**Grow Group Leader Training**

1. Characteristics of a Grow Group Leader includes many things: F—faithful, A—available, T—teachable.
2. A growing relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. A growing understanding of biblical principles.
4. A desire to serve.
5. A commitment to caring for people.
6. A willingness to learn.
7. A resolve to spend the necessary time on the group.
8. A willingness to share the leadership—encourage, delegate.
9. Establish the purpose for being a group with the group.
10. Extend grace and encourage group members to extend grace also.
11. Allow silence.
12. Listen.
13. Lead discussion—mostly by asking good, well thought out, open questions.
14. Enable the group to make decisions, set goals, assess ‘where we are,’ recognize when the group needs to terminate.
15. Understand and lead the group process.
16. Practice transparency, honesty, authenticity, and genuine concern for other.
17. Deal with conflict and problems—don’t allow things to fester or be stuffed.
18. Follow up regularly with members outside the group time.
19. Plan learning/serving opportunities for the group.
20. Deal with ideas/problems according to biblical principles. This could mean you’ll say “I’ll find out and let you know next week.”
21. Group time should include:
22. Prayer.
23. Study.
24. Discussion.
25. Planning of where to go next by seeking the Lord’s will.
26. Service.
27. Keep conversation on Spiritual Topics.
28. When the subject drifts from the study, ask WWJD to redirect the conversation back to the study.
29. When a person needs advice, refer them to the Counseling Center. The ONLY advice you should offer must come straight out of Scripture. If you can’t think of an exact example, recommend the Counseling Center.
30. When one person dominates the conversation, interrupt when you can without offending:
31. Ask others by name about their answer.
32. Ask others what they think Scripture says on the subject.
33. Ask what insights others have learned from the Lord on this subject.
34. The transparency/authenticity of the leader sets the tone for the transparency of the group.
35. Teach the use of media.
36. Use Right Now Media or You Tube for pull up Bible Study sermons on pertinent topics.
37. Seek out the use of commentaries, concordances, a Bible Atlas, or a Bible Dictionary.
38. Search twitter, internet or MP3 for sermons on related topics.
39. Be creative in structuring your lessons.
40. When teaching narrative, don’t read it! Tell it like a story. Tell it from an unlikely perspective of a minor character in the story. Tell it from the eyes of the unexpected person.
41. Ask question like:
42. What new thing did you discover in the story that you did not know before?
43. What did you learn about God?
44. What did you learn about people?
45. What person in the story do you relate to the most? Why?
46. How can what you’ve learned change the way you live your life?

\***Recommended Reading:**

*Small Group Emergency Response Handbook* by Group

*Leading Life-Changing Small Groups* by Donahue

*The Ways of the Alongsider: Growing Disciples Life2life* by Mowry

**Grow Group Covenant**

A Grow Group is a group of men or women who come together regularly in a grace-centered environment to pursue life transformation through a balance of transparent connection, prayer, Bible study, accountability and service. A Grow Group is not a curriculum; rather it is a way of relating to others that is biblical, balanced, and beneficial.

For a Grow Group to be most effective, there are some minimum ground rules and commitments that must be made and honored. Should you decide to be part of this group, we are asking you to make the following commitments:

1) To honor one another through maintaining the “Non-negotiables of Grow Groups”:

1. **Grace-centered:** When we get to spiritual formation for Christians one of the great tools of Satan is Fear, Shame and Guilt. Judgment has already come. Our call as men is to live out the grace of God with each other--speaking truthfully in love. If our groups become performance driven, then pride will take over and lasting growth diminish. God knows all I have done, said, and thought…yet still I am here today. His grace covers and transforms me.
2. **Committed**: For life transformation to occur and the relationships to deepen, the group must be honored and valued regularly. Through committing to be present and fully engaged in your group, you actively prioritize the men involved and establish the context for growth to occur.
3. **Confidential**: For authenticity and transparency to grow, men must be able to trust that the issues and topics discussed within the group will not be shared outside of the group. Simply stated, what is said in a Grow Group should stay in the Grow Group with the exception of personal safety issues or the safety of others.
4. **Progressively Transparent**: The atmosphere of a Grow Group is to be authentic and real. Each man must seek to be open and honest about his journey. Knowing that some men struggle in this area, each group should expect for the men to grow more comfortable with transparency as they spend more time together. This progressive transparency is a healthy process that should naturally occur. Without transparency, your group will never achieve the transformational impact upon your life that it could.

