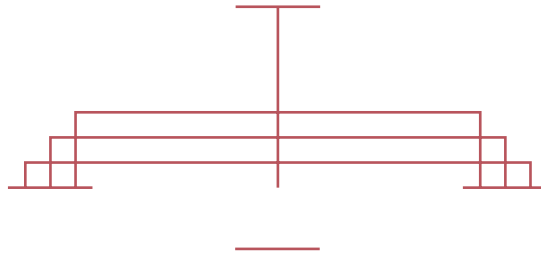




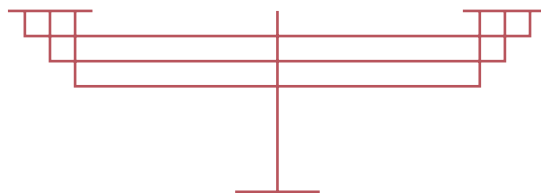
PART 2

COMMUNITY GROUP LEADERSHIP



Among the followers of Jesus... leadership is not a synonym for lordship. Our calling is to be servants not bosses, slaves not masters. True, a certain authority attaches to all leaders, and leadership would be impossible without it... Yet the emphasis of Jesus was not on the authority of a ruler-leader but on the humility of a servant-leader. The authority by which the Christian leader leads is not power but love, not force but example, not coercion but reasoned persuasion. Leaders have power, but power is safe only in the hands of those who humble themselves to serve.

JOHN STOTT
Issues Facing Christians Today





PART 2

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER?

Community group leaders serve a vital role in our church. A community group leader is responsible for the direction and health of their community group. They oversee, coach, and develop the apprentices within their group. For this reason, there are certain requirements for community group leaders.

REQUIREMENTS FOR A COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER

The following requirements must be met for someone to be considered for community group leadership:

- ***A believing and baptized Christian***
- ***A covenant member in good standing with the church***
- ***Believe and champion Frontline's mission and five distinctives***
- ***Completion of the launch process found at frontlinechurch.com/launch***

COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER JOB DESCRIPTION

Does the thought of leading a community group make you nervous? You're not alone. Like most people, you might be carrying a confusing and contradictory tangle of ideas about leadership that swirl in the culture at large. You might think to yourself: "I'm not a leader—leaders should be charismatic and outgoing, and always know what to do. On top of all that, to lead in the church you need to be armed with ready-made answers to every conceivable biblical question."

Or, like many others, you might be carrying bad memories of previous leadership experiences. You might think to yourself: "My experience of leadership has always been lonely and exhausting, but I keep getting sucked back in because nobody else will step up."

If you can relate to any of that, good news! Our community group leaders don't have all the answers either. They are not afraid to say, "I don't know, but I'll get back to you," because they know their pastors and hub leaders will help them find the answers they need. Our community group leaders have wildly diverse personality types and talents, and they have been relieved to discover they don't have to lead alone.

Community group leadership is both easier and harder than you might think. Easier because at Frontline character and commitment always trump charisma and copious knowledge. Harder because refusing to lead alone, asking for help, saying "I don't know," listening more than talking, and patiently walking alongside others are not behaviors any of us have seen modeled enough. Our community group leaders are normal people, just like you, who quietly and patiently walk alongside, listen to, pray for, and follow up with others—and they do all of those things for people *with* people, as a team.

If you are willing, set aside your preconceptions, assumptions, and fears about leadership for a moment, and see if the following five commitments don't stir something in your heart. Here is the real "job description" of a Frontline community group leader:

- ***A commitment to co-labor***
- ***A commitment to communicate***
- ***A commitment to pursue***
- ***A commitment to mature***
- ***A commitment to champion***

1. A COMMITMENT TO CO-LABOR

Most people assume community group leadership is inherently lonely, but lonely community group leadership is not sustainable leadership. Scripture describes being saved out of the world as simultaneously being saved into a family. All of us have been given spiritual gifts to build each other up, but none of us have been given all the gifts. Because Jesus has designed the Church to function interdependently, we are committed to team ministry at Frontline. When leaders feel weary, overwhelmed, and lonely, they tend to think “It’ll be easier if I just do it myself.”

Counter-intuitively, a large part of leadership is learning to ask for help, give up control, and share the load. We might go faster alone, but we’ll go farther together. Team ministry moves far slower, but it’s far more sustainable.

Ask for help. Identify others’ gifting and energy in the areas of planning, hosting, communication, and facilitation. Invite them in. Give up control in order to gain help. Don’t get discouraged when their help doesn’t meet your standards the first time around. Gently and calmly give them direct and immediate feedback, and watch them grow in using their gifts to support you and bless the group.

Healthy community group leaders aren’t Lone Rangers who do everything themselves. Instead, they constantly think and preach “team,” and work alongside others to help their group grow in maturity. Rather than taking on every role within their group, they delegate tasks and call others to relate to the group like owners, not renters. They also welcome and seek out coaching, advice, and soul care from their hub leaders.

A commitment to co-labor might look like...

- making a list of everything that’s needed for your group to be healthy and run smoothly, and asking yourself who might be good at stewarding each of those tasks (creating and communicating the group calendar, planning the family meals, hosting, facilitating a d-group, planning and coordinating a missional gathering, setting up a meal calendar for a new mom, leading a service project for an elderly group member, etc.).

- prayerfully reading through the “Apprenticeship” section of this handbook in order to strengthen your ability to identify, equip, and launch others.
- identifying and recruiting another person or couple to apprentice.

2. A COMMITMENT TO COMMUNICATE

Communication is a key part of co-laboring. Lone Ranger leaders don’t tend to be great communicators. Your group members will feel cared for and led well whenever you proactively develop and communicate the plan for the upcoming schedule. Share the load of planning and communication to ensure it happens consistently. Just because you are responsible to make sure everything gets done doesn’t mean you should do everything.

Communication isn’t just for logistics—it’s also for relationship. One of the biggest keys to success as a community group leader is working to slowly build trust over time with your hub leader. As you get more comfortable with them, you can let them know more and more about what you’re thinking and feeling. In turn they can encourage you and pray for you in increasingly thoughtful ways. Can you name what you are afraid of? What you are avoiding? Share with your hub leader—it will lighten you. “We name things to tame things.”

