

Small Groups for Married Couples > FAQs

Q: *Life Groups, Small Groups, and Sunday School. I am so confused?*

A: Life Groups is our umbrella term we use for all our discipleship groups here at First Baptist. Think of Life Groups as a “penny”. Small Groups and Sunday School classes are different systems we use to grow disciples. In the “penny” analogy, Small Groups might be “heads” and Sunday School “tails” – different looks, but the same coin.

Q: *What then is the definition of a Small Group?*

A: Small Groups consist of approximately four to six married couples that meet weekly in someone’s home for fellowship, Bible study, prayer, and accountability. They are for adults of all ages, stages of life, and spiritual maturity. Most Small Groups are formed as people meet and connect at **GroupLink**.

Q: *What makes Small Group’s discipleship model unique from others?*

A: Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of Small Groups is the closed group structure. The Small Group model believes relationships take time to form and anything that gets in the way of the group building relational capital with one another works against this goal. Groups stay closed for a predetermined time of twelve to twenty-four months. At that time they multiply to form at least two new groups. (If a group loses members along the way, they are free to add new couples or individuals if everyone in the group agrees.)

Q: *Why does First Baptist do Small Groups?*

A: We believe that it is in the context of intentional relationships where significant life change takes place best. Small Groups create an environment where real life and real issues are discussed. This is an environment to celebrate the successes and good times of life and comfort one another in the tough and disappointing times. It is a place to be encouraged, equipped and challenged to grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Q: *Which Life Group model is best for me – Sunday School or Small Group?*

A: At First Baptist, we embrace several strategies for creating disciples – the Sunday School Model and the Small Group Model. Both of these models have the same goal in mind – to grow disciples of Jesus Christ. They go about this differently. The Sunday School Model is an open group – meaning people can join the group at any time – mainly for outreach & evangelism purposes. It tends to be more curriculum-driven and meets on Sunday morning. The Small Group Model is a closed group – meaning people cannot join the group at any time – mainly for developing trust and redemptive accountability. It tends to be more relational driven and meets in homes during the week. Both models embrace the Bible as the infallible Word of God and use it to instruct, teach, encourage, and correct.

Q: *How do I decide which one is best for me?*

A: That depends on you and what you are looking for. Both models offer truth from God's Word and the opportunity to build community. If you desire a consistent, small environment where you can have spiritual discussions and personal accountability, and meet in homes during the week, then Small Groups are probably better for you. If you desire more flexibility in attendance, more of a teacher/teaching driven atmosphere, larger groups, meeting on campus on Sunday morning, and an environment where you can bring guests, then Sunday School is probably best for you.

Q: *Can I be in a Sunday School Class AND a Small Group at the same time?*

A: We strongly discourage this for several reasons. First, it removes people from weekly opportunities to serve our guests and various children's ministries. We desire that people "own" their ministry and believe that the best thing for guests and children to see week after week is familiar faces. Second, it removes people from weekly opportunities to worship corporately. We want our people to sense God's presence and learn from His Word each week. Ministry rotations (one week serving, one week in service) prevent this.

Q: *When do Small Groups meet?*

A: Each Small Group decides when and where it wants to meet. Most groups meet at least 3 times a month. As individuals seek to join a Small Group, we help them find people that are meeting on a particular night and have common interests in life. All of our Small Groups meet either in group members' homes throughout the week or here on campus on Wednesday nights; no Small Groups meet at the church on Sunday morning.

Q: *Why don't Small Groups meet here on campus on Sunday Morning?*

A: There are basically two main reasons. First, time constraints. In order for Small Groups to accomplish connecting people to God and each other, they need more than the current 70 minutes. Most Small Groups meet, on average, two hours per week. Second, we desire people to attend our worship services and to find a place of service on Sunday morning – focusing on the needs of our guests and various children's ministries.

Q: *Why do you want people in Small Groups to serve on Sunday morning?*

A: We feel this is the best way for members to use their spiritual gifts and talents to help the church reach our guests and minister to their children. Ideally, we desire that every member at First Baptist church do three things each week: worship God corporately, serve within the church, and be in a Life Group.

Q: *How long does a Small Group last?*

A: Initially, all of the groups that are formed at [GroupLink](#) begin as starter groups. Starter groups are created to be an introductory step into group life.

After eight weeks, group members can decide to continue on with their starter group members or dissolve to find another group. Starter group members who continue on establish themselves as a Small Group and commit to meet for an additional twelve to twenty-four months. Each group determines the duration of time that they will meet.

