

What is a “Smallgroup” at Grace Bible Church?

Part 1

A “smallgroup”

*is an interdependent subset of GBC
which gathers together regularly
to live out the vision and purpose of GBC.*

*The elder-connected smallgroup leader
extends the elders’ pastoral care
to each member of the smallgroup.*

What’s up with the spelling (“smallgroup”)?

So, just what is a smallgroup?

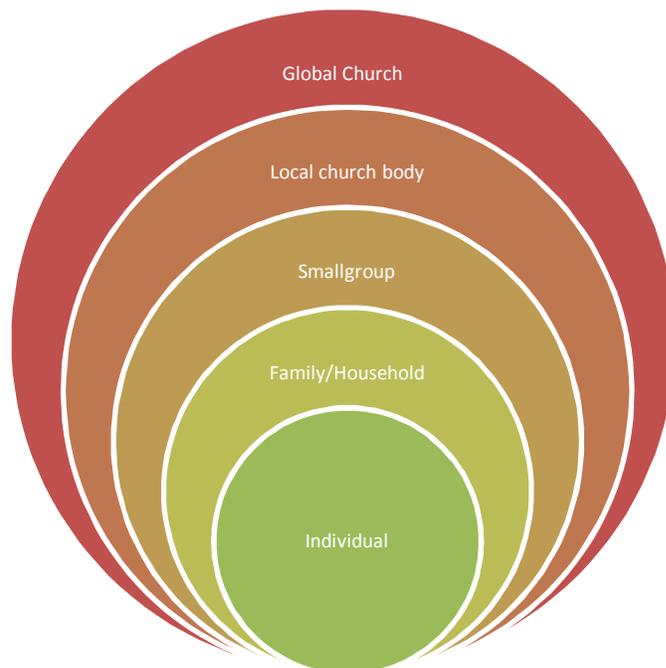
Can a smallgroup get too big or too small?

Part 2

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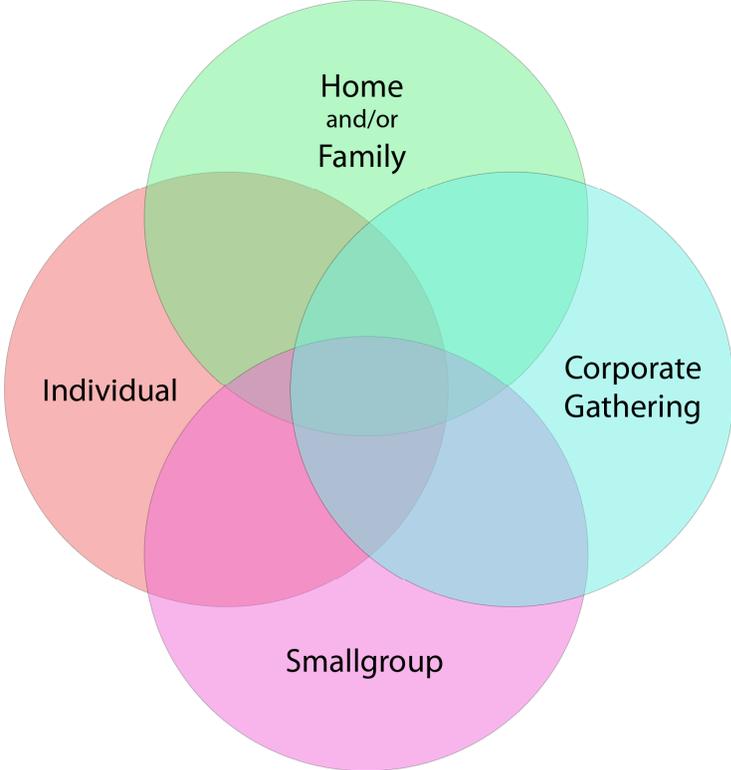
What do we mean by “subset?”



What about families and smallgroups?

What about geographic location and smallgroups?

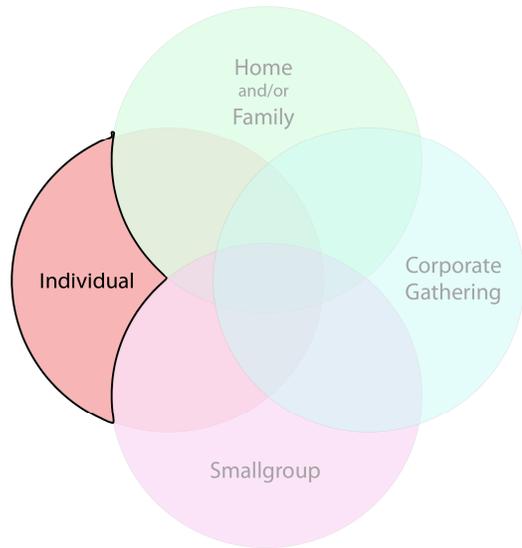
Should we all be the same?



