

# *Small Group* LEADERSHIP BOOKLET





# Introduction

First of all, we want to say thank you for those already leading as well as those considering small group leadership. Here at ClearView we believe that God shows up in unique ways when a group of people choose to gather together in Christ's name in small groups. The idea is not ours. Christ did His most important work through a small group of disciples that He chose to walk with Him and learn from Him. When you read through the gospels, you find that Jesus drew crowds on occasion, but He spent most of His time with the same small group of men His entire ministry. Their relationship grew as they walked together, learned together, ate together, ministered together, worshiped together, fished together, and many other simple rhythms that created a friendship and a trust that would become the foundation for the launching of the church.

The New Testament gives us over 58 "one another" commands to live out in our lives. The Greek word for "one another" is "allelon", which means a reciprocal and mutual work on the part of believers toward one another (ntd).

✦ "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you..." (Romans 15:7)

✦ "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love." (Romans 12:10a)

✦ "...Instruct one another." (Romans 15:14)

These are just a few examples, but one thing we realize when we think through how to live these out is that you cannot practice these one another's very effectively in a large group. They are all about relationships and the way we build up the body of Christ.

To lead a small group is to lead in the process of knowing and being known. Romans 12:9 gives us the call to live out our love with sincerity. This is a love without pretense and without masks. It is leading people out of your own experience of knowing God and being known by Him. It is doing the interior work of knowing yourself, your true self, the parts He has healed and the parts God is in the process of recovering. Out of this to let yourself be known by others and to take the time to know the lives and stories of those in your group. This is vulnerable work and takes great courage, but leads to the unique joy of Christian community. You cannot lead people where you are unwilling to go. To join small group leadership is to join with many that have gone before us and others around us that have taken the narrow road of life together in Christ. This is a call to gather people around the table of grace, hope and love, to sit at the feet of Jesus together, to answer the call to be a part of a community of light. We ask that you would pray and see if God would have you join Him in making disciples as you partner with us in leading a small group.

Pastor Zach Bearss  
ClearView Community Church

# Purpose of Small Groups

The mission statement of ClearView is “to lead people into a transforming relationship with Jesus and authentic community with others so that the light of the gospel may be declared through our lives to the world.”

Small Groups fulfill this mission statement in a number of ways:

- ✔ **WE LEAD PEOPLE:** By developing, mentoring, and encouraging small group leaders who, in turn, lead their groups as they come together, grow together, and go together.
- ✔ **INTO A TRANSFORMING RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS:** Through studying the bible together, going deeper into the sermons preached on Sunday, or studying relevant Christian books, DVDs, and bible studies, we grow in our walk with Christ together.
- ✔ **AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY WITH OTHERS:** By encouraging openness and trustworthiness within a small group and sharing our struggles and joys, we then pray together, do life together, and help meet one another's needs physically, spiritually, and emotionally.
- ✔ **SO THAT THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL MAY BE DECLARED THROUGH OUR LIVES TO THE WORLD:** As we bond together in the love of Christ, we reach out to those that do not know Christ to extend this love.

Ephesians 4:13 states that we are to build up the body of Christ “until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.” Small Groups are one of the main avenues for ClearView to build up and strengthen the body of Christ.

## Definitions of a Small Group

“A small group is a group of followers of Christ sharing life together, their struggles as believers seeking to grow in Christ-likeness: the places of un-Christ-likeness as well as places of growth and victory. We spur one another on, support one another in whatever ways needed as we do life together and face life's challenges--we pray for one another, cook meals, financially help, laugh, cry, praise, and worship, and serve others together.”

--by Cindy Kramer, Small Group Leader

“Our community with one another consists solely in what Christ has done to both of us. This is true not merely at the beginning, as though in the course of time something else were to be added to our community; it remains so for all the future and to all eternity. I have community with others and I shall continue to have it only through Jesus Christ. The more genuine and the deeper our community becomes, the more will everything else between us recede, the more clearly and purely will Jesus Christ and his work become the one and only thing that is vital between us. We have one another only through Christ, but through Christ we do have one another, wholly, for eternity.”

