

FAQs for Small Groups and Adult Bible Fellowship

1. What is an Adult Bible Fellowship?

An Adult Bible Fellowship consists of a group of 20-60 people who meet on weekly basis for bible study, fellowship and an opportunity to better understand how we can care for each other as we learn how to apply God's Word in our everyday lives.

2. What is the mission of Adult Bible Fellowship?

The mission of Adult Bible Fellowship is to connect people to God and with each other.

3. What happens at an ABF meeting?

Meetings last for an hour and fifteen minutes. The first 15 minutes is for fellowship. Beverages and snacks are provided. 45 minutes is for bible study led by the ABF Teacher. The balance of the time is for prayer and celebration. There is small group discussion of the subject presented by the teacher.

4. When and where does it meet?

There are currently two ABF's. One meets at 9:45; the other at 10:45 on Sundays.

5. Who can come?

St. Paul members and seekers (friends and neighbors) are all invited. Invitations can be made as a next step for those who participate in an Alpha Class or in a new member's orientation.

6. How is it organized?

The expectation is that once an ABF gets large enough there will be a leadership team established that consists of a Teacher, Leader, Coach and Outreach Champion. The connection to the Small Groups ministry is that everyone who attends an ABF will end up being a part of a small group that begins simply with those who sit at your table.

7. What does an ABF Small Group host/leader do?

A host welcomes people to the table that a group sits at. The host facilitates discussion when there is a small group exercise. The host also uses a sign in sheet to keep track of those who attend at their table. A host is encouraged to become a small group leader.

8. What does an ABF Coach do?

The ABF Coach gets small groups organized at the ABF meeting and then meets with small group hosts/leaders once per month to support and encourage hosts and leaders and provide accountability for small group interaction.

9. What does an ABF Leader do?

The Leader is responsible for organizing the mechanics of the ABF as well as doing the welcoming, announcements and prayers at the beginning of the session. The leader organizes people to be greeters for new people as well as organizing volunteers to be responsible for coffee and doughnuts, and set up/take down of chairs and tables.

10. What does an ABF Teacher do?

The Teacher is the main speaker at the ABF. He/she does appropriate research on subjects that help us apply bible to applications in our everyday lives. The Teacher may present information/guidance information for small groups to discuss and report back to the larger group for even more discussion and learning.

11. How are small groups connected with ABF's?

Existing small groups and their members are encouraged to participate in ABF's. Since there are two times available for ABF meetings it might be that a given "old" group will want to multiply into two new ones. All those

who participate in an ABF will be sitting at tables with hosts wherein a small group will be formed ad hoc for that session. The group at that table decides whether they would like to spin that group into a small group that meets outside of the ABF time for its own bible study, care for each other as well as those outside of the group and service projects. The group at the table needs to “elect” a leader /host for that session and the next one if no one volunteers to be the host/leader for that session at that table. Each table is to keep at least two chairs open to provide an easy welcoming point for new people attending the ABF for the first time. It is expected that people will align themselves with groups within a month of initial attendance.

12. Do I need to be a "Bible Expert" to become a Small Group Leader?

Definitely not! The most important things that you need is a desire to serve the members of your group and to grow in your own personal relationship with Jesus Christ. When you take this step of faith, through prayer, God's Holy Spirit will give you what you need to be an effective leader. Your responsibility is to facilitate discussion as you teach using provided resources.

13. What training is required to be a Small Group Leader?

A Small Group Leader is expected to go through some version of a small Group Leader training class. Depending upon background/experience as a leader/apprentice leader, the training class typically is 16 hours.

14. What are the requirements to be a Small Group Leader at St. Paul?

- a. Leader must have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
- b. Leader must be, or have been, baptized.
- c. Leader must complete leadership training at St. Paul Lutheran Church.
- d. Leader must be able to answer that there are no problems with the following areas:
 1. Leader must not have current habitual struggles or moral issues (drugs, alcohol, cohabitation, etc.) that would bring shame on the name of Jesus Christ or on St. Paul Lutheran Church.
 2. In addition, there must not be any current marital struggles (i.e. infidelity, separation, divorce in process, etc.)
 3. Finally, the leader must support St. Paul Lutheran Church's Core Values Statement.

15. I'm an experienced Small Group Leader. Why do I need to go through leadership training?

We want every small group leader to understand the principles of small groups and to be the best leader he or she can possibly be. Seasoned leaders will not only sharpen their skills, but will be able to share what they have learned with new leaders.

