



MACARTHUR BLVD
BAPTIST CHURCH

**The Art and
Science of Hub
Leadership**

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The Art of Hub Leadership

What is a Hub Leader?

A Hub leader is a unique role within MacArthur Blvd Baptist Church (MBBC). A Hub leader's role is to shepherd the shepherd leaders at MBBC. At MBBC, we have many Community Groups and a lot of current shepherd leaders and apprentices who desire to lead groups in the future. To healthily care and develop our current shepherd leaders, we need Hub leaders who can oversee, care for, and develop 3-5 shepherd leaders in what we call a hub.

A hub is a set of three to five community groups connected geographically for (1) more efficient mission, (2) more effective care, and (3) more exact equipping. Hubs are vital to the health of our groups and our church; hence we need a plurality of healthy leaders who manage hubs. In our current structure, the Pastor of Spiritual Formation will be the hub leader over the male and female hub leaders. To prevent leadership isolation, the following three areas of responsibility are recommended for healthy team leadership of a hub.

1. The **male hub leader** is the primary leader of the Hub, and the hub leadership team, who (1) casts vision, (2) coaches, and (3) provides pastoral care for the people in the Hub, with particular focus on the primary male leaders of each community group, but not to the exclusion of female group leaders or group members, as needs arise.
2. The **female hub leader** is the primary provider of Titus 2 mentoring, shepherding, and coaching to female community group leaders within the Hub. The female hub leader is also encouraged to coordinate any form of occasional hub-wide discipleship and equipping of women as she and the male hub leader might deem beneficial at any given time.
3. The **hub coordinator** assists the male and female hub leaders with communication, administration, and hub-wide missional engagement—leading the Hub into larger missional opportunities. If the male and female hub leaders primarily serve by leading, hub coordinators primarily lead by serving. These three areas of responsibility could conceivably be carried out by as few as two people (provided the female hub leader has a unique capacity and gifting to provide both Titus 2 mentoring and a measure of administrative and missional support), or as many as four people, where the hub coordination efforts are divided between an administrator and a missional coordinator as Hub needs increase. Each of these three areas of responsibility is primed for an apprenticeship. Male and female hub leaders and hub coordinators should be alert and diligent to include other people in the Hub in their ministry efforts—both for the sake of developing leaders and sharing the ministry load.

Qualifications of a Male Hub Leader

1. Because the role of male Hub Leader is a pastoral pipeline role, priority will be given to externally called and qualified men.
2. Because the role of male Hub Leader is pastoral, priority will be given to those men uniquely skilled in the art of shepherding and friendship, who also possess margin and an internal call.
3. Because the role of male Hub Leader is a pastoral type of role, priority will be given to those men with prior experience leading and multiplying community groups.

Responsibilities for a Male Hub Leader

1. Visit each community group in your assigned Hub once a quarter.
2. Hold a visit follow-up debrief meeting with the primary male and female leaders of each community group in the Hub.
3. Meet in person with each primary male community group leader every other month for ministry coaching and personal pastoral care.
4. In partnership with the Pastor of Spiritual Formation, schedule and co-lead at least one hub training per semester (either for community group shepherd leaders and apprentices only or you can include all community group members within a hub).
5. Work to be available to all shepherd leaders in the Hub for coaching and care through phone, email, or personal interaction.
6. Meet with the female Hub leader and the Pastor of Spiritual Formation at least once a semester for strategic planning, coaching, fellowship, and vision alignment.
7. Meet with the other Hub leaders during assigned meeting times. Meetings will occur twice a semester.
8. The male Hub leader should take the initiative to work collaboratively with the female Hub leader for the health of the Hub as a whole.

Qualifications of a Female Hub Leader

1. Priority will be given to those women uniquely skilled in the art of shepherding and friendship, who also possess margin and an internal call.
2. Because the role of female Hub leader is a practical role, priority will be given to those women with prior experience leading and multiplying community groups.

