

# What Is a Smallgroup?

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A smallgroup is an interdependent subset of the local church which gathers together regularly to live out the vision and purpose of the church. The elder-connected smallgroup leaders extends pastoral care to all members.

## “A Smallgroup”:

A smallgroup<sup>1</sup> is a smaller group of believers within a single church that gather together to live out the vision and purpose of the church in its own unique way. This group has unique strengths that must be maximized compared to the whole and compared to the individual Christian. Therefore, it is important that the smallgroups be kept to a size small enough to not sacrifice these strengths. This number is something that each elder-connected smallgroup leader will evaluate with the help of elders<sup>2</sup>. Just as a smallgroup is smaller than the corporate whole, it is bigger than an individual and most families<sup>3</sup>.

The term smallgroup describes the collection of people who are united by their regular gathering together. Smallgroup is more than a Bible study, more than a meeting. It is a collection of people in relationship and fellowship around the gospel. Just as the church exists apart from the worship service, so smallgroup exists apart from the meeting. Just as the term church describes the people, so smallgroup describes the people. Smallgroup isn't something that meets and is done when the meeting is complete; rather people are a smallgroup. That is, they are defined in at least one aspect of their life in the church by the smallgroup of which they are a part.

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<sup>1</sup> Smallgroup is written as a single word to differentiate what this document is speaking of from any small group of gathered believers or people. Thus smallgroup is different than “small group” in that it is a particular kind of group that is small.

<sup>2</sup> It is likely, speaking from experience, that 15-20 people in an individual smallgroup may be the upper limit of optimal sizing. There are other factors (such as rate of growth, readiness of new leadership, and group dynamics) that will affect size optimization. Therefore, when a smallgroup grow to 15-20, evaluation of effectiveness is encouraged with an eye toward a planned split.

<sup>3</sup> Similar to there being a maximum optimal size (which will vary from group to group), there is probably also a minimum optimal size of 4-5. Subsets of a smallgroup can certainly do things together in smaller groups, but the body/group aspect of the smallgroup may be lost at numbers smaller than these. If a group finds itself shrinking to suboptimal size, assimilation into an existing group should be considered.

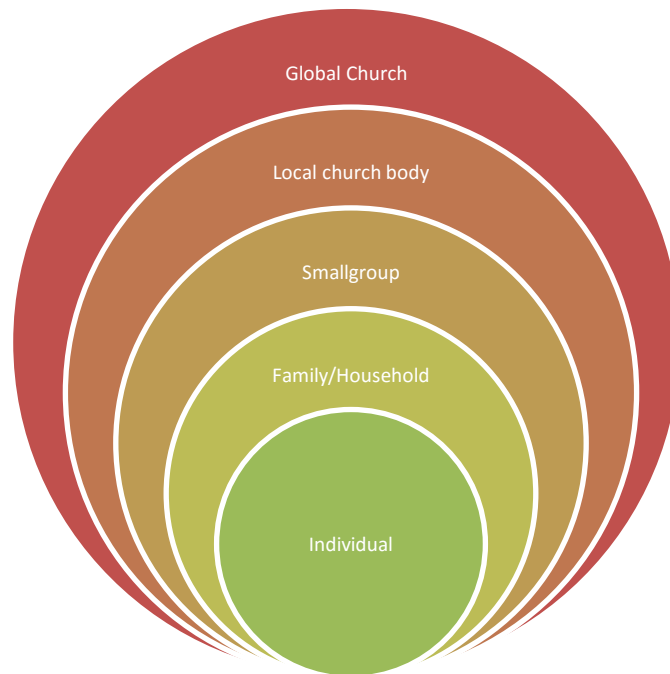
“A smallgroup is an Interdependent Subset of the Local Church”:

**Keyword: Subset**

What do we mean by subset?

The diagram below may be helpful in visualizing the relationship among the members of the subsets of the church: Individual, family/household, smallgroup, corporate entirety of the local church, global church. It also shows that every individual in Grace Bible Church is in a family/household (of various kinds), in a smallgroup, a part of the local church, and a part of the global church. The individual is to live out the vision and purpose of the church in all spheres of life.

**How the Subsets Relate**



*Families in the same smallgroup*

As the diagram shows, it would be natural for families or those who live in the same household to be in the same smallgroup together. We encourage families to not overlook the distinct benefits of being united together in the same smallgroup. This can help prevent smallgroup commitment from competing with “family time.” Rather, it may have a profound unifying force on both smallgroup and home.

### *Neighbors in the same smallgroup*

There is a benefit to grouping smallgroups by geographic location. There are fewer limits on peoples' ability to regularly gather and serve together when they live close to each other. Living an hour's-drive apart puts limits on the amount of time spent together and fellowship shared.