16. As a Leader, where do I get help if I need it?

Every small group leader is assigned a Coach who is your point of contact and is the source of help, information and resources to help you.

17. What if my group wants to continue and I can't continue to lead?

You can identify a new Leader from within the group if there is someone that is qualified. Your group can determine the Leader as long as they meet our Leader requirements. Please read the answers to questions on Leader requirements.

18. How do I raise up leaders?

Each group should have a Leader and also a Leader Apprentice. A Leader Apprentice is a member of the group who wishes to lead a group in the future. The apprentice will lead the group when the Leader is unable to do so. He/she meets the qualification of a leader and will take St. Paul's leadership training class.

19. Do we use husband and wife leadership teams?

Yes, we do. We find it very beneficial to have both the husband and wife lead in couples small groups. Each one brings different gifts to the leadership position.

20. I'd like to be a Leader, but should I wait until I have more experience?

If you have a willing heart and a few open seats in your living room, you are ready to lead a group. You may prefer to be a Leader Apprentice within a group and gain experience first.

21. How can I form a group with people who are similar to me?

If you would like to form a group of a certain affinity (like Couples, Singles, Women, Men, Single Parents, Empty Nesters, Widows, etc.), let us know. Be sure to invite your own friends that you enjoy sharing a couple of hours with.

22. I live out of the immediate area of St. Paul. Should we still consider leading a group?

Yes! If you live out of the area we would still love to support you as you lead a group. Although 90% of members are within a ten mile radius of Trenton, we have members from as far away as Northville with quite a few "snowbirds" who are here for the summer.

23. We have a small house or condo. Can we still lead a group?

Sure! You can host a small group or you can host a large group and then sub-group into smaller groups in several areas in the house. Sub-grouping can actually be fun for everyone, but it's really up to you.

24. How do I get into a group?

Just call Greg Exner at 734-307-7372 or email exnergf@hotmail.com.

25. What is the format for small groups?

People connect in new small groups consisting of 3 to 12 people who provide love, support, friendship, connection and spiritual strength. The format is an informal and comfortable 1½ to 2 hour gathering at the home. Participants are comprised of people from our church, as well as friends, neighbors, relatives and co-workers who are invited to join in the adventure. A sample meeting might begin with 30 minutes of conversation, while everyone in the group catches up on what's been happening in their lives since they last met. The next hour would be Bible study with a free exchange of questions and answers followed by a closing prayer. The last half hour would be light refreshments and conversation and discussion about service/care projects.

26. What are Service/Care Projects? Each group is encouraged to engage in one service project each year. This is intended to remind us that serving and caring for others in His name is at the core of Christ's teachings. Contact your Coach or St. Paul's Care Minister, Jack Scola, for ideas.

27. How can I get more people for our group?

Leaders/members are encouraged to invite new members by having an "empty chair" at each meeting and praying for opportunities to connect with others that they might get closer to Him by joining them at a meeting ... or any group/service activity. Invite unconnected people you meet at church, your friends, neighbors, co-workers and family to join the group. This is the best way to get new members in your group. Pray about inviting someone new to share in getting to know about Christ. A few people meeting at someone's home with donuts and coffee and casual conversation is a great non-threatening way to get someone/or two initially engaged without making a big deal out of it. Be authentic, open, welcoming and flexible. Anyone new to a group deserves special attention regardless of the plan for the meeting otherwise.

28. Can I invite people who don't attend St. Paul?

Absolutely! Inform your friends, neighbors, family members, co-workers and casual acquaintances about your small group study. Small group study materials are appropriate for both believers and seekers. Pray for God's guidance as you can make an eternal difference in the lives of others. Please note that while it is not St. Paul's desire to attract people from other Christian churches, our desire is to "connect" people at our church and also to reach our "unchurched" community.

29. Should Leaders invite people only from St. Paul or can we invite seeker friends?

That is totally up to the Leader and to the group. The point is to seek God prayerfully about who to invite. Hundreds of lives have been changed because groups have welcomed their unbelieving neighbors, co-workers, friends and family into their groups. Your group can too!

30. How do I get my established group to want to grow and multiply?

Each group should have guidelines for meetings as well as goals for where the group is heading. This should include a life span for the group, such as 2 or 3 years. At the end of this time or if the group grows beyond 12 people, some of the members of the group will be ready to be leaders of new groups.

