

New Horizon Group Guide

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INTRODUCTION TO GROUPS AND DISCIPLESHIP

Why does New Horizon Church exist?

We exist to bring new hope and purpose to every life.

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Everyone in our community is hoping in something: religious vigor, health, finances, children, careers, or alternative faiths. We are not without our false hopes in this world. We believe at New Horizon that the ultimate hope of every man, woman and child on earth is found in Jesus alone. We also believe that all people, regardless of race, gender, or ethnicity, are created by God and for God to love and serve. So, New Horizon longs to see everyone we encounter find their hope in Jesus and their purpose in God's mission.

WHY WE DO GROUPS

^qto equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up ^sthe body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to ^tthe unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, ^uto mature manhood, ⁵ to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, ^wtossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in ^xdeceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, ^yspeaking the truth in love, we are to ^zgrow up in every way into him who is ^athe head, into Christ, ¹⁶ ^bfrom whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, ^cwhen each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. Ephesians 4:12-16

We urge you, brothers and sisters, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. ¹⁵ See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek what is good for one another and for all people. ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:13-18

Simply defined, a group is a place where people come to be fully known and fully loved.

Therefore, Groups are the primary means of seeing the new community of God love one another well and observe rhythms of healthy family. The prime picture for leaders to grasp is family around a dinner table. It is where we converse, laugh, share our life, and learn to imitate what it means to be in the family of God.

RHYTHMS OF A HEALTHY GROUP

Every group has a leader, an apprentice, and family members. The group meets weekly in a leader's home, a host home, or a venue. We believe that every healthy group has anywhere from five to fifteen members. When groups come together to live the gospel, they devote themselves to one of our four rhythms: family, transformation, mission, and celebration. These rhythms help to reflect the gospel message to Love God and Love one another from the love received by Christ.

GATHER WEEKLY

We believe the best way to create culture is time, proximity, and commitment. Because it's so important we want our members to be consistent in showing up, joining in, and being real.

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Therefore, we have established healthy rhythms each group should practice each month to create an environment of care and community.

Your group should discern prayerfully how to organize your lives and create a plan to live together with intentionality. The best way to plan, and lead your community, is to think in months, then weeks. Plan out what the rhythms will look like each month with your group to engage all the rhythms of a healthy group.

Be specific. Be consistent. Be focused. Remember, the goal is to live the gospel as deep as possible in relationship with the five to fifteen people God has called your group to love and serve.

1. FAMILY – CULTIVATE TRUST

It's been said that "trust" is spelled T-I-M-E. With time, trust will grow. Trust produces fruit, such as love, vulnerability, honesty, confidence, etc. In our groups, we want to be intentional about providing time in our meetings for everyone to build trust with one another. Over time, if a group devotes itself to cultivating trust, the group will have fruitful discussion and build an irresistible culture to a world longing for genuine expressions of being fully known.

What does this look like?

- Intentional meetings dedicated solely to building family dynamics
- Sharing a meal together
- Telling life and salvation stories
- Going on trips together
- Playing games
- Being consistent each week
- Being prepared for discussion
- Meetings outside of the group time
- Caring for each other in crisis

2. TRANSFORMATION – PURSUE HEART CHANGE

God's desire for us all is that we'd be transformed into the image of Christ. Scripture calls us to pursue this transformation together by living out the gospel we have heard proclaimed as a church. This is not simply another bible study but a rhythm of encouraging life change through deeper discussion of what we heard in the context of community. Some week groups will discuss the passage that was preached in the Sunday gathering, other times we will learn practical core disciplines of the faith as a community. This rhythm will help grow us by becoming fully known driven to be fully loved.

What does this look like?