Responsibilities for a Female Hub Leader

1. The invitation for the female Hub leader is to function in the same spheres of leadership as the male Hub leader—underneath his empowering servant leadership—along with the following baseline commitments for the two-yearly blocks of August–November and January–June.
2. Meet in person with each primary female community group leader every other month for ministry coaching and personal care. In alternating months, it will be crucial for the female Hub leader to connect by phone and check-in with each of her leaders—by listening deeply, encouraging verbally, and praying for each leader on the spot before concluding the call.
3. In partnership with the Pastor of Spiritual Formation and male Hub leader, schedule, help speak into, and co-lead at least one hub training per semester.
4. Pursue regular communication with female shepherd leaders in the Hub, with the goal that every primary female shepherd leader would be pursued, known, loved, heard, and prayed for.
5. Join the male Hub leader in meeting with the Pastor of Spiritual Formation at least once a semester for strategic planning, coaching, friendship, and vision alignment.

Heart of Coaching¹

What is the heart of coaching? What does it mean to be a hub leader functionally? Being a hub leader is an overflow from our ambassadorship in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). All believers are called to live as ambassadors for Christ. For everyone, that may look different. In a similar vein, all believers are called to make disciples. Being a hub leader falls into those categories. The heart of coaching is caring, developing, and deploying fellow leaders into ministry at the highest level of character and competence for the role. Coaching involves inspiring, motivating, challenging, encouraging, and difficult conversations. But in our holistic coaching model, we want to be

¹ Some of this section has been inspired and adapted from Scott Thomas and Tom Wood, *Gospel Coach: Shepherding Leaders to Glorify God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012). Any quotations in this section will be from this book.

coaches who **know, feed, protect, and lead** our Hub (shepherd leaders). “A gospel coach inquires about the personal, spiritual, and missional aspects of a ministry leader’s life in a loving yet focused manner.”²

Know

The good shepherd, Jesus, knows his sheep (John 10:1-5). The role of a Hub leader is that of a shepherding role. The first phase of coaching is connecting with those you are coaching relationally. Knowing those you are coaching is essential to leading, counseling, coaching, and mentoring in the future. A good shepherd (Hub leader) knows his sheep’s past and present realities. In regards to their past, get to know their testimony. Hearing someone’s testimony allows you to understand their unique experiences because past experiences shape people into the people they are today. Stories allow people to connect deeper with others who have had similar experiences.

Regarding their present, get to know their hopes, fears, and needs. Understand how they are doing in their marriage, with their children, neighbors, co-workers, and in their job. None of this can happen apart from time spent together. There is no substitute for a Hub leader spending quality time with their leader. If you want to experience fruitfulness in this role, you cannot disregard the importance of togetherness and the discipline of being present in body and mind with those you lead.

This is never truer than when a crisis strikes or a genuine need arises. Think about a time when you went through a tragedy or a difficult trial. You most likely remember those who were present with you, although you probably can’t remember all the words that were said to you during that time. It is more important to be physically present during crises and other life events rather than having the right words to say. A good shepherd celebrates with those who celebrate and mourns with those who mourn. Following the John 10 passage that was noted earlier, the sheep followed Jesus because they hear his voice and personally know Him. Similarly, those whom we are called to shepherd in the Hub leader role ought to know our voice, know us personally, and trust our leadership.

Feed

An aspect of being a good Hub leader is feeding the sheep. Feeding those we lead involves providing spiritual nourishment. The people to whom we minister need spiritual food for nourishment. For the Hub leader role, feeding has three aspects to it. The first is nourishing with the truth. Leading and feeding go hand in hand. A Shepherd knows what the sheep need for nourishment to stay healthy. In the feeding of truth, Hub leaders want to inspire those they lead with truths from God’s Word. Reminding them who they are in Christ, what he has done, and

² Thomas, 38.

how this should shape our thoughts and lives. Biblical truth is the foundation for our faith; apart from truth continually being imparted, people often stray or lack confidence.

The second aspect to feeding those we lead is inspiring them towards obedience in Christ. Christian leadership begins with proper followership. Christian leaders are not leading out in a vacuum, but instead, they are leaning and depending on the God who goes before them. Proper leadership in the Christian realm flows from our followership of Christ and the followership of others towards Christ. As Hub leaders, we ought to inspire growth and obedience in Christ. The healthier the leader is in their relationship, the healthier they will shepherd their Community Group. Coach your Shepherd leaders towards greater obedience to Christ, dependence on the Spirit, trust in God's Word, and a love for others.