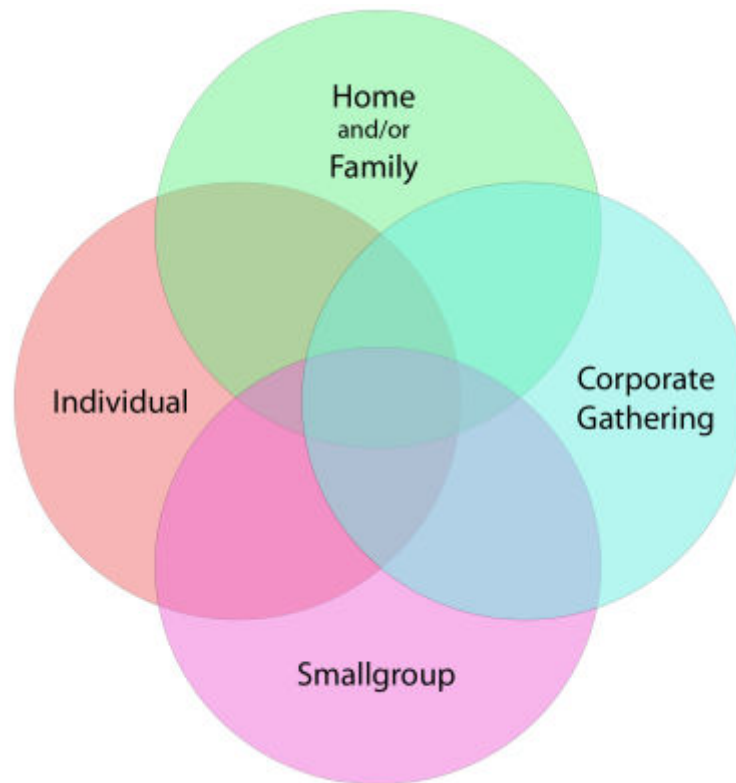
### *Various seasons of life in the same smallgroup*

The default for Christians oftentimes is to gravitate toward those of same gender, age, season of life, etc. Relationships are natural where sameness abounds. We encourage smallgroups to reflect the diversity of the church body. We don't want every smallgroup to be age-segregated, gender-segregated, or season-of-life segregated. The Church is a beautiful and God-glorifying picture of a diversity of ages, cultures, races, jobs, and classes gathering together into a unified whole. Smallgroups can take advantage of that diversity by, where beneficial, take advantage of

However, we want some smallgroups to be marked by sameness. There will be distinct benefits for some in this type of smallgroup. It is important for these smallgroup members to seek fellowship in the greater diversity of the body outside of smallgroup.

### ***Interdependent subset***

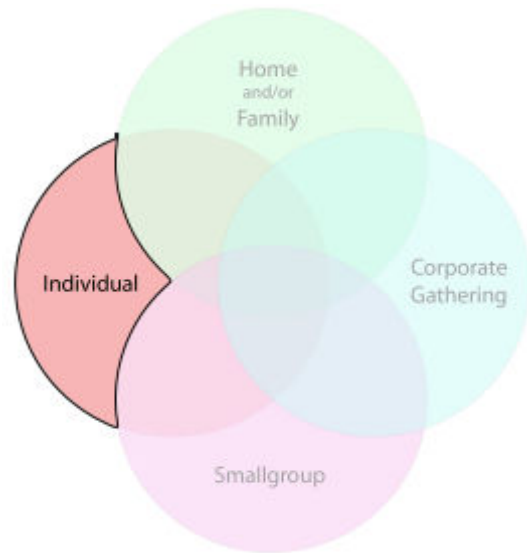
## **How the subsets function to fulfill the vision and purpose of the church**



This diagram shows how the different subsets of the church function separately and together to fulfill the vision and purpose of the church. Each of the four subsets can fulfill the vision and purpose of the church alone (where there is no overlap) or working together as best fits the need (where there is overlap).

For example, suppose Steve has a neighbor who is recently widowed. How might Steve, his household, his smallgroup, and his church all work to fulfill the vision and purpose of the church?

