



# GROWTHGROUPS

## Growth Group Leader Training

### Introduction

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**Crosspointe Mission Statement** – Helping others Find and Follow Jesus.

**Crosspointe Strategy**- Upward in Worship, Inward in Growth, Outward in Compassion, Forward in Influence

**Purpose of Growth Groups:** Growth Groups exist to provide a safe place to meet new people, make friends, grow in your faith and have fun.

John 10:10 – Jesus says, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it *more abundantly*.”

In John 13:34-35, Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples.”

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Leading a growth group will change your life in several ways:

- 1) Abundant life is not necessarily always better life, but rather can signify having more life.
- 2) By leading a growth group, I believe that God will cause your heart to grow. Psalm 119:32, “I will run the course of Your commandments, for You shall enlarge my heart.”

- 3) You will learn more than you ever have before.

## **Five Marks of a Healthy Group**

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For our group to be healthy, we need to . . .

- 1) Focus on spiritual growth as a top priority.

*<sup>12</sup>to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup>until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Ephesians 4:12-13 (NIV)*

- 2) Accept one another in love just as Christ has accepted us.

*<sup>7</sup>Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. Romans 15:7 (NIV)*

- 3) Take care of one another in love without crossing over the line into parenting or taking inappropriate responsibility for solving the problems of others.

*<sup>34</sup>“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:34-35 (NIV)*

- 4) Treat each other with respect in both speech and action.

<sup>25</sup> Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. <sup>26</sup> "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup> and do not give the devil a foothold. <sup>28</sup> He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. <sup>29</sup> Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Ephesians 4:25-29 (NIV)

- 5) Keep our commitments to the group – including attendance, preparation and keeping confidences whenever requested. Honesty, purity and integrity should characterize the group.

<sup>1</sup> LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? <sup>2</sup> He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart . Psalm 15:1-2 (NIV)

## **How do effective Growth Groups Leaders build community?**

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1. Building relationships – model appropriate behavior; invest yourself in each person in your group; provide opportunities for personal interaction (worship?); remember studying the Bible provides us with knowledge - wisdom is putting that knowledge to work in our daily lives.
2. Being a listener – the group meeting is a conversation-interact-stop talking so much; ask questions to stimulate interaction.

3. Being vulnerable – let God peel back the layers of your life He wishes to share with your group. The more you are willing & able to communicate your weaknesses, the more your members will be enabled to share.

4. Being available – stay in contact with your individual group members in addition to the regular meetings; see #1.

5. Setting boundaries – if your feeling used-you probably are; we each need personal confidants with whom we may share openly and honestly; let the group know you are not their babysitter/driver/financial advisor/spiritual counselor – your are their friend in Christ.

### **Facilitating Life-Changing Discussions**

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1) Remember you are a facilitator more than a teacher...

The learning process is enhanced when people are fully engaged in the discussion. If you feel that you are doing most of the talking, try to help everyone get into the discussion by:

- Making good eye contact
- Ask direct questions to individuals by name in the group
- Ask open-ended questions
  - Closed questions produce “yes” and “no” or brief answer. Use sparingly or not at all.
  - Open questions encourage the sharing of ideas and information.
    - Use “what” and “how” questions.
    - Never use “why?” It is confrontational, judgmental, assumes right and wrong answer. It is past centered and puts people on the defensive.

## 2) Learn to listen actively...

- Be fully engaged and focused!
- Avoid distractions
- Don't interrupt
- Paraphrase what's said
- Listen and learn, and clarifying briefly as needed

<sup>19</sup> *My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. James 1:19 (NIV)*

<sup>13</sup> *He who answers before listening— that is his folly and his shame. Proverbs 18:13 (NIV)*

<sup>2</sup> *A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions. Proverbs 18:2 (NIV)*

## 3) Handling tangents...

Tangents are a part of facilitating a discussion, do your best to handle them. Listen to what your group has to say, just watch time and try to keep them on task.

Tip: Say things like, "That's a great story Suzy, why don't you tell the rest when we are done." Try to keep them focused on the subject of the discussion. Also, try to be positive with your responses to tangents. It's really easy to roll your eyes or get frustrated.

## 4) It takes time...

It will take your group some time to "get the flow." Don't worry. It takes time for groups to bond together. It could even take a few weeks for your group to go the way you want.

Tip: Be patient and don't get discouraged. Encourage your group to attend other events together.

5) Patience...

