



A VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH DISTINCTIVE

The *Distinctives* series articulates key biblical and theological convictions of Village Bible Church.

www.villagebible.org/distinctives



At Village Bible Church, small groups are a critical part of our ministry - they are not just "another thing"; they are our **main channel for discipleship & care** for each person who is a part of our family.

We realize that our spiritual needs cannot be met through simply a once a week large group worship service and Adult Bible Fellowship class every Sunday morning. That's a great start, but small groups help take us to the next level - to genuine community.

Small Groups are the best place to connect if you want to grow in your relationship with Jesus. A small group will help you develop significant relationships with others who can encourage and challenge you to consistently apply the truths of God's Word to each area of your life. They are gifts of God given so that we might "exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:12-13).

Small Groups meet once a week and range in size from 8-15 people. They are normally two hours and include time for Bible discussion, accountability, and prayer, as well as informal times to build relationships with others in the group.

God wants every follower of Jesus to be continually growing as we worship Christ, walk with Christ, and work for Christ. Each Village Small Group is committed to both mutual ministry and multiplication.

Hebrews 10:25 tells us to meet together "so you may encourage each other even more..."

Community: God is relational, so He created us to live in relationship with Him and each other.

- Authentic community involves sharing life together and connecting on many levels with others in our group.
- Healing best occurs within the context of community and relationships. It's vital to see ourselves through the eyes of others, share our stories, and ultimately find freedom from the secrets and lies that enslave our souls.

Bible Study: Gain a deeper knowledge of God's Word

- *Interactive:* God gave the Bible as our instruction manual for life. We need to deepen our understanding of God's Word. People learn and remember more as they wrestle with truth and learn from others. Bible discovery and group interaction enhance growth!;
- *Sermon Based:* In effort to focus our study efforts and to 'master' sections and themes of scripture, our small groups are normally tied to the Sunday morning sermons, which provides opportunity to take a passage of scripture and study it individually, discuss it with others and then experience it being taught from the pulpit.

Experiential Growth: Beyond solely reading, studying, and dissecting the Bible, being a disciple of Christ involves reunifying knowledge with experience. We do this by taking questions to God, opening a dialog with our hearts, and utilizing other ways to listen to God speak (other people, nature, circumstances). Experiential growth is always grounded in the Bible as God's primary revelation and our ultimate truth-source.

Power of God: Processes and strategies will be ineffective unless we invite and embrace the presence and power of God. In order to experience community and growth, Jesus needs to be the centerpiece of our group experiences and the Holy Spirit must be at work.

Mutual Ministry: Each member of the group is looking for ways to minister to the other members of the group, helping to meet each other's needs.

Multiplication: All groups should also be prayerfully considering a way to extend the ministry of their Small Group through Multiplication. Multiplication means eventually forming two or more groups so that others who are not yet in Small Groups can continue to find places to connect with a Small Group.

Shepherding: Small groups are the main channel for shepherding within our church. An elder is partnered with each of the small group leaders who together work to shepherd the people in the group and it's "extended family".

As we begin, it is important that our group commitments to each other in the following ways.

Priority: While we are in this group, we will give the group meetings priority.

Participation: Everyone is encouraged to participate and no one dominates.

Respect: Everyone is given the right to his or her own opinions, and all questions are encouraged and respected.

Confidentiality: Anything that is said in our meetings is never repeated outside the meeting without permission.

Care and Support: Permission is given to call upon each other at any time, especially in times of crisis. The group will provide care for every member.

Accountability: We agree to let the members of our group hold us accountable to commitments we make in whatever loving ways we decide upon. Unsolicited advice giving is not permitted.

Empty Chair: Our group will work together to fill the empty chair – either someone in the church who is not in a small group or an unchurched person or couple.

Mission: We agree as a group to reach out and invite others to join us and to work toward multiplication of our group to form new groups.

Ministry: We will encourage one another to serve God within the church and also to get outside the walls of the church to serve in a way that impacts the world around us.