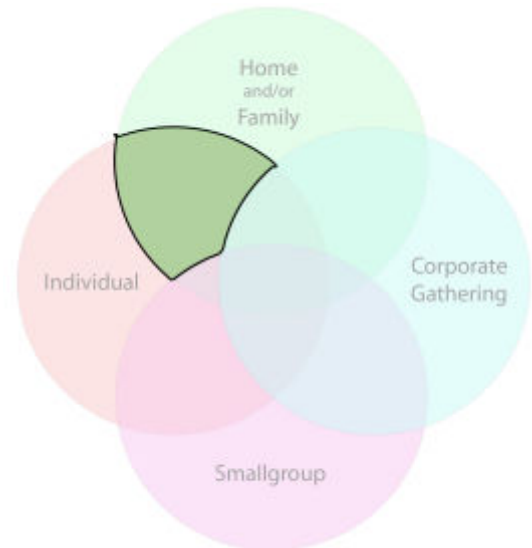
- 1) **Steve alone:** Steve alone can certainly fulfill the vision and the purpose of the church in his interaction with the widow, Mabel. Steve can live as a sent one with the gospel to her, proclaiming the gospel and demonstrating the gospel. For example, Steve could spend time fixing her car, a task her husband did for the last 50 years. While Steve is covered in grease, Mabel begins to express some of the grief that is overwhelming her. Steve listens patiently, incarnating Christ's compassionate care to her. In the context of this conversation, Steve shares the good news with her.



*Strength:* Steve's strength is his flexibility, spontaneity, and the very personal nature of his gospel ministry to Mabel.

*Weakness:* A primary weakness is that Mabel is not able to see the effects of the gospel in forming a family of followers of Christ through Steve's ministry alone. Another weakness is that Steve is limited in the number of needs that he can meet in Mabel's life: limited time, limited money, limited giftedness, and limited manpower.

- 2) **Steve's Household:** As you read this, imagine how these same strengths and weaknesses could apply to a household of singles or any household, even where all members aren't family members.



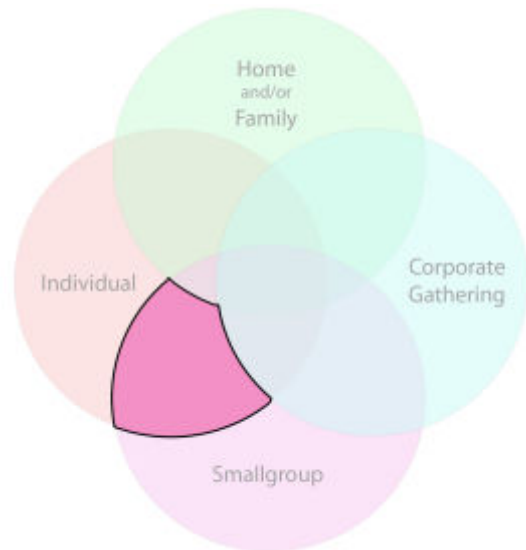
The members of Steve's household, working together, can fulfill the vision and purpose of the church in a different way as they bring the gospel to Mabel in word and deed. Steve shares with his family the conversation with Mabel; in response

Steve's daughter and wife serve Mabel by doing light housework each week. Steve's son keeps the yard mowed and the garbage taken out. Steve's wife invites Mabel into their home throughout the week for meals and to offer a listening ear. Each member of Steve's household is intentional to keep the gospel as his or her motivation for serving, testifying of Christ in word and deed.

*Strength:* Note the strengths of multiple people with a variety of giftedness serving independently and together. Just as God draws sinners through the cross into his family, Steve's family can incarnate God's love by inviting Mabel into their house as if she were a member of their family: hospitality. This is something Steve could not demonstrate alone.

*Weakness:* Although Mabel has seen multiple members of a family caring for her, she has not witnessed the unified diversity of the body of Christ that the gospel forms.

- 3) **Steve's Smallgroup:** Steve's smallgroup is uniquely equipped to fulfill the vision and purpose of the church as they serve Mabel. Steve is in a smallgroup of three other couples and a single mom. Steve shared Mabel's needs with his smallgroup, and they are eager to become involved as a smallgroup in her life. Over the following months, Steve's smallgroup has ministered to Mabel in a variety of ways: Giving Mabel rides to the store, helping Mabel to learn to pay bills, and some of the women have begun to meet regularly with her to study the gospel of John. The smallgroup begins to pray for Mabel each time they gather.

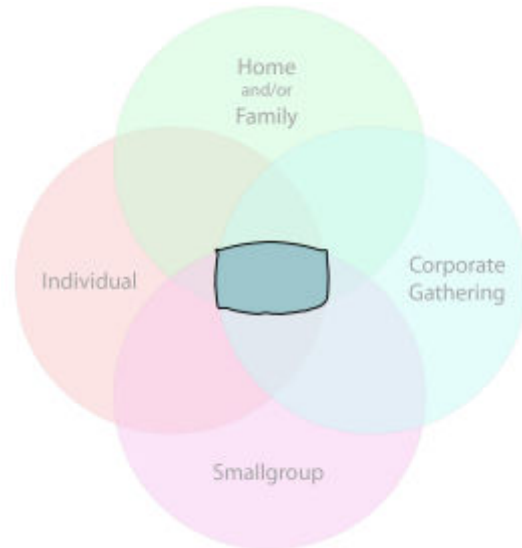


*Strengths:* Mabel is now witnessing complete strangers, not her neighbors, demonstrating a genuine gospel love for her. The smallgroup, with a wider assortment of giftings, is functioning together as part of the body formed by Christ, to manifest Christ's love in a diversity of ways to her. A great breadth of needs can be met.

