



# STONEBRIDGE CHURCH

## SMALL GROUP AND DISCIPLESHIP CLASS HANDBOOK

The goal of our groups and classes is to create spaces and opportunities for discipleship that help foster maturation in our four anchors.

### BEING CONFORMED INTO THE IMAGE OF JESUS (ROM 8.29.)

Being a disciple of Jesus means to become ever more like Him. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we want to be people who take on His character, attitudes, and outlook, exhibit the fruit of the Spirit, and are confident in who we are in Christ.

### BEING LED BY THE SPIRIT (GAL 5.25.)

Jesus said His sheep will know His voice. We want to be people who listen to what He is saying to us and then obey what we are hearing.

### DOING THE GOOD WORKS GOD HAS PREPARED FOR US TO DO (EPH 2.10.)

Each of us has a part to play in God's plan for our community and the world. We want to be people who are actively pursuing those good works.

### SERVING WHERE GOD HAS PLANTED US (JER 29.4-7.)

God has planted each of us in a particular place. We want to take on the responsibility to live as missionaries wherever God has us.

### How do we define successful leading?

In the Kingdom of God, obedience is success. Successful leading is seeking to lead from a place of open-handed submission to Him and His word.

## RESPONSIBILITIES & EXPECTATIONS

### GROUP/CLASS LEADERS

Simply put, your primary responsibility is to create an environment where people can grow as disciples and disciple makers of Christ. To be clear, you are not responsible for the spiritual growth of your group members - they are. Each individual is responsible for his/her heart before God. As a leader we ask you to create an environment where people can grow spiritually; whether they will grow is up to them.

### GROUP LEADER EXPECTATIONS

#### HONOR STONEBRIDGE BELIEFS

Lead and teach your group/class according to StoneBridge's beliefs, even if you may have a differing opinion.

#### MAINTAIN COMMUNICATION

Stay in communication with Matt and Vanessa with updates on your group or class, studying material, and any concerns that may arise.

#### TAKE ATTENDANCE

Report group/class attendance on the Church Center App or StoneBridge website.

### CULTIVATING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

#### REMOVE OBSTACLES

Remove hindrances to people connecting with God and with others.

#### CREATE HANDHOLDS

Give people concrete opportunities to connect with God, grow in their understanding of who He is and what He is calling His people to, and apply the truths they learn.

#### CULTIVATE AUTHENTICITY

Model the behaviors that honor God, His word, and those that are needed for spiritual growth.

## ENVIRONMENT

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### HIGH SUPPORT/HIGH CHALLENGE

A high support/high challenge atmosphere is most conducive to spiritual growth.

#### HIGH SUPPORT

This is the relational foundation for your group. Your group should feel like family. There can be a tendency to see High Support as 'fluff' and that is a huge mistake. If people do not feel comfortable, they won't share, and this will impede spiritual growth. No matter how long your group has been together, you need to regularly incorporate High Support elements to maintain an environment conducive to spiritual growth.

#### FOSTERING HIGH SUPPORT

##### PROMOTE DISCUSSION PARTICIPATION

Set up a 'discussion friendly' room - a circle is best. Everyone should be able to make eye contact and avoid anyone sitting on the 'outside'.

##### PROMOTE CONNECTION DURING MEETINGS

Icebreakers help people get used to sharing about themselves and listening to others share. Samples are provided in the Resource Section.

##### PROMOTE CONNECTION OUTSIDE OF MEETINGS

Start a group text and use it to follow up between meetings. Organize a social activity- or better yet, have someone in your group organize it. Seek fun activities that promote interaction and connection (dinner out, game night, picnic, etc.).

##### CONFIDENTIALITY

Clearly define expectations around confidentiality and periodically offer gentle reminders of those expectations. Smaller groups or gender-based groups for sharing/prayer requests can promote increased levels of vulnerability and transparency. Things to consider:

Are prayer requests staying in the confines of smaller share/prayer groups, or are group members free to share the prayer requests of others with the larger group? In couples' groups, are husbands and wives permitted to share with one another when sharing/prayer requests took place in gender-based groups?

