



# ETERNAL CHURCH

## Small Group Participant Guide

*The following material is taken from Eternal's **Small Group Leader Handbook**, and it is designed to be a quick reference for group members in reviewing the purpose, goals, and expectations for Small Groups at Eternal.*

*For more questions about Small Groups, please contact:*

*Andy Crissinger, Minister of Discipleship & Community*  
[andy@eternalchurch.net](mailto:andy@eternalchurch.net)

*Wendy Chrisley, Women's Ministry Coordinator*  
[wendy@eternalchurch.net](mailto:wendy@eternalchurch.net)

# Eternal Small Groups

## *Purpose and Goals*

1. To build loving, supporting, Christian community by investing in relationships with God and each other.

**Acts 2:42-47** *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

2. To disciple each other, encouraging our fellow group members to grow in their personal relationships with Christ, gain a deeper love for and knowledge of scripture, discover their spiritual gifts, develop a heart for people (including unbelievers), and provide an opportunity for confession and accountability.

**Hebrews 10:24-25** *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

**Matthew 28:19-20** *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*

**James 5:16** *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*

3. To help keep our growing church "small" by providing opportunities for us to pray together, share life together, and bear one another's burdens.

**Galatians 6:2** *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*

4. To give members a context in which they can serve the Body of Christ in a variety of ways (e.g. CARE projects, community outreach, etc.)

**Matthew 25:40** *'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'*

Please Note: Eternal church membership is **not required** to join a small group. Everyone is welcome to attend!

# The Functioning Small Group<sup>1</sup>

## Four Components central to a healthy small group:

- 1) Bible Study
- 2) Fellowship, Accountability and Care
- 3) Prayer
- 4) Missional Focus

**Bible Study-** receive the Word as God-breathed and authoritative; choose a bible study that spurs each individual in your group to deepen his/her understanding and beliefs.

- The Bible is essential for life transformation; serious, focused study is crucial.
- Include and ask for personal, specific application and prayerful responses to the Scripture you are studying

**Fellowship, Accountability, and Care-** by sharing lessons learned about God and how He is at work; devote time to hearing the genuine state of each other's heart.

- At the core of genuine fellowship is sharing with others what God has shown you.
- Accountability is not merely targeting one another's sins; it is even more tracking down evidences of grace in one another.
- Pursue ministry for those inside your group, striving to meet their physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

**Prayer-** far from a minor add-on, prayer is an essential part of small group meetings. Reserve adequate time each week to lift up one another and the world.

**Missional Focus-** to multiply joy, encourage your small group to be others oriented in nature.

- Spend time praying for the "empty chair" and strive for a welcoming environment.
- Pray that the Lord expands Eternal's Small Group Ministry through **Invitation, Multiplication, New Leaders** and **Improved Quality**.
- Pursue ministry towards those outside your group (C.A.R.E. supported ministries like The Crisis Pregnancy Center or Gary's Circle Neighborhood, the elderly, those with disabilities, the homeless, etc.)
- A great prayer request: "Lord, reveal to us how you want to use us to minister to your church and our community this week/semester/year.

---

<sup>1</sup>Materials from this section have been adapted from David Livingston, *Bethlehem Baptist Church Shepherd's Training*.

# Expectations for SG Leaders and Participants

## LEADERS

The following are some spiritual and practical guidelines for **Small Group Leaders** at Eternal. Please take time on a periodic basis to review these in honest self-analysis. (*A more thorough discussion of biblical qualifications for leadership can be found in the Eternal Small Group Leader Handbook.*)

- Must be members of Eternal Church (or actively pursuing membership).
- Must be spiritually mature, demonstrating the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).
- Must be emotionally stable in order to be able to lead with consistency, patience, and grace (no unresolved anger, bitterness, etc.).
- Must have a desire to build into new leaders to encourage group multiplication.
- Must have a love for people and a desire to invest in the lives of group members.
- Willingness and ability to facilitate a focused discussion and prayer time.
- Must be committed to supporting the Purpose/Goals for Small Groups and the overall Mission of Eternal Church.
- Willingness to commit to a minimum amount of time (i.e. a semester or a year) in order to ensure continuity among groups.
- Must make every effort to attend all training and organizational meetings scheduled by Eternal Leadership.
- Must meet/train with Small Group Coordinator prior to leading a group.

## PARTICIPANTS

The following are the basic expectations for **participants** who attend Eternal Church Small Groups.

- A commitment to faithful attendance (as much as is within your control) and making the group a priority in your life. The heart of this expectation is not legalism or a desire to control behavior, but rather to promote stability in relationships. Participants are always free, when seasons of life or schedules require, to stop attending one group and join another.
- A commitment to protecting the confidentiality of the group. Participants must not talk outside of their groups about what is shared in confidence within them.
- A willingness to support the leadership of the SG Leader (and by extension, the leadership of Eternal Church) and pursue the health and well-being of the group.
- A readiness to share one's life with others and take a loving interest in their lives as well.
- A willingness to welcome newcomers to the group and embrace occasional multiplication for the sake of reaching those who are in need of community.
- A commitment to do one's best to come prepared for the group meeting (e.g. completing reading, thinking and praying about scripture passage, etc.)
- A commitment to pray for the members of the group and the leader.