You don't just crank out Christ-like people. You don't just un-wrap your bag of ministry tricks and automatically bear fruit. Have patience with your group, as they are walking the path of life like you are. We all have blind spots in our spiritual growth that require a little more grace and patience.

Tip: Try to feed and care for them by pacing with them and then leading them toward Jesus. Let people think after you have asked a question or asked for sharing. Relax, don't fear silence.

6. Go with the flow...

Every person in your group is going to have different personalities and gifts. Go with it! Encourage each person individually, to "go with" what God gave them.

Tip: Don't try to turn them into clones of you or each other. Affirm their individual walks with Christ.

7. Don't stop with one person's answering or sharing...

Tip: Ask, "What else do you see?" or "What other ways are there?" or "Does anyone else have a different perspective?"

8. Don't struggle to get exactly what you think is the right answer...

Tip: Better to let a few questionable responses go by than to discourage people from talking. However, if it is a matter of basic truth or the answer is wide of your aim, say something like "That's an interesting point of view. Does anyone else have a thought about this?" Avoid leaving an impression of confusion. Rather, sum up briefly, "I appreciate your sharing. I guess my thoughts are ... because ..."

## 9. Acknowledge each person's answer...

Tip: Let each one know (verbally and nonverbally) that you are listening and that you appreciate the contribution. If it will help, ask clarifying questions: "Could you explain more?" Be natural in responding. If the idea is something new, simply say, "I hadn't seen that before. Thanks for pointing it out."

## 10. Try to have all included in group discussion...

Tip: If someone talks too much, a helpful comment is "Let's hear from someone who hasn't had a chance to comment yet." Strive for balanced participation.

## A Typical Growth Group Meeting

6:15 - 7:00 p.m.	Optional dinner and fellowship
7:00 - 7:15 p.m.	Opening ice-breaker or fun "get to know you" activity
7:15 - 7:25 p.m.	Opening prayer & optional worship
7:25 - 8:00 p.m.	Bible study/discussion
8:00 - 8:30 p.m.	Prayer, share and care
8:30 p.m.	Dismiss
8:30 p.m.	Optional dessert/hang out

## Planning Center Instructional Video

Please take the time to watch the following before our semester begins.



## [Planning Center University: Training Videos](#)

<https://www.planningcenter.com/university?wvideo=r6sgq9k1zw>

Look for the Groups Video, click “watch tutorial”

3:38: Helping members use Groups

9:31: Intro for Leaders

10:44: Add members to group

45:35: Take Attendance

We highly encourage you to download the “Church Center App” on your phone. You can find it by searching “Church Center App” in Google Playstore or Apple App Store.



Instruction Video for Church Center App- how to download and set up

[https://youtu.be/mPdK\\_dT2nVw](https://youtu.be/mPdK_dT2nVw)

This App will allow you to manage your group as well as provide a private online experience for group interaction.

\*Crosspointe does NOT use the giving module in this App.

Growth Group Leader Resources can be found at on your group page in the Church Center App. Look under the “resources” tab.



## Start Building Your Group

- Make sure you submit all of the info needed above in a timely manner so that we can put your group on our website. This will allow people to easily find your group with all the right info so that they can sign up online.
- Start personally inviting people to your group.
  - Post a link to your group on social media inviting people to join.
  - Call/Text/DM individuals asking them to join your group.
  - People to consider inviting to your group: someone who could help you lead, people at church that you click with, people that you serve with at church, people from work, neighbors, family, people who know God, people who DON'T YET know God.
  - *List 5 people you can invite to join your Growth Group:*
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- Follow-Up with the people who have signed up for your group.
  - Log into Planning Center to access your group.
    - Go to [groups.planningcenteronline.com](https://groups.planningcenteronline.com) and put your email in. You either have an account already and can enter your password, or request a password and Planning Center sends a quick code to set up a password.
    - If you need a guide to navigating Planning Center, you can check out the tutorial videos on [Crosspointe.com/gg](https://Crosspointe.com/gg).
    - You should be notified when people join your group or you can log in and look at your members anytime you would like to.
  - Follow up with everyone that signs up within 24-48 hours.
    - Following up with someone is more than a “one and done” attempt.
      - Email, text, and call before you consider someone connected with. Not everyone opens emails or answers phone calls but almost everyone opens text messages. Chances are it took a lot of courage to sign up for a group, so you can help take the fear out of

Growth Groups by giving that personal touch of connection.

- Take some time to look over [The Follow-Up Basics](#) on Crosspointe.com/gg to find sample emails, texts and phone calls.
- The day before your first meeting, individually contact each person who signed up for your group to remind them and invite them to your group.