*Weaknesses:* Though more needs are being met by the smallgroup, Mabel still has

needs (financial, for example) that go beyond what his family or smallgroup can handle. There is still an even greater unified diversity that Mabel has not yet seen working in her life. For the smallgroup to function together, more planning is required for coordinating schedules; needs are met less spontaneously.

- 4) **Steve's Church:** Steve's church, the local body of believers, can fulfill the vision and purpose of the church. After considering Mabel's needs, the church decides to assist Mabel financially over the difficult months to come. Mabel begins to attend worship services and sees the body of Christ gathered, hears the gospel proclaimed, and feels God's love through individual's caring for her. She sees how Steve, his family, and his smallgroup are united in Christ to others. As others in the body become aware of her needs; a mechanic in the church fixes her car, a CPA prepares her taxes, and another widow begins to help her through the grieving process.



*Strengths:* The fullness of the unified diversity of the body of Christ is seen and experienced by Mabel. The Word of God is seen to be central among this family of families. Mabel is not just now impressed by individuals, but she sees the church, and is impressed by the supernatural connecting of multiple lives into a unified body. When all of the parts are functioning together as a body, the church can reach into many more lives than just Mabel's. When the body is viewed as a whole with each subset using its members' giftedness to serve in the areas in which they are able, we see the power and wisdom of God in gathering together his people as the church.

*Weaknesses:* The various aspects of the church's care for Mabel are primarily manifested through the functioning of individuals, households, and smallgroups not the whole body serving together at the same time. The church as a whole would be slow and ineffective at meeting Mabel's needs if the only time and way the church could meet Mabel's needs was when they gathered together. The ministry of the church to the community is not primarily legislated out of the office or performed with the whole body with all of its members gathered together at the same time. Rather, as each member of the body exercises his or her spiritual gift while in

fellowship with one another, the church is built up and Christ's body is seen.

*In Summary*, in a church the size of GBC, smallgroups are a necessary and important part of the local church. Each and every member of Grace Bible Church for this reason is encouraged to be an active part of both the Sunday corporate gathering and smallgroup gatherings and the ministry flowing from each.

"A smallgroup is an Interdependent Subset of the Local Church which Gathers Together Regularly:"

**Regular meeting:** Smallgroups meet together regularly. For most groups, this means meeting weekly.

**This weekly smallgroup meeting is the elders' intentional effort to help those in Grace Bible Church not neglect "the meeting together".**



Consider the passage in Hebrews 10:23-25 to give us insight into the purpose for the smallgroup meeting. Confident in sustaining grace and fearful of the hardening effects of unfought sin, the author writes,

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting the meeting together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day draw near (ESV).”

The goals of meeting together laid out in Hebrews 10 are perhaps best accomplished in the smallgroup gathering. Therefore, the the weekly smallgroup meeting must be designed to accomplish these “one-another” (10:24-25) privileges.

What is the primary benefit of gathering regularly? Regular gathering guards our heart from stagnation and sin’s deceitfulness and encourages godliness in the church. Concerning anyone who would forsake this gathering, C.J. Mahaney writes, “They have demonstrated a distinct lack of growth. What’s worse, they haven’t even been aware of their spiritual condition and stagnation. Smallgroups provide the encouragement, correction, and accountability that keep us from drifting. As important as it is to cultivate a personal relationship with God by practicing the spiritual disciplines, we need others to help us in our pursuit of sanctification” (*Why Small Groups*, p. 6).

The New Testament offers an extensive list of “one anothers” to help Christians in their common pursuit of sanctification. Consider the impact in the church if all of its members are fulfilling the “one anothers” in the list on the right.

