



EASTLAKE

CHURCH

Winter 2019 Growth Groups Notebook

EastLake Church: Growth Group Notebook

This notebook is designed to provide a roadmap for every group leader this 2019 Winter Group Season. This book is full of important information that will help guide you as you lead your group; plus, our team is here to help you via email, phone, and face-to-face connections. Combine this book with your Growth Group Coach or Staff Lead and you are good to go.

A quick note about your coach: A coach is the best resource we have to offer you. A coach is an experienced group leader who has signed up to offer new group leaders practical support and care. You can ask your coach anything — there is no question too small or big for your coach.

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What it Means to Be a Group Leader

Here at EastLake Church, growth groups are all about helping people grow in friendship and faith. Everything we do in our groups is meant to fit under the umbrella of “people helping people grow in friendship and faith.”

At EastLake Church, we believe the best group leaders are real, authentic, humble people who are trying to follow God. As group leaders, we don't minimize others' experiences or problems, we aren't know-it-alls, we don't have all the answers, and we don't try to fix people. We value fun, we know how to laugh, we use normal language, and we act like ourselves. We do all of this while believing God is working for the good of people and he's interested in us walking with him. In turn, we are appropriately open about our own story (good and bad) and our own journey with God (good and bad).

So, as you do your thing, follow Jesus, and make space for others to do the same, we trust God can use your group to help people grow in friendship and faith.

Group Leader Requirement: All group leaders must read through and complete the Growth Group Leadership Agreement form and update their group on the group website. (We will talk through these details later.)

How to Fill Your Group

Every group leader gets to decide how they will fill their group. You can choose whether you fill your group with two friends, five strangers, 10 couples, or whomever. Your group members can be part of EastLake or not — that is totally up to you. However, regardless of how each group leader decides to fill their group, every group leader must understand that filling one's group is part of the job as a group leader.

Here are key notes on how to fill your group:

- **Each group leader decides if their group is going to be listed as public/open or private/closed on the groups website. (All groups — whether private or public — need to be inputted into the system. Our team will walk you through all those details and ensure you have the support you need.)**
 - Public: Anyone looking for a new group online will see your group listed; if your group type, time, day, and description meets their needs, they'll be able to sign up or request more info about your group. This is a great way to help make space for people looking to connect at EastLake.
 - Private: While all groups must be listed on the groups website, you can choose to keep your group off the public listing. You can fill your group by inviting anyone you'd like to your group.
- **Whether your group is public/open or private/closed, here are some tips on how to make a personal invite to your group:**
 - You are welcome to invite friends, acquaintances, people you interact with on the church campus, etc.
 - Ask God to give you ideas on who to invite and be open to God's leading.
 - Invite people you like, get along with, and/or are drawn to. We want groups to be a place where friendship is experienced.
- **There is no magical number of how many people should be in a group.** We have group leaders who love a group with 18 people and other leaders who want a group of 4. There are gifts and challenges with each side. Here are some example:
 - Large Groups Challenges: Some people won't open up or talk in a group that is large, various circles may form in this one group, overall group trust will take longer to form, you will need lots of space, childcare numbers will likely be impacted, etc.
 - Large Groups Gifts: If someone is absent the group will still feel full, you will get many points of view, large groups often come with a level of fun, etc.
 - Smaller Groups Challenges: If someone is absent the group will feel it, you will have fewer points of view, etc.
 - Smaller Groups Gifts: Easier for people to get to know each other, trust is built faster, etc.

How to Follow Up Well

Regardless of how you are filling your group, a key component to a healthy, successful group is ensuring everyone who sign-ups for your group or everyone who is invited to your group is followed up with well.

- **If your group is public/open on the website, here is what that means and how we follow up:**
 - A website sign-up is more like someone saying they are interested in learning more about your group than someone committing to join your group so following up is essential. Prompt follow up helps the person who signed up feel welcome and assures them they have the information they need for your group.
 - While the website is awesome, your intentional presence at Group Central during sign-ups will help fill your group. Group Central will happen after every service from February 2 through February 17. Try to hang out at Group Central as often as you can. People looking to find a group will visit Group Central in hopes of finding a group on the website and/or meeting a group leader. By being present, you not only increase the chances for website sign-ups, you also increase the chance of people showing up for your group. If people can meet you for a couple minutes prior to showing up to your actual group, they'll likely feel more inclined and comfortable with the idea of going to your group.
 - It is really important that you call and invite all new group sign-ups within a day of receiving sign-ups online. If they don't answer, leave a voicemail or text.
- **Whether your group is public/open or private/closed on the website, be intentional with everyone who said they they'd come to your group:**
 - Make reminder calls to all sign-ups two days before the first group gathering. If they don't answer, leave a voicemail or text. Help people plan for the group and remember when group is scheduled for.
 - If someone misses group, reach out to them within a few days of the missed group. Acknowledge that they missed group, check to see that everything is okay, and invite them back for next week.
- **Once groups start, every group leader will need to ensure they are taking weekly attendance in the group website and updating their group rosters online.** (Step-by-step instructions are for all of this. Plus, you can always contact your Growth Group Coach or Staff Lead for help.)