--by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*

# The Life of a Leader

## CHARACTER

✦ **BE IN A LOVE RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST.** “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And He said to him, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and foremost commandment.”(Matthew 22: 36-37) As devoted lovers of Jesus, we are seeking to be conformed to His image, understanding that we are loved, chosen, and empowered by God.

✦ **ABIDE IN CHRIST.** “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. Apart from Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:4-5) We are committed to prayer, worship, the study of Scripture, and living and working with spiritual integrity.

✦ **GROW IN CHRIST.** “Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith just as you were instructed and overflowing with gratitude.” (Colossians 2:6-7) We are willing to let others hold us accountable and speak into our personal life for growth in the journey towards maturity.

✦ **BE LIKE CHRIST.**

**A Servant Heart.** “Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:26-28) As we are leading others, the foremost quality in doing so is to have a teachable spirit ourselves. As we are willing to be aware of and honest about our strengths and weaknesses, we will create an environment for our small groups to do the same.

**A Walk of Faith.** “ And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:6) We walk by faith, not by sight and are on a spiritual journey together to discern God’s wisdom and His will in our lives.

**Led by the Holy Spirit.** “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” (Romans 8:14) Our walk of faith is vibrant and alive as we live it out day to day in our families, with one another, and in our community and workplaces.

✦ **BE IN FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHERS IN THE BODY OF CHRIST.** “and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:24-25) We make our spouses, and then our families, followed by those we share small group leadership with a priority. Embracing ClearView’s culture means being part of its family, having an open, joyful, servant heart towards the ministry, avoiding building ministry “silos”, not participating in gossip, and not taking oneself too seriously.

## CALLING

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)

The Lord is asking you to step out in faith to follow Him and lead a small group of believers in their daily walk with Him. The church is the Bride of Christ. There is no greater honor than to serve Him in this context of a body of believers. Your role as a leader within ClearView helps to give stability, growth, and maturity to individual lives in your group, as well as influencing your group towards unity of the body as a whole.

## COMPETENCE

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit...But to each one is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good.” (I Corinthians 12:4,7)

Spiritual gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit listed in the New Testament include, but are not limited to the following: service, teaching, exhortation, leadership, mercy, wisdom, faith, knowledge, and administration. Sometime in your walk with Christ you hopefully have been encouraged to discover what those gifts are so they can be used to edify the Body of Christ.

Another way to explore your giftedness in the body is to take an assessment through StrengthsFinder and to be coached to use your top 5 strengths to be effective in your leadership. The list of 34 strengths includes, but is not limited to the following: empathy, learner, developer, belief, connectedness, responsibility, and relator.

The Lord blessed you with giftings and strengths to equip you to lead. We will help you to discover your uniqueness in Christ and give support, encouragement, and training to continue to develop your leadership skills.

# *Leadership Structure within ClearView*



ClearView has a hierarchy of leadership within the church. The head of the church is Jesus Christ. Serving Him is the Elder Board, comprised of men from our congregation as well as our pastoral staff. The Small Group Coordinator and the Small Group Leadership team align under the Elder Board leadership. In a similar manner, the Small Group Leaders and their groups are active under the leadership of this team and then the Elder Board.

ClearView highly values the ability to speak the truth in love without destructive results and a willingness to work through misunderstandings to find resolution. If a problem or conflict should arise within your group, we ask that you first determine if the issue can be resolved within your group. Next, you may then bring the issue with confidentiality to the Small Group Coordinator, and, if needed, the Small Group Leadership Team. If it is not resolved there, than the Small Group Coordinator will present it to the Senior Pastor and if needed, the Elder Board. Discretion will be respected at all times.

# Approval for Leading a Small Group

- ✔ Agree with the Basic Tenets of ClearView 101.
- ✔ Demonstrate that you are committed to the Body of Christ at ClearView.
- ✔ Fill out and submit the Volunteer Form for ClearView Community Church.
- ✔ Fill out and submit a Background Check Form.
- ✔ Take the Strengthsfinder Assessment and meet to discuss the results and insights in regards to leading out of your strengths.
- ✔ Meet with the Small Group Leadership Team for approval to lead.

