

“Many who join groups will tell you they signed up to grow deeper in their faith, explore a biblical concept, or simply understand the Bible better. Little do they realize, they are embarking on a radical spiritual undertaking!”

*Bill*

# What Is the Purpose of Our Small Groups?

Jared and Lindsey have been leading their group of young couples for nearly six months. It's been a wild ride! When the group first met they ate dinner together and enjoyed lively conversation. At some point they thought they should “do something” as a group, so they watched a video series on marriage.

When that wrapped up, someone thought it would be fun to serve together, so Andrew and Katie organized several service opportunities. It was hard to find something that fit every member's interest and schedule, so full group participation was tough to manage.

After several service projects, the group was back to dinner and conversation. But now the original excitement waned. What happened?

Although Jared and Lindsey identified what a small group is, they never identified what a small group is supposed to do when they get together!

**GOAL:**

*Know why and how you hope to see members experience spiritual growth.*

## Select a Curriculum Plan

Some churches have a required curriculum pathway and expect every group to accomplish specific studies. Others expect all groups to tie into the weekend services. Still other churches give small groups freedom to choose studies that interest them. Which is God calling you to do? Let's review three common approaches to curriculum.

### Structured Curriculum

#### *Challenges & Opportunities*

- It's easier to build a cohesive church culture since all group members experience the same material across the church.
- If someone needs to switch groups, the curriculum is consistent.
- There is higher control from leadership over what is studied in small groups, and curriculum can be chosen that is consistent with the doctrine and values of the church.
- Groups will not be overwhelmed by the many curriculum choices available.
- Groups that want to cover certain topics (e.g., marriage, parenting, or finances) will have to wait until they appear in the curriculum rotation cycle.
- Not all topics are as appealing, and group participation may wane if the topic doesn't seem applicable.
- Some groups will not appreciate being told what to study and may rebel.
- If the structure doesn't have enough curriculum options, people will probably leave rather than repeat material.
- If a church decides to craft its own material, it will be a big undertaking to make sure it's of high quality.

#### *My Thoughts*

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### Freedom to Choose Curriculum

#### *Challenges & Opportunities*

- Groups can identify their unique spiritual blind spots, goals, and challenges and explore them.
- If the group doesn't like the curriculum it is using, it can stop and find new material without upsetting church leaders.
- Church leaders can spend more time training and developing leaders instead of searching for curricula or producing their own material.
- Groups may choose material that is not aligned with the church doctrine or values.
- Groups can become unbalanced, focusing only on one theme and missing out on the full range of biblical topics.
- Groups can get overwhelmed by the many choices on the market.

#### *My Thoughts*

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### Sermon-Based Curriculum

#### *Challenges & Opportunities*

- Groups have an opportunity to take the sermon further by discussing and applying it.
- The preaching pastor's efforts are maximized, and the sermon lives on in the small group, not just in the worship service.
- If group members have questions and need further clarity from the sermon they have those needs met by others in the group.
- The group never has to think about what to study since the material is provided by the church leadership.