

Small-Group Evaluations Assessment Pack



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Leader's Guide

How to use an "Assessment Pack" by SMALLGROUPS.COM in your regularly scheduled meetings

Welcome to SMALLGROUPS.COM. You've purchased an innovative resource that will help you train and direct the leaders of your small-groups ministry. The material comes from respected thinkers and church leaders, and has been selected by the editors of LEADERSHIP Resources at Christianity Today International.

An "Assessment Pack" is a collection of tools that can be used individually or with a leadership team. Each tool has been designed to help measure some dimension of small-group ministry. This specific pack is designed to measure the overall health of church-wide small-group ministries and individual small groups.

For example, to evaluate your church's ability to attract men into small groups, see "A Gathering of Men," by Patrick Morley (p. 7). To determine whether an individual group is unhealthy, use "When a Group Is Sick," by Rick Lowry (p. 11). Or to assess the effectiveness of your group's study time, see "Evaluating Group Discussions," by JoHannah Reardon (p. 13).

We hope you benefit from this resource as you evaluate the health of small groups in your church.

Need more material, or something on a specific topic? See our website at Smallgroups.com.

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Five Essentials for Small Group Health

How to keep your groups growing vibrantly

Jeremiah 30:17

As head of Touch Outreach Ministry, my job is to look at churches that have failed with small groups and to try to help them find health. As I've done that, I've seen the following principles of health emerge. To what degree does your church's small-group ministry demonstrate these principles?

Relationships Must Be a Priority

Building relationships is the number one priority of our small groups.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Members of our groups have regular contact with each other outside of group meetings.

Group members are consistently transparent with each other.

Group members love each other unconditionally.

Leaders Need Adequate Training

Our church does not give people a leadership role before they are properly trained.

As potential group leaders serve in ministry, we affirm their gifts and encourage them to become trained.

The leaders of our small-group ministry are familiar with the personal character of our group leaders.

Even if our church is in desperate need of new leaders, we do not loosen our leadership training criteria.

Everyone Should Be Viewed as a Leader

Our church affirms the spiritual gifts of each person involved in a small group.

Our groups provide an opportunity for all members to use and develop those gifts.

All group members are given the opportunity to lead in some aspect of the ministry.

Healthy Groups Divide and Multiply

Our small-group leaders are encouraged to identify potential new leaders within their groups.

The majority of our church's small groups experience some kind of change on a yearly basis.

Once a group multiplies, both new groups are encouraged to remain connected.



Groups Should Focus on Living Out the Bible

Our church’s small groups are not characterized solely as “Bible studies.”

People regularly experience the presence and power of Christ in their small-group gatherings.

Our small groups place a high value on applying biblical truths in everyday life.

Our church offers a variety of programs and ministries that provide and opportunity for group members to apply what they have learned.

—RANDALL NEIGHBOR; © LifeTogether.com. Visit LifeTogether.com to find resources that help your church transform communities through community.

Discuss:

1. Do I agree with the principles listed above? Why or why not?
2. Which of the five principles does our church demonstrate best?
3. Which of the five principles does our church need the most help in demonstrating?



Seven Warning Signs

Check for these seven areas where your small-group ministry can go sour.

Proverbs 28:13

When done correctly, small groups glorify God, help people grow, and build community. But ministries and groups can malfunction. Assess your groups for these seven warning signs. Make a check mark after each of the items you observe in your group ministry.

1. We don't know where we are aiming.

We have not identified what we want groups to accomplish for the entire church.

We look at our small group as an entity unto itself.

We don't know what our groups will accomplish in the life of individuals.

We have not articulated a vision of how group life can help people be fruitful.

2. We don't provide consistent leader training.

Our group leaders aren't sure if they're doing a good job.

Our leaders are lacking in confidence.

Our leaders are lacking in competence.

We plug new leaders into existing non-group specific training programs.

Our leadership training consists of giving people a book or tape.

3. We don't provide enough support for leaders.

Our group leaders are not growing in Christ.

We do not provide coaches or shepherds to help leaders with spiritual formation.

We do not affirm our leaders when they are doing things right.

4. Our practiced vision and values don't match the stated vision and values.

We don't have vision and mission statements.

We do have vision and mission statements, but do not align our behavior to them.

We do not assess whether our conduct matches our vision and mission statements.

5. We value busyness over production.

People are giving their time but not experiencing authentic community.

People are serving faithfully without producing transformation in themselves or those they serve.

The lives of leaders are more frantic and frenetic than the lives of those they serve.



6. We don't take time to celebrate.

We do not celebrate what God is doing in the lives of group leaders.

We don't celebrate what God is doing in the lives of group members.

We don't celebrate what God is doing in the entire small-group ministry.