Continue to send a weekly reminder text to your group throughout the season so that they don't forget about the group. That text could be just the push they need to show up that week.

## FAQ

- How many people are supposed to be in a group?
  - Growth Groups are groups of 8-15 people. We do this because we have found this is a great size for community to happen. When we build groups we aim at having 18 people sign up, knowing that not everyone comes all the time.
- How often do groups meet?
  - They meet weekly.
- Where do groups meet?
  - Either at church or in convenient locations throughout the community or online.
- How many Growth Group seasons do we have?
  - Growth Groups are separated into three distinct 3-month long semesters (Spring, Summer and Fall) that create clear and easy entry and exit points for the groups.
- How long is each season?
  - Each group lasts only 10-12 weeks.
- How do we promote Groups?
  - Each Growth Group semester is preceded by a Growth Group promotion month in which people sign up for the group of their choice online.
  - We promote Groups to the whole church and we ask you to invite people to join your group. Between a personal invite and the general promotion, our groups get filled.

- How can I invite someone to join my Growth Group? What's in it for them?
  - There are many ways to invite someone to join your growth group. Some people may be more interested in community while others might be more interested in growing in their faith. The truth is that both can happen in groups.
  - Three things to keep in mind.
    - Make it personal. There is a lot of power in a personal invite instead of a general invite to many people.
    - Tell them that if they come they might connect with other people and that this could be a place of community for them.
    - Tell them that if they come and are intentional this could grow their relationship with God.
- What about Childcare?
  - Get a reimbursement form. The church will reimburse every growth group for childcare. You must fill out a reimbursement form.
  - Each group is responsible for its own childcare.

If you hold your meeting time on Monday night during the school year, you can drop your children off at church between 6:15 p.m. - 8:15 p.m.

## FIRST NIGHT AGENDA

*For the full overview refer to the document linked above.*

- Allow people to arrive, talk, and snack – 15 min.
- Pray – 1 min.
- Have everyone introduce themselves and share what they do, where they are from, and why they decided to join the group – 7 min.
- Introductory game (examples: Have everyone tell 3 things about themselves - 2 being true and 1 being false. Have everyone else try to guess which one is false). – 7 min.
- Go over Why Growth Groups Matter. - 6
- Go Over BLESS cards
  - Begin with prayer
  - Listen to stories
  - Eat with people
  - Serve people's needs
  - Share Jesus
- Briefly introduce Your Study - Answer any questions – 15 minutes.
- Go over the Growth Group Covenant. Read through the Growth Group Covenant carefully with the group. Explain the points as you read each one. Answer any questions. If anyone tries to be difficult and disagreeable, offer to talk with them individually at the end of the meeting – 5-15 min.
- Explain and ask for volunteers for the different roles within the group: Fun Night Coordinator, Snack Coordinator, Prayer Coordinator, & Greeter – 5 minutes.
- Share prayer requests and pray together – 10 minutes.
- Talk and eat – 10 minutes.

Total Time: 80-90 minutes.

- Follow the 90 Minute Rule

- We limit Growth Groups to 90 minutes. This is a vital rule because when it comes to expectations, people need to know how long they should expect to be at the group. There may be some weeks where things are going so well you want to continue past 90 minutes. Although that week may be amazing, you'll find that people may stop coming after that week because they can't budget the several hours that group could be.
- Study: Get weekly questions and review ahead of time.
  - Pray that God gives you wisdom on how to lead with grace and truth.
  - You are not the spiritual sage in your group, but rather the guide and fellow sojourner. Your job is to help create space for others to talk and discover who God is and what He has to say about their lives.
  - Redirect softly and don't make a strong correction in the group. There may be times when someone in your group says something that is not biblically true. When that happens, help redirect the conversation in a way that points to the truth without directly saying "WRONG."
    - For example: Someone may say... "I love that the moment I got baptized, my sins were washed away and I was saved." We know that baptism doesn't save you, but is an outward demonstration of an inward decision. You feel compelled to make sure the other people in the group know the truth on this topic. You could say something like this... "Thank you for sharing! What I love about baptism is that it is an outward demonstration of an inward commitment. I remember when I asked Jesus to be my Lord and Savior (describe that moment) and I knew at that moment I was saved. Maybe you could read a verse like Romans 10:9.
- Read Your Bible & Pray
  - If you want to win as a group leader you must do these things. We don't meet together because WE have the answers. We meet together because HE (Jesus) has the answers. When people ask for your opinion, be careful to not share your opinion, but rather point them back to the Bible. If you don't know what the Bible says about something go to [gotquestions.org](http://gotquestions.org)
  - Communicating with God is a massive part of spiritual growth. We must set aside time to pray. The other other great thing about

this time is when you ask for prayer requests, this usually opens people up to sharing with the group what is going on in their life.