An example of how the interdependent subsets of GBC function in relation to one another:

1. Steve alone.

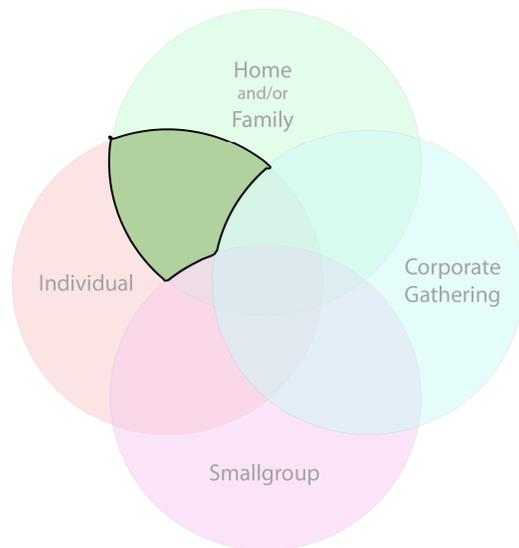
Strength:



Weaknesses:

2. Steve's household.

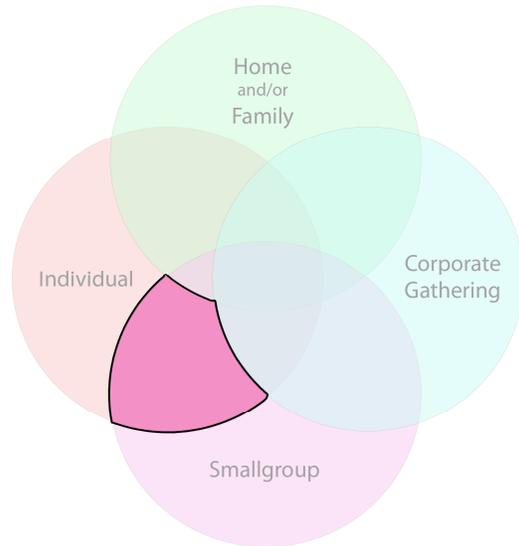
Strength:



Weakness:

3. Steve's smallgroup.

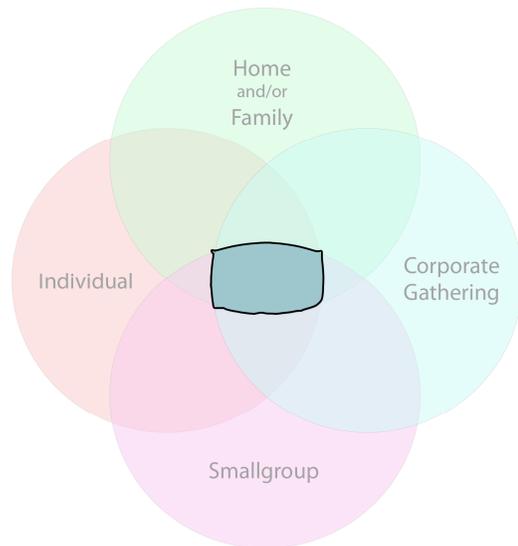
Strengths:



Weaknesses:

4. Steve's church.

Strengths:



Weaknesses:

In summary:

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1. The regular meeting of the smallgroup.

Consider Hebrews 10:23-25.

Concerning the one who willingly forsakes this kind of regular 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. Small groups 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).

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)

John Loftness defines fellowship as:

“Participating together in the life and truth that is made possible by the Holy Spirit because of our union with Christ.”

Fellowship is a uniquely Christian experience.

C.J. Mahaney offers a helpful distinction between fellowshiping and social activities:

“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).

With all of this in mind, what then does a smallgroup gathering actually look like? (Observations and wisdom from Acts 2:42-47)

“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. . . . And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.” (Acts 2:42, 45)

The early church’s fellowship was marked by the teaching of God’s word (Acts 2:42).

How can a smallgroup make the word of God central in its fellowship?

- The smallgroup could study a book of the Bible
- Review Sunday’s sermon (see the appendix for a suggested format for doing so)
- Read books from our book table (see appendix for suggested resources for smallgroups; or request another resource for elder approval)
- Share personal interaction with the Scripture and its application to life
- Encourage one another to daily be in God’s word
- Etc.

The early church's fellowship inspired praise-filled prayer (Acts 2:42, 47).

The early church's fellowship was centered on Christ and His cross (Acts 2:42, 46).