31. How do people move from one group to another, or do they?

Yes, we have found over time that people do move from one group to another. It is important that you let people have the ability and the flexibility to move to another group. It's important that the leaders understand that meeting the members' needs is the primary concern, even if it means they find another group. We encourage leaders to remember that not all people grow at the same rate, or have the same needs over time. It is healthy for people to seek a group that meets their needs at the time.

32. I have changed the day or type of group I am hosting. What do I do?

We ask you to update your group information with your Coach, who can support you with additional members or resources as you need them.

33. What if I am involved in another ministry?

Small group membership is a venue for St. Paul members and friends to connect and grow in community. We need to be connected and growing before we can be effective in the ministry God has in mind for us.

34. How many groups or ministries should I be involved in?

The answer to this question is contained in your answer to how much time you have to do ministry effectively? We have found that people do one primary and one secondary group or ministry the best. Life stage and family responsibilities will help to determine how many ministries you can do, i.e. an empty nester will have more time to devote to a ministry than a young family with children. We encourage small group leaders to be sure they are involved in a small group or ministry where they are being fed spiritually. It is only out of the overflow of what God is doing in your life that you will have the stamina and heart to serve others.

35. My group is dying. What do I do?

This is where connecting with your Coach is important. Your Coach will be able to help you diagnose what is happening and recommend changes or training that could help you as a leader, and help your members as well. A common vision and mission and agreement on how your small group is to function is required for success as a continuing small group. If different people in your small group have different needs, or ideas, than what your small group is doing, it may be time for them to move on and find a group that will meet their needs. There also may be value in you taking a break from the group or go to another group. Again, it is through a relationship with your Coach that you can be coached into seeing what is right for your group.

36. What small group studies are recommended and where can I get materials?

St. Paul has a wide range of small group studies available in our library. The Leader may wish to consult with a Coach or Don Busse regarding a particular topic. There are literally hundreds of choices for material for Christian study by ordering through the internet. Once a decision has been made, the books can be ordered at a discounted price through St. Paul's bookstore. See/contact Greg Exner (734-3077372 email exnergf@hotmail.com) for more information

37. Are all of the groups required to study the same material?

Occasionally all groups are asked to study the same material associated with a campaign like Purpose Driven

Community. Otherwise, we ask each group to select what they want to study based on the interest of its members and their spiritual maturity.

38. What do we do when we finish a study?

Have a party and celebrate the time you have shared together as a small group. Decide on the study that the group will do next, and continue meeting!

39. How should our group handle childcare?

First, make childcare a top priority in order to make it happen. If there are people who can't afford childcare, others need to step up to help out. Another thing is that you want to rally together. You might be able to get a sitter to watch the kids in one part of the house while the group meets in another room. If there's a home nearby, one person can watch the kids there while the group meets in another house. You may even try to rotate people out of the group to take care of the children. There are many childcare options and these are just a few.

40. How often do you suggest Small Groups meet?

It's up to the group whether they meet once a week, every other week, or monthly. All of these can be effective as long as the group feels that there is ongoing care, nurturing and spiritual development of the group.

41. When should my group meet?

Groups meet at the time, place, and day of the week that best ministers to the needs of the groups. It may be 6 a.m. on Fridays for a men's group, Sunday night for a couples group, or Tuesday afternoon for a ladies group. If you are starting a new group, you should choose the time and place that is convenient to you as the leader, then people who can meet your schedule will be attracted to your group.

42. How do we prevent small groups from breaking up family unity?

No ministry should take priority over the family. If it does, then they are out of sync with God's will. We need to help people to see the value of the family. Small group meetings should enhance the member's life, not create a problem.

43. How long should the average small group meeting last?

A typical small group meeting is one and a half to two hours.

44. On which day of the week does the Small Group meeting take place?

One of the great things about the small group is that it fits with every person's schedule. Pick the day and time that works best for you and then select the group nearest to you that works. A business and professional group may choose to meet for breakfast or lunch. A busy career couple might choose to meet on Saturday mornings while a mom with kids in school might prefer a group that meets on a weekday morning. There are many small groups and many options.

45. Do you have a Small Group Question not answered here?

Please e-mail: exnergf@hotmail.com or call Greg Exner at 734-397-7372.