Q: *What is the process for connecting people into Small Groups?*

A: The primary way we connect people into Small Groups is through **GroupLink**. We hold two **GroupLink** events per year for married couples – around January and August. We publicize **GroupLink** during our Sunday services. Throughout the year, cards are available at any information table for people to fill out when they inquire about joining a group. Those who complete a card are contacted by a staff member or volunteer to answer any questions they may have about the **GroupLink** process.

Q: *What is GroupLink?*

A: **GroupLink** is a two-hour event where people meet and connect with others in their area and stage of life to start a Small Group. Groups are asked to initially commit to meeting together for eight weeks. They spend that time getting to know each other and doing a short Bible study. At the end of the eight weeks, group members decide to either continue with the group for an additional twelve to twenty-four months, or wait and join a different group at another time.

Q: *What criteria is used to place people in Small Groups?*

A: Typically people looking to connect to a new Small Group for the first time use the following criteria:

Stage of life (married with kids, married with no kids, married empty nesters)

Common interests

Day/night of the week

Q: *What's the next step for people who get connected into a Small Group at GroupLink?*

A: The group typically decides at **GroupLink** the time and location for their first meeting. Group leaders leave the **GroupLink** that night with contact information for everyone in the starter group.

Q: *What is a Starter Group, and how is it different from a Small Group?*

A: A Starter Group is a group that has agreed to meet together for eight weeks to get to know each other, do a relational type curriculum, and at the end of that time determine whether or not they want to stay together for another 18-24 months as a Small Group. The main purpose of a Starter Group is getting to

know each other and forming relationships. This sets the foundation for the group as it becomes a Small Group.

Q: *How do Small Groups choose curriculum?*

A: The first source of tension for new groups can often be around curriculum. We have chosen to remove that potential obstacle by assigning group members their first curriculum at [GroupLink](#), called “Community”. After the first study is complete, our leaders have access to our Life Group Resource Library that has over 200 different curriculum choices. They also have the option to contact their director to assist them in the selection process. Our goal is that groups choose studies that promote growth around the 3 vital relationships (intimacy with God, community with insiders and influence with outsiders).

Q: *If a member drops out of a Small Group, does that group add additional members?*

A: During the first six months of the group’s twelve to twenty-four month life cycle, members are added to fill the group to capacity. After that, it is the group’s decision whether to add additional members. If the group is planning to multiply within six months, we recommend they don’t add new people.

Q: *How do Small Groups add additional group members?*

A: We encourage group members to look at their existing relationships first (friends, neighbors, etc.). After that we encourage them to go to [GroupLink](#) or contact their director.

Q: *What is the process for making sure that community groups stay “closed”?*

A: Once a group has finished its eight-week starter period, the members who choose to remain in the group sign a covenant agreeing to keep the group closed unless all members of the group agree to add additional members.

Q: *What is the purpose of the covenant and is it really necessary?*

A: The **Small Group Covenant** is a tool used by the group members to establish expectations and manage the group for the duration of its life cycle. Its use is essential because most problems that groups face are due to unmet expectations. To view the contents of the **Small Group Covenant**, go to www.fbcloganville.org/smallgroupcovenant.

Q: *What about childcare?*

A: Each Small Group member is encouraged to secure their own childcare each week – if feasible. For those that cannot, we encourage groups to provide childcare at the host home each week – with members rotating the cost of the sitter. Some groups have older children watch younger children. For members that cannot afford the rotating cost of the sitter, financial support is given. Small Groups select and approve their own childcare worker and pay them directly at a fixed rate.

Q: *How does First Baptist get groups to multiply?*

A: We get groups to multiply by continually casting vision to our leaders, who in turn continually cast it to their groups. We also encourage leaders to identify and equip apprentices. The apprentices will take half of the group and start a new group, while the leader keeps the other half and starts another new group. Our motto is "What we have is too good to keep to ourselves".

Q: *Who do leaders contact if a problem or question arises that they can't answer?*

A: Group leaders have a Small Group Coach assigned to them who helps them walk through any challenges their group may experience.

Q: *Why do Small Group members buy their own curriculum?*

A: We ask Small Group members to do this as a way of investing into their own spiritual growth. We have found that people tend to read and participate in things when they are invested into it.

Q: *How are Small Groups encouraged to support missions?*

A: Each Small Group is encouraged to support a local ministry or service opportunity AND a domestic or foreign missionary. This helps the Small Group think ministry outside of the group and connects them with global purposes of God.

If you have a question that was not covered in this list, please contact Rick Bene, 770.466.4250 or rbene@fbclloganville.org.