- Praying out loud might be scary for people, so be sensitive about who you ask to pray. While we don't want to put people on the spot, we recognize that if they move past the safe zone into the faith zone they could experience the joy of growth. So as you talk about prayer, take some time to help take the scary out of it.
- Connect with your coach. Before your head hits the pillow make sure you text your coach.
  - Cool stories, concerns
  - Take attendance in Planning Center.

## **Growth Group Sermon-Based Discussion Guide Description**

Each week's "Discussion Guide" will be available in two places: Guest Services and our website. We will always use three basic kinds of questions in every lesson. They however, may not always be in the same order. The Grow Group Leader will make sure that each section on the discussion guide is covered. They may choose not to discuss all the questions in a section or may choose to bring up different questions not provided in the discussion guide. The thought is to make the lesson fit the group as much as possible.

### **Conversation**

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These opening questions are designed to foster relationship building and allow group members to get to know each other. These questions will not be too deep the first few weeks in the session. There are no right or wrong answers to promote safety in sharing. These questions may or may not relate to the sermon itself but will help everyone feel heard, understood and valued. *(2-3 questions only)*

### **Consideration**

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These questions are designed to get group members into the Bible. We do not want to restrict the study to passages that were explicitly studied in the sermon. To do so will quickly bore those who have been Christians for any length of time. These passages can be everything from Old Testament case studies illustrating the sermon topic to parallel passages that were briefly referred to (or not even mentioned) in the message. They can deal with all of the points and topics or they can zero in on just one point or topic from the message. They can expand or even contrast what was said. *(5-7 questions only)*

### **Connection**

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These questions relate to the actual points and applications of the previous weekend's sermon. They may deal with all of the main points and applications, some or just one particularly important point or principle. The idea is to make the connection between the study/sermon and real everyday life. *(2-3 questions only)*

## Example Discussion Guide

Don't Let Your Dreams Die! Even If You Live In A Dysfunctional Family.

Genesis 37:1-36

### Conversation

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1. What did you used to dream about as a child? Is this still the dream of your heart now? If not what is?
2. How would you define a dream? How does the definition change when applied to real life's callings or life pursuits?
3. Describe a time when those around you did not believe in the dream you have held onto? What did that make you feel like?

### Consideration

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Read Genesis 37:1-36

1. When we commit our lives to follow Jesus, we are adopted into God's forever family. Read Genesis 37:1-4 & 1 John 3:1, 4:9-10. What makes God's love different than the obvious mistake Jacob made with his sons? What was the result of Jacob's mistake?
2. Read Genesis 37:5-11. What, in your opinion, is the reason why God gave Joseph his dream related to his calling in his teen years?
3. What was Joseph's mistake with his brothers? How was the dream misunderstood?
4. Read Genesis 37:12-20. What was the main reason why Joseph's brothers did what they did to him? (James 3:14-16)
5. As Joseph was en-route to Egypt as a slave, what do you think might have been some of his thoughts? How can you relate with those feelings?

### Connection

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1. Read James 1:2-4. What is the main reason why God allows difficulties in our life?
2. As you think about your own history, in what ways can you chronicle events where you have seen God's fingerprints on your life?
3. What is the dream in your life? What has God called you to do? How are you responding to all that God is doing in your life to prepare you for the dream?



## **Skills Practice Exercises**

### **Practice #1: Active listening skills**

Find a partner near you. We are going to take five minutes for each person to talk about whatever they want to while the other person listens. The person listening cannot say a word. At the end of the five minutes, you will switch roles for a second five minutes. At the end of the second five minutes, each of you will recap/summarize what the other has said in a minute a piece.

How many of you found this difficult? What made this difficult? What was harder: listening or summarizing?

### **Practice # 2: Asking Powerful Questions**

It is important to build the skill of asking powerful, thought-provoking questions. This exercise will test your ability to ask open-ended questions. Find a partner and spend 10 minutes coaching each other. Each person will play the role of coach and person being coached. This will take a total of 20 minutes. The coach is only allowed to ask questions, nothing else. The burden of the conversation will rest on the person being coached. After the first ten minutes, you will switch roles.

What was the most difficult for you as a coach? Was the conversation helpful for you when you were being coached?