

B R I D G E

GR
OU
PS

New Leader Orientation Guide

TOGETHER IS BETTER

Hello New Bridge Group Leader! This guide is designed to help you get started in your journey of leading. Please use this as a resource for material and aids to launch your group. We are excited to see how God moves in your new Bridge Group!

The Mission And Vision

When we step into leadership, it is important that we have clarity on what it is that we are doing, a compelling mental picture of where we are going, and that we determine how it will inspire the involvement of others. This is especially true in the context of leading a Bridge Group. You need a vision of what your Bridge Group could be, and then you can use this vision to make an actionable plan that moves the vision from aspiration to reality.

Vision

Webster's Dictionary defines a visionary as a person who has foresight and imagination. When we look to the ministry of Jesus we see a visionary leader who had no ambiguity about what he was trying to achieve. He operated out of complete clarity knowing that he was sent to preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God — he had foresight which included specific God ordained steps in his birth, life/ministry, death, resurrection, and building of the church. One of these steps was having other people embrace what he was working toward and come alongside him in his mission.

“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’” Matthew 28:16-20

Mission

Forest Hill's mission of building bridges that connect everyone to dynamic life in Christ is just our unique way of expressing Christ's Great Commission. Bridge Groups are part of us accomplishing that mission together. Your particular vision for your group is how together you will live out this mission through your group. To have a successful group where people are motivated by participating in the group, you must have a clear vision and share it with your group.

“You need a vision of what your Bridge Group could be, and then you can use this vision to make an actionable plan that moves the vision from aspiration to reality”.



How Do Bridge Groups Live Out This Mission and Vision?

The overall vision for Bridge Groups is to live out Forest Hill's mission of *building bridges that connect everyone to dynamic life in Christ*. When groups come together to **Experience the Gospel, Engage in Community and Equip one another as Bridge Builders** they begin to live out Forest Hill's bridge building mission.

But what is your specific vision for how your group will live out this mission? Let's look more closely at these **"3 E's"** so that you can begin to develop the specific vision you have for your group and start to put together a plan to lead your group in the months ahead.

Experience The Gospel

What is the Gospel and how does it shape our identity and the world? What are spiritual rhythms that will help us grow in dynamic life in Christ?

Study and Pray Together: The best way to experience the Gospel is through studying scripture and taking time to pray with and for one another.

Leaders are actually servants who serve a group through leading it with intentionality and joy. Take time to plan a thoughtful and caring time together each time your group meets.

A good structure is using **5 "C's"** over the course of your time. Here's an outline for a 75-minute meeting together (adjust as needed).

- 1. Connect (10 minutes)** - Spend time catching up from the week, doing introductions if needed, and maybe sharing in some snacks or drinks.
- 2. Celebrate (5 minutes)** - Have the group share any place that they have seen God at work in their lives or the lives of others.
- 3. Coach (45 minutes)** - This is your study time. Use the resources from the Flight Map or other resources you have to cultivate this time.
- 4. Communicate (5 minutes)** - Use this time to communicate anything coming up at church, upcoming schedules for the group, etc.
- 5. Care (10 minutes)** - Here, you can close in prayer together. Be considerate of time as you pray and if anything is a difficult situation, consider following up personally with that person outside of group time.

Engage In Community

What makes a gospel-centered community unique? What does the Bible say about how we relate to one another? How has God uniquely designed each person for a purpose in the group and in their communities?

Group Hospitality

- Encourage authentic friendships by creating a space where people can be their true selves and be supported by the whole group
- Pray for one another

Social Activities

- Create a rhythm of socially spending time together either during group time or outside of regularly scheduled meetings
- Plan a game night, celebrate birthdays or go away together for the day or even a weekend.

Serve Together

- Some groups find serving as group on a regular basis helps to build dynamic life in Christ. Consider holiday seasons or Forest Hill outreach partners, which can be found here: <https://foresthill.org/outreach>
- You can also use group social events to build bridges and invite someone to join you who may be exploring faith or just need community.

Help with major care needs, but know the limits of you and your group members

- Use Forest Hill as a resource:
 - Forest Hill Counseling team (info and appointments): (704) 716-8775
 - Pastor on call: (704)716-8779

Equip One Another as Bridge Builders

What does the Bible say about building bridges to people whose experiences are different than ours? How can we share our stories to point people to the Gospel? How do we actively go out to build bridges and intentionally invite others into the Kingdom?