A commitment to communicate might look like...

- sitting down with your fellow leaders and apprentices to map out dates, times, and locations for family meals and discipleship groups for the next 60 to 90 days. Once you’re done, have someone who’s handy with that kind of thing lay it all out in a clean and clear format and send it out to the group.
- recruiting someone to send out week-of and day-of reminders to the group before each gathering, as well as choose the themes, and coordinate the preparation, for all family meals.
- recruiting someone to collect everyone’s contact information (phone numbers, addresses, birthdays, names of children, etc.), and then distribute all the information to the group. They can also set up a group text or email thread, as

well as take the initiative to regularly update the group's communication channels whenever new members join the group. Ask them to alert you whenever a group member's birthday is approaching, as well as help facilitate a way to recognize and celebrate that person.

3. A COMMITMENT TO PURSUE

Community group leaders are not called to merely set out chips and salsa and keep the conversation going. Community group leaders are called to walk alongside other people as spiritual friends and fellow travelers, in order to get to know them well enough to pray for them. Indeed, all forms of "pursuit" are simply variations on the theme of knowing people well enough to pray for them.

Only God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and everywhere-at-once. You won't be able to answer all their questions, fix all their problems, or be there for them all the time. But you can always listen, encourage, and pray. You can always ask thoughtful questions. You can always notice when they're absent, and let them know they were missed. You can always follow up after a meaningful conversation, ask how they're doing, and let them know they've been on your mind. In fact, the majority of your ministry as a community group leader will involve offering your peaceful, prayerful presence, and then following up.

A commitment to pursue might look like...

- taking a few moments after a meaningful conversation to stop and write down significant details before you forget them (names of family members, significant life events, etc.). The notes section of their contact card in your phone is a great spot that can be easily pulled up or added to.
- setting a reminder in your calendar to pray for someone before a big event in their life, as well as calling them afterwards to hear how it went. Or setting a reminder for yourself to call and pray for someone when you know they'll be on a business trip and struggling with loneliness or temptation.
- casting vision for how every member can take personal initiative to move towards others, and check-in, listen, pray, and otherwise be human with each other during unstructured time

together. This is particularly applicable to the family meal.

- asking an appropriate, trusted person in your group to check in on someone who's been absent or has a need.

4. A COMMITMENT TO MATURE

We don't necessarily invite people to consider community group leadership because they're brimming with leadership confidence. We invite them because they're brimming with character, and seem to possess a sense of calling to this unique ministry—the kind of calling that will keep them from bailing out the minute it gets hard. Competence can be coached on the job, but character and calling are prerequisites. That's the paradox of leadership—sometimes the people who feel the least qualified are the most qualified! Pride might keep someone from growing as a leader, but fear could keep them from ever becoming one in the first place—especially if they wrongly assume they have to be a Bible expert, trauma specialist, public speaker, or visionary thought leader (whatever that is).

Again, character is a prerequisite for community group leadership, and perhaps the most unmistakable mark of character is humility—the kind of realistic view of ourselves that makes us teachable, receptive, and willing to grow.

Spiritual maturity is not a destination at which any of us have arrived, but a direction in which we're all headed. One sign that we are growing in maturity is if we can name—with help from our friends—at least one place where we sense an invitation from Jesus to grow and change.

- Jonathan is more likely to: hide his flaws, avoid challenges, and view feedback as a personal attack.
- Kristen is more likely to: believe mistakes are part of learning, embrace challenges, and welcome feedback.

Would those closest to you say you're more like Jonathan or Kristen?

Community group leadership requires patience with yourself and patience with your group. You

can expect to make mistakes. What matters most is how you respond. Don't beat yourself up over every little mistake. Rather, as you fix your eyes on Jesus, you will stop thinking less of yourself, and start to think of yourself less. God will faithfully lead you into radical "extrospection," where you navel-gaze less, and move towards others more. Paul describes this progression as "love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim 1:5).

This kind of humble receptivity is enabled and sustained only by genuine spiritual vitality—including regular rhythms of communing with God through Scripture and prayer. If that doesn't feel true of your present reality, begin cultivating new habits that will sustain you on the journey. For help with engaging Scripture, see additional resources in our Leadership Library (frontlinechurch.com/library).

At Frontline, every ministry role invests in your development as a follower of Jesus before it's ever about what you can do for that ministry. We are committed to using ministry to build up people, rather than using people to build up ministry.

A commitment to mature might look like...

- fighting to regularly find your joy and comfort in the Lord—through Scripture, prayer, and fresh infillings of the Spirit.
- taking the initiative to ask for help on the front end, and feedback on the back end, instead of avoiding it, or merely bracing for it.
- learning to tell yourself a different story when you make mistakes, by actively naming how each mistake has created an opportunity for you to strengthen a weakness, deepen your character, or learn a new skill.

5. A COMMITMENT TO CHAMPION

At Frontline, community group leaders play a crucial role in maintaining the unity of our church. If all our groups are on the same page, rowing in the same direction, and working from the same plan, our people will generally experience growth and health, despite the inherent imperfection of any and every ministry strategy. On the other hand, leaders who pull their group in a different direction from the

church could do profound damage to people and their faith.

Therefore, community group leaders must believe and champion the distinctives of our church: Gospel-Centered, Bible-Honoring, Spirit-Filled, Kingdom-Focused, and Gender-Redeeming. While these distinctives are not essential beliefs in order to be a follower of Jesus, they are core beliefs of our church and have massive implications for how we live and minister in this local church, in this place and time. Going beyond what we require for covenant membership, community group leaders must wholeheartedly believe these distinctives—prizing them as true, good, and beautiful. They should feel comfortable pursuing growth in each of these areas and leading others to do so as well. Leaders who believe and champion our distinctives are best positioned to preserve unity and promote flourishing.

In addition, community group leaders must believe and champion our philosophy of community groups. Every local church has its own way of doing things—the ministry practices by which they seek to live out the mission God has given them. And every church must agree on a particular kind of discipleship strategy, so they can all head in the same direction with one heart and mind. At Frontline, community groups play an essential role in how we do ministry.