# ENVIRONMENT

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## HIGH SUPPORT/HIGH CHALLENGE

### HIGH CHALLENGE

This is the growth component of your group. The individuals in your group should be encouraged to both deal with hindrances in their lives and stretch into the new things God is inviting them into. Whether you are more of a study group or more of a discussion group, there should be some element of application of material rooted in scripture. It's the 'now that' piece- "now that we've discussed/learned this, what are we going to do about it?"

### FOSTERING HIGH CHALLENGE

#### SET THE EXPECTATION

Make sure your group/class knows that the goal is individual spiritual growth in the four anchors. You aren't setting the standard for growth, that's done individually under The Lord's leading (see below on accountability), but you do want to see fruit in the lives of those attending the group.

#### PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER

God works in and through us to produce fruit. We cooperate, but it's His work and we invite Him into it through prayer. After 4-6 meetings, your group should be bonded enough to begin praying for one another.

#### INCORPORATE POSITIVE ACCOUNTABILITY

Positive accountability focuses on where someone wants to go/grow as opposed to dealing with sin issues (refer to Resources - Challenging Situations). All you are doing is holding people accountable to the thing(s) they said they would do.

#### INITIATED THROUGH QUESTIONS

What do you feel like God is saying to you about this?

Based on what we've been discussing, what is one thing you want to incorporate into your family/work life, etc.?

#### REQUIRES INTENTIONAL FOLLOW UP

"Bob, you said you wanted to commit to that bible reading plan. How is that going?"

"Jill, you said you wanted to be in bed by 10 so you could wake up before the kids to spend time with The Lord. How is that going?"

## MECHANISM

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### UP, IN & OUT

Intentionally pursuing regular activity in these areas will help develop a strong and healthy small group that honors the first and second greatest commandments outlined by Christ in Matthew 22, Mark 12, and Luke 10.

#### UP

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### HELPING PEOPLE CONNECT WITH GOD

#### WORSHIP TOGETHER

The heart of worship is to acknowledge and thank God. It's also an opportunity to set your eyes on Him and wash away the things you've brought into that space. This can seem tricky if you don't have a guitar player in the group, but phones are wonderful devices. Try starting with 1 song that leads into a prayer time. Over time, consider increasing to 2 or 3.

#### PRAY TOGETHER

Prayer is a relational engagement between us and The Lord. By creating the time and space to pray together we invite each other into that relational space where we can intercede for each other, truly caring for one another in the deepest way that's available to us, by bringing each other's needs to the only one that can truly meet them. Try these formats:

Popcorn prayer - everyone prays one sentence prayers about the same topic.

Pray for the person on your right.

Break up into men and women for sharing and prayer.

Break into groups of 2-3 to pray.

#### PRACTICE LISTENING TO THE LORD

We know that The Lord speaks to His children and that those who follow Him know his voice. For some, this is uncharted territory, but learning to hear His voice is a very important element of our spiritual growth.

Create a safe environment - One way to do this is to corporately listen to God for one person. This takes the pressure off as every person doesn't need to share. i.e. "Jill is having a tough time this week; let's take a moment ask God to encourage her through us and listen for Him. If you sense God puts a word, picture, or verse in your heart for Jill, please share it."

Take the pressure off - assume God is speaking. Invite people to share the thoughts, words, and/or pictures they receive.

# MECHANISM

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## UP, IN & OUT

### IN

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#### HELPING PEOPLE CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

Helping people connect opens the door to care for one another and better live out being brothers and sisters in Christ. This connection is a commitment to one another that is not confined to your regularly scheduled meetings. It should be available, with healthy boundaries, between meetings as well. This is a part of becoming family in Christ. It is commitment to one another not just when you are all together, but throughout the time between (refer to Promoting Connection Outside of Meetings under High Support).

#### CARE FOR EACH OTHER

At some point during the year someone in your group is going to hit a rough patch. When that occurs, rally the group to that person- if it's meals, visits, financial help, extra time, etc.- this piece is key to thriving community.

### OUT

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#### HELPING PEOPLE CONNECT WITH THE COMMUNITY

God has a mission, and He invites us to participate in that mission with Him.

#### ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER TO DO YOUR DEAL

Look for ways to actively support those in your group who know their deal and are engaged in it. Other are still discerning God's calling on their life; encourage and resource those who are in the discovery phase (reach out to Matt or Vanessa for resources).

#### DO A SERVICE PROJECT

There are many local opportunities to serve. Pray together and ask God where/how He wants your group to serve in the community and make time to serve together.

#### GO ON A MISSION TRIP

Don't write it off too soon. Why not take a short-term mission trip as a group? It's a great way to engage in ministry and grow your skills in living life like a missionary.

# RESOURCES

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## FOUR ANCHORS

Through our character, actions, thoughts, and attitudes, God wants to develop, grow, and mature us into His people who look like, act like, and live like Jesus in our community. The shared vision of the churches in the Transformation Network is to see community transformation. At StoneBridge, we seek community transformation by encouraging growth in our four anchors.

Whether you are using the sermon notes and questions, are following a bible study, or are using another book as the material for your group/class, review the questions below to help your members move towards growth in the four anchors. Naturally, our groups/classes create opportunities for you to share how you have seen God at work in your life. Encourage your group members to share how they've grown spiritually, what has helped them to grow, and what growth they would like to see. We are all on the journey of growth in these four anchors. Sharing our stories can help others see how God might be at work or desiring to work in their lives.

### BEING CONFORMED INTO THE IMAGE OF JESUS

#### Questions for Leaders:

How can you model growth in this anchor while leading your small group?

Where have you seen growth in this anchor both in yourself and in your group?

(Character, Actions, Thoughts, Attitudes)

Where do you see the greatest need for growth in this anchor for both you and your group?

(Character, Actions, Thoughts, Attitudes)

#### Questions for your group/class:

How have I been conformed into the image of Christ while walking with Jesus?

(Character, Actions, Thoughts, Attitudes)

How in this season am I being conformed into the image of Jesus?

What ways does Jesus give for others to be conformed into his image in Scripture?

How can you better yield to His spirit as He seeks to conform you into Christ's image?

As you seek growth in this anchor, describe who you would like to become 5 years from now.

### BEING LED BY THE SPIRIT

#### Questions for Leaders:

How can our group practice being led by His spirit within the structure of the small group?

How is The Lord calling our group to grow in being led by Him?

How can I create opportunities to practice being led by His spirit during our small group time

AND/OR challenge my group to seek growth in being led by Him throughout the week?

#### Questions for your group/class:

What does Scripture tell us about being led by His spirit?

What does it look like for you to practice being led by the Spirit?

What are you prone to be driven by in place of His spirit?

(Desire, Fear, Expectation, Wounds)

How do we see Jesus being led by the Spirit?

What would it look like for us to live like this in Marietta?

## RESOURCES

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### FOUR ANCHORS

#### DOING THE GOOD WORK GOD HAS PREPARED FOR US TO DO

We've all been given unique personalities, life experiences, strengths, and spiritual gifts that fully fit who we are and how God has designed us to live. God has created opportunities for us to use everything He has given to us to show others God's love and care for those around us.

##### Questions for Leaders:

Do you know what your "deal" is?

What does it look like for you to be "doing your deal"?

How has God prepared you to step into the good works He is leading you to do?

(Think through your own story, personality, life experiences, strengths, and spiritual giftings.

These good works may have been completed, they may be ongoing, or you may be discerning

what these good works are for this season in your life. No matter where you are, further

reflection will help you lead others in examining what God is leading them toward.)

Think through the current material your small group is studying: How can you create space

through discussion for your small group to process what God is doing in their lives?

##### Questions for your group/class:

What personality, strengths, spiritual gifts, and life experiences God has given to you?

What patterns have you seen in how God uses you in others' lives?

What makes you come alive?

What is your favorite way to be Jesus to others or to show others who Jesus is?

How can we practice being followers of Jesus to others?

(Ask logistical questions to see what would be possible, practical, and the best way to practice

following the ways of Jesus in service of others: who, what, when, where, & how.)

#### SERVING WHERE GOD HAS PLANTED US

This anchor is a practical application of scripture driven by a motivation to love others that's inspired by God's deep love for us. Remember that no people group size or location is too small or insignificant in God's eyes. Obedience and faithfulness are success.