2) To honor one another and God through intentionally investing in the “Essential Elements of Grow Groups”:

1. **Prayer**: Prayer is the air we breathe as followers of Christ. It is vital for true transformation to happen. We will pray regularly for one another’s growth.
2. **Study and Spiritual Disciplines**: The Word of God is one of His chosen tools to chisel and form our character into His likeness.
3. **Vision-Centric Accountability**: Everyone needs accountability...not the guilt-driven variety that leads to legalism and checklist spirituality, but an accountability that is voluntarily entered into and focused on unleashing each person into the vision that God is calling him toward. The result is not being beat down, but being built up. The Bible calls this edification.
4. **Life-on-Life Connection through Social & Service Opportunities**: There is great danger in doing life alone. Grow Groups thrive in challenging people to cultivate deeper relationships through sports, camp outs, road trips, mission projects, or just hanging out. Groups should look for times outside of “group” time to connect & serve together.

Agreeing that life is a battlefield of eternal significance and that God never intended people to live life alone, we, the undersigned, vow to commit ourselves to Christ, His Kingdom, and each other as outlined above.

1. We will meet together on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (day of week).

2. Our commitment to our Grow Group and LBS will last from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (begin date) to\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (end date).

3. Our meetings will begin promptly at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (begin time) and close no later than \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(end time).

4. We agree to be faithful in attendance (to the LBS & the Grow Group) and actively engage with each other to pursue transformation in Christ with the exception of truly extenuating circumstances (e.g., health emergency, work travel, vacation, and/or hurricane).

May Christ alone receive the glory from all that is done in and through us.

Agreed to on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Signed by:

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*Colossians 1:28-29 HCSB*

*We proclaim Him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.* ***29****I labor for this, striving**with His strength that works powerfully in me.*

**Practical Reminders for all Grow Leaders**

1. You are the presence of Men’s & Women’s Ministry within your class . . . Engage the people of your class. Every man/woman at our church is a part of the men’s/women’s ministry here. You have authority to lead and invest.
2. Please look regularly at the Men’s and Women’s webpage! [www.Houstonsfirst.org/Men](http://www.Houstonsfirst.org/Men) or [www.houstonsfirst.org/women](http://www.houstonsfirst.org/women) for upcoming opportunities for gaining biblical vision of manhood and womanhood (Milestone classes, service opportunities, etc.), training in faith skills (a lot of these will be Milestone classes), and having intergenerational opportunities (events like Men Serve, Car Care Ministry, TAG, Generation-to-Generation, etc.)
3. We want to invest in YOU! If you are new or simply have not met Sherrie or Don, please come and introduce yourself and allow us to get getting to know you.
4. Another key reminder is that we need your feedback on the needs you are seeing within the lives of the men/women and we need your feedback on what you are seeing God doing in the lives of your class. Also, part of feedback is simply sharing any suggestions or ideas with us or asking us questions you might have. Often the greatest ministries flow out of a community who is pursuing Christ together.
5. Lastly, please remember that every person needs an opportunity to be involved in a Grow Group. You will be the ones to help organize them. We offer training for doing it well. Again, if you feel you need some more coaching, please contact us. If we are truly going to accomplish God’s mission of transforming lives, then we must all pour our lives out in ministry to others.