Create ownership within the group

- Invite the group to help:
 - Choose studies and facilitate discussion
 - Coordinate prayer within the group
 - Mobilize the group to address care needs
 - Plan social gatherings
 - Organize serve activities

Create a culture of bridge building

- Talk about areas in life where there are opportunities to be the hands and feet of Jesus and the people in your lives who need to have the Gospel shared with them – then celebrate these bridges being built!
- Brainstorm ideas of how to build bridges to neighbors, coworkers, friends, family, etc. and hold one another accountable to do it.
- Pray together for friends, neighbors, family members and co-workers who are not yet following Jesus.

How Do You Lead Your Group Into Living Out This Mission and Vision?

Group Logistics

Start your Bridge Group Well

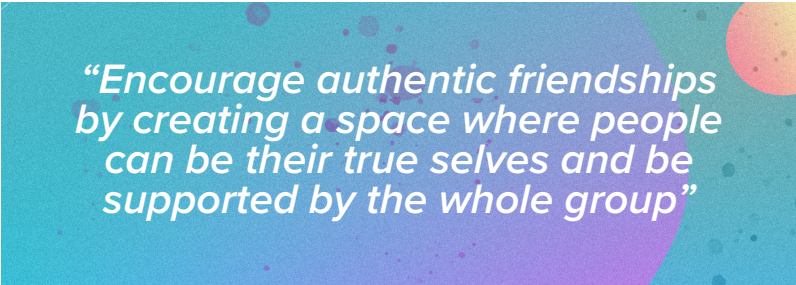
- Clearly communicate group details with new members between group sign-ups and first official meeting
- Build excitement and engagement between Bridge Group participants by starting a GroupMe, Facebook page, or group text
- Kick group off with Launch Guide (3 weeks or 1 week)
- Collaborate with group to create group expectations
- Pray for your group and pray with your group

Be Consistent and Creative in your Meetings

- Look at the Flight Plan and consider the flow of your group in the months to come
- Consistency is key! Many groups struggle because they cancel meetings if people can't come. Plan to meet if even just a few people can make it to keep the rhythm of connection going.
- Encourage group ownership by inviting members to: choose studies and facilitate discussion; coordinate prayer within the group; mobilize the group to address care needs; plan social gatherings; or organize serve activities.
- Continually acknowledge and celebrate all the ways God is moving and through the group

Begin with the End in Mind and Multiply Leaders

- Why multiply your group?
 - The Great Commission empowers us to make disciples who will then make other disciples
 - There is an ongoing need for leaders
 - More groups create opportunities for more people to grow in their faith
- How can you develop future leaders?
 - Look for potential leaders in your group and encourage them
 - Empower them to help with the group and give them responsibility
 - Provide coaching by inviting them into your life and your walk with God
 - Invite them to Forest Hill Events and Bridge Group Leader Huddles
 - Connect them with your Groups Director



“Encourage authentic friendships by creating a space where people can be their true selves and be supported by the whole group”

Leader Support, Development, and Resources

We use a model of 3-2-1 for leader development and care:

3 Leader Huddles each year

2 Individual Meetings with your Groups Director or Coach

1 Large Inspirational Gathering with leaders from across Forest Hill

Here's more about the development and support you can expect as a Bridge Group Leader:

- Support by a Groups Director and/or Groups Coach meeting with you one-one or visiting your Bridge Group (2x/year)
 - Your Groups Director will have regular email and texting check-ins with you
 - Your Groups Director will help you identify, select, and develop new leaders
- Join the Forest Hill Bridge Group Leader Community for learning opportunities through leader huddles (3x/year)
- Attend an all-church annual gathering to inspire leaders from across Forest Hill (1x/year)
- As a new leader you are also invited to 4 New Group Leader Trainings to develop these core leadership skills:
 1. Servant Leadership
 2. Engaging Conversation
 3. Cultivating Healthy Community
 4. Developing Others

Leader Resources

- Pastor on Call: (704)716-8779
- Forest Hill Counseling: (704)716-8775
- FHC Leader Website: www.fhcgroupleaders.org
 - Bridge Group Leader Overview
 - Bridge Group Launch Guide
 - Leader Development Trainings
 - Curriculum Pathway

Thank you for leading this group! We are excited about what God will do in and through you as you lead your Bridge Group.

"Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ." – Colossians 1:28



FOREST HILL
CHURCH