##### Questions for Leaders:

Sometimes God shows us a specific group of people through a volunteering opportunity: How can you help expose your members to the needs and service opportunities around Marietta?

The heart of Evangelism is simply sharing God, your good father, with others. How can your members practice sharing our God with others in the community?

How can your small group practice serving others together?

##### Questions for your group/class:

Where are you in discovering who or where "your Marietta" is?

How has God led you to serve in your Marietta?

How can you practice the ways of Jesus among the people God has given you to serve?



## RESOURCES

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### CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

In walking closely with others, you may find yourself facing some challenging situations that you'd like support navigating. We want to encourage you to reach out to Matt or Vanessa in any instances where you would like support or guidance. It can be helpful to read through these guidelines prior to meeting as a group to begin to consider how you might navigate these situations in the moment.

#### CONVERSATION DOMINATORS

Many groups have at least one conversation dominator who, however well-intentioned, speaks too soon, tries to solve problems for others, or is prone to talking or interjecting more than listening. This can make facilitating discussions challenging. Many over-talkers are simply verbal processors. Consider the following approaches to redirect and invite other members into the conversation.

##### BE PROACTIVE

Direct questions toward individuals in the group who are less prone to dominate the conversation. Or, ask everyone to take turns providing a one-minute discussion question answer.

##### POLITELY INTERRUPT

You can politely interrupt by first acknowledging your interruption and then offering a one-sentence explanation for it. "I'm sorry to interrupt, but I want to make sure we have time to discuss the remaining questions."

##### THANK THEM

When there is a subtle pause thank them for sharing and ask another group member directly for their thoughts on what they had shared. If you'd rather, you can also thank them and follow it up with one sentence about something they said that stood out to you, then firmly move the discussion forward through a directed question or by moving back into the discussion material.

#### ADDRESSING SIN ISSUES

Sin issues should be addressed first by one and then by many (Matthew 18). When one surfaces ask the person involved to talk one-on-one. Prior to meeting spend time in prayer seeking The Lord's guidance as well as wise outside counsel as you feel led (honoring confidentiality). In the one-on-one speak truth in love, lean on scripture, and offer encouragement to them reminding them they are fully loved and forgiven by grace through faith.

#### ABOVE YOUR PAYGRADE

An important characteristic of any strong leader is to know what falls outside their purview and to humbly seek support. When you find yourself confronted with a situation that requires support beyond your giftings, ability, or training we encourage you to seek support. Matt and Vanessa can help you identify professionals and organizations that are best equipped to offer your group/class members the support they need. It's important to remember that ultimately, it is up to the person who needs help to accept it and to cooperate with The Father and the resources they are offered to get the help they need. It is not your responsibility to solve anyone's problems.

## RESOURCES

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## CHILDCARE

Group/Class leaders are responsible for communicating childcare needs to Patience and for communicating changes in needs to her.

Childcare is offered onsite for those who need it during onsite group/class meetings. Parents must stay onsite when they have children checked into childcare at StoneBridge.

### CONTACT PERSON:

Patience Regular  
childcare@stonebridgemarietta.org

FOR LAST MINUTE CHANGES IN CHILDCARE NEEDS PLEASE TEXT PATIENCE

Cost: \$10 per family per night  
Childcare can be paid through the events page on the  
Church Center app or through our website.  
(select 'register' and follow prompts)

### Offsite Group/Class Meetings

For those groups/classes that meet offsite and require childcare, we encourage you to seek creative solutions to increase the accessibility of your group/class for those The Lord might be leading to you. One option is to encourage the members of your group to pool funds to cover the cost of a shared sitter. The sitter can care for the children in another part of the home you're meeting in, or at a nearby home of one of the group/class members. StoneBridge is not liable for any offsite childcare.

# RESOURCES

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## DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

### Testimony

- What are you saved from?
- What are you saved for?

### Hearing and Doing:

- What do you think God is telling you right now?
- The source: Through the Word, our book, etc.
- The specific area of life: about your family, finances, work, time, calling/ministry, etc
- Biblical themes: about justice, the poor, missions, etc.
- How do I apply what I am learning/hearing?
- How do I live it out in my community?