2 Timothy 2:1-2

 You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

**Formulating Great Questions**

**Grow Group Leaders**

1. Preparation for leading a grow group.
2. The goal is ‘know-be-do.’
3. Before you begin, know your audience—what was their religious training? What would they change about their past? Describe who you are? What are you passionate about? What are your talents/spiritual gifts (may need to take PLACE test)? What do you aspire to be? What are you most proud of in your life?
4. Prepare lesson with questions that seek to observe the text (what/who/when/where/how/why did this happen), interpret the text (what is it saying), and apply the text (how will this change my life/the way I am living).
5. As you write a lesson plan, ask good questions (how, why, what—never yes/no questions), build progression into your line of questioning, add activities such as story, historical background, supplemental info, explanation of what might be confusing.
6. \*Important\*: Your launch question should engage each group member. It should build a bridge between the text and the experience of the participants. The launch question should be non-threatening! It should make each person project themselves into the bible story/text under consideration.
7. Questions should govern/lead the conversation. Questions are a powerful tool to discover if participants understand the content, hear their perspective, and integrate info into their lives.
8. Observation questions promote awareness, are who, what, when, where, and how type questions. Observation questions draw the group’s attention to facts that are significant and worthy of focused awareness.
9. Observation questions have multiple answers, but not an infinite number of answers.
10. Observation questions promote awareness. They ask about what we know.
11. Interpretation questions take the learner another step in the direction of full understanding. Interpretation questions answer why and how questions. This type may compare and contrast. These questions help participants synthesize new learning with previously understood material to arrive at a new way of thinking. These questions enable people to analyze their thoughts and understanding against the standard of Scripture. These questions will help people understand how Scripture affects their life. These are questions of evaluation.
12. Interpretation questions ask “how and why.” They attempt to judge the material against the standard of God’s word.
13. These questions establish what we should be—desired outcome.
14. Application questions help participants apply content learned to their present life. These questions ask, “so what?”
15. These questions have an unlimited number of possible answers for each individual reading eh passage.
16. Application questions are what we do. James 2:22 establishes the correct order—know, be, do.
17. Questions that generate a discussion are “open.” This means they cannot be answered with yes/no! Open questions will generate conversation, have many right answers, and stimulate reflection. They strike at the heart of the issue.
18. Yes/no and leading questions kill conversation:
19. Leading questions imply a “right” answer, and generate fear of being wrong.
20. The answer is obvious, so no one answers because the question insults the intelligence of the group.
21. Silence is good for a group!
22. Silence give people time to process and formulate what they want to say. (Warning: Some people process by talking [external processors], while others process in their mind before every saying a word [internal processors]. Typically, internal processors will speak less often because they are thinking and formulating internally. Silence is especially helpful for these people. Internal processors think all the way through before saying the first word. External processors get a snippet of an idea and begin talking to process their thoughts.
23. Silence always feels longer than it is. After silence you will receive the most well-thought out answers.
24. Preparing a group requires careful planning.
25. Establish with the group what it takes to make the group feel like a safe place.
26. Ask what makes each person feel loved, respected, and cared about.
27. The authenticity/transparency of the group leader sets the tone for the rest of the group.
28. Caring concern often means the leader and members reach out to one another during the week.

TIPS:

* Make the group think.
* Rephrase the question if you get no answer.
* Respect the value of each person.
* Allow time for people to think—do not let silence make you uneasy-let people process and think
* Encourage discussion
* Take advantage of controversy
* Review periodically
* Emphasize the positive
* Challenge superficial answers.
* Use background information.
* Restrain too-talkative members by addressing questions to other members by name.
* Ask uninstructed members questions related to facts from the text until they grow in confidence to be able to give their opinion and impressions.
* Keep “tangent-chasers” on focus by drawing them back to the study.
* Encourage “well-informed” members who frequently digress by quoting other parts of Scripture.

**LBS Guidelines for Counseling Referrals**

**What options exist for additional/advanced help in HFBC?**

1. **Stephen Ministry** is a twelve year-old ministry in HFBC in which trained lay members of our church can be confidentially assigned to a care receiver for the purpose of walking through difficult life events. These events include, but are not limited to: loss of a loved one, illness, disability, discouragement, marital problems, job loss, and loneliness. The phone number for information and referrals is 713.957.6761. *This service is free.*
2. **Juliana Poor Memorial Counseling Center** provides biblically based, clinically competent, and Spirit-sensitive counseling, promoting the emotional, psychological, and spiritual health of individuals, marriages, and families. They seek to help with personal and interpersonal problems through the application of biblical truths. The Bible and the Holy Spirit are the primary agents in counseling and teaching. Additionally, the Counseling Center also leads various counselor-led groups and facilitates Celebrate Recovery, to assist in overcoming addictions. The phone number for the Counseling Center is 713.335.6461.

Many other services are available but these are good starting places to get the help your friend needs.

**Referrals in Emergency Situations:** An emergency situation is when you feel that the person you are talking with is an immediate threat to himself or to someone else. In that instance, **CALL 911.**

**Under what circumstances should I refer my friend to trained help?** The basic guideline is this: Refer when the care that you as a Grow Group can offer is not the best choice for your friend in need.

**Refer your friend to Stephen Ministry if:**

-you are sensing that your time with him is one-sided over a long period of time. All of your time is needed to care for his needs, or he is becoming overly dependent upon you.

-you find that she is placing blame on other parties and not taking any of the responsibility for herself.

-you feel that he would be better served by having someone listen to him on a regular basis (once a week) and work through his difficulties.

-the problems that you are dealing with are generally outlined above in areas that Stephen Ministry addresses.

**Refer your friend to the Counseling Center if:**

-he seems to have difficulty maintaining the basic functions of life.

-she has experienced marked weight loss or gain

-you would have expected him to be doing better by now.

-her ability to cope seems to be on a definite downward spiral.

-he has become extremely withdrawn from his social activities.

-she has been involved in any kind of abusive situations.

-he is behaving explosively or threatening violence.

-she seems out of touch with reality.

-he has mentioned suicidal thoughts or wishes or behaved in reckless, self-destructive ways.

**Reasons People Give for Not Referring Someone for Additional Help:**

-It would be unchristian not to care for this person by yourself.

-He can’t afford professional care, so I’m better than nothing at all.