### HOUSE RULES FOR GOD’S FAMILY

1. Be at peace with each other (Mk 9:50)
2. Love one another (Jn 13:34)
3. Be joined to one another (Ro 12:5)
4. Be devoted to one another (Ro 12:10)
5. Honor one another (Ro 12:10)
6. Rejoice with one another (Ro 12:15)
7. Weep with one another (Ro 12:15)
8. Live in harmony with one another (Ro 12:16)
9. Accept one another (Ro 15:7)
10. Counsel one another (Ro 15:14)
11. Greet one another (Ro 16:16)
12. Agree with each other (1 Co 1:10)
13. Wait for one another (1Co 11:33)
14. Care for one another (1Co 12:25)
15. Serve one another (Gal 5:13)
16. Carry one another’s burdens (Gal 6:2)
17. Be kind to one another (Eph 4:32)
18. Forgive one another (Eph 4:32)
19. Submit to one another (Eph 5:21)
20. Bear with one another (Col 3:13)
21. Teach, admonish each other (Col 3:16)
22. Encourage one another (1Th 5:11)
23. Build up one another (1Th 5:11)
24. Spur one another on (Heb 10:24)
25. Offer hospitality to one another (1Pe 4:9)
26. Minister gifts to one another (1Pe 4:10)
27. Be humble toward one another (1Pe 5:5)
28. Confess your sins to one another (Jas 5:16)
29. Pray for one another (Jas 5:16)
30. Fellowship with one another (1Jn 1:7)

Therefore, smallgroup gatherings must be thoughtfully designed so that the “one anothers” are performed with ease.

The goal of smallgroup relationships is **fellowship** that would accomplish these “one anothers.” As John Loftness defines it, “[Fellowship is] participating together in life and truth made possible by the Holy Spirit through our union with Christ.” Fellowship is something that only Christians can uniquely experience because our fellowship is determined by our fellowship with Christ. True fellowship will seek to accomplish all of the aforementioned “one anothers”. Our smallgroups must aim to have true biblical fellowship be the result of the gathering, thus modeling to the members the fellowship that can be enjoyed in all Christian relationships.

Notice the important distinction between fellowshiping and social activities.

“[Fellowship is] participating together in the life and truth made possible by the Holy Spirit through our union with Christ.”

-John Loftness

“Social activities can’t be equated or confused with fellowship. They are distinctly different. Nothing compares to the fellowship we enjoy when we worship together, study and apply Scripture together, encourage and correct each other, and communicate to one another our current experience of God. Nothing. Social activities can create a context for fellowship, but they are a place to begin—not a place to remain. When I spend an extended time with another Christian, my main desire is that we know fellowship. I want to hear of his relationship with God, and how God is revealing Himself to him. I want to communicate my current experience of God as well, and impart a fresh passion for God. Is that your desire? If someone spent an afternoon with you, would he or she leave with a fresh understanding of and passion for God? If not, you need to change” (Mahaney, *Why Small Groups*, 11).

An effective smallgroup will model true biblical fellowship, knitting its members together in community by fulfilling the one-anothers. It will teach its members how to *do* fellowship in and out of the group’s gathering.

With these goals in mind, what does the smallgroup gathering actually look like? The early church was faced with the same question. What observations can we make from their fellowship together?

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers...and all who believed were together and had all things in common. And the were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need (Acts 2:42-45, ESV)”.

We think there is wisdom in prioritizing the same things they did in our smallgroups:

1. **Their fellowship was marked by God’s Word (42, 46):** In our smallgroup meetings, the following may be some ways in which you can make the Word central in your fellowship
  - Studying a book of the Bible.
  - Reviewing Sunday’s sermon.
  - Reading elder-recommended resources (see attached list or request for approval).
  - Sharing of personal interaction with and application of the Scripture.
  - Encouraging each member to be daily in God’s Word.
2. **Their fellowship inspired praise-filled prayer (42, 47):** Prayer should not just be something that is done to open and close the meeting, but should be a defining characteristic of each smallgroup. Smallgroup should break from eating, studying, encouraging, sharing, or admonishing in order to retreat into prayer. This way prayer is woven into the fiber of every detail of the smallgroup.
3. **Their fellowship was Christ- and Cross- Centered (42, 46):** To ensure that Christ and the cross were central to their meetings, the early church took advantage of what Christ instituted in the Lord’s Supper. Smallgroups must be markedly Christ- and cross-centered. MacArthur comments on Acts 2:42, “Nothing is more vital to the church’s ongoing, regular confrontation of sins in the lives of its people than the thoughtful expression of devotion to the remembrance of the cross.” This expression of devotion to the remembrance of Christ & the cross can manifest itself in a number of ways in smallgroups:
  - Taking the Lord’s Supper together.
  - Worshiping with cross-centered music.
  - Reviewing regularly of the gospel and its application to our lives.
  - Remembering grace first and most when confessing and confronting sin.
  - Looking for the gospel in all of Scripture as you study.

4. **Their fellowship produced generous, self-giving commitment to one another (44-46):** The gospel creates the fellowship the smallgroup enjoys, transforming the members into gracious, self-giving people. The grace is manifested by meeting the needs of others, especially those of other Christians (c.f. Gal 6:10). Smallgroups are an important venue for each person to use his or her spiritual gifts in the service of one another and the world.
5. **Their fellowship drew others to Christ (47):** For how fellowship is vital to the drawing-in ministry of the church, see the "Vision and Purpose" section.