7. We talk about prayer more than we pray.

No one in our church prays specifically and consistently for small groups.

Coaches don't pray for the leaders in their care.

Leaders don't pray for the members they serve.

—JACK DYSON, copyright © 2007 Christianity Today International/Buildingsmallgroups.com

Discuss:

1. Do any of the seven warning signs suggest a critical situation in our church or small-group ministry?
2. What steps will need to be taken, and who will need to be consulted, before changes can be implemented in our church's small-groups ministry?
3. What is the value of mission and vision statements? Should our small-group ministry have its own set of statements or should it align with the church's statements?



A Gathering of Men

An effective group ministry can be a great entry point for men into the life of the church.

Jeremiah 10:23

Church small groups can play a crucial role in helping men turn to Jesus Christ and break the chains of bondage to sin and broken relationships. Do our church small groups play their part in producing men who love God, provide spiritual leadership to their families, and serve the Lord? Use this assessment to help find out.

1. Begin with a clear understanding of your purpose for men in the church. Write down what you're trying to accomplish and why. If your purpose statement were "To equip the men of our church to be spiritual leaders," you probably wouldn't focus on service projects. Instead, you would focus on discipleship groups.

What are the purposes for men in our church? _____

What kinds of small groups will be in alignment with these purposes? _____

2. Find a leader. All you need to get started is one man with passion to reach other men. Put one of your best men on this—someone the other men respect. Don't let a man elect himself to leadership if the others think he is a loser.

Who are our potential leaders of ministry to men? _____

How are these potential leaders viewed by other men? _____

3. Build a leadership team. Invite a few other potential leaders to meet regularly for Bible study, prayer, and, eventually, strategic planning. Your leadership team must be more than a planning committee; it must be a living demonstration of what you want to reproduce.

Who are the members of our small-group leadership team? _____

How often do they meet and what do they discuss? _____

4. Create initial momentum. This is best accomplished by a momentum-building event built around a topic men are drawn to. Reach fringe men by providing what they need in the context of what they want. But the event itself is not the most important tactic here: it's men engaging other men that makes the difference.

What momentum-building events have we held? _____

Which topics would best reach the men of our church? _____

5. Capture momentum. Give event attendees a definite next step that they can visualize themselves taking. Don't shift them from first to fourth; offer them second gear—perhaps a small-group study that lasts three, four, maybe six weeks in length. Give men every chance to hook into something and sustain momentum.

What small group opportunities now exist for the men of our church? _____

How can men move from these opportunities to greater church involvement? _____

—PATRICK MORLEY; excerpted from our sister publication LEADERSHIP Journal, © 2001 Christianity Today International. For more articles like this, visit LeadershipJournal.net.

Discuss

1. What might a man see as the most compelling reason to join a small group?
2. Why is the phenomenon of men engaging other men more important than clever programming?
3. What kinds of needs or wants do the men in our church express? How could small groups help meet these needs?



A Big-Picture Assessment

Take a look at your group's leadership, soul life, and relationship to the whole church.

3 John 2–4

Small-group health gets evaluated from very different perspectives, depending on your role in ministry. Because of these different perspectives, there is a need to do a broad diagnosis of small-group health. Take this assessment and give yourself and your groups a letter grade (from A to F).

Grade **The Group Leader's Heart**

- _____ I actively model a Christ-centered devotional lifestyle in my relationships to God, my spouse, and my family.
- _____ community.
- _____ I pray daily for those in my sphere of influence.

The Life and Ministry of the Group

- _____ We make intentional relational connections with people in need of Jesus and invite them and their families into Christian community.
- _____ We facilitate group members to become involved in accountable discipleship relationships.
- _____ We select a balance of study topics that address the specific growth needs of the group, rather than choosing similar studies repeatedly.
- _____ We identify and mentor apprentice leaders.

Relating to the Church as a Whole

- _____ Within the life of the church, our group is finding a good balance between learning, service, outreach, worship, fun, fellowship, and rest.
- _____ We are finding healthy balances between life stories and Bible truth.
- _____ We are finding a healthy balance between care and discipleship.
- _____ We are finding a healthy balance between kindness and confrontation.
- _____ There is a larger purpose and mission in our group gatherings.
- _____ The logistics of group gatherings are being worked out.
- _____ The group is preparing for multiplication.
- _____ Group members are embracing congregation-wide service and vision.
- _____ The leader or administrative person in the group is keeping attendance and membership records for updates to the church, reports, and directories.

Group-Leader Shepherding

- _____ I make contact with my group members outside of our meeting times.
- _____ I welcome new people and facilitate follow-up as they enter our group.
- _____ I care for the emotional and physical needs of group members.