-She will be embarrassed if I say to her that she needs professional help.

-If I recommend professional help, he might become angry and leave the church or group.

-She would never accept a professional caregiver.

**Questions to Help Refine Accountability**

**Spiritual**

1. Are you growing in your relationship with the Lord?
2. How do you know?
3. Are you spending time in the Word and prayer on a daily basis?
4. Is confession part of your prayer time? Praise? Thankfulness?
5. Are you memorizing Scripture?
6. If Jesus were physically present with me now, what would He say to me?
7. Am I deceiving myself or others?
8. Am I being transparent and authentic with other?
9. How has God been speaking into your life this week? How are you responding? Have you experienced any conviction this week?
10. What is your greatest prayer request this week?

**Friends and Relationships**

1. Who are my friends?
2. Am I a good friend?
3. What makes a good friend?
4. Do people feel cared for by me?
5. How do I relate to people I don’t like necessarily?
6. Do I need to ask forgiveness or make things rifht with anyone?
7. Are there relational ghosts in my closet?
8. Am I making efforts to make people around me feel valued and affirmed?
9. How can I make people feel special?
10. Do I go out of my way for others? Am I hospitable?
11. Am I working on my weaknesses?
12. In what areas have I settled for that just the way I am and not been willing to allow the Lord to change or discipline me?
13. Am I too busy for my friends? What would they say?
14. Do I have an accountability group that is honest with me and asks me hard questions: Who really cares? Or, do I surround myself with people who just tell me what I want to hear?

**Ministry**

1. What are my motive for ministry?
2. Why am I doing what I am doing?
3. Do I have the ability to describe the eternal significance and value of my ministry? Or do I rationalize?
4. Do people sense something different about my dealings with them because I am a believer?
5. Would they say I am honest, above reproach, and have high character?
6. Do I handle money in a biblically ethical way?
7. Do I trust others? Do I inspire trust in others?
8. How do I deal with those who stand in the path of my plans?

**Financial**

1. What does my checkbook say about my relationship with the Lord?
2. Am I giving away more and more? Am I only giving from my abundance?
3. Who/what am I giving to? Why am I giving? Am I a cheerful giver?
4. Do I tithe? Do I give offerings?
5. Am I paying my debts in an orderly fashion?
6. Am I a good steward?
7. Am I taking steps to eliminate my indebtedness as much as possible?
8. How much money do I need? What will I do with the rest?
9. Am I wise in planning for the future financially? Who do I talk to about these things?

**Physical**

1. Am I taking care of my body?
2. Am I watching my weight?
3. Am I eating right?
4. Am I getting regular exercise? Where? What do I do?
5. Do I get enough sleep?

**Reputational**

1. What is my reputation among others?
2. Do others see me as being a servant of Christ?
3. Does my life stand as a pattern of godly living?
4. Do I receive respect from non-believers?
5. Am I known as loving towards others?
6. Am I leaving a Christ-filled legacy?
7. Am I known as a giver or a taker?
8. Have I suffered any persecution for the sake of the Gospel? Have I rationalized some persecutions, or could it be that I have mishandled some situations?

**Leadership**

1. Where am I using the gifts of leadership that I have?
2. Do I stand up for my convictions?
3. Do I push others too much?
4. Am I working at being a better listener?
5. Are my decisions reflective of my understanding of Scriptures?
6. Can I follow others when I need to?
7. Does my leadership enable othe4rs to become better people and draw them closer to the Lord?
8. Can I build a team? And work with a team? Or am I the strong natural leader? Am I a loner?
9. How am I working to improve my leadership?

**Renewal and Recreation**

1. How do I get refreshed and renewed?
2. Do I block out time to rest?
3. From whom/where do I draw my sense of peace?
4. How is my energy level?
5. When and how do I play?
6. Do I always have to win when playing a game? Can I play for fun, just to be with friends?
7. How do I handle solitude?
8. What is the most refreshing and renewing thing I have done in the last month?

**Questions to spark accountability**

1. How has this week been? High point? Low point? Share one thing you are thankful for this week. How did you use your time this week?
2. Discuss an issue/concern/conviction/passion in your life that is very important to you.
3. Share a time in your life when you felt you hit a “pot hole” in your journey. How long were you there and how did you get out?
4. What has been your greatest victory/success in life?
5. What has been your greatest disappointment/defeat in your life?
6. If you could change one thing about your life, what would it be? Why?
7. What is your greatest challenge or struggle that you are facing today? What has you worried about this? What do you wish you had more control over?
8. What major factor or occurrence in your life has shaped your personal or spiritual development?
9. What do you do to grow in the Lord?
10. Is there anything you would like us to know about you?