**Each of these priorities should be evident in the way a smallgroup meets together.**

Each smallgroup meeting should be conducted in such a way to ensure that this type of fellowship occurs. Each group, under the prayerful leadership of the elder-connected smallgroup leader, will go about this a little differently. That's good!

Likewise, the group meeting should be designed in such a way that members of the group are able to use their spiritual gifts to serve one another. The smallgroup should give each and every member the chance to be a participant, not a spectator in the gathering. Unfortunately, on Sunday, it is possible to come, sit, listen, and leave; however, this is far more difficult in the smallgroup gathering. Let's consider a few of the one anothers and how a group can be designed to allow them to be performed by all in the group:

- Have smallgroup gatherings in homes so that hospitality can be shown to one another
- Eat a meal so that we can wait for one another and serve one another
- Confess sin to one another so that we can restore one another, encourage one another, and bear one another's burdens.
- Share what God is teaching different members from His Word to build up one another and to teach one another.
- There are many more ways; each smallgroup leader should regularly evaluate his group and pursue additional one-another opportunities.

**Core Questions**

Historically at Grace Bible Church, the *Core Questions* have been an important means to the goal of biblical fellowship. If a smallgroup doesn't use these core questions, we encourage them to utilize a different means that helps them arrive at biblical fellowship.

Ed Welch writes, "Somehow God must be bigger than our own desires -- so big that we worship Him alone. Here...is the basic idea: take ten looks to the true God for every one

at ourselves. This biblical rhythm must become second nature" (*Addictions*, 143). Core questions must model this rhythm. They make sure that when we, in smallgroups, look at our lives, we are looking at God in our lives. God (not us) gets the glory for obedience; God's grace (not our effort) is our hope and strength in the face of sin.

When we open up our lives to each other, our eyes must not be first and most on our own lives, but rather on God and His work in our lives to accomplish His ends through us for His glory.

Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, **for it is God** who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. -Phil 2:12b-13

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And **this is not your own doing**; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For **we are his workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for good works, **which God prepared beforehand**, that we should walk in them -Ephesians 2:8-10

Therefore, when we gather for fellowship, and we ask each other questions intentionally purposed to gauge how God is at work in us, we ask them and answer them in such a way that makes much of God. Where there is obedience, answers to prayer, and conquered temptation, God gets the glory. Where there is sin, the answer is obvious: Grace-dependent confession and repentance.

These suggested questions get to the "core" of the Christian life; therefore, we call them "Core Questions". They are:

1. **What is God teaching you about Himself from His Word, and how is your life changing as a result?**
2. **How have you seen God answering prayer? What are you praying for?**
3. **How is God using you in the process of evangelism to draw people to Himself?**
4. **What sins has God revealed to you so that you may repent of them? In light of grace realities, how must your repentance look?**

**Meeting throughout the week**

The smallgroup meeting is the most visible place where this kind of fellowship takes place, but fellowship in the church is to happen throughout the week. The smallgroup meeting is the place where intentional, Biblical fellowship is **modeled**. The members of the smallgroup should be encouraged to be involved in each other's life so that this fellowship occurs in homes, coffee shops, parks, over the phone, and in all the various ways in which their lives can interact.

Fellowship during the smallgroup gathering is able to effectively perform many of the fellowship priorities for smallgroup; others are best performed as smallgroup members gather outside of the meeting. As needs are made known during the smallgroup gathering, selfless commitment to one another may be best expressed as those needs are met by the group outside of the smallgroup meeting time.

The smallgroup will function both during the meeting time and outside of the meeting time to live out the vision and purpose of the church in the way that the smallgroup is uniquely able to do. Therefore, smallgroup members should be encouraged to view their participation in the group as extending beyond the bounds of the meeting and into all of their life lived together.

"A smallgroup is an Interdependent Subset of the Local Church which Gathers Together Regularly to Live Out the Vision and Purpose of the Church:"

The BIBLICAL VISION  
of Grace Bible Church and smallgroups:  
**The glory of God in the cross of His Son  
which results in life-transformation by the Spirit.**

Every time the church gathers together (in any of its subsets, as well) it must be done purposefully. GBC has given much thought about the vision and purpose that Scripture lays out for our church. When smallgroups gather together, our church's vision and purpose must be at the forefront of these gatherings.