The third and final aspect of feeding is equipping people with their needs. Just as coaches feed the sheep spiritual nourishment through biblical truths and inspire them towards Christ, they also assist with various equipping needs. Equipping needs could be ideas, resources, people, and information. If a leader is looking to host a missional engagement and is looking to plan it, a Hub leader can help equip them by assisting them to think through logistics, other groups that could help, ideas for how and what kind of event to put on, and other people to talk to who have done something similar. That quick example would be helpful for a group leader and would make them feel more equipped for the task at hand. Equipping can also be less practical in nature, such as equipping them for future changes; it could be equipping them in godly character or skill-based traits.

Lead

Leading through a Hub leader role is an intimate shepherd aspect to the position. Hub leaders will lead the Shepherd leaders by providing investment, guidance, and oversight. Hub leaders provide investment relationally. Investing relationally takes time, but it demonstrates sacrificial care for that person. When Shepherd leaders know that you care and are invested deeply in their lives, they will willingly follow your leadership. Without proper investment, leading them through change or struggle will be more challenging. Hub leaders will provide direction to Shepherd leaders by assisting them in choosing the appropriate path forward.

In many cases, there are various ways to do something, but not all courses are the most efficient or best for the flock. Hub leaders will properly guide leaders through decision making, relational issues, group dynamics, and even personal dealings. Lastly, Hub leaders provide godly oversight. Proper oversight is not lording over someone. Instead, oversight is watchful care and attention being paid toward a person. It is watching a person walk through their life, relationships, leadership, and decision-making to oversee how they are doing spiritually in those aspects of life. You may see a struggle in your oversight and gently guide them in the right direction, which could be a protective marker.

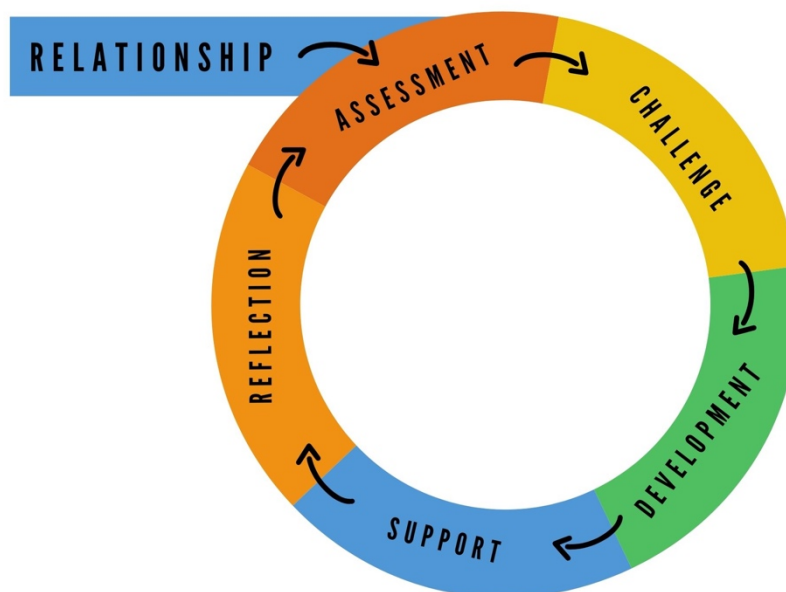
Protect

All Christians need protection. In our ecclesiology (doctrine of the church), the church is one of the primary means of protecting Christ's children. The church is to protect all of the sheep, but Hub leaders have a role in protecting the ones called to protect the flock at large. If Hub leaders do not protect Shepherd leaders, dysfunction and issues can permeate the group. What are we protecting these leaders from? As a Hub leader, you are protecting the leaders from three things, sinful behaviors, doctrine, and poor leadership decision-making. First, we are protecting them from sinful behavior. When you see concerning or simply not godly behavior, you want to confront that behavior. Believers should confront each other in sinful behaviors but even more so for leaders. These sinful actions, if not corrected, can damage the overall group. Because this is the case, we must swiftly and gently correct them to protect the general flock. Another aspect of protection is protecting them from poor doctrine. If a leader is teaching doctrine contrary to Scripture, it is your role to confront them to protect them and the group. Lastly, we must protect them and the group from poor leadership decisions. Protecting our leaders from making poor decisions benefits them and the group overall. Examples of this could be multiplying before being ready, making significant changes too quickly, not clearly defining roles that can confuse groups, etc. Protecting is a safeguard for the leader, the group, and the church. Protecting Shepherd leaders requires courage, compassion, and relational capital.