Group Leader Personal Growth

_____ I keep a daily connection with God, with spouse, and with family.

_____ I obey God more today than a few months ago.

_____ I am becoming more loving.

_____ I am becoming more approachable.

_____ I am becoming less judgmental.

_____ I am becoming more serving.

—DAN LENTZ. Copyright 2005 Christianity Today International; originally appeared on Smallgroups.com.

Discuss

1. Did this assessment reveal any holes in how we equip small-group leaders? Are these serious gaps?
2. What steps will we take to fill these holes?
3. What letter grade would you give your entire church small-group ministry? Explain why you gave that grade.



A Measure of Group Health

How close does your group come to matching the profile of a healthy, thriving ministry?

Ephesians 2:21–22

Prayerfully ponder each of the following categories and descriptions and plot your group experience somewhere on the range between the two choices offered. Place a slash mark on the line to reflect the status of your group.

Plot your group experience

A group of acquaintances that meets weekly	Sharing of life	A family of friends whose lives are intertwined
Sharing and prayer requests tend to be superficial	Safety/ intimacy	Members feel freedom to risk sharing deep struggles
Opinions and personal feelings dominate	Dependence on truth	God’s Word is considered the final authority
Leader ministers; members mostly observe/ receive	“Every member” ministry	Each person encouraged to use gift(s) to care for others
Little evidence that folks are progressing spiritually	Life change	Tangible signs that individuals are growing
Monologues (dominated by one or two members)	Group discussions	Dialogues (involving the entire group)
The same people attend week after week	Outreach	Group fills the “empty chair” by inviting visitors
Members routinely skip meetings and gatherings	Participation	Members make group functions a top priority
Leader is practicing and developing his own skills	Leadership development	Leader is identifying and training new leaders
Little outside interaction or involvement	“One another” care	Group members show active, ongoing concern
Group is limping along out of a sense of obligation	Overall sense	We are excited because of all that God is doing!

—LEN WOODS; Copyright 2002 Christianity Today International. Originally appeared on Smallgroups.com.

Discuss

1. Consider all the measurements above as a whole. What would be the total health measurement of your group?
2. Which of the categories above are the most important, and why?
3. How does small-group ministry leadership come alongside a group that is floundering and help it recover its bearings?



When a Group Is Sick

Help find out whether course corrections are needed, or if it's time to abandon ship.

Philippians 1:6

Use this assessment to help determine next steps when an individual group suffers from poor health. Consider each major question by using the additional questions provided to assist your thinking.

	definitely	perhaps	probably not	definitely not
<i>Is it time for a shift in leadership?</i> Has the leader grown tired of leading? Was the leader ever effective? Is more training needed for the leader? Does the leader need to recruit a co-leader?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Is the study material meeting a need?</i> Is the study guide too basic for the spiritual life of the group members? Is it too challenging? It is time to get back to just the Bible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Is it time to invite?</i> Is it time to challenge each person in the group to bring one new friend? Is it time to ask the church's small group director to send new people to the group? Is there a need for the "fresh air" brought by new group members?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Is there a polarizing personality in the mix?</i> Is there a person who dominates the discussion and drives away group members? Is there someone who needs emotional or spiritual support beyond what the leader or other members can provide? Has a good enough relationship been built with this person that it's time to discuss their situation with them in private?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Does the group need "a new outfit"?</i> Does the group need to change meeting locations? How about meeting in a different home? Multiple homes? A restaurant?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Do we need to get out and serve?</i> Does the group need to be stretched by getting out of that living room and serving somewhere in the name of Christ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Is it time for a new approach?</i> Is there a need to spend more evenings in prayer and less in study? Or more events just to have fun together? Is it a good time to introduce some exercises to help group members become more intimate with one another?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Has enough time passed?</i> If the group is new and got off to a slow start, is there a need to persevere for a while and see what God's will and timing are? Is the idea of quitting being considered too soon?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Is it time to break up this party?</i> Is it time to send a few members off to begin another group? Is it time to become a "supergroup" and break up into smaller groups within our meeting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Is it time to die?</i> Is it time to rejoice together for all God has done with this group, have a final celebration together, and the individual members of the group move on to their next small group experience?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

—RICK LOWRY; copyright 2005 Christianity Today International. Originally appeared on Smallgroups.com.

Discuss

1. How often have we ended or changed the membership and leadership of existing groups? What was the fallout from those decisions?
2. When we see evidence of group sickness, how long should we wait before considering treatment?
3. Who should be involved in the deliberations about ways to help improve or end a sick group?



Leader Self-Assessment

Search out your heart and your performance by considering these key issues.