We've chosen to gather our community groups in three different rhythms: discipleship groups, family meals, and missional gatherings. These three rhythms are not sacred or inherently superior to any other model. Other churches may do things differently with great success. But we believe these rhythms are the best way for us to love God, love people, and push back darkness in this time and place. Leaders who spend more energy complaining about the model than capitalizing on its strengths will miss out on countless opportunities to disciple their people. Leaders need to believe in our model, cast vision for why it matters, and call their people to commit to living it out with them.

A commitment to champion might look like...

- revisiting the content on the five distinctives as taught in Frontline's membership class.

- ready to step into this role, you will be provided with next steps.
4. ***Complete MinistrySafe's Sexual Abuse Awareness Training.*** Before becoming a community group leader, every candidate must be in compliance with Frontline's MinistrySafe Sexual Abuse Awareness Training policy. Your community director will let you know how to proceed.
5. ***Get commissioned on a Sunday.*** This is an opportunity for the church to pray over you as your community group prepares to launch, but it's also a chance for you to do some free advertising! Formally request to be commissioned, and make sure all the details for your new group are locked in (e.g., launch date, time, place, etc.) by filling out the Launch Checklist, which can be found at frontlinechurch.com/launch.
6. ***Gather your group and go through Basic Training.*** As you step into leadership, your group will be equipped with Frontline's Basic Training curriculum.

New community group leaders are identified and equipped by existing group leaders and hub leaders, particularly through our apprenticeship process. If you have a desire to lead a group and haven't been approached yet, reach out to your group leader about becoming an apprentice.

1. ***Watch the community group leader training videos.*** You can find these videos online at frontlinechurch.com/launch. These videos will lay the groundwork for your time as a community group leader.
2. ***Complete the Gospel Self-Assessment.*** You can find this online assessment at frontlinechurch.com/launch. If you already filled out the Gospel Self-Assessment as part of your apprenticeship process, you do not need to fill it out again.
3. ***Meet with your community director and hub leaders for an assessment.*** Once you've submitted the Gospel Self-Assessment, your community director will reach out to set up this meeting. Afterwards, if your leaders feel you are

APPRENTICESHIP

The term “apprenticeship” refers to a method of training where a skilled worker passes on the practical knowledge they have acquired over the years. The apprentice receives one-on-one training, hands-on practice, and an opportunity to see the skills needed to succeed. The benefit of this method is that it allows our learning to move out of theory and into reality. It is one thing to read a textbook about a medical procedure; it is another thing entirely to perform that procedure under the watchful eye of a knowledgeable and caring mentor, with an opportunity to ask questions and receive feedback.

In our community groups, we take an apprenticeship approach to leadership development. This means we don’t just train new community group leaders in a classroom or on a screen. Rather, we ask each of our group leaders to take on an apprentice, in order to relationally pass on the knowledge they have acquired in their experience as a leader. In doing so, apprenticeship moves leadership out of theory and into reality. It is a form of development with dirt under its fingernails.

In addition, apprenticeship allows us to not solely focus on techniques, but to aim for mature followers of Jesus marked by wisdom. Our hope is that, through apprenticeship, a person would grow as a disciple and deepen their understanding of how God can use them in the lives of others. The primary goal of apprenticeship is not to increase our number of community groups. The primary goal is “that we may present everyone mature in Christ” (Col 1:28).

WHAT IS AN APPRENTICE?

Apprentices are potential community group leaders. Whether formally or informally, they are being equipped to lead and gradually given responsibility within the group. An apprentice helps shoulder the load alongside of and under the direction of their

leaders. Depending on their skill and experience, apprentices are the most likely people to lead a multiplication out of their group. Every community group should have an apprentice as soon as possible. Not every apprentice will become a group leader. But the hope is that every apprentice would deepen their joy in Jesus as they serve and learn alongside their leaders.

HOW DO I LEAD AN APPRENTICE?

As a community group leader, one of your major responsibilities is to identify, equip, and launch leaders. Therefore, we ask that every leader commit to recruit one or two apprentices. You are encouraged to do this from the start of your group, preferably within the first 90 days. This process requires us to be intentional—prayerfully asking God to raise up new leaders, and diligently working towards their development. Consider the following as a guide:

1. Identifying an Apprentice

Over the last several weeks, you’ve begun to notice leadership potential in John and Cindy. Every time someone new visits the group, they have been hospitable and made the person feel welcome. They also have been quick to pray for others when someone shares a need with the group. You’re not quite sure they would make good community group leaders, or even if they would want to. But when you think of who you would trust to lead a group, they are the first ones that come to mind.

While there’s no absolute formula for identifying an apprentice, there are several qualities to look for.

- Who is consistently present?
- Who engages discussion (not dominating the conversation, but contributing meaningfully)?
- Who helps meet the needs of the group?

- Who is especially hospitable?
- Who has expressed a willingness to step into leadership?

Someone does not have to check all the boxes above before we start the apprenticeship conversation with them. Still, markers like these can help alert us to potential apprentices. Make sure you don't simply look for someone like you. The body of Christ is immensely diverse, and so are those whom he has called as leaders. Be open to consider people who are very different from you.

If you are struggling to identify a possible apprentice in your group, that's okay. It can be difficult to recognize leadership potential in others. Ask your hub leader for input. They may have a different perspective on the members of your group as they have visited your group and gotten to know the members better. But more importantly, pray regularly for God to raise up leaders and give you discernment (Matt 9:27-28).

2. Inviting an Apprentice

"Greg, I really appreciate how you contribute to our community group, especially by driving us to be better about engaging our neighborhood. I think there could be some real leadership gifts in your life. Would you consider stepping into some more responsibility in our community group? In particular, I'd love it if you planned our next missional gathering and helped us serve and engage our neighbors."

Apprenticeship typically begins informally, asking an individual to begin taking on some leadership responsibilities in the group. You could begin by letting a person know that you have observed certain leadership qualities in them and invite them to begin taking on some responsibilities for the group. This could look like coordinating events, scheduling meals, sending group communication, leading a discussion, or attending a training. This allows an individual to get a feel for leadership, find their gifting, and clarify their calling. This unofficial stage creates less stress than formally naming someone an "apprentice" and also gives the leader a chance to evaluate and equip without pressure.

