them in their daily life. If you notice someone in your group has leadership skills, consider inviting them to lead a particular part of the small group session to encourage them in their gifts.

*Last few weeks of the semester:* Build into the discussion or closing prayer time opportunities for people to identify 'next steps' on their faith journey. How will people live differently once the small group is over? What is the 'mission' they feel God is asking them to do? What is the first step to living that mission and making a difference in the world. This is also the time to recommend potential small group leaders to the Archdiocesan team so we can reach out to invite them to join next semester.

*(Adapted from National Community Church)*