# Expectations of a Leader Beyond the Group

A number of times throughout the year you will feel quite alone in leading and insignificant in your efforts to lead. To combat these feelings, to give you fellowship with other small group leaders, and opportunity for leadership growth, the following activities have been created during the year to give you connection to the other leaders:

- ✔ Attend the Fall Leader's Meeting to kick off the year and hear the vision set for the year by the Senior Pastor of ClearView.
- ✔ Attend the Leader's Retreat the first weekend in February each year. This is scheduled for Friday evening and all day Saturday.
- ✔ Participate in outreach beyond your group. One key planned event for all the small groups to participate in is Bless BV Day around the first weekend in May.
- ✔ Meet with the Small Group Coordinator and/or the Small Group Leadership Team throughout the year to help problem solve, be encouraged, pray together, and stay connected with other leaders throughout the year.

# The Life of a Group

## FORMAT OF SMALL GROUPS

We celebrate the uniqueness of each group with its own style. We are not expecting groups to be clones of one another. Let your group find its own “personality”. Structure your time together based on what you are comfortable with and the gifts that God has given you. With this being said, we do want your group to experience the key elements of COMING TOGETHER, GROWING TOGETHER, and GOING TOGETHER.



### *Come Together*

**“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)**

The average size of a small group is 10-12 adults who meet weekly to study God’s word and fellowship together. The studies are varied. Most new groups discuss the sermon further through sermon questions provided by our Senior Pastor each Sunday. Bible studies, book studies and DVDs by respected Christian authors are also excellent resources. Prayerfully decide which study is best for this season of time for your group. We ask that you keep the Small Group Coordinator informed of your current study.

At ClearView we encourage longevity and commitment to one another within each small group. We believe deep fellowship and growth can only be created over time as you begin to trust one another and become accountable to one another. Therefore, most existing groups are classified as “closed groups”. This means that we will not randomly assign someone to your group. Neither will we break up the group to multiply the small group ministry. Because of this commitment to one another, we ask that each adult choose to be in only one small group at a time. And, although the leaders of small groups are required to be committed to the body of ClearView, on occasion there may be a person that you invite into your group that attends another church body or does not attend a church at all.

Occasionally we have seen the Lord encourage a group to break into two and add others to each half, or sometimes the Lord calls a leader out of an existing group to begin a new group. The most common way in which we see change in a group, however, is when someone moves away or stops attending your group. If you find yourself looking to add others to your group, this can be done in one of two ways:

- Ask the Small Group Coordinator for a list of those that have signed up to join a group but are not in one yet
- Look for opportunity and connection, then ask someone directly to join your group that is not currently in a small group.

Both should be done prayerfully and with discussion within your group before proceeding to invite someone. We encourage you to reach out and include others, but note that it changes your dynamics for a season of time. Please keep the Small Group Coordinator current as to who is attending your group.

We do offer twice a year a Newcomer's Group, which is an open group for anyone who is new to ClearView or new to a small group. This is offered in a 6-week format, in which we develop friendship and fellowship by studying further the sermon from Sunday morning as well as prayer and worship together. It is designed to give others a taste of what small group life is like at ClearView. Many of these groups decide to continue on and become a permanent group.

## *Grow Together*

**"They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (Acts 2:42)**

In the example of the early church, we find the basic design for growth in Christ: to be devoted to His teachings through learning and growing together, prayer for one another, and being dedicated to fellowship with one another. Many of our groups also worship together, singing and opening their hearts to God before studying.

All small groups at ClearView are centered around growing through His Word. There are many excellent resources for studying the Bible: going further with sermon discussion questions, DVDs, Christian book and bible studies, going through a book in the Bible, or doing a topical study. You can check with the Small Group Coordinator for ideas, talk with other leaders, or look through our resource library. We do ask that you "major on the majors" and not get entangled in frivolous or minor points of doctrine, as ClearView represents a number of denominational backgrounds that we honor and do not want to cause division. ClearView 101 is our guideline for what we believe are the important points of doctrine.