In time, some will begin to show themselves as candidates for more formal apprenticeship. At this

point, the community group leader should ask the person to become an apprentice in hopes to train them to lead a community group one day. Some people may sense a call to leadership, but never step into it if you don't invite them in. Having spent time informally with them, they should be more confident to take on greater responsibility. At this point, there are a few things to invite them to do:

- Read a copy of this Community Group Handbook. Ask them to read a section at a time and discuss with you.
- Fill out the Gospel Self-Assessment and Reality Check Self-Assessment. They can find these online at frontlinechurch.com/library. As they complete each assessment, they can forward you their results and schedule a time to process in person.
- Begin attending your Hub Leadership Gatherings. These are regular meetings with your hub leaders and the other community group leaders in your hub for training and connection. These gatherings will help shape the apprentice's understanding of gospel community and Frontline culture.

If your invitation is met with hesitation or "no," don't panic. Ask follow-up questions with a posture of calm curiosity. As you process with them, you may realize there is a misunderstanding of what apprenticeship entails, or some previous experience in Christian community that is haunting them. Be patient and give them time to think and pray about your conversation. In other instances, there may be legitimate reasons they shouldn't step into apprenticeship at this time. Either way, if they are persistent, respect their "no." You can still assign small, informal responsibilities to them, as they are willing.

3. Equipping an Apprentice

Karen is showing a lot of progress as you talk about community group leadership. But she lacks confidence in her ability to lead a group discussion. You ask Karen to lead the next women's discipleship group while you participate. You give her the Discipleship Group Guide and tell her what you have learned as you've led that time. You remind her that you'll have her back if something unexpected comes

up during the group, but that you would like her to take the lead. You meet up the following week to give feedback and encouragement.

If someone has accepted our invitation into apprenticeship, we have a responsibility to prayerfully help them identify a few places Jesus might be inviting them to grow. We need to thoughtfully build out a plan to help develop them as a leader and follower of Jesus. If we neglect that responsibility, we may end up inadvertently using them to build up ministry instead of using ministry to build them up. We should be looking for areas that need attention in our apprentice's life and leadership, whether theological, philosophical, or practical.

In particular, you should guide them through our Apprenticeship Training Plan (frontlinechurch.com/apprenticeship). The Apprenticeship Training Plan is a tool to help you equip your apprentice in the five commitments of community group leadership. As they complete each step, ask them to initiate a conversation with you to discuss what they are learning, as well as forwarding any online assessments they fill out. Be sure that you are listening intently during these conversations and making note of specific areas your apprentice needs to grow. Review these prior to each subsequent meeting. This is a great opportunity to give them additional resources for development, some of which can be found in our Leadership Library (frontlinechurch.com/library). Ask your hub leader for any book, sermon, or article recommendations that fall outside the scope of the Leadership Library.

In addition, you should provide them with more responsibility in the leadership of the community group, while providing encouragement and feedback. We don't want to give someone more than they can handle, but we do want to provide them with opportunities to stretch themselves. We want to give them a safe place to try things out, grow, and maybe even fail. Areas where we might delegate responsibility include:

- Facilitating discussion during a discipleship group or family meal
- Praying for a hurting person in their discipleship group
- Coordinating the meal calendar for family meal

- Praying for the group before you eat at family meal
- Planning and leading a missional gathering
- Handling the weekly communication with the rest of the group
- Setting up a Meal Train for someone in need of care
- Meeting up with a member of the community group to check in on them

It is important in each of these areas to give feedback to the apprentice, sharing the things you have learned from experience as you have led the group.

4. Assessing an Apprentice

Michael and Janet have been serving as apprentices for the last seven months. They have been working through the Apprenticeship Training Plan and occasionally leading various aspects of the community group, such as leading discussion and handling communication. In consultation with your hub leader, you feel like it is time for your group to multiply and for Michael and Janet to become community group leaders. "Michael and Janet, I think it's time for you to start praying about leading a group that multiplies out of our existing group. I'd like to sit down with you and process calling, further growth, and next steps."

As you invest in your apprentice, it is important to regularly assess when your apprentice is ready to step into leading their own community group. Part of this assessment will include evaluating your group's readiness to multiply. You can find more information on multiplication and how to lead your group through it in the section entitled "Multiplication" in this handbook. Your hub leader will help you assess when the time is right for multiplication, taking into account a number of factors include the readiness of your apprentices. But in general, your apprentice may be ready to move towards community group leadership if they have done the following:

- Accepted your invitation to formal apprenticeship
- Aspired to group leadership
- Worked through any growth areas in the Apprenticeship Training Plan

- city through the birth of a new gospel community. Schedule time in the near future to gather back up, share stories of God's grace, and enjoy spending time together again. For more information on multiplication—including how to talk about it and how to plan for it—see the section entitled “Multiplication” in this handbook.

When you and your hub leader feel it is time to move forward, invite your apprentice to begin the launch process (frontlinechurch.com/launch). This process will still give time for you, your hub leader, and your apprentice to address areas of growth and cast a vision for multiplication to your group. You can find more information on this process under the section entitled “How Do I Become a Community Group Leader?” in this handbook.

Communicate to your apprentice up front that completion of the launch process does not guarantee community group leadership. Often, the launch process will reveal areas of growth that need additional attention. Some of this growth can happen as they lead their new group. Other times, you may need to pause the process in order to work more closely with your apprentice before moving forward. Again, the primary goal is leadership development, not merely starting new groups. Your hub leaders will help you know what steps to take as you move toward multiplication.

5. Launching an Apprentice

At the current group's last gathering, the Smith family sits in the middle of the room as you lead the group in praying for their future as community group leaders. You listen for words, pictures, or passages of Scripture from the Holy Spirit. You also pray for the two other families who are helping launch this new work. Several months later, you invite the Smiths and their community group to rejoin your sending group for a meal. You take turns sharing evidences of God's grace and lead everyone in thanksgiving to God for all that he has done in both groups since the multiplication.

Make an event of your last night together before the multiplication. Throw a party and celebrate what God is doing among you. Put your new community group leaders and their core team in the middle of the room, lay hands on them, and pray for their future together. Mourn the reality of saying goodbye and celebrate God growing his kingdom in your



MULTIPLICATION

WHY DO WE MULTIPLY COMMUNITY GROUPS?

