GROUND RULES FOR SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

SAFE GROUP: We will all do our part to create an environment where everyone can be real, open and honest with their struggles and victories.

CONFIDENTIALITY: What is said in the group stays in the group.

LISTEN: Let’s value one another during the discussions by really listening to what is being shared. Try to avoid thinking about how you are going to respond or what you are going to say next.

PAUSE: Allow a pause in conversation after someone shares to give the person sharing the chance to finish and the group the opportunity to consider what was just shared before responding.

SILENCE: It is important to allow silence in the group as it provides an opportunity for someone to share and for members in the group to process the topic or question being considered. Most importantly, it creates opportunities to listen to our Teacher, the Holy Spirit.

NO “CROSS TALK”: Be considerate of others as they are sharing. No side conversations.

NO FIXING: We are not here to fix each other. Jesus does that part. Give encouragement; speak truth and point to Jesus. Don’t try to solve or fix each other.

NO RESCUING: When people are sharing something deeply personal, there can be a tendency to try to make them feel better about themselves or the situation by providing immediate condolences. This will often cause them to stop sharing. Resist the temptation to rescue people.

SHARING: Be sensitive about the amount of time you share and how many times you share.

BE SELF-AWARE: Be self-aware of how you are personally effecting the environment through your words, actions and non-verbal communication.

USE “I” STATEMENTS: It’s easy to talk about the issues of others, but for our purposes, we want you to put yourself on the table. Try to use “I” statements rather than “them”, “the church”, “us”, “we”, etc.

CONFLICT: We will commit to resolve conflict biblically. When conflict or sin issues between group members arise, we want to make sure that we are honoring God and each other in the way we deal with these issues.

Material source: DiscipleShift 1 Participant Manual, The MET Church
Group Prayer Week: Coaching Guide

**Leading** [learn to facilitate spiritual growth in your group more effectively]

Many of our group leaders have attended and even led prayer meetings before. A group prayer meeting is not unlike other prayer meetings you may have attended. As the leader of this prayer meeting, you need to take time to prepare:

- Get the elements you need for the Lord’s Supper (grape juice, bread, cups).
- Read through the provided passages BEFORE the meeting starts and choose 1-2 passages that you feel will best encourage spiritual growth and discussion in your group.
- Consider whether or not you will end with a worship song. We recommend singing as a group in most settings, but you know the nature of your group best. There are a few ways to lead songs in group…
  1. Ask someone who is gifted on an instrument to lead a song most everyone knows
  2. Sing a song a cappella that is 1) easy to sing and 2) most everyone knows
  3. Chose a worship song on YouTube that has lyrics and music, play it on your TV, and invite everyone to sing along
- Finally, here are a few tips for you to note that will help with the flow of your prayer meeting…
  1. Sit in a circle. This helps the group keep track of whose turn it is to share/pray.
  2. As you take prayer needs, ask for volunteers who will remember the need and pray for the need later on. For example, when someone shares a need, follow it by saying, “Who can remember to pray for this need in a moment?” Remind them not to forget! Perhaps they may want to take notes?
  3. Be prepared to encourage the group to pray shorter prayers (1-3 sentences for each need). Note the lesson guide’s reference to Matthew 6:7-8.
  4. When the praying starts, simply open in prayer and then go around the circle to your right or left. Encourage each person to pray when it is their turn, or to tap the person next to them if they do not have a need they are praying specifically for.
- If you need help or have questions, just ask your coach!

Creative Idea: You could consider starting or closing the prayer time by inviting people to pray a sentence prayer of thankfulness to God.

**Developing** [grow as a disciple yourself]

Do you believe in the power of prayer? The answer to this question is not primarily found in your knowledge, but in your practice. Are you a person of prayer? When is the last time you have prayed for your group or the needs of people in your group? The pace is changing this summer, and this prayer meeting is our first step towards getting ready for it. Stop and pray for your group now, and ask the Lord to help you grow in the spiritual discipline of prayer! Then take the steps you need to take to be ready to lead this week’s meeting.
Group Prayer Week (May 29 – June 4)

Open with The Lord’s Supper
Welcome/Introductions
Ask the group to recall the guidelines for discussion that we use to create a safe environment

Group Leader: Chose 1-2 of the following passages before your group meeting and have someone from your group read the passages...

- Philippians 4:4-7
- 1 Thess. 5:16-19
- Romans 8:26-28
- Matthew 6:7-13
- 1 Timothy 2:1-6
- James 5:13-18
- Ephesians 6:16-18
- Psalms 34:15-18
- Mark 1:35
- Hebrews 4:14-16
- Acts 2:42-47

Consider asking one or more of these questions after you have read the passage as a group:

- What does this Scripture teach us about people? About God?
- What does this Scripture teach us about prayer?
- What is the Lord speaking to you through this passage as we prepare our hearts to pray?

Go around the circle and ask these each person the following two questions. As people share, ask for a volunteer who will remember the need(s) and pray for that person* (they may want to take notes)...

- What sin issue have you been battling? How can we pray for you?
- Do you have any other needs or burdens on your heart that you would like prayer for?

Ask for volunteers to lift up the following church wide prayer needs:

- Prayer for VBS week at Western Hills Church
- Prayer for our elders, deacons, and group leaders
- Prayer for God’s people at Western Hills to have hearts for His mission (make disciples)

Remind the group to keep their prayers SHORT: Read Matthew 6:7-8
Group leader opens in prayer
*Go around the circle and let each person pray for the prayer needs they volunteered to pray for
Group leader closes in prayer

Optional: Conclude with a worship song. If you have someone who can lead worship with an instrument, consider asking them to use their gift to lead in a closing song that most everyone knows.