Growth Group Rules and Values

These rules and values are here to help set a tone and cast a vision for how your group will work. And while we know rules and values can be seen as negative words, they are meant to help us get on the same page. Rules and values on the front end can help us understand what our shared goals are and what healthy expectations look like. These rules are designed for every group member to hear; these aren't just rules for the group leader.

1. **Purpose:** EastLake Groups exist to help people grow in friendship and faith. Everything we do as a group should fit under this purpose.
2. **Showing Up:** In an effort to get the most of our time together, and to foster trust this group season, we want everyone to try and come consistently to group. If you have to miss a week, please communicate proactively so we know what to expect.

Along these same lines, when we show up let's be willing to let people see the real us. Groups are meant to be a place we can be ourselves. This is not meant to be a place of right answers or for us to act like know-it-alls.

By all means, we don't want to deny that trust and friendship take time to build. Wisdom is welcome here! So, while we value authenticity, we don't believe we need to be transparent with everyone.

3. At EastLake Church, we value safe environments. Here is what this means for your group:

- There are no perfect people allowed. So relax...you're in good company here. Our issues may be different, but we are all in process. Therefore we should plan to be patient, gracious, and compassionate to one another. Let's not forget we all fall short and are all in need of grace.
- We value fun and we know how to laugh. Fun and laughter are proven to help people lower the emotional walls and connect people.
- We want everyone to share from the heart, but we don't want this to be place where we throw others under the bus. Let's be considerate and careful about the way in which we talk about others.
- There is rarely just one right or wrong answer to a discussion question. Most often there are several different perspectives and facets to one question. We make room for the various ideas people bring to the table. We even believe that respect, love, and harmony can exist when we disagree. The goal of most questions is to help you connect as a group and get everyone to think about their own faith. Along with that, we all have our doubts, curiosities, and questions about God. We make space for them here.
- We don't try to fix people here. Growth groups are meant to be about growing in friendship and faith. We are each in process ourselves and need fixing in our own ways. If there is a specific concern for the well being of anyone in our group, we can refer them to pastoral staff for professional assistance. EastLake Church has therapists and recovery groups we recommend for people who desire/need that.
- We don't monopolize the conversation; we take turns. If this is hard, consider using a timer. It sounds silly, but few things can kill a group like one or more members not letting others talk. And if this means sometimes there is silence in the group, that is okay. Let's give each other

space and time to process before we assume no one is going to say something. If you are a quiet person, we encourage you to speak up some. Let us hear what you have to say. We want to get to know you too.

- We share ownership of this group. See the section below titled “Sharing the Load” for various ways each member can volunteer.
- What is shared in your growth group stays in your growth group. If something is shared that presents a concern that needs further input, contact groups@eastlakechurch.com.
- Growth groups are not dating pools or platforms for selling products, raising funds, or making political pitches. If you represent a career or a product in your professional life, you can discuss this outside the group on a personal, relational level, but no one wants the growth group to become a sales or fundraising pool. Your group is also not a voting box so don't turn it into the next political debate. Leave that up to CNN. And lastly, though people have met and married through our growth groups, this is not a dating service.

Sharing the Load

As a group leader, a key part of your job is to encourage others to participate fully in your group. Below are some possible roles for you to consider sharing. By sharing the load, you are more likely to enjoy your role as a leader and you'll help your group function smoothly, run as a unit, and keep anyone from burning out. Let people choose how they will contribute to your group. And remember, something magical happens when "your group" or "my group" becomes "our group".

- **The Group Website:** Keeping your group data updated and clean on the website and taking attendance is meant to be quick and easy, but if the idea of doing it weekly freaks you out at all, pass the task off to another person in your group. Be sure to contact your Growth Group Coach or Staff Lead requesting the right person gain access to your group and your weekly automated attendance reports be sent to the right person.
- **Co-Leader:** While we don't recommend you act too swiftly with giving this role away, we do recommend you stay open to a potential co-leader. Sharing leadership with someone you like and have chemistry with can make leading a group so much more enjoyable.