Spiritual growth is not measured solely by biblical study, although it is a central theme of our small groups. Beyond growth in the Word, there is growth together as a person's entire being is in need of healing and care. We all have a past. We all have hurts. Establishing an atmosphere of trust, belonging to a group of believers who truly listen, who pray together, and who come alongside and give practical and grace filled care are all key elements of walking out the Christian life together. Some nights you will not even get to the bible study because life is overflowing and time is needed to "be devoted to one another in brotherly love" (Romans 12:10). That is part of loving on the body of Christ.

From time to time, you will run up against an issue in someone's life that goes beyond your small group's ability to help see them through. Several examples of this would be: depression, a divorce, drug addiction. We do not expect you to be able to counsel beyond your ability or that of your group's ability. Instead, please confide privately with the Small Group Coordinator. There are resources available, such as counseling provided by the church, that may be a better course of action to help bring ultimate healing and help to those deeply hurting.

## *Go Together*

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

There are seasons in the life of your small group that are ARROWS IN. Everything revolves around the crisis of the moment within your group: health, children, marriages, and jobs take up all your energy, focus, and time. With that being said, we encourage you to have an ARROWS OUT mentality. Look for opportunities for your small group to serve outside of yourselves locally through personal contact with neighbors and those in our communities. Chop wood, run errands, adopt a family in need, make meals, volunteer. Simply reach out as the Lord leads your group to do so.

Working closely with ClearView’s Missions Committee, almost all our groups adopt one of our missionary families supported by the church to build relationship with both our local and foreign missionaries. Writing letters, video chatting through FaceTime or Skype, and sending care packages are all ways to reach out and have your missionary not feel alone on the mission field.

Then, for all the small groups to become involved, once a year we coordinate Bless BV Day. This is when we partner with the town of Buena Vista to provide service projects around the first weekend in May. It is a beautiful testimony that we commit to this annually simply because we love our community while asking for nothing in return. Encourage your group to sign up and be a part of the bigger picture.

# *Scenarios You Might Experience*

...AND IF YOU DO, YOU ARE NOT ALONE

## ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER

We walked into small group with our kids feeling so defeated. I yelled at them at dinner to hurry up, lost my temper trying to get out the door so that we weren't late, apologized in the car for previous outbursts. The kids run off to play and my husband and I flop down. Before we even start our book study, an older man in the group comes over and notices that I look bothered by something. I share about the evening and how I just can't get it right, can't control my tongue, and feel like I am always apologizing to my kids. This man shared some of his experiences as a kid, that his mom never apologized to him and how much he longed for his parents to admit when they messed up. He was wonderful and encouraging. During prayer time he made a special point to pray for our family...not perfection but for humility. We left feeling so much better about the challenges of parenting.

## SERVE ONE ANOTHER

A man in our small group suffers from a chronic illness. It makes it difficult to care for his family in the way we would like. This fall we knew they would need some firewood, so we got together a few hours early before small group one week without inviting this family. We split 6 cords of wood with all the kids and adults helping, loaded it into trailers and trucks and drove it over to the family as a surprise. For group that night there was no book study, no prayer time, and no food. We just stacked the wood and talked together while we worked. The family was so thankful, and we the givers were blessed too.

## LOVE ONE ANOTHER

It was the week after Christmas. My grandmother had just died. I was getting ready to fly out to the funeral the morning after small group. We walked into small group, not particularly feeling like being there. There was a fire going and everyone was chatting on the couches. We were getting ready to start the book study when the leader asked me to share a bit about my grandmother. Everyone listened to a few stories and then began to share their own stories about their lost loved ones. We never did get to the book study that night. There was laughter and some tears and 2 servings of dessert on that cozy evening around the fire. It was a precious time that resulted in thanksgiving and gratefulness for "my small group family" and their understanding and love.

## PRAY WITH ONE ANOTHER

One family in our group has a tough situation with a grown child that is living a wayward life. They sometimes ask for prayer for him, but tonight it was very heavy. During prayer request time they shared how it felt like their marriage was at a breaking point because of him. They were always fighting about how to handle their son's problems, and they were under financial strains trying to help. We listened and sat in silence with the weight and hopelessness of the situation. Then someone started to pray...no parenting advice or platitudes or bible verses. We simply cried out to God to reach down and help them. We prayed for a long time. No one else shared any requests that night; we just interceded for our friends. And God answered! We have a small group journal in which we keep prayer requests and answers from our years together.