Frontline exists to multiply gospel communities that love God, love people, and push back darkness. Through multiplication, we are able to better make disciples, care for others, and advance the kingdom. We multiply so that we can proclaim the gospel and demonstrate the kingdom to more people who desperately need it.

We don't aim to multiply as an end in itself. In other words, our goal is not to launch as many groups as possible. Rather, our community groups multiply for discipleship, care, and mission. If we are to form and sustain healthy groups, multiplication will play a crucial and necessary role.

Multiplication is a very big deal in itself, but what we multiply really matters too. As you prepare for multiplication, do some soul-searching and ask yourself if your community group is faithfully committed to our vision, goals, rhythms, and, ultimately, the gospel. Talk with your hub leader about how you can point your group back towards health as needed.

We multiply for discipleship. When disciples are making disciples, they grow. When community groups increase in number beyond a certain threshold, participation and growth begins to waver because human relationships are inherently limited. We can't know everyone. Leaders can't be everywhere for everyone. Conversations can begin to center around the most vocal people in the group. As a result, mission shrinks, and discipleship is stifled. But through multiplication, we can create room for deeper discipleship and greater intentionality. Multiplication can and should be a means of helping us grow as disciples. We multiply so discipleship can thrive.

We multiply for care. Community groups are responsible for much of the care at Frontline;

therefore, it is crucial to be sensitive to group size and its impact on how we care for one another. When groups grow too large, people can begin to fall through the cracks. Needs might go unknown and unmet. We can easily become overwhelmed and exhausted. The ability to effectively care for one another becomes restricted. But through multiplication, we can keep groups to a reasonable size so that we may know and care for every member. We multiply so care can thrive.

We multiply for mission. Jesus commissioned us to go, and the Church has been committed to multiplication since its inception. We ourselves are recipients of the gospel because Christians throughout history have multiplied and spread the gospel message throughout the world. In the same way, community groups should be reaching out in order to welcome in. We should regularly see new people join our group—both from our church and through relationships in the community. If we are hospitably creating space for others to join us, it will naturally lead to multiplication. When we are on mission, our groups have the potential to grow. When a group is too large, visitors can feel overwhelmed, neglected, and even go unnoticed. We multiply so that mission can thrive and more people can come to know and love Jesus.

HOW DOES SIZE FACTOR INTO MULTIPLICATION?

The size of our groups must be taken into account when thinking about multiplication. The ideal size of a community group is about twelve to eighteen adults. If there are lots of young children in a group, that number might be less. There are exceptions to the rule, but overly-large groups are not our desire and are not usually the best environment for effective discipleship, care, and mission.

When a group is too small, it could turn inward and become less effective at mission. On the other hand, when a group is too large, people might struggle to know and be known in community. The larger the group, the harder it is to shepherd well. It becomes more difficult for everyone to be heard; it becomes harder for everyone to remain organized and accountable. Multiplication should be the objective of a large group sooner rather than later.

WHEN SHOULDN'T YOU MULTIPLY?

Don't multiply just because your group is large.

Group size should not be the primary determining factor for when a group multiplies. While size is incredibly important, what matters most is leader health and readiness. If your group is currently larger than the ideal, we definitely recommend you start having conversations about multiplication. But don't let your group's size dynamics dictate what is wise or rush you into an unhealthy situation.

Don't multiply without trained and qualified leaders.

Before any community group multiplies, we should aim to have leaders who have been trained and equipped to lead a healthy community group. We should avoid rushing someone into leadership so that we can multiply faster. We can't create a shortcut to healthy leadership. If you feel the need to multiply and don't have leaders in mind, talk to your hub leader about ways to develop the right leaders.

Don't multiply to solve relational problems.

Conflict is inevitable in relationships. As we live in community with one another, there will be times we might experience tension, frustration, and anger. We should never use multiplication as an antidote to conflict. Instead, we should encourage healthy, gospel-centered conflict resolution. If a problem persists, contact your hub leader for the best way to move forward.

Don't multiply without a clear sense of mission.

If our reason for multiplying has more to do with convenience than the kingdom, it's just not a good enough reason to multiply. This kind of multiplication is often driven around the felt needs of the group members. *We need to multiply because Thursday nights aren't convenient for me...*

We need to multiply because I don't "click" with Susan... We need to multiply to alleviate _____. Whatever the reason, this is more like division than multiplication, and often reveals a consumeristic heart. The appropriate response is not to multiply, but to patiently lead your group to live in line with the gospel over time (Gal 2:14).

HOW DO I LEAD MY COMMUNITY GROUP THROUGH MULTIPLICATION?

Talk about multiplication from your very first gathering.

If a community group is healthy, it will eventually multiply. Set this as an expectation for the community group from the very first gathering and discuss it often. Regularly remind the group members of our missionary identity. Talk about why we multiply, using some of the language found in this section of the handbook. We multiply for discipleship, care, and mission. If you need additional help knowing how to talk to your group about multiplication, talk to your hub leader.

Identify and equip apprentices. You are encouraged to identify and equip apprentices from the start of your group. Every group should have an apprentice as early as possible. For more information on what an apprentice is, and how you can identify and equip them, read the section entitled "Apprenticeship" in this handbook.

Discuss multiplication with your hub leaders. As your group grows and apprentices are developed, contact your hub leader to discuss a potential multiplication. Your hub leaders can help support you, by giving you wisdom on why, when, and how a multiplication should happen. They will also make sure the new group has everything they need for a successful launch.

Talk to your community group about upcoming multiplication.

When your community group is ready to move forward with multiplication, it is important to talk to your group about the upcoming plans. A multiplication must be led more than managed. As we share multiplication plans with the group, we have to shepherd as well as communicate. For more details on how to have this conversation, see the section entitled "How Do I Talk To My Community Group About Multiplication?"

Hold a Prayer and Planning Meeting. In prayerful consultation with your hub leaders, and in prayerful collaboration with your apprentices, it is important to make a plan for multiplication. One important step in this process is to hold a Prayer and Planning Meeting with the community group leadership team. For more details on what this step entails, see the section entitled “How Do I Lead a Prayer and Planning Meeting?” in this handbook. Once a new group has a male and female community group leader, a host home, and a core team of at least three households, it is ready to multiply.