First and foremost, our smallgroups must set their sights (or their "vision") on the Scriptures. GBC has tried to summarize the grand message of Scripture. The Bible reveals the glory of God in the cross of Jesus Christ which the Holy Spirit uses to transform the lives of sinners. So

smallgroups should work hard to keep these three inseparable themes before every smallgroup member (the glory of God, the cross of Jesus, and life-transformation by the Spirit).

As smallgroups zero in on the word of God in their fellowship together, a growing understanding and prizing of God's glory should be observable. The place where God's glory is most clearly seen is in the place where His love and mercy for sinners meet, where His justice and grace meet: the cross of His Son Jesus Christ. Smallgroups must be cross-centered in their focus as they study Scripture. Finally, it is God's intent that sinners be transformed by His Spirit as He applies the atoning work of the cross to the sinner's life. So smallgroups must be eager to pursue application of the word of God in daily life by grace.

As smallgroups increasingly grow under this vision, the lives of those in the smallgroup become breathing testimonies of these three themes in Scripture. Most often, the world will see these themes (our biblical vision) fleshed out before them those whose lives have been transformed to be God-glorifying and cross-centered while they seek to be used to transform others' lives.

### ***The glory of God***

Smallgroups is the perfect platform for setting this vision in the lives of members at GBC. The smallgroup setting can help a theoretical concept like "God's glory" become more tangible and easily understood as the smallgroup works its way through the Bible. And, "glorifying God," becomes very practical as smallgroup members discuss together the extent to which they are seeking to live out every arena of life in a way that makes much of God before a fallen world.

### ***The cross of Jesus***

As smallgroup members help one another deal with sin, they have the perfect opportunity to preach the gospel, or the cross of Jesus to one another. If conviction of sin is needed, smallgroup members do not want it to come any other way but in the shadow of the cross. If the weight of the guilt of sin becomes too much for a smallgroup member to bear, the only message of hope for that smallgroup member is the cross of Jesus. If victory over sin is being experienced, rejoicing over God's grace will certainly travel through the cross because it was the power of the cross that purchased that and all victories over sin. God could not be glorified more as smallgroup members seek to apply the cross of Jesus again and again to one another's lives.

### ***Life-transformation by the Spirit***

The intimate setting in smallgroups provides members the opportunity to live life more closely and transparently with one another. Their common love for and focus on the cross will inevitably lead to life-transformation. In the smallgroup they can enter into one another's

encouragements and discouragements in the Christian life. The members can provide specific care and consistent accountability for one another as they seek to live life under the grace of God in the cross of His Son.

Questions to consider regarding the glory of God, the cross of Jesus, and transformation of life by the Holy Spirit:

- Q: Is your desire to be in a smallgroup to glorify God with your fellowship?
- Q: As you consider attending your smallgroup, how can you serve and contribute to the ultimate end of your fellowship together to glorify God?
- Q: How will God be seen to be more weighty and impressive because of your time together in small group?
- Q: Are you coming to smallgroup tonight prepared to see God's glory in your trials and joys in a new way? With an eagerness to glorify Him better in your life?
- Q: Are you eager to solicit from your fellow smallgroup members biblical strategies for glorifying God better in your thoughts, words, attitudes, deeds, desires and relationships?
- Q: Does your attitude toward your smallgroup glorify God?
- Q: In your conversations in smallgroup, is your aim to magnify God and not yourself?
- Q: As you prepare your heart for smallgroup, are you eager and prepared to bring the cross of Jesus to bear on every conversation, relationship, joy or trial?
- Q: How are you planning to make the cross of Jesus more visible and central to others in your smallgroup?
- Q: Are you eager to solicit from your fellow smallgroup members strategies for seeing the cross more clearly in your own life?
- Q: Does your attitude toward your smallgroup need a fresh dose of the cross of Jesus Christ?
- Q: Is your desire to be in a smallgroup to see not only your own life be transformed by the Spirit of God, but to contribute to the transformation of others by the Spirit's help?
- Q: As you prepare for smallgroup, how will you strive to put emphasis on life-transformation in your time together?
- Q: Are you coming to smallgroup tonight eager to hear from your fellow smallgroup members concerning where you need more life-transformation by the Spirit?
- Q: In your conversations with others in you smallgroup, how do you intend to draw the conversations toward life-change?

### The GOSPEL PURPOSE of Grace Bible Church and smallgroups:



**Drawing in, building up, and sending out.**

This biblical vision does not lead smallgroup members into a static, sheltered life away from this world. Rather, it purposefully leads the smallgroup member into the lives of those around him with the gospel mission of Jesus Christ.

The glory of God in the cross of His Son for the transformed life the Spirit gives, is what God is using to draw sinners to Himself, to build them up in His gospel mission, in order to send them out in the mission of the gospel. Put another way, to be concerned for the glory of God, the cross of Jesus Christ, and life-transformation by the Spirit but NOT be concerned for the mission of the gospel in the world is impossible according to Scripture.