# *The Practical Side of Small Groups*

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Have your group make a commitment, either in writing or verbally, to not share personal information outside of the group that was shared during your group time.

## **CONSISTENCY**

Setting the day of the week and time to meet, and then sticking with it, is crucial. 90% of the groups meet in member's homes, although you are welcome to reserve space and meet at the church. For those meeting in homes, about half meet at the same home each week and the other half rotate week to week. Almost all serve refreshments. Sometimes the host provides the food while other groups have everyone bring something to share. No matter what your style, creating a welcoming environment through the gift of hospitality helps to generate an atmosphere of fellowship and friendship.

## **DISAPPOINTMENT**

When we have asked leaders, "What is your biggest discouragement in leading a small group?" the #1 answer is: "When we had everything all set for the evening and then no one showed up." Just as the enemy is discouraging you as a leader to cancel, the enemy is also discouraging those joining you from getting there, because he hates unity of the body and for us to experience life together. Sometimes you must cancel, however, simply because of illness, busy schedules, or everyone is out-of-town.

In addition, there also seems to be a "tipping point" where gathering together moves from "Maybe I will get there" to where it becomes the priority to be at small group or they feel like they are missing out on a vital part of their week. Be patient. Be consistent. Extend grace.

## **LINES OF LEADERSHIP**

You have been approved by the Small Group Leadership Team to lead your small group. It is okay to pass around the leadership from week to week, as long as you are still there as the leader. If, however, you are gone for an extended period of time, and your group continues to meet, you need to designate a person or a couple as the leaders and have them approved by the Leadership Team to lead your group in your absence. In addition, many groups have co-leaders that have been approved and share in the leadership, especially when one couple or person is away. We encourage this for stability in being able to continue to meet and to share in the leadership role in fellowship together.

## **SPIRITUAL WARFARE**

What you are committing to has eternal value. Expect interference, especially on the day you meet. Put on the armor of God and stay focused on seeing it through to gather together.

## SCHOOL YEAR FORMAT

With the busy summer season in Buena Vista of individuals in your group working hard because of tourism season, as well as family members visiting from around the country to enjoy the Colorado mountains, most of our groups take a break during the summer season.

Fun and simple gatherings still occur to stay connected: have a picnic, jeep together, or grill out on a summer evening from time to time. You do have the option of still meeting for study, but most groups simply enjoy playing together.

## SELF FUNDING

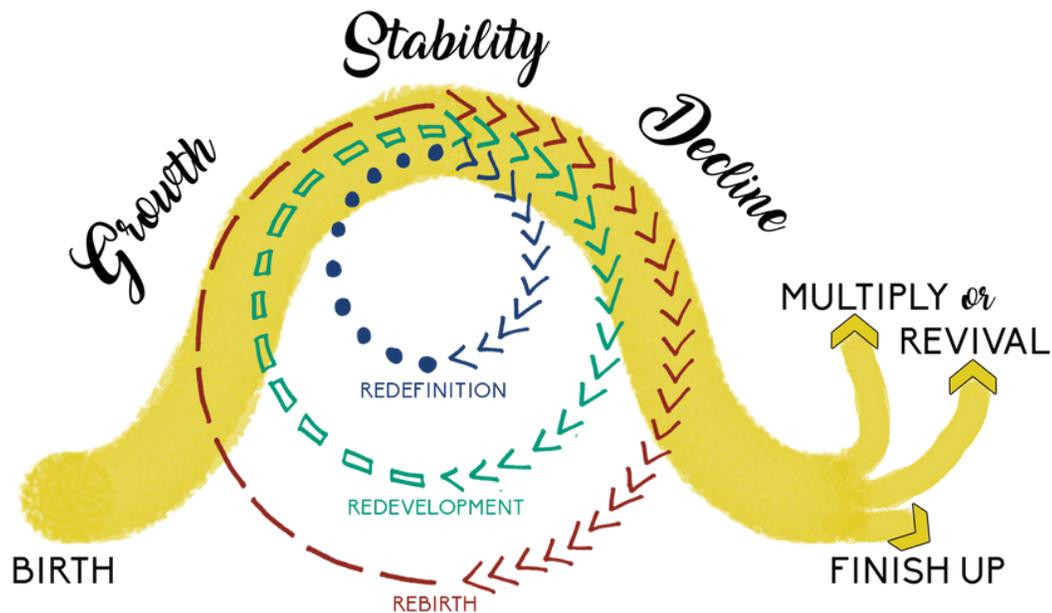
Each group member is expected to pay for books ordered, if any, that you will be studying together. If someone in your group does not have the funds to pay, then you may contact the Small Group Coordinator to request that this person be sponsored by the small group budget.