### Growth:

- Where are you feeling stretched? Squeezed?
- Where is one area you want to grow? What is holding you back?
- What is one skill you would like to learn/pick up by your next birthday? Why?
- Where did you see God at work today?
- Where do you need to see God move?

### Micro Group questions:

- Look Back: Throughout the current book study, what has God been teaching you?
- Look In: Based on the Scripture reading & message, is there something in your life that God is leading you to change?
- Look Up: What does this passage of Scripture teach you about God's character?
- Look Out: How are you doing loving God and loving the people in your life (family, neighbors, community)?

### Discussion Questions for reading the Gospels together:

- What encourages or connects with you?
- What challenges you?
- Matthew: Looking at The Sermon on the Mount, discuss how Christ's fulfillment of the law reveals the heart behind it and how this understanding guides us in identifying the underlying principles which ultimately produce heart transformation in His followers.
- Mark: Discuss Jesus' divine authority as outlined in His word and deed recorded in this gospel.
- Luke: Discuss your observations on the divinity/humanity of Jesus.
- John: Which "I Am" statement from John most resonated with you and why?
- Signs: Look at the signs in John (5 of the 7 miracles are explicitly called 'signs'). Signs point to something beyond themselves:
  - What does each sign in John point to?
  - What does it tell us about Jesus?
  - Describe 2 or 3 signs God has performed in your life.
  - What did each sign tell you about God's character?
  - Why was that revelation about God significant to you?
- If Jesus asked you to "sell" something, what would that be? What does it look like to sell it?
- Can you identify any idols you are making or placing your trust in?

# RESOURCES

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## DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

### Discussion Questions for Reading the Bible Together:

- What is the passage about? (fact question)
- What did you learn? (lesson question)
- How will you apply it? (application question)

### Discussion questions for Inductive Bible Study Method:

- What does the passage say? (Observing what the author is communicating.)
- What does the passage mean? (Interpreting what God may be saying.)
- How am I going to respond? (Application to the passage.)

### Misc Questions:

- If every year of your life is like a chapter of a book, what would the title of this year be?
- Where are you in your relationship with Jesus?
- What's the one question you would like someone to ask you?
- When you worry, what do you tend to worry about?
- What is the first thing you think about in the morning/last thing at night?
- In your regular routine, when do you feel most alive/fulfilled? Most robotic/drained?
- What does your prayer life look like?
- How do you connect with God?
- What do you need in this season of life?
- What idol are you most tempted to worship?  
(control, security, money, possessions, relationships, stability, status, etc.)
- What lie are you believing about:
  - Yourself?
  - Your life?
  - God?
  - What truth does Scripture speak instead of these lies?
  - How can you practice believing Scripture's truth instead of the lie?

# RESOURCES

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## ICE BREAKERS

### Ice breakers to help people connect:

- If you were an animal what animal would you be?
- What is the best live event you've been to?
- What is your position in the birth order? What did it mean to you?
- What kind of car would you be?
- If you could live in any generation which one would it be and why?
- What was the last fun thing you did?
- What is the most exotic place you've been?
- What is the greatest thing you've ever done?
- What is the most embarrassing thing you have done?
- If you could meet anyone famous who would you meet?
- Explain one of your scars.
- If you could meet any 3 people who would they be?
- If you could have dinner with any biblical historical figure who would you choose? (expect Jesus)
- If you could have dinner with any non-biblical person, dead or alive, who would you choose?
- What is the most influential book (other than the Bible) that you have read?
- What is a weird fact or quirk about yourself?
- If you could do anything without the possibility of failing what would you do?
- If you had to write a book what would it be about?
- Favorite movie?
- What was your favorite surprise?
- What was your worst surprise?
- What are 3 adjectives that describe you?
- Where would you live if you could live anywhere?
- What superhero would you be/what superpower would you have?
- What is your favorite vacation spot?
- What is your middle name? Is there a story behind it?
- Tell us something few know about you.
- Which Biblical figure do you most resonate with?
- What are your passions/interests?