



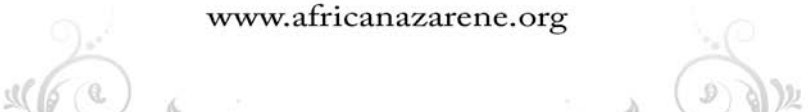
CELEBRATING HOLINESS



HOW TO START A SMALL GROUP

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE - AFRICA REGION

www.africanazarene.org



What is a Small Group

A small group in the church refers to a group of people (3-12) who meet regularly with the purpose of growing in knowing and following Christ. The purpose of the group determines its nature, membership, and activities.

What is Its Purpose

Congregations meet in small groups to engage in Prayer and Fasting, Bible study and in Covenantal and Accountability relationships with God and the church to individually and corporately celebrate holiness.

The ultimate purpose of the 'Celebrating Holiness' small groups is to continually become a holy Christian fellowship, entirely sanctified, seeking the conversion of sinners, being built up in holiness and seeking the simplicity and spiritual power manifest in the primitive New Testament Church (*Manual 2009-2013*, ¶25).

How to Start a Small Group

- Determine the nature of the group you want to start in accordance with the stated purpose
 - Is it a Prayer and Fasting, Bible study, Covenantal or Accountability group?
 - Who will be the members? Will it be open for anyone or only for certain people? The number and people in the group will influence the level of intimacy and openness
 - How long should the group exist? During the course of the Initiative or longer (3 ½ to 6 months or more)
 - How long should each session be? 1-1½ hours recommended
- Establish the number of small groups you want to start
 - Determine how many small groups already exist in your congregation
 - Assess their location, potential, and effectiveness to achieve set goals
 - Consider this as an opportunity to refocus, restart, or revitalize them
 - Depending on the size of the congregation and availability of committed leaders, a minimum of three or four groups rather than one is recommended
- Acquire the relevant recommended resources to help the group achieve set goals
 - Ensure that all resources are approved by the Pastor before use
- Enlist helpers as hosts, co-leaders, etc. It is recommended that those who are hosting do not serve as group leaders at the same time

- Decide on the meeting place and make proper arrangements for its use
- Publicize and invite people. Give as much specifics as possible regarding purpose and activities in addition to place, time, leadership and membership.
 - Requirements for membership should include:
 - A desire and a hunger for holiness
 - A commitment to meet regularly at the agreed time
 - A commitment to contribute to the creation of a safe environment for confidentiality
 - A heart to realize and appreciate the benefits of their participation in the small group as:
 - An opportunity to practically learn to be like Christ
 - A safe environment to be held accountable for their spiritual growth so they can become more like Christ
 - A sense of belonging
- Once the criteria for the group has been decided, a clear covenant and steps to hold each other accountable must be established and committed to by all members.

The Role of the Small Group Leader

- To facilitate the meeting and ensure that the group stays on track to achieve the set goal. This involves:
 - Planning ahead of time
 - Following the agenda
 - Beginning and ending sessions on time to avoid inconveniences to the host or participants
- To acquire and practice group facilitation skills including:
 - Affirming love. Show genuine unconditional love and acceptance of every member as Christ did
 - Listening and responding with empathy. Assure the speaker their thoughts and feelings are heard and accurately understood
 - Asking for help. Be willing to admit when an answer is not known, and ask the group for help
 - Developing questioning techniques that will encourage members to think and discuss. Use open-ended questions with words like who, what, when, why, where and how. Wait for answers. Avoid embarrassing anyone who may not know the answer
- To acquire skills to handle challenges relating to different personalities, getting off track, gossip posed as prayer requests, etc. Handle all difficulties wisely

- To depend on God to sustain and help the group achieve its goals. Plan, but be willing to let God have His way

What to Do in a Small Group

➤ **Prayer and Fasting**

- **15 minutes:** Sing and give testimonies of answered prayer. Always follow-up on prayer requests
- **15 minutes:** Read the Scripture but do not engage in preaching or study
- **30 minutes:** Briefly share prayer requests according to the prayer plan or purpose of the group, and spend time in prayer

➤ **Bible study**

- **15 minutes:** Briefly have fellowship followed by an opening song and prayer
- **30 minutes:** Read the text for study and discuss it with specific questions to help achieve the goal of the session. Seek to understand: what does the text say, what does it mean, how can it be used here and now. Solicit group interaction
- **15 minutes:** Briefly share prayer requests and personal needs arising from the study, and spend time in prayer. Always follow-up on prayer requests

➤ **Covenantal and Accountability (relationships with God and the church)**

A small group may specifically be started when an even deeper walk with God is desired

- Sing a short song and open with prayer
- Follow the accountability questions agreed upon, e.g.
 - What is the state of your soul?
 - What are you doing to help yourself grow spiritually?
 - What opportunities did you have this week to serve others and how did you use them?
 - What temptations did you face and how did you overcome them?
- Briefly share prayer requests and pray for one another. Always follow-up on prayer requests

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