If you are leading a "Group for Everyone" we highly recommend developing a host team that represents both genders.

- **Alternate Discussion Facilitator:** Most people don't see themselves as leaders unless someone else points out their abilities. Look for people who are willing to step in and lead your group discussion if you can't be there.
- **Food Coordinator:** Have people take turns bringing food to your group and have someone own that schedule. Owning the Food Schedule generally also means sending reminders. (Please note, not every group needs food, and even groups with food do it differently. Some groups do snacks and others enjoy sharing meals. There is no right and wrong way here; just get a feel for your group and make a plan that works for you all.)
- **Group Communication:** Your group will need someone who is willing to call, text, or email group members in regard to schedule changes, prayer requests, or other needs.
- **Special Events Coordinator:** When it comes time to plan a party, an outing, potluck, or celebration, remember you don't need to carry the load alone. In fact, there may be someone in your group who'd love to help plan something fun.
- **Service Project Coordinator:** Find someone who loves service projects and let them come up with ideas for how your group can serve our local or global community together. You are free to come up with your own ideas, or you can join others by jumping in with projects.
- **Childcare Coordinator:** If your group needs childcare, you will need one or more volunteers to coordinate the details and serve as the childcare contact person. Options for organizing groups with children are listed on the following page.
- **Other:** What else does your group need and who is willing to make it happen?

Childcare Options

There is no perfect way to do childcare in a group. But in a community like ours, it's wise to think through childcare ideas. Groups with childcare do fill up first.

A. Here is what every leader needs to know: We do know groups with childcare are often the easiest to fill. Some parents can have strong opinions regarding their children so making everyone happy can be hard. As a leader, we encourage you to find an option that works for you.

B. If you are going to do childcare, read this before you start: Kindly communicate a clear vision, expectations and boundaries to adults on the front end. For example, childcare costs (costs are usually shared), no children under a certain age, no food upstairs, kids will entertain themselves outside, etc.

C. If you are going to do childcare, here are some options we've seen play out well:

Option One: Depending on the ages of the children consider including them in all or some of your group time. You can literally have kids sit through the content and discussion with you or you can have the kids eat and socialize with you on the front end and back end and run wild upstairs or outside during the content and discussion.

- The plus side: Groups are a great opportunity for kids to share in community. The family vibe of groups like this is often a very special thing for every family member and group member.
- The downside: Groups must be prepared for a measure of chaos.

Option Two: Each family finds their own babysitter.

- The plus side: No difficulty in trying to meet each family's needs and preferences.
- The downside: For many people finding a babysitter can be hard, and babysitters can fall through often, causing people to miss the group on a regular basis.

Option Three: Hire one or more babysitters to come to the host home. Some homes have an area for the adults and an area for the children.

- The plus side: People are not individually trying to find babysitters. Parents feel comfortable with the children being so close.
- The downside: The children often want to be with the parents and can be disruptive to the group.

Option Four: Rotate group members weekly to watch the children at the host home.

- The plus side: Same as above, plus this option saves money.
- The downside: Same as above, plus somebody has to miss the study each week.

Option Five: Choose another home for childcare. Some of our groups use one home for the study and one home for childcare. (In this option you can either hire a babysitter or rotate the adult member of the group.)

- The plus side: Good separation between children and parents.
- The downside: Finding an available home in close proximity.

Option Six: Get creative and let us know what works for your group!

Group Curriculum

This season all groups will be starting off by using the preselected content on RightNow Media or using the weekly EastLake Church Discussion Guide.

- **EastLake Discussion Guide:** These guides are designed to help us explore and process the weekly content we hear at church while we connect with others. In other words, discussion guides are designed to help us grow in friendship and faith. Each guide comes with its own opening and closing prayer to help leaders.

Access the guide each week at eastlakechurch.com/discussion-guides or on the EastLake App.

EastLake Church App: Click on the section titled “Growth Groups” and look for where it says “Discussion Guide”.

- **RightNow Media:** This resource connects us to countless group videos. To see what content we are suggesting this season, login to RightNow Media and check out the content listed under the “EastLake Chula Vista (Adults)” channel. Pick a study that stands out to you. Once you pick your content, make sure you take the time to see if you need to buy a leader guide or discussion questions for that particular study. (If you do, you likely only need to buy one copy of the content.) Also, make sure you can get the video teaching up and running on your tv days in advance. Give yourself time to solve any unforeseen issues and to reach out to your Growth Group Coach or Staff Lead for help.