Devotion to Christ and Him crucified can take expression in a number of ways in smallgroups:

- Taking the Lord's Supper together
- Singing songs which focus on Christ and Him crucified
- Reviewing regularly the gospel and its application to lives daily
- Remembering God's grace at the cross first and most when confessing or confronting sin, and when strategizing for greater obedience to Jesus
- Looking for the gospel in all of Scripture as you study

The early church's fellowship produced generous, self-giving commitment to one another (Acts 2:44-46).

The early church's fellowship was an effective tool to draw others to Christ (Acts 2:47).

How might a smallgroup be designed so that many (if not all) of its members can perform the "one anothers" during the meeting?

- Have smallgroup gatherings in homes so that hospitality (1 Pt 4:9) can be shown to one another.
- Eat a meal so that we can wait for one another (1 Cor 11:33) and serve one another (Gal 5:13)
- Confess sin to one another (James 5:16) so that we can restore one another, encourage one another and bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:2).
- Share what God is teaching different members from His word to build up one another (1 Th 5:11) and to teach one another (Co 3:16).
- There are many more ways! Each smallgroup leader should regularly evaluate his or her smallgroup and pursue additional "one another" opportunities.

Core Questions for the regular smallgroup meeting.

Ed Welch has some helpful words for us at this point:

“Somehow God must be bigger than our own desires—so big that we worship Him alone. Here. . . is the basic idea: take ten looks at the true God for every one at ourselves. This biblical rhythm must become second nature” (*Addictions*, 143).

The “Core Questions”

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 prayers are you currently asking God to answer?
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 to return to Him? In light of the grace realities in the gospel, what does your repentance toward God need to look like?

2. Smaller subsets of the smallgroup meeting throughout the week.

Smallgroup leaders should encourage the members of the smallgroup to view their participation in the smallgroup as extending far beyond the bounds of the regular meeting.

Part 4

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GBC’s Biblical Vision: *The glory of God in the cross of His Son which results in life-transformation by the Spirit.*

What do we want smallgroup members to set their sights on in their smallgroup?

The glory of God...

The cross of Christ...

Life-transformation by the Spirit...

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?

GBC's Gospel Purpose: Our biblical vision should lead us to be very purposeful with the gospel to draw in the lost in order to build up the saints so that they live as sent ones for Christ.

What do we hope our biblical vision will lead smallgroup members to do?

Drawing in...

Building up...

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 8)?

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? Other needs?

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?

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The role of the elder-connected smallgroup leader compared to the elders’ task. Consider these passages: Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2-3; Hebrews 13:17.

What’s the point of elders having regular meetings with smallgroup leaders?

The purpose of this is two-fold. 1.) The smallgroup leader has an elder over him providing shepherding care to foster growth in godliness and effectiveness in leadership, and 2.) Every member of the flock is now one person removed from their pastor-elders via the smallgroup leader.

More reasons for the elder-smallgroup leader meeting:

- To grow the relationship between the smallgroup leader and elder.
- To evaluate the smallgroup leader.
- To evaluate the smallgroup leader’s shepherding care of the smallgroup.
- To review the sheep in the smallgroup.
- To provide guidance on the smallgroup leader’s involvement and leadership of the smallgroup.
- To encourage and equip the smallgroup leader.

Smallgroup-leader training day each year. The primary goals of this training day are:

- To present a single, unified vision for smallgroups regularly before the smallgroup leaders.
- To provide smallgroup leaders a platform to hear from other smallgroup leaders (what is working/encouraging and what is not working/discouraging, etc.).
- To foster growth in friendship among smallgroup leaders and networking among smallgroups.
- To highlight the relationship between individual smallgroups and the corporate body.

How does someone become a smallgroup leader at GBC? New smallgroup leaders at GBC will be identified as those individuals evidencing shepherding ability and shepherding qualifications. **More specifically, the person:**

- Should display at a minimum, proficiency and progress in shepherding his/her heart, home and ministry in the church.
- Needs to demonstrate ability to handle accurately the Bible and teach it with a degree of clarity.
- Must have completed at least one year of BUILD (or an elder approved substitute within the body – thinking of the gals here in particular!).
- Must have a growing awareness of the role of the smallgroup in relationship to the church body as a whole.
- Must have the recommendation from a smallgroup leader.
- Must complete an application for smallgroup leader.
- Must have an elder interview and elder approval (likely by the elder overseeing the previous smallgroup the prospective leader came from).
- Must have at least 3 months of co-leading alongside another smallgroup leader.
- Must be a member of GBC.

How long would we like a smallgroup leader to serve as such?

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Can you think of good reason to NOT become involved in a smallgroup?