If your group is using a DVD, the church will pay for the DVD as long as it is returned to our resource library for small group usage afterwards. In addition, we ask at the end of each study for a volunteer from your group to donate their book to our resource library for other leaders to check out and consider studying in the future.

For babysitting, once again, it is up to the group to coordinate this and to pay for this service.

Call the church office if you need suggestions for babysitters. We would ask that the group consider helping with the funding instead of leaving it up to the individual families.

# Life Cycles of Groups



## GATHER TOGETHER: MEET AND GREET STAGE (Birth and Infancy)

- Creating a safe environment (confidentiality is key)
- Creating authenticity
- Getting to know one another

## GROW TOGETHER: CULTIVATING COMMUNITY: SENSE OF BELONGING (Adolescence)

- Desire to be known
- Creating vulnerability
- Carrying one another's burdens
- Serving together and being fruitful

## GO TOGETHER: MATURING TOGETHER (Adulthood)

- Developing deep rooted relationships with God
- Developing deep rooted relationships with one another

## FINISH UP OR MULTIPLY OR REVIVAL (Old Age)

- Finishing strong through revival or multiplication
- Time to Finish Up

## FINISHING WELL WITH YOUR GROUP

Sometimes death comes to a group because God wants to send group members out to bear new fruit in new settings, or it may simply be that your group's season of life is at an end. If you sense from the Lord that it is time to stop, we ask that you do so with a great deal of care.

Please seek out help and advice from the Small Group Coordinator for prayer and ideas as to how to finish well with your group. In addition, we will ask that you meet with the Small Group Leadership Team for an exit interview, at which time the leadership team can process this decision and pray with you.

## *What a Small Group is Not*

- a new concept
- A Bible study only
- A social club only
- a one day a week commitment
- always easy
- where you say “don’t stretch me”
- where you say “don’t rock the boat”
- addiction counseling
- gossip night
- a one-man show
- rigid
- a group of perfect people
- about being comfortable
- about status quo
- all work and no play
- clones of one another
- entertainment time
- about the meeting place (but about each other throughout the week)

## *What a Small Group Is*

- trust
- acceptance
- confidentiality
- longevity
- vulnerability
- love
- honesty
- truth
- grace

“Just as Christians should not be constantly feeling the pulse of their spiritual life, so too the Christian community has not been given to us by God for us to be continually taking its temperature. The more thankfully we daily receive what is given to us, the more assuredly and consistently will community increase and grow from day to day as God pleases.”

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together and Prayerbook of the Bible*

# *Favorite Studies Over the Years*

We have asked small group leaders what their favorite studies have been along the way; here is a list below. We also have a resource library for you to be able to check a book or DVD out and review before suggesting it to your group. Please get in touch with the Small Group Coordinator for more details.

- Sermon Questions by Pastor Zach posted weekly for groups to discuss the message further
- Experiencing God by Henry Blackaby
- The Holy Spirit by David Jeremiah
- Heaven by Randy Alcorn
- A Long Obedience in the Same Direction by Eugene Peterson
- That the World May Know DVD Series by Ray Vanderlin
- Indescribable and How Great is Our God Louie Giglio Videos
- A Loving Life by Paul Miller
- Prodigal God by Timothy Keller
- Ragamuffin Gospel by Brennan Manning
- How to Stop the Pain by James Richards
- Stuff Christians Like by Jonathan Acuff
- The Sacred Romance by John Eldredge