Access RightNow Media via eastlakechurch.com/rightnowmedia. Be sure to use the website, not the app, to view the “EastLake Chula Vista (Adult)” channel.

Tips on How to Use a Group Guide Well

Regardless of what study you use, please know the guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create space to grow in friendship and faith. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, consider reviewing the guide before your group to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel pressure to read all the content or to hit all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help foster friendship and faith in your specific group.

In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead.

Before Your First Few Group Meetings

Here are some basic reminders to help you succeed. Review this list the weeks before your group meets.

- Connect with your Growth Group Coach or Staff Lead. Fill them in on any highlights or lowlights. Our team is here to help you win. Implement this step during weeks one through three.
- Send reminders to everyone who signed up for your group. We recommend you send reminders the first two to three group meetings. Implement this steps during weeks one through three.
- Reach out to anyone who didn't show up to group. Let them know you noticed they weren't there, make sure they are doing okay, and let them know they can join the group the following week. Implement this step throughout the entire group season.
- Plan to have name tags available the first few weeks.
- Be mentally prepared to start your group with an icebreaker. Icebreakers are provided on the next page ("Your First Growth Group Gathering"). Implement this step during weeks one through three.
- Review the "Your First Growth Group Gathering" schedule provided on the next page. You will want to make sure your house is ready at least 15 minutes before group starts. Consider implementing this step during weeks one through three.

Your First Growth Group Gathering

Below is a timeline for your group. Keep this schedule with you the first few weeks of group. You can tweak the details below as your group evolves and gets more comfortable.

15+ Minutes Before Group Starts: Get ready for your guests. Tidy up, maybe turn on some light music, turn on lights inside your house and in front of your house to make for a more welcoming environment. Be sensitive to the idea that strangers may be showing up to your house and you want to help them feel welcomed. Do what you can to help a guest feel comfortable. Gather all necessary material — name tags, video teaching, etc. Brew coffee. Set out snacks.

15 Minutes Before Group Starts: Have everything ready to go. Be ready to be present to your guest.

****Group Official Start Time****

0-15 minutes in: Allow people to arrive, fill out name tags, talk, and enjoy a beverage or snack together. Here are some easy “get to know you” questions: How long have you been coming to EastLake? Do you have any experience with EastLake growth groups? Do you serve in any ministry at EastLake? What has caused you to stick around EastLake Church? Do you have any kids? Do you work? If so, what do you do? What do you like about your job?

15-25 minutes in: Sit down, welcome everyone, share a little bit about yourself, and introduce our icebreaker.

Week One Icebreaker: Introduce yourself and (1) tell us what your all-time favorite movie is and (2) how many times you have seen it.

Possible Icebreakers for Week Two: Where is your perfect dream vacation spot?

Possible Icebreaker for Week Three: Play Two Truths and a Lie. Have everyone tell three things about themselves — two true facts and one false one. Have everyone else try to guess which of their statements is false.

25 minutes in: Open your group with this simple prayer: God, thank you for being here and for bringing us together as a group. Help us grow in friendship and faith through this group study and discussion.

26 minutes in: Start going through the Discussion Guide.

If you're using RightNow Media, watch the group video for the week you're on and then move to your questions when the video is done.

65-75 minutes in (or 15 minutes before your group ends): Close up the discussion with a simple prayer.

76 minutes in (or 14 minutes before your group ends): Thank everyone for coming. Communicate or review the “Share the Load” vision found on the previous page and see if anyone wants to sign-up to help next week. Communicate any reminders or questions for next week and let everyone know group ends in about 15 minutes.

90 minutes in: Tell everyone “thank you” for coming, that you enjoyed connecting with them, and share that you hope to see them all next week. If you need more tips on how to kindly kick people out, feel free to contact your Growth Group Coach or Staff Lead.

The Group Website

Our group database enables our growth group team to stay informed and organized as a whole. Having all our group information on a website helps us see what groups are meeting when, who in our church body is connected in groups, and how well we are engaging in community as a church. We also believe a good group database helps group leaders stay organized and informed.

Here are some basic things to know about our website:

1. Your group will need to be created by a staff member before you can gain any access to said group.
2. Your Growth Group Coach or Staff Lead can help you edit your group and show you how to use the system during most weekend services. We are here to support you.
3. Every group leader is responsible for ensuring their group and group roster is up to date on the website.
4. Once your group is setup correctly, you should get automatic attendance reports each time your group meets. Be sure to complete your weekly attendance reports.