Phases of Coaching

In this section, we will look at two separate phases of coaching. One is phases for your individual coaching relationships, and the other is your phases of coaching structurally. The first will apply to coaching people through situations, whereas the second will look at the future development of hub leaders. We will start with phases for your individual coaching relationships.

Individual Coaching Relationship Phases



These phases and cycles of coaching may look intimidating. But the way you move from one to the next is both a matter of time, patience, and steering the meetings with appropriate questions. Once the relationship is built and there is trust, questions will ultimately move you from one phase to the next. Also, these phases are cyclical. As a coach, we are never finished because there are always issues and challenges.

Relationship

Much of life cannot be accomplished without a relationship. Discipleship, coaching, counseling, and even business deals often do not happen without a relationship. In coaching, relationships are crucial. These relationships should go beyond the surface level and into a deeply trusting relationship. Here are some keys to building relationships with those you coach.

- Connect with them Regularly (text, phone call, in-person, email)
- Listen to their story and demonstrate how much you care for them personally
- Do something fun together
- Pray for them regularly
- Be patient; relationships take time to develop

Assessment

Assessment is a crucial area to probe into as we begin coaching. What are we coaching towards, and where do they need to be developed? This question cannot be answered without assessment. In our coaching model, we are doing holistic coaching. Thus, our assessment should be comprehensive. As a coach, you need to assess the health of their marriage, community group, leadership abilities, personal spiritual health, emotional health, physical health, and various skills they may lack. One of the best ways to assess is by asking open-ended questions and having the person you are coaching share. Questions should be more exploratory in this phase to gather information. Once adequate information has been collected, you move to the next phase, challenge.

Challenge

The heart behind challenging people is to help them establish areas that need attention and a clear picture of how to grow in these areas. In our assessment, we want to cast a picture of what is possible and ask them what some steps to get there are. Some questions for challenging those you are coaching is...

- What are you not doing that is holding you and your group back?
- What are some alternative routes to fulfill the mission you could look at?
- What is the cost of not making the change?
- What are the upsides of trying something new?
- What would it look like to take a calculated risk in this situation?
- What is the next step to take to fulfill the vision?

Development

In some circumstances, you may not need to develop the person you're coaching through a concept, and other times you may not. Suppose a Shepherd leader needs to multiply and has already gone through it. In that case, you won't have to develop them in their theology and practice of multiplication. But suppose a leader needs to and has no current understanding. In that case, you may need to develop them theologically and practical steps in working towards a group multiplication. Development is on a person by person, case by case scenario. In development, always feel the freedom to reach out to the Pastor of Spiritual Formation or other Hub Leaders. An essential guide to look at would be the Shepherd Leader Field Guide.

Support

As those you are coaching begin to grow, implement new things, get pushback from group members, and even struggle through personal issues, our role as coaches is to support them. Just as our coaching is holistic, our support is also holistic. As a hub leader, your desire should be to support your shepherd leaders through whatever they are going through personally or in terms of leadership. Helpful questions to ask in this phase is...

- How can I best support you?
- In what ways can I be praying for you?
- Are there any resources that you don't have that would be helpful?
- What else do you need to be successful?

Reflection

The final step in the phase of coaching through a situation is reflection. Humans grow through the positive outcomes we see, but often we develop more through challenging situations that didn't go the way we thought. Reflecting and getting feedback on the overall situation, how we handled things, how we responded often helps leaders grow. This could be a time for celebration or a time for humility and prayer in a circumstance in which the leader failed. Some questions to help leaders reflect on a situation would be...

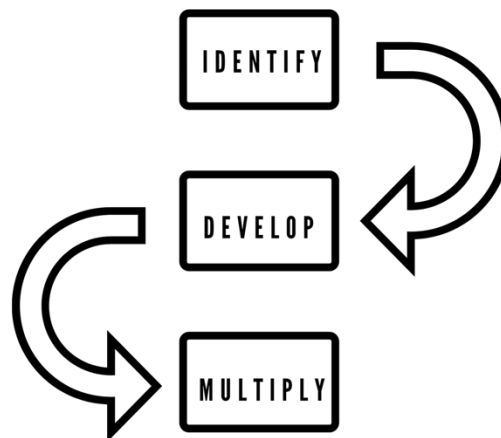
- How did it go?
- What would you do differently?
- What did you learn about yourself through the process?