- Studying the word of God together
- Asking questions that get to the heart and mind

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- Invite to huddle if there presently is room
- Learning Core disciplines In community
- Praying for one another
- Strive to form the “one another” commands found in scripture.
- Speaking the truth in love
- Living out what we believe
- Accountability: Expect it, do it, then discuss it

3. MISSION – OFFER HOPE

Every believer is called to own the mission of God. Your mission is your sphere of influence! Take ownership over it and determine how your group will be a force of influence that offers the hope of the gospel through your irresistible community to every family and individual that calls your area home. Together we will see the lost found, peace restored, justice established, lives changed, and new churches planted.

So, at least once a month, our groups will be out in the harvest engaging the mission of God with the goal of proclaiming the gospel and seeing people come into relationship with Christ. Think who can my gospel community serve inside my local community. We know the best time to get to know people is by participating together in a project. It just brings people together. Do not forget this rhythm.

How can we offer hope?

- Examples are, but are not limited to:
 - Neighborhood cookout
 - Serving a local school through cleaning or caring for teachers/students/staff
 - Helping the elderly and under-resourced in your neighborhood
 - Having a fun outing and intentionally inviting your lost friend
 - Serving at Send Relief downtown

4. CELEBRATION – GIVE THANKS

Scripture is full of exhortations for the church to give thanks to God for the works that He does in their midst. One, is in Ephesians 5:20, “giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” As God works in our midst through the gospel of Jesus, we want to be intentional about setting aside time to gather and celebrate what God has done and is doing in our midst through worship, word, and praise.

What does this look like?

- Share stories of multiplication, heart change, life change, redemption, reconciliation
- Capture these stories and create a praise wall.
- Share testimonies of discipleship that are being established in your group members and community
- Celebrate the Formation of an apprentice in your group

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Here is an example of what a month of group could look like:

Rhythm	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5 (when occurs)
Family	Share a meal and have game night! Focus on trust and planning the month.			organic get together of a few people from group that were free for a movie. Invited specific friends to join that weren't involved yet.	
Transformation		Study the sermon aligned curriculum.	Study the sermon aligned curriculum.	Study the sermon aligned curriculum.	
Mission			On Tuesday, have a neighborhood cookout to invite our community to.		
Celebration					Have a Group Celebration Night to capture stories of life change.

TIPS FOR FAMILY

Intentional time in the group comes directly from time spent outside the group. We must be fully known before we can say we have been fully loved that leads to family. Realize this is a form of parenting. These desires of family will not come naturally to children and must be committed to by the leader for the long haul.

Proximity + Compassion + Frequency + Vulnerability + Generosity = Family Environment

- Proximity: How close in location are we
- Compassion: How well do we serve one another's needs and ask pointed questions
- Frequency: How often are we around each other in and out of group
- Vulnerability: How genuine are we with our hurts, habits, and hangups.
- Generosity: How open are you with your time, talents, and treasures

TIPS FOR TRANSFORMATION

DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS

Our team has developed questions that are based around the sermon from each Sunday morning gathering. This should help produce discussion and deeper knowledge of that week's passage for developing heart change. Everyone's part is simple: Join in. Be real. Seek change.

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Fruitful discussion first comes from Conversations + Word + The Spirit = Change. We might not see the most fruitful discussion until it feels like a trusted family. This takes time so do not give up.

A few tips to help the conversation are:

1. *Ask for clarification in a response.* This helps people keep talking and shows you want to listen.
2. *Ask what others in the group think about a response* to have further community dialogue. You do not have to be the one to answer everything.
3. *Do not answer your own question too soon.* Let people have time to think and sit in silence. They need time to process.
4. Encourage people when they give an answer. Example, "I love the thought. That's an interesting perspective."

PRACTICE AND CHALLENGE

Scripture is not solely meant to be known but something that transforms us. It happens when we take the knowledge we have heard and apply that truth to our lives in an experience.

- Example of this:

- How do you see that truth playing out in your life?
- What must we change to become more like this truth?
- Is there a way for our community to help you in this area?

As a Group think: How can I instill a healthy discipline worth imitating for my family to practice and learn to live by based on what we have heard? Remember, if groups are about parenting around a table, we need to show them observable practices to grow into.