For more support, visit eastlakegroups.com/resources. Also, you can always email your Growth Group Coach or Staff Lead for additional help.

Group Calendar / Important Dates

To help you stay organized, here is a list of key dates that you'll want to know about. Also, make sure you check out your weekly group emails from Karla Renfro. And lastly, remember your Growth Group Coach or Staff contact is here to walk alongside you as much as you need.

Weekly emails will include reminders, steps, or upcoming dates.

For example, Baptisms, 101, Worship Night, etc.

The Week of January 27

- Ensure your group is on the website whether your group is 'open' or 'closed' to the public.
 - Group website opens Friday, February 1.
- Start inviting your friends to your group.
- Look through content to figure out what curriculum you want to use.
- If you are a man leading a group, be sure to invite the other men in your group to this Friday's Men Tailgate. Details at eastlakechurch.com/tailgate or email collier@eastlakechurch.com.

Friday, February 1

- Men's Tailgate

The Weekend of February 2/3

- Group Central opens this weekend. If your group is 'open' on the website, please plan to be present. If your group is 'closed', we'd love to have you present to help.

The Week of February 3

- If your group is 'open' on the website, follow up with all sign-ups.
- Send reminders to everyone you want and expect to be in your group.
- Make sure curriculum is picked and tested.

The Weekend of February 9/10

- If your group is 'open' on the website, please plan to be present at Group Central. If your group is 'closed', we'd love to have you present to help.
- New series, Relationship Goals, starts.

The Week of February 10

- Groups start this week.
 - Confirm you followed up with all sign-ups and sent reminders.
 - Ensure you are ready for your group. If you need help, ask!
- Sign-ups will still be coming into the website.

The Weekend of February 16/17

- If your group is 'open' on the website, please plan to be present at Group Central. If your group is 'closed', we'd love to have you present to help.
- This is our last weekend for Group Central, but some sign-ups will keep coming in through the website so keep an eye out on people who need to be followed up on.

The Week of February 17 - Week of March 17

- Keep sending reminders to all people.
- If people didn't come last week, make sure they know they can still come. Be sure to also check in on people who said they'd come but didn't show up.
- If you need help, be sure to ask. Coaching and resources are available.

The Week of March 3

- Leaders need to start thinking about what's next for their group. Plan to see more details — with curriculum ideas — in this week's email from Karla.

The Week of March 10

- Group leaders need to have clarity on what's next for their group.
- If you need help, be sure to ask. Coaching and resources available.

The Week of March 17

- This is week 6 of groups.
- Group leaders need to ensure they have chosen their next step and communicated the plan well. How well a group ends is often as important for how a group starts — especially for new groups.
 - Some groups might choose to keep meeting.
 - We want groups to celebrate or do something fun together.
- If you need help, be sure to ask. Coaching and resources available.

Decide What's Next for Your Group

As your group semester draws to an end, you'll receive an email communicating possible next steps and ideas. Your Growth Group Coach or Staff Lead will also contact you around that time to talk through what you're thinking and any questions you may have, as well. As a group leader, we want you to feel empowered to make a choice for what is next, but we don't want you to make the decision alone.

And while you don't need to plan for "what's next" at the start of your six week commitment, here is a quick overview of the options you'll be given. The email you'll receive towards the end of the series will have more details. This list is just to give you a general idea of what to expect.

Start by knowing your initial commitment is six-weeks. At the end of those six-weeks, here is what we ask you do and consider:

- **Celebrate:** We encourage all groups to end their six-week commitment by having some fun together.
- **Service Project:** While a service project isn't required, we do ask that you remain open to doing one as a group. Serving others as a group not only has a way of connecting members, it's a tangible way we can share God's love with others.
- **After your six-week commitment, choose one of these options for the future:**

Agree to continue meeting together and decide on the following details:

- Do you need to change location?
- Does someone else need to lead?
- Are there any other role shifts that need to take place?
- When will you restart your group?
- What material will you use for your group? (We will send possible ideas your way as the time approaches.)

Agree that the growth group has been the right thing for this season, but it's now time to end the group.

- **Final Step:** Once you have decided what is next, send the plan to your Growth Group Coach or Staff Lead.

Thank you for reading through this notebook and learning key details for leading a great group. We look forward to walking with you as you help people grow in friendship and faith through your group.