***Drawing in***

For the man or woman who is being drawn to Christ by God, the smallgroup is a crucial setting to be in. Here, in that group, the one being drawn by God to Jesus sees the gospel alive and powerful in the lives of the smallgroup members. The glory of God and a God-glorifying life is in vivid color before him as well! And over time, the one being drawn by God more fully into the body of Christ will be able to see the Spirit's life-transforming power at work in smallgroup members. If done carefully and thoughtfully, smallgroups can be an ideal place for the drawing work of God in the gospel.

***Building up***

The building up (or edification) of the Christian needs a conducive environment. Smallgroups provide that environment as they give members the platform to implement the "one another's" together which strengthen the members in the gospel. God has determined that spiritual maturity comes only through life lived on life in the body of Christ. As smallgroups fix their purpose on building one another up, they will find themselves sent into wider and deeper spheres of gospel ministry.

***Sending out***

Smallgroups can help each member find the encouragement, equipping or accountability needed as he or she lives as a sent one for Christ in the place God has placed him or her. Study of God's word, prayer, encouragement in the difficulties of living for Christ, admonishment for neglecting to live purposefully with the gospel before the lost should all be regular features of smallgroup ministry. The entire smallgroup should also step out into the community as sent ones for the gospel.

As each member of a smallgroup is to draw in, build up, and send out, the smallgroup can uniquely pool the collective gifts of the members. Functioning as a part of the body (or a team), each member complements the others so that drawing in, building up, and sending out is accomplished in ways that an individual could never do. As a group, one member does not have to carry the whole weight of the gospel mission. God saves individuals and yet accomplishes His mission with a body, the Church.

Questions to consider regarding the drawing in, building up and sending out of disciples of Jesus Christ:

- Q: How is your smallgroup contributing to God's work of drawing you more fully into faith in Christ and the body of Christ?
- Q: Are you prepared to help others be drawn closer to Christ and more fully into the body of Christ in your smallgroup tonight?
- Q: In what ways do you need to rely on your smallgroup to better equip you to participate in God's drawing in ministry?
- Q: In your sphere of influence, do you see God using you to draw someone to faith in Christ?
- Q: Can your smallgroup help someone in your sphere of influence be drawn more fully into the body of Christ? How so?
- Q: How is your smallgroup helping you to become more built up in Jesus Christ? Are you relying on your smallgroup as you should to become more mature in your faith?
- Q: Are you prepared to help others be built up in Christ in your smallgroup?
- Q: Specifically, how is your smallgroup helping you be built up in your sanctification process? How are you helping others with their sanctification?
- Q: Specifically, how is your smallgroup helping you be built up in your effectiveness with the mission of the gospel in the world? How are you helping others with their maturity in the mission of the gospel?
- Q: Are you rehearsing through the "one anothers" of Scripture so you can more specifically and intentionally practice these in the lives of those in your smallgroup, thereby helping them be built up (see list on page 7)?
- Q: In what ways is your smallgroup helping you live as a sent one for Jesus Christ where He has placed you?
- Q: In what ways are you helping those in your smallgroup see themselves as "sent ones" for Jesus?
- Q: Has your smallgroup been considering itself as a "sending base" for the gospel? How can you help it become more of a training base that effectively sends disciples of Christ out into the gospel mission?

Q: Do you have any helpful ideas or strategies that might help your smallgroup serve effectively with the gospel in your community?

Q: Are there "sent ones" from GBC, serving in the gospel mission in far away places that your smallgroup might adopt and encourage? How can you support them in prayer?

Finances?

Q: How does the size of your group currently affect its ability to equip one another to live as sent ones?

Q: What do you think about the idea of losing members of your smallgroup to be sent out to start a new one? What do you think about you leaving your current smallgroup to help form a new one?

### **Smallgroup involvement is expected of all in GBC.**

In light of everything laid out relating to Grace Bible Church's view on the importance of smallgroups, **smallgroups should not be seen as a season of life but a way of life for the Christian.** Smallgroups are not something to be done one year and skipped the next. When would we ever graduate from our need for this kind of fellowship, ministry as the church, and shepherding elder care?

It would have been odd for a Christian in the New Testament to be separated from fellowship. The elders want to strive for the only thing that the New Testament knows, that every Christian would be intimately involved in gospel centered fellowship, ministry, and community life.

It is the elders' desire that 100% of the attendees and members of Grace Bible Church become part of a smallgroup. The elders are eager to help each and every attender and member of GBC find the best smallgroup for them because of what is at stake: The blessings, protection, and joy of being part of the church are too big a treasure to miss.