TIPS FOR MISSIONS

LOCAL

We want to see each of our groups serving inside of their own circle of influence, which is the communities God has already providentially placed you. So, your mission should center around where you work, live, and play. We want every group to focus their efforts in these places. Therefore, our groups are location-based instead of life-stage or activity-based.

PEOPLE

Remember, our vision is to bring a new hope and purpose to every life. This is because God desires to redeem a people for Himself through the gospel message. As a result, our mission should focus on people.

Simple questions to gauge community impact are:

- Who needs the hope of Jesus around your group?
- Where are the unique needs within our community?
- Who is being mistreated, under resourced, or marginalized?
- What service organizations already exist in our community that we could partner with?

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- What are some passions our people share within our group?
- What does our community value that we could get involved in?
- Where people are, we want to be also.

IMPORTANCE

Not every missional activity is equal in importance. What makes an activity important is the hope and purpose it brings to the people we are serving. Your group's mission should aim to bring faith, hope, and love to the people in your community. Some examples are a simple cookout because your neighbors are starving for real relationships, serving in a local relief center for the under-resourced, or giving encouragement to local schools who are forgotten about.

CONSISTENT

Be consistent! Being a constant presence in people's lives is what makes the mission work. Authentic relationships grow from proximity and intentionality over time.

REPLICABLE

No one else can bring what your group members bring to the table and reach the people your group members are surrounded with. Make sure your group members are contributing to the missional activity brain storming, so they learn how to replicate this with their own group and family.

GROUP OWNERSHIP

A Group is a community of developing leaders. So, each member of a group should have an active role in the group. Passivity and movement do not mix well. Groups will never feel like family, or see lasting transformation, without everyone taking ownership and sharing responsibility. While these roles can rotate, here are some roles that will need ownership within the group.

*One of the greatest reasons for leader burn out is the lack of group ownership. Leaders tend to own every area of the group without even realizing it. If you have the thought "I wish others would own this. I feel tired every week. Why do I have to plan everything" You might need to re-asses if you have made a group centered around you instead of the community.

LEADER

A person who is responsible for the week-to-week teaching and shepherding of the group, and the formation of an apprentice.

** Teaching can also be a role that is delegated if you have gifted Individuals In your group who desire to teach.*

APPRENTICE

An apprentice is a future group leader within every group. Over time, the apprentice will take on more responsibility in the group in an effort to train to lead a group alone in the future. The apprentice will come alongside the leader to learn to lead a group through tasks the leaders give.

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**See your apprentice guide for specific milestones to work through with an apprentice like hospitality, teaching, caring, and mission.*

PRAYER

Someone in the group should be responsible for recording prayer requests and/or leading prayer time, as well as communicating these requests to the group each week.

HOSPITALITY

Look for someone in the group that flourishes and thrives in hospitality situations. Let him/her host your group or organize how to best entertain and invite others into your community.

COMMUNICATION

This person coordinates effective communication with the group for meeting times, important updates, missional priorities, dates, and times. He/she keeps the group on the same page.

CHILDCARE

Someone will need to coordinate childcare for your group based on your group's needs and how your group decides to handle childcare.

**See [Tips for Childcare](#) section below.*

MISSION

As a leader, you need someone else to help you coordinate and execute the details of your missional rhythm. Let them help you plan, coordinate, delegate and execute the mission.

TIPS FOR CHILDCARE

We know childcare is a common concern for many new groups. Due to the different situations and circumstances of every group, groups will have the option of choosing how they will handle childcare. Here are a few different examples:

HIRE A WORKER

As a group, invest together to hire a worker to come and watch your kids onsite. With everyone pitching in, it will not be that expensive to pay a childcare worker each week. Many younger singles, or retired families, in our church are looking for extra income and a way to grow relationships with the rest of the church community.

DEVELOP ROTATIONS

Develop a rotating schedule for members to handle childcare. This way, each member will only have to serve every one or two months. We recommend gender specific rotations to promote relational development even when you serve together. One-on-one time is beneficial for community care.