Have a sending celebration. On the last gathering before multiplication, throw a party to celebrate the multiplication. Take time to share stories of the things God has done in your midst. Encourage the leaders of the original group and the new group. Prayerfully ask for the Spirit to speak through words or pictures to encourage each group. Take time to pray for the leaders and the groups. It should feel more like a graduation than a funeral. It is also important to recognize that multiplication can be painful, because we have to say goodbye to something good. Still, we can take heart knowing that, through multiplication, more disciples will be made, more people will meet Jesus, and more people will be cared for.

Regather to celebrate. Schedule time in the near future to gather back up, share stories of God’s grace, and enjoy spending time together again. It might be ideal to gather a month after multiplication, and then again after six months. Plan a meal or an outdoor party.

HOW DO I TALK TO MY COMMUNITY GROUP ABOUT MULTIPLICATION?

Begin with prayer. Ask for God’s grace in the conversation and for each person to remember the unity they have in the Spirit. Pray for God to give wisdom as you discuss the next season of life for the group.

Announce the intention to multiply. Don’t drag this step out too long. Let people know that the group is heading towards multiplication, and that you want to take time to process that with the group right now. Avoid seeking total consensus or surveying the

group’s preferences as a first step. You could say something like “As a leadership team, we feel it is time to move our group towards multiplication.”

Talk about the “why” of multiplication. This point will be easier if you have already laid the groundwork for multiplication from the very first gathering (see the section entitled “How Do I Lead My Group Through Multiplication?”). But even if you haven’t, you can still shape a vision for multiplication now. In particular, we multiply for discipleship, care, and mission. You can find a paragraph explaining each one of these in the section entitled “Why Do We Multiply Community Groups?” If you need even more tools for explaining this vision, don’t hesitate to reach out to your hub leaders.

Let apprentices briefly share. As those who will be leading out a new group, give the apprentices space to share their desires and hopes for leading. Group members should already have a sense for the apprentices’ character and competency. This time gives the apprentices an opportunity to express their own sense of calling. This shouldn’t last longer than five minutes, and could be as short as a couple sentences. For example, they could say, “When the community group leaders approached us a few months ago about leading a new group, we weren’t so sure. But as we’ve prayed about it and learned more about leadership, we feel God moving us in that direction. And we are really excited about getting a chance to serve in this way.”

Outline next steps for the group. Give the community group a roadmap for what the next steps will look like. Let them know you plan to do the following: (1) Schedule an upcoming Prayer and Planning Meeting where the leaders and apprentices will pray and draw up a multiplication plan. (2) Extend to each member a personal invitation into one of the groups, coming out of that meeting (from either a leader or an apprentice). (3) Give each person time to prayerfully consider and give feedback. (4) Schedule a sending celebration for the last gathering before the multiplication takes place.

Calm fears and anxieties. You can do this as you outline the next steps for the group, or give it its own section. First, explain that this process will be done prayerfully and with a desire to serve each

person's spiritual growth. Second, it is important to stress that if anyone does not want to join the group into which they are invited, they are welcome to join the other group instead. By honoring the group members in this way, leaders can avoid the ditch of controlling leadership on the one hand, and passive leadership on the other. Most people—if they know their leaders have approached the process prayerfully, and not removed their freedom—will gladly accept whichever invitation is extended to them. Also, keep in mind that many fears and anxieties will be brought up after this initial announcement outside of a gathering. Be prepared to address concerns over the next few weeks in organic, one-on-one conversations.

Give members space to voice concerns or questions.

Give everyone space to share what they are feeling or thinking. Don't feel pressure to argue or refute what people are saying. Instead, listen humbly, take note, and thank them for sharing. Also, don't be discouraged or surprised by negativity. People are not always as resistant as they sound initially. Sometimes, the process of sharing concerns is part of getting their head around the idea, especially if multiplication hasn't been talked about much up to this point.

HOW DO I LEAD A PRAYER AND PLANNING MEETING?

There are many ways to multiply a group, and there are many tensions to navigate in the process. A Prayer and Planning Meeting is one simple strategy that has been proven to help group leaders tiptoe through the landmines. A community group's leaders and apprentices constitute a leadership team or "core team." This leadership team should set up a group phone call or in-person meeting to pray for and plan the multiplication. If they need additional help, they can invite one or both of their hub leaders—or even their community director—to sit in on the call or in-person meeting.

The primary goal of this meeting is to prayerfully and pastorally guide the members of the current group into two viable future groups. The current leaders can plan to lead one of the groups, and the apprentices the other. At the very beginning of the

meeting, the leadership team should spend time praying, asking for the unity of the Spirit throughout the planning meeting (Eph 4:3). Further, they should pray for the Spirit's guidance and wisdom as they plan. God hears our prayers and gives us wisdom when we need it. And without God's grace and direction, multiplication can devolve into a messy, divisive, and hurtful process.

Throughout the meeting, the leadership team should remind each other that the goal is to look primarily through the lens of what will serve each person's spiritual growth. All things being equal, the multiplication plan should preserve or increase, rather than diminish, the following:

- intergenerational diversity
- geographical proximity
- a balance of single and married
- a balance of low and high margin
- a balance of spiritual maturity and immaturity

Every group member will have personal preferences, or a particular comfort level with every other person in the group. Those factors should not be ignored, but they are secondary. Multiplication must first be governed by the mission of God, not the anxiety of any given member.

Sometimes the current discipleship groups—if they have been constructed thoughtfully—will draw the lines for the multiplication, with almost no alteration needed. Other times, the leadership team will need to wrestle with the tensions listed above. Regardless, each member of the leadership team must be prepared to embrace discomfort and prayerfully set aside their own preferences.

In the Prayer and Planning Meeting, leaders and apprentices should seek to contribute to the overall health of the process. Here are some examples of what might be said:

- "Sarah was invited to the group by you, Nancy, and you have built a lot of trust with her over the past six months. We're not quite sure where Sarah is with Jesus yet, and it seems like it would be wise for Sarah to be in the same group as you, so you can continue to capitalize on the trust you've built with her."
- "I know Robert wears on people, and can lack self-awareness, but for some reason God's given

me a lot of patience for him. He is learning, even though it's a slow process. I would like him in both my community group and my discipleship group. I really think I can serve him in some unique ways as he continues to grow."