Exodus 3:11–12

An individual small-group leader often needs to take an honest self-appraisal of his or her work. Rate yourself from 1–10 in each of the following categories. Discuss the results with your small-group pastor or coach at your next scheduled meeting, with the goal of devising a plan for gaining competence and/or help in weak areas.

Delegating

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Teaching the Bible

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Planning

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Leading discussions

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Tending to details

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Making newcomers feel welcome

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Evaluating

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Shepherding

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Showing compassion

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Equipping others

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Developing new leaders

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Keeping the group on task

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Creating a warm, safe atmosphere

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Getting others involved

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Listening

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Counseling

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Getting people to open up

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Hospitality

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Discernment/wisdom

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Leading in “fun”

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

—LEN WOODS; Copyright 2002 Christianity Today International. Originally appeared on Smallgroups.com.

Discuss

1. Which of these areas is now of most concern for you in your future development as a leader? How will you address these concerns?
2. If this assessment of the leader were given to your group members, how do you think they would respond?
3. Which of these areas are foundational to all the others? Which do you think are the least important?



Evaluating Group Discussions

How well do you practice these principles of small-group discussions?

Luke 24:15–26

The first small-group discussion I led took approximately 15 minutes. No one had explained to me how to get a discussion going. Instead I was handed a list of questions and Scriptures to look up. My goal was to get through all of it as quickly as possible so that we could have our snacks and go home.

Since then I've learned a few principles about how to lead a good discussion, several of which are listed below. Use this assessment to get a sense of your strengths and weaknesses as a discussion leader.

Good Questions Trump Information

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I use open-ended questions that require more than a “yes or no” answer.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I almost never answer my own question.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't assume that my interpretation of a text is the correct one.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I usually wait until the end of a discussion to offer my opinion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Restate a Question that Doesn't Work at First

When I ask a question, I allow enough time for the group to process their answers and speak.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't skip a question when it doesn't seem to be working.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If a question isn't generating discussion, I can restate it to help the group try again.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Communicate Love, Not Judgment

I never make light of or ridicule a group member's answer to a question.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When a group member offers an opinion that is an obvious heresy, I don't avoid the issue.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel confident in my ability to bring doctrinal discussions back to the root of Scripture.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When encountering a heretical or disruptive group member, I offer to continue the conversation later so that the group is not derailed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Keep the Discussion on Track

I understand the fine line between allowing discussion to flow and degenerating into tangents or useless banter.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When I identify a statement or opinion that is off the subject, I am able to steer the discussion back on track.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I bathe our group's discussion times in a lot of prayer.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

—JOHANNAH REARDON; copyright 2006 by BuildingSmallGroups.com/Christianity Today International.

Discuss:

1. What kind of feedback tells me that a discussion is going well?
2. How much silence am I comfortable with in a group discussion? How much silence should I be comfortable with?
3. Which of the discussion principles above do you need to learn more about? Which do you practice well already?



Additional Resources

Books, downloads, and websites to help you assess the effectiveness of your small-group ministry.

BuildingChurchLeaders.com. Leadership training resources from Christianity Today International.

- “Small Groups” Assessment Pack
- “Developing Leadership Gifts” Assessment Pack
- “Shepherding Others” Training Theme and PowerPoint
- “Healthy Small Groups” Training Theme and PowerPoint
- “Growing Small Groups” Training Theme and PowerPoint
- “Relaunching a Small-Group Ministry” Training Theme
- “Small-Group Leader” Orientation Guide

SmallGroups.com. An established website dedicated to equipping small-group leaders to make disciples and strengthen communities.

Creating Community: Five Keys to Building a Small Group Culture by *Andy Stanley and Bill Willits*. The authors describe how they established a small group culture at North Point Community Church (Multnomah, 2004; ISBN 978-1590523964).

How to Lead Small Groups by *Neal McBride*. This guide is designed to help leaders give biblically-based guidance to their groups (NavPress, 1990; ISBN 978-0891093039).

Leading Life-Changing Small Groups by *Bill Donahue*. This book is particularly suited for churches that wish to reorganize their entire ministry around small groups (Zondervan, 2002; ISBN 978-0310247500).

Making Small Groups Work by *Henry Cloud & John Townsend*. Outlines how the three principles of grace, truth, and time can be applied to small group health and growth (Zondervan, 2003; ISBN 978-0310250289).

Management Essentials for Christian Ministries *Michael J. Anthony and James Riley Estep, eds.* This nuts-and-bolts guide to ministry management includes a section on how to assess for effectiveness (B & H, 2005; ISBN 978-0805431230).

Nine Keys to Effective Small Group Leadership by *Carl George and Warren Bird*. This is a new edition of a book designed to help build individual leaders of groups, cells, and classes (Cdml, 2007; ISBN 978-0979535000).