EVERYONE FOR THEMSELVES

Sometimes childcare can't be worked out easily together. It may be a challenge, but help each family develop their own strategy for their family.

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FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

This may be difficult depending on age but try having the children join in the group study.

GROUP CONNECTION

One other area we have seen be successful for some is a interconnected group rotation. This means having another group at New Horizon watch the kids one week while the other group meets and then switch the next week. (This lets groups have service and discussion monthly already built into their rhythms)

RESOURCES TO LEAD WELL:

As a group, there are several resources that are available to you on a regular basis. Our leadership at New Horizon wants you to feel confident and cared for by your coaches and pastors to effectively live the calling God has put on your life.

WEEKLY LESSONS

Each week, the New Horizon staff will produce lesson guides for the group meeting. This material is for every week, unless told otherwise, which includes sermon-aligned curriculum questions for discussion, upcoming announcements as a church, and tips as a leader to lead family and mission well, that will be sent out to each group member that Sunday to prepare beforehand.

COACHING

The number one reason for leader burn-out in ministry is the lack of coaches to help people grow in leadership. We have monthly coaching connection for every group leader that will be through whatever means the leader needs. Phone call, meet up, zoom. This is to be a time to gain advice and share your concerns.

LEADER TRAININGS

Our pastoral team seeks to produce excellent and relevant content for our leader's growth. Therefore, we plan to hold leader trainings 4 times a year to discuss and implement skills to lead well in a group. These trainings should be a priority for every leader and apprentice so that you can be cared for, equipped further, and voice your heart. These trainings are in August, October, January, and April.

CARE FORMS

At New Horizon we have elders that care for our members and want to be involved in your struggles, joys, and development. So, each month a care form will be sent out to you to fill out for the elders at new horizon to see. This form will include things like prayer requests, life changes coming, group dynamic issues, and evaluation. These are designed to be a source of encouragement and care for you to remain in the game.

MULTIPLICATION:

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When we live the gospel, we start to see people learn and respond to the gospel. One of the primary things we want to see out of our groups is the ability to multiply. We want to see every person reached with the gospel have a family to grow in the gospel. Keep these tips in front of your mind as a leader to set a clear vision of multiplication.

KEEP OPEN HANDS AND MINDS

Our natural inclination is to love our group and not want anything to change. This leads to an un-welcoming atmosphere. As we reach the lost, different personalities will emerge. Remember, without change nothing stays healthy. Stagnant water produces bacteria so we must always be a group about movement both individually and communally.

ROLES

Helping every believer grow in maturity to the gospel call is a core foundation of New Horizon Church. To help develop servants, make sure to give everyone a different role inside the group. As scripture affirms, the best leaders are the best servants. We must continually push people to take their next step in living out the gospel.

MULTIPLY

Grow your group and be willing to multiply when it gets big. Don't try to be the group that seats the most people but be the group who sends the most people out to start new groups. This requires us to go and reach out to our communities with the gospel message

TIMING & MOVEMENT

We know multiplication can be difficult when you have grown as a family. However, one way to have healthy multiplication is to do it in the right time for the right reason. Timing of multiplication should be when we have grown to big for our location and have reached enough people to stay behind for a new group. We do not want to create a new group at the expense of another. Second Is movement. This means where God has strategically placed your people to multiply to reach. Could It be a work group, neighborhood, college campus, region? Look for where God could be moving in your members lives and join Him.

APPRENTICE

Find someone in your group who might be a potential group leader. As a leader, invest in this person's life and find steps to send them through our pipeline. Investment in their life looks like inviting them into your life, showing them how to lead, and giving them opportunities to practice.

LEADER EXPECTATIONS:

The Group Leader is the lead missionary of the group. He/she keeps the group focused on mission, imitates the care we all desire to see, and helps others form community.