- "Hey, let's make sure we don't end up putting all the married couples in one group and all the singles in the other."
- "We have a few people who live in the Miller Neighborhood. It would be great to plant a gospel flag in that neighborhood. If one of the groups could be hosted in that neighborhood, it could provide some great opportunities to build relationships with people far from God."

Designate a secretary to write down the names for the proposed new groups. After the meeting, to ensure clarity, the secretary should text or email the names to the other leaders and apprentices.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the leaders and apprentices should commit to the plan. Humble disagreement in the meeting, behind closed doors, is an important part of the decision-making process. However, once the plan is drawn up and agreed on, it is crucial that the leadership team stay on the same page moving forward. If a leader or apprentice has second thoughts after leaving the meeting, it will be important for them to circle back with the leadership team and reopen the conversation, and then come to a new agreement.

After the Prayer and Planning Meeting, the leaders and apprentices should personally invite each person into their respective groups, while giving them space to provide feedback or voice their desire to be a part of the other group. This step is important because sometimes group members will see something the leaders have missed about geographical proximity, missional possibility, or relational opportunity. The leadership team should communicate frequently with each other about how these conversations are going, and pass on any insights group members provide.

HOW DO WE PREPARE FOR THE LOSS OF MULTIPLICATION?

We have to acknowledge that multiplication will be accompanied by pain and loss. And we must not minimize that. It will be hard for people to let go of something good and real, even if it is for the right reasons. The sense of loss we experience around multiplication should not only be acknowledged, but in a real sense, embraced. It will be very difficult to celebrate multiplication unless we feel and experience the pain of gospel goodbyes.

Through multiplication, many of us will feel instability as the ground shifts beneath us. For those who have never experienced a multiplication, it will be normal to feel fear about the unknown and what losses might come through this. On the other hand, for those who have already been through a multiplication, it will be normal to feel multiplication fatigue and wonder if they will ever have stability. For both groups of people, it will be important to acknowledge fear, while also recognizing what Jesus is doing in us and for us through multiplication.

In multiplication, we often have to say goodbye to something good. Relationships might look different as we establish new rhythms and enter a new season. The pain of loss points to the reality that we experienced something beautiful. But we can recognize it as a gospel goodbye, because we have hope that transcends our grief—that Jesus will use this for his glory and our joy.

Every group multiplication leads to gospel goodbyes. Gospel goodbyes can be tearful and sad, yet they are ultimately tinged with hope and joy. We can even find ourselves celebrating in the midst of loss because we know that we are making room for more people to be discipled, to receive care, and to meet Jesus. Even as our relationships change, we can rejoice that we are still united together in Jesus by the Spirit.

COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER FAQ

HOW DO I FILL OUT THE WEEKLY REPORT?

Community group leaders fill out a weekly report to take attendance, record notes, and pass along any prayer requests or important information. These reports are confidential and only seen by the community director and hub leaders. In weekly reports, a group leader can notify the leaders of the church about important seasons of care, like marriage, pregnancy, miscarriage, suffering, etc.

Every week, you will receive an email called “Weekly Report.” Work through the following steps:

- **“Record Attendance” or “Did Not Meet” buttons:** If you are meeting as a whole group, click “Record Attendance.” If the group is not meeting or is meeting in discipleship groups, click, “Did Not Meet,” and in the “Event Notes” section just write either “did not meet” or “discipleship group.” Give any updates that may be helpful.
- **Recording your attendance:** After clicking “Record Attendance” your community group roster will appear. Take attendance at your group. Then go through and check the names of those present. In the “Visitors” section, put the number of those present whose names were not in your roster and you therefore did not check. For example, if you had fourteen people present, and you checked twelve names, type “two” in the “Visitors” space so the total will be correct. If you would like people added to or deleted from your list, please use the “People Info” space to request it. If you would prefer to manage your own roster and group through CCB (our database), email your hub leader and request a CCB login.
- **Info spaces:** In the “Event Notes” space, please provide a sentence explanation of what your group did that night.

In the “Praises and Prayer Requests” space, please share encouraging stories and let us know of anything you would like for us to be praying for.

This is the correct place to let the pastors know if someone is going through a season of care.

In the “People Info” space, please tell us if you would like for us to add or delete anyone from your roster. If asking to delete someone, please let us know the circumstances. Feel free to use this space to let us know life updates on your members as well.

- **Email event summary:** Finally, you are asked where to send the report summary. Select, “Leadership Only”. If you do not select this button, your hub leader will not receive your report.

HOW DO I HANDLE THE SUMMER AND WINTER BREAKS?

God has created our world and our bodies with rhythmic cycles of work and rest. Community groups take two breaks throughout the year: one in July and one in December. These are natural moments where people are scattered on vacations or celebrations, and they present a healthy opportunity for leaders to take a break from regular leadership duties. Here are three things you can do during the break to make the best use of the time.

- **Communicate expectations to your community group.** The summer and winter break should serve as a “leadership sabbatical.” Push pause on your group leadership duties for that month. As you do so, let people in the group know that you will be using the month to rest and recover. Make clear any boundaries you are wanting to set during the break.
- **Establish a Sabbath rhythm.** We are not resting well if we simply replace the work of leading a community group with other work. We should use the time to establish healthy Sabbath rhythms. Consider reading the chapter entitled “Practice Sabbath Delight,” in Peter Scazzaro’s *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* to help you answer

practical questions like: What will make this Sabbath day different from business as usual on the other six days of the week? What do I need to do to protect my ability to rest on this day?

- **Take a personal inventory.** Take some time over the course of the break to assess your life and leadership. Where would you like to grow? Where have you seen God's grace? What do you hope to accomplish in your community group in the next six months? Taking a break can give you space to process these questions and maximize your health when you step back into leadership. If it helps you, consider taking the "Reality Check Self-Assessment" to determine if there are any warning lights popping up on your dashboard (frontlinechurch.com/library).

Just like taking a weekly sabbath requires preparation in the days leading up to it, you'll need to work diligently before the break in order to truly unplug. Here are four things you could do.