Smallgroup Leader and Elder Evaluation Guide

Please go to www.gracetempe.org/sg/leader and fill in the items with an asterisk there.

The Leader

1. How are you caring for your own heart with the Word of God? What are you doing well? What concerns do you have?
2. How are you caring for your household with the Word of God? What are you doing well? What concerns do you have?
3. If you are married, comment on your wife's leadership and care for the women in your smallgroup.
4. Do you foresee any reason in the next year, due to season of life or otherwise, that you will need to step down from your role as a smallgroup leader?
5. Elder qualifications (if you are married have her answer the following as well). The elder qualifications can be found in 1 Timothy 3:2-7 & Titus 1:6-9. For more guidance in this area, consult the elder qualification evaluation questionnaire.
 - a. Which two elder qualifications would you identify as strengths or as areas in which you have recently grown?
 - b. Which two elder qualifications do you identify as areas in which you need to grow the most?

The People

1. How many people are in your smallgroup? Please list their names: *
2. Who has joined your group recently? Has anybody left? Do you know where they are?
3. What are the highlights of how you have seen God at work in individuals in your group? (Be specific)
4. What are some shepherding concerns or challenges you have been facing (be specific, especially regarding unrepentant sin)?
5. What elder help do you need?
6. Who have you identified as a potential co-leader? What have you seen that has made you think this way?

The Meeting

1. When and where does your group meet?*
2. Describe how your current meetings look? What is your format? What are you studying? *
3. In what specific ways do you structure your meeting in order to facilitate and model the following fellowship priorities?
 - a. Fellowship that is marked by the Word of God
 - b. Fellowship that inspires prayer
 - c. Fellowship that is Christ- and cross-centered
 - d. Fellowship that produces generous, self-giving commitment to one another
 - e. Fellowship that draws nonbelievers to Christ?
4. What is going well that should be continued?
5. What do you need to strengthen and/or change?
6. Are you planning on changing any of the group dynamics (format, study topic, meeting time/day etc) in the upcoming months?

Frequently asked Questions

Q1: Should the members of a family be in the same smallgroup together?

Q2: Should I invite non-believers to my regular smallgroup meeting?

Q3: Should someone who attends another church become a consistent member of my regular smallgroup meeting?

Q4: Should someone who doesn't attend church at all become a consistent member of my regular smallgroup meeting?

Q5: Are the elders not favorable of "season of life" smallgroups? (single guys, single girls, married, etc.)

Q6: What is a good way to go over Sunday's sermon with my smallgroup?

- Consider using the following to direct smallgroup discussion around Sunday's sermon.
 1. Restate the main point of the passage studied (the sentence that was given to answer "What is this passage all about?"). Show how and where that sentence is tied to the passage (or if it isn't!). Try to identify what the main point is about God in the passage.
 2. Smallgroup leader: Divide Sunday's passage into specific verses (follow the outline given or do one verse at a time). Have smallgroup members pick one of the section of verses and tell the small group what it means. Do not simply define one word after another. Talk about what the verse is saying and how it is connected to the verses around it.
 3. Write out one specific application from the passage that: a) you personally want to practice by God's grace; b) you think is especially appropriate for your smallgroup; c) you think GBC can grow in as a church body; d) you think you, your smallgroup, or the church has been doing well by God's grace.
 4. Write down one question that you have from the passage or sermon that you would like to get answered in your smallgroup discussion.
- You can ask each smallgroup member to pick just one of the 4 above each week, or you can assign 1-4 to each member of your smallgroup each week. Be creative with it and come up with even better assignments for you smallgroup.

Resources for Smallgroups

Bridges, J. *The Gospel for Real Life.*

_____. *Transforming Grace.*

_____. *Respectable Sins.*

Carson, D. *Call to Spiritual Reformation.*

_____. *For the Love of God (Vols. 1, 2).*

_____. *The Cross and the Christian Ministry.*

Clotfelter, D. *Sinner in the Hands of a Good God.*

Dever, M. *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism.*

_____. *The Message of the OT.*

_____. *The Message of the NT.*

Harvey, D. *When Sinners Say 'I Do'.*

MacArthur, J. (Grace Community Church) *Fundamentals of the Faith.*

Mahaney, C.J. *Humility.*

_____. *Why Small Groups?*

Pink, A.W. *The Attributes of God.*

Piper, J. *Don't Waste Your Life.*

Sande, K. *The Peacemaker.*

Tripp, P. *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands.*

_____. *War of Words.*

Tripp, T. *Shepherding a Child's Heart.*

_____. *Instructing a Child's Heart.*

Vincent, M. *The Gospel Primer.*

Whitney, D. *10 Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Condition.*

_____. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life.*