



July 2017 - Growth Groups Notebook

EastLake Church: Growth Group Notebook

This notebook is designed to provide a roadmap for every group leader this 2017 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 Group Staff 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.

Table of Contents

What it Means to Be a Group Leader.....	Page 4
How to Fill Your Group & How to Follow Up Well	Page 5
Growth Group Rules and Values.....	Page 7
Sharing the Load.....	Page 9
Options for Childcare.....	Page 10
Before Your First Few Group Meetings.....	Page 11
Your First Growth Group Gathering.....	Page 12
Group Vitals.....	Page 13
Group Calendar / Important Dates.....	Page 14
Decide What's Next for Your Group.....	Page 15

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 in Group Vitals. (We will talk through these details later.)

How to Fill Your Group & How to Follow Up Well

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 or private on the website.**
 - 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 welcome unconnected people in our church community into groups.
 - Private: While all groups must be listed on the Group Vitals website, you can choose to keep your group off the public listing. You can fill your group by inviting anyone you know to your group.
- **Whether your group is public or private, 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 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, but here are a few quick things to consider:** We do know Jesus intentionally gathered 12 people around him. 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. For example:
 - Large Groups Challenges: Some people won't open up or talk in a group that size, 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, 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, easier for trust to get built, etc.

Here are key notes on follow up for all sign ups and invites:

- **If your group is “public” 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 August 5 through August 20. 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 or private 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.
 - If someone misses group, call them within two 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 Group Vitals and updating their Group Vitals roster.** (See Group Vitals notes in this notebook or contact your Growth Group Coach or Staff 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. While we know friendships take time to build, and we don't believe we need to be transparent with everyone — especially when trust has not been built yet, we do believe we are called to be authentic. That being said, we ask that you authentically show up each week and let everyone get to know the real you.

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

- Here at ELC, 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 we all have been saved by 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 questions. 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 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, I want to encourage you to speak up some too. 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 going 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".

- **Group Vitals Attendance:** Taking Group Vitals 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 requesting 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 biblical 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!

Before Your First Few Group Meetings

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

If you are a new group leader, please note the bullets below shared specifically for you.

- New Leaders: Connect with your Growth Group Coach or Staff. Fill them in on any highlights or lowlights. Our team is here to help you win. Implement this step during weeks one through three.
- All Leaders: 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.
- All Leaders: 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.
- New Leaders and New Groups: Plan to have name tags available the first few weeks. Implement this step during weeks one through three.
- New Leaders and New Groups: 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.
- New Leaders : 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.

All leaders need to select and test their curriculum for this season:

This season you can choose to use the Discussion Guide or curated content from RightNow Media.

- **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 on the EastLake Church app or at eastlakechurch.com/discussion-guides.

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 two to three days in advance. Give yourself time to solve any unforeseen issues and to reach out to your Growth Group Coach or Staff contact for help.

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

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 — nametags, video teaching, etc. Brew coffee. Set out snacks.

15 Minutes Before Group Starts: Have everything ready to go.

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

0-15 minutes in: Allow people to arrive, fill out nametags, talk, and enjoy a beverage or snack together. 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 made you stick around at EastLake? Do you have any kids? Do you work? If so, what do you do? Do you like 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 this group, for new friends and old friends, help us grow in our 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 time 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.

Group Vitals

Group Vitals is our new church wide group database that enables our growth group team to stay informed and organized as a whole. Group Vitals 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 Group Vitals helps group leaders stay organized and informed.

Here are some basic things to know about Group Vitals:

1. You will gain access to Group Vitals through a personal invite. The email subject will read “You are invited” and the sender will be “invite@groupvitals.com”. You will need to create your own login by following the link in your email. If you cannot find the email in your inbox or spam, contact your Growth Group Coach or Staff.
2. Your Growth Group Coach or Staff can help you edit your group and show you how to use Group Vitals during most weekend services.

Once you have an email invite, start by watching this video: groupvitals.com/leaders

You can find step-by-step instructions for many of the Group Vitals needs, at support.groupvitals.com. Email your Growth Group Coach or Staff for additional help.

3. Once you log into Group Vitals and watch the video listed above, be sure to edit your group.
4. As you edit your group, be sure to notice the details listed under “GroupFinder”. By turning on the button listed “Show group in GroupFinder”, you are choosing to list your group as public on the website.
5. Every group leader is responsible for ensuring their group and group roster is complete on Group Vitals.
6. 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.
7. Group Vitals defaults to sending both email and text notifications. If you’d like to turn off text notification features, log into Group Vitals, click on your profile icon on the top right corner, click “My Notifications”, and make the desired adjustments. Email your Growth Group Coach or Staff for additional help.

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

Group Calendar / Important Dates

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

- **Sunday, August 6 at 6PM:** EastLake In
- **Saturday, August 5 thru Sunday, August 20:** Big Group Launch / Group Central
Group Central happening after each service. If your group is open on the website, please plan to join us after as many services as you can.
- **Sunday, August 12:** Groups start this week...
Groups will run about five weeks, take a two week break, then conclude after about five more weeks.
- **Sunday, August 20:** Church 401
Email info@eastlakechurch.com for details.
- **Sunday, August 20:** Group sign-ups will close on the website.
If you want your group closed on the website before this, contact your Growth Group Coach or Staff.
- **Sunday, August 27 at 3:30PM:** Beach Baptism
Email baptism@eastlakechurch.com for details.
- **Saturday, September 16 thru Sunday, October 1:** Fall Break for Chula Vista schools.
An email will be sent prior to these dates with options on how to handle the break. But for most groups, this will be when they have their two week break.
- **Sunday, September 17 at 11am:** Church 101
Email info@eastlakechurch.com for details.
- **Saturday, September 23 thru Sunday, October 1:** Small Group Launch / Group Central
Group Central happening after each service. An email will be sent prior with details and options, but open groups will be posted on the website.
- **Sunday, October 1:** Groups restart this week....
Groups will run for about five more weeks.
- **Sunday, October 15:** Church 201
Email info@eastlakechurch.com for details.
- **Friday, October 27 thru Sunday, October 29:** All Serve Weekend
Details will be shared via email and in all weekend services.
- **Sunday, November 12:** Church 301
Email info@eastlakechurch.com for details.
- **Friday, November 17:** Most groups will start their break by this date.
Details regarding how to end your group or how to kick off a group break will be sent prior to this date.

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 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.

- **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 Member.

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 & faith through your group.