1. **Schedule your restart.** Before the break, communicate clearly a hard restart date for your community group. For example, "Our group will resume our family meals on Tuesday, August 6th at 6:30pm at the Johnsons. Please mark your calendars and bring meat to grill and a side to share."
2. **Encourage group members to pair up relationally.** These should be very informal, gender-specific pairings, doing something as big as a meal, or something as small as a walk around the lake. This allows relationships to grow and deepen, and reminds everyone to keep pressing into communion during the break.
3. **Commission others to throw a summer or winter party.** Ask your community group members to plan and host a party for the group during the break. This allows people in the group to take ownership, and provides a connection point during the break.
4. **If applicable, set a multiplication plan in place.** The summer and winter breaks are an ideal time for community groups to multiply. Getting all the logistics and pastoral concerns nailed down prior to the break will make multiplication flow much more smoothly afterwards.

If a care need arises during the summer or winter break, communicate with your hub leader on the best way to move forward and respond.

HOW DO I HANDLE CARE SITUATIONS IN MY COMMUNITY GROUP?

We begin to care in community by simply being open with each other about our own needs. Then, with a loving and thoughtful disposition, we respond collectively to meet those needs. This means regularly sharing where we are and what we are wrestling with, and being courageous enough to ask for and accept help. When we respond collectively and quickly to real needs as they arise, people are loved and cared for. Sometimes more specific, intentional care is required. When this is the case, you will need to gather information and determine what level of care is needed. In general, there are two levels of formal care:

- **Community Group Driven Care:** If the care situation is not an emergency and does not require immediate attention, your community group should drive care, while communicating with your hub leadership team via weekly reports. You should follow up with the individual receiving care as needed, but, in general, you should be touching base with them at least once a month. Examples might include pregnancies, weddings, or minor illnesses.
- **Hub Leader or Elder Driven Care:** If you determine that no one in the group is equipped to handle the need or if the need requires immediate, pastoral, or professional care, contact your hub leaders immediately. From there, hub leadership or other elders will drive care if necessary, while maintaining frequent communication with your community group. Examples might include divorce, criminal behavior, miscarriages, major mental health issues, or death. In some cases, these individuals may be referred to outside professionals, like counselors, mental health professionals, DHS, or the police.

If you ever feel overwhelmed, have a question on who should drive care, or are unsure how to care for an individual in a care situation, contact your hub leaders and ask for help.

WHEN SHOULD I ELEVATE A CARE ISSUE TO MY HUB LEADERS?

Though a good deal of care will be provided by your community group, there are some things that you simply will not be able to handle, and, if left unattended, could lead to major physical, emotional, or spiritual harm for the individuals on the receiving end of our care. These are typically situations that require the help of deacons, elders, or outside professionals. With that in mind, if you encounter any of the following situations, you should contact a hub leader immediately.

- Marital or family problems
- Adultery
- Marital separation or divorce
- Hospital admission or surgery
- Miscarriage
- Death
- Mental health issues
- Psychotic episode
- Suicidal behavior
- Addictions
- Financial problems or benevolence needs
- Unemployment
- Legal issues
- Unrepentant sin patterns
- Egregious sin
- Predatory behavior
- Physical or sexual abuse
- Criminal behavior
- Chronic absence from the church or community group
- Major disagreements with the church
- Crisis of faith
- Leaving the church

Again, if you ever feel overwhelmed, have a question on who should drive care, or are unsure how to care for an individual in a care situation, contact your hub leaders and ask for help.

WHAT DO I DO IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS?

If a group member or child is in immediate danger or has been the victim of domestic violence or abuse, call 911.

If a group member is experiencing a mental health crisis, call the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988.

(According to the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, a mental health crisis is any situation in which a person's actions, feelings, and behaviors can lead to them hurting themselves or others, and/or put them at risk of being unable to care for themselves or function in the community in a healthy manner.)

If you have witnessed abuse of a child, an adult with disabilities, or an elderly person, or if you suspect that it may have occurred or that there is potential for abuse to occur, call the Statewide Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-522-3511. You have a legal obligation under state law to promptly report current or potential instances of abuse.

After contacting the appropriate authorities, when it is safe to do so, contact your hub leaders and fill them in on the situation.

WHERE CAN I GET RESOURCES ON SPECIFIC CARE SITUATIONS?

If you are needing help knowing how to care for community group members who are dealing with specific issues (such as depression, addiction, finances, or pornography), reach out to your hub leader who can give you resources, as well as guidance on particular issues.

WHAT IF SOMEONE IS DRAINING THE GROUP?

How you handle this situation depends on the particular person in question. If the individual simply lacks social skills, or is behaving in a socially inappropriate manner, it is important to help them by having a private conversation with them to lovingly address the behaviors that are disrupting the group. However, more often than not, those who drain the group do not do so intentionally. In fact, very often the draining behavior stems from legitimate suffering or struggle and only becomes draining when the individual begins to expect their group to meet their needs in ways only God can. It is important to remember that we have all been the draining person to someone else at some point.

In some unavoidable ways, suffering turns us inward. Counterintuitively, the answer is often to simply move towards the draining person. As we encourage each other to look to Christ in the midst

of our suffering, we are helped and reoriented. One of the best ways to address draining behavior within the group is to pursue that person outside of the group.

This is a perfect opportunity for an apprentice to gain valuable experience. As the apprentice invites that person to coffee, hears their story, and prays for them, they will grow in skill and wisdom. And hopefully, the draining person will begin to find their footing as they are counseled and met in the midst of their sin, wounds, and weakness.

Remember, you are not and cannot be anyone's savior. Once you and your group realize this and rest in God's sovereign purpose, the person in question will become less of a drain. Some individuals need specialized care, so you may also suggest biblical counseling. Contact a hub leader for counseling references.

A FINAL WORD ON COMMUNITY GROUP LEADERSHIP

When you encounter problems, the worst thing you can do is to ignore them and hope they will go away. It is unlikely that they will disappear without being addressed. If you let them go on unchecked, the members of the group will gradually cease to attend as their dissatisfaction with the group grows. Your failure to act could lead to the death of the group. Remember, your chief job as a leader is to do everything in your power to point people to Jesus and lead the group to function as a healthy community. This will occasionally require you doing things that don't come naturally, and even seem unpleasant. But love for God's people and concern for their wellbeing ought to serve as sufficient motivation for carrying out these difficult tasks.