- Be a Christ follower
- An active member of New Horizon Church

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- Will constantly set the bar in his/her group by inviting newcomers to the group and to church
- Will reflect someone living the gospel by setting the example in their personal and group life. Specifically, Spiritual Disciplines, Care, and Missional living.
- Group will be a priority not a burden
- Will be responsible to encourage group members to join a huddle for further equipping
- Will respond and engage with his/her group coach to see his/her group continue to be effective and grow; and to be equipped further for better leadership
- Multiplication and the vision of New Horizon Groups is communicated consistently
- Will Actively help the group own the rhythms of Family and Mission.
- Will be continually seeking out of an apprentice

FAQ:

HOW OFTEN DO GROUPS GATHER?

Each group gathers once a week normally on Sunday night. This is an intentional time of planning, praying, and fellowship. Each week should implement a different rhythm of a healthy group mentioned above.

HOW LONG DOES EACH MEETING LAST?

The meeting time is up to each group to decide. However, we advise group meetings to last around a total of two hours. It includes one hour of dinner and fellowship and an extra hour for that week's rhythm.

WHERE DO I FIND THE CURRICULUM?

Our curriculum is found on New Horizon's website. Click the tab called *Groups*, then click the tab titled *leader resources*. You will find both huddle guides and group guides there.

ARE THERE BREAKS?

Many people wonder if our groups take a break in the summer or winter. We do realize that we need to take some time off to energize our families. Therefore, groups will take a break during June-September and December to focus on their families and other New Horizon gatherings. Please let your people know ahead of time that there will be Service-Oriented gatherings held monthly to continue having community. This is not a time to take a break from community, but from hosting weekly. Plan activities still that your group can partake in that promote rest and mission.

ARE KIDS AND STUDENTS WELCOME AT GROUP?

Absolutely. As much as possible, we encourage you to involve your kids and students to be involved with you on mission as your group serves in the community. The best way for your kids to learn about serving and the hope we offer in the gospel is to serve with you. It is a bonding experience for the whole family!

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HOW CAN I GAIN MORE PEOPLE IN OUR GROUP?

The number one way to gain more people in a group is by becoming involved in more people's lives to invite them in. Groups are about living the gospel out with one another and in our missional communities. As you meet people, invite them into your group. We will also have a place on Sundays for people to get connected with a location-based group. However, do not rely on this method as your primary means of outreach.

HOW DO WE HANDLE DISAGREEMENT?

We know when you gather any number of people into an intimate setting, tension will arise. It is normal. God calls us people of peace for a reason. (Matthew 5:9). Here are tips for conflict:

1. Glorify God. We seek primarily to see God glorified. That means stepping into the tension to seek reconciliation. Our actions should reflect His heart. Ask yourself does this behavior or action glorify God?
2. Get your Own Log Out: Before you address tension, you must address your own heart. We are all professional sinners, meaning, we all have a natural tendency to cover our own sin and justify our brokenness. Start by identifying your addition to the tension.
3. Gently Restore: Ask the question when addressing the tension, "how can I serve others by helping them in their tension." "How might I have misinterpreted what they said." Christian charity seems to be lost in social media, but not in family. Remember not all disagreements are hills to die on.
4. Go and Be Reconciled: One of the most notable traits of God is His mercy and forgiveness. God does not hold on to wrongs done but absorbed them Himself and moved to a place of favor. We must ask how we can demonstrate the forgiveness of God and encourage a solution between the parties.
5. Gain a Mediator: If the Parties involved have not sat down together to speak about the conflict. Start here. We must hear one another first and be heard second. Then, think through involving a group coach as a mediator is the conflict persists and needs fresh eyes to help resolve the tension.

MY FAMILY HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN A GROUP BUT IS INTERESTED IN SWITCHING TO ANOTHER. WHAT DO WE DO?

You are welcome to switch from one group to another at any time. We do, however, encourage you to think about why you might be switching. If there is difficulty, or drama involved? Remember that our groups are like a family, and families often experience hardship. However, they learn to work through it for a deeper love. Commitment is a core trait for us. An issue in one group could be an avenue God is wanting to transform in your life. Switching to another due to this could be running from God's gracious hand.