

GROWING AS A SMALL GROUP LEADER

Whether you've been leading Small Groups for years or you're just getting started, you can grow as a leader. We all have strengths and weaknesses, areas we're aware of and blind-spots. You can always become better at shaping the culture of your group. If growing as a leader leads people to know God better and love each other more, then that's effort well spent!

Stages: Leaders at Salt tend to move through 3 stages as they grow. Which stage are you up to now?

LEADER STAGES	CULTURE MODELLER CRAWL	CULTURE SHAPER WALK	CULTURE MAKER RUN
YOU ARE...	Starting out as a new Small Group Leader or leading again for the first time in a while. You're excited to give it a go & aware you have lots to learn.	A competent leader: you make the 'bits' of small group run without too much stress & you're relaxing into the role.	An experienced leader who has lead at least 2+ groups over 2+ years. You have your own approach & style. You know what to do, how you'll do it, & you're confident God will work through you.
YOU BRING...	Excitement, willingness to learn, energy.	Stability, ideas, willingness to experiment.	Encouragement, experience & inspiration (leaders want to be like you).
YOU NEED...	Equipping: from Bible Discussion Notes, other leaders, your coach & Getting Started as a Small Group Leader. Feedback: often, from your coach & co-leader. Encouragement: it's hard to see 'wins' & assess how the group's going when you start. It can be discouraging if your group's not great straight away or not like the good group you used to be in	Re-energising: your group may not be as good as it could be, which can feel disheartening. Equipping: you could settle as a leader in this stage, but with more support from your coach & co-leader you could keep growing instead. Vision: of what your group could be & how culture shaping can create that.	Coaching Sessions: to remember how crucial groups are, & to support leaders in other stages by your advice & presence. Reflection: since you don't have to work as hard as in the past to make group happen, reflecting on how God's growing you & your group stops you being in cruise-control. Accountability: you know changes you can make or convos you should have, but they're hard to fit in around your other life responsibilities. Prayer: to depend on God as the one who changes lives.

Areas: Once you work out which stage you're at, look at this table to find areas of group life you could grow in. There's 5 areas: bible discussions, prayer, group dynamics, hosting and follow-up. Where can you grow?

CULTURE MODELLER CRAWL	CULTURE SHAPER WALK	CULTURE MAKER RUN
<p>Bible Discussions: Use the Bible Discussion Notes to lead or participate in a bible discussion.</p> <p>Get feedback from your co-leader after, to work together.</p> <p>Note: discussion probably feels stilted as you find your own style.</p>	<p>Bible Discussions: Lead or ably participate in a bible discussion that suits your group, by shaping the Bible Discussion Notes, e.g. write new questions or pick & choose them.</p> <p>Shape your group to engage deeper with the bible, by asking 'where do you see that in the passage?' Follow a tangent & try to weave it into the discussion.</p>	<p>Bible Discussions: With the passage, Notes & your own knowledge, lead or ably participate in a bible discussion to arrive at the place you think is best for growing your group.</p> <p>Work on weaving between set questions, your ideas & group members' input in a way that feels like a natural conversation.</p>
<p>Prayer: Be a great model by being honest & praying big prayers.</p> <p>Encourage others when they pray out loud & share honest prayer points.</p>	<p>Prayer: Help people pray big, by making time for it & showing why it's good.</p> <p>Experiment: split into a smaller group, guys & girls if it's a mixed group, try a theme for prayers, pray at different points in your group time.</p>	<p>Prayer: Make prayer instinctive & natural, rather than a tacked-on part of group life.</p> <p>Help people's prayer to be shaped by God's concerns, e.g. if someone's sick, pray for health <i>and</i> growth in their patience & trust of God in sickness.</p>
<p>Group Dynamics: Be aware of how you're interacting in your group: do people feel heard & valued by you? Are they put-off by you? Do they get what you're saying & doing, & your motivation?</p>	<p>Group Dynamics: Discuss with your co-leader how engaged people are, how to better involve quieter people, what your group's strengths & weaknesses are. Use that input to shape the way your group interacts.</p>	<p>Group Dynamics: Use your influence to shape how your group interacts, so it's fun yet edifying, with deep relationships. Shape the content of your social media thing so it has the same effect across the week.</p>
<p>Hosting: Ensure people are seated comfortably & fed / have a cuppa, by doing it or helping the host do it.</p>	<p>Hosting: Experiment with your co-leader (& hosts) to make the space feel warm & more conducive for good conversations.</p>	<p>Hosting: Help people feel welcome & valued by the space setup <i>and</i> the way you welcome & interact with them across the group time.</p>
<p>Follow-up & Care: Text, call or speak at church with someone who wasn't at group, to ask how they are. Provide practical care for someone in your group, & let the group know so they can help too.</p>	<p>Follow-up & Care: Decide with your co-leader how to involve others to follow up someone who wasn't there, & who'd be best for that.</p> <p>Help your group to be aware of & anticipate needs, & to organise practical care for each other in their group.</p>	<p>Follow-up & Care: Have discipleship follow-up convos, where as well as checking in on how they're going, you also help them value & prioritise gathering with God's people around God's word, more than they do the things that stop them coming regularly.</p>