- What's your next step?
- What is there to celebrate?
- Is there anything to repent of?

At this point, the cycle is constantly resetting. Through each coaching conversation, you will enhance your relationship, assess where they are in that moment, challenge them in some ways, develop if necessary, and follow up with support. Shepherd leaders are constantly going through something, and thus this cycle never ends. We move from support right back into the assessment. The goal of these phases is to help you identify where you are in your coaching of a person understanding that this is fluid. Also, when a leader is going through multiple things, you may be in different phases for each issue. For example, you may support them in a parental situation they are going through, but simultaneously, you may also be developing them for group multiplication. Our coaching is not necessarily limited to one item per meeting/person.

Coaching Structural Phases (STRANGE WORDING)

The following diagram demonstrates how we want our hub leaders thinking about phases of growing other coaches. In one sense, this is for your well-being and the development of future coaches. All leaders need to replicate themselves, and hub leaders are no different. Depending on the speed at which these hubs grow and need to multiply might determine how long our development potential hub the phases of leaders.



process is with
leaders. Below are
developing other hub

Identify

As we grow as coaches, we desire to replicate ourselves for the glory of God. The first step in looking for a replacement or someone to take over another hub is identifying the right person. For the identification phase, you want to look for leaders who have godly character, are excelling

at being a shepherd leader, show a level of pastoral care for people, care more about the kingdom than themselves, and someone who prioritizes the local church. Once you have prayerfully identified a person and talked to the Spiritual Formation Pastor about that individual, you progress to develop this future hub leader.

Develop

Development is a crucial phase in any leadership role. Although some people have ‘natural’ leadership gifts, it does not necessarily mean they are ready to take on a particular leadership role. There are multiple ways and angles to develop a person into a hub leader. The first is making sure they are actively engaged in the hub gatherings and with you, the hub leader. This will help them see what good hub leadership looks like. Second, this person should go through team-leader training if not done so already. This one-year training helps develop holistic leaders within the church. The third aspect of development is to get familiar with this document, The Art and Science of Coaching. Once you go through this with them, you can slowly begin to allow them to ‘coach’ you, lead hub gatherings, and even coach other shepherd leaders when ready. There are additional resources for character and competency development that the Pastor of Spiritual Formation has laid out on the Hub leader page on the website. When you believe this person you are developing can do what you do as a hub leader and they have a hunger for developing and discipling leaders, you are ready for the next phase.

Multiply

Just as the Great Commission calls disciples to make disciples, leaders are called to develop leaders. The natural overflow of Christian discipleship is multiplication or, in this case, hub leaders developing and deploying hub leaders. This is no different from disciple to disciple, leader to leader, or coach to coach. Regardless of the role, multiplication is the healthiest next step of a growing people. The way you multiply yourself takes patience and endurance. In the midst of development, map out their apprenticeship in this role. Throughout the apprenticeship, be in communication with the Pastor of Spiritual Formation for the next steps and a potential timeline for the apprentice to take over the role as hub leader for a particular hub.

Principles of a Healthy Coach

1. Regularly check your own heart, motives, and background

As a hub leader, can you make the connection between the details of your daily life and your relationship with the Lord? Your daily life, work, and relationships give you an accurate read on your relationship with Jesus. Ask yourself:

- How are your best relationships? Your worst relationships?
- How are your spiritual disciplines?
- How are you growing in your battle with sin? Can you identify sin in your own life?
- Do you ask for help? When was the last time you asked someone to pray for you and then actually let them pray for you on the spot?

- Do you encourage other people to do things you don't do? In other words, if you ask them to begin meditating on Scripture, do you meditate on Scripture?

As a hub leader, you must care for yourself spiritually and do not project your motives and history on a leader you are coaching and caring for. We must regularly check out hearts, listen to the Spirit, and demonstrate good listening skills.

2. Coach/Care Holistically

Hub leaders are to holistically address (1) personal, (2) spiritual, and (3) ministerial needs of leaders in their care. We should make it our aim that whenever someone decides to lead a community group, we shepherd them in such a way that in hindsight, they end up pointing back to their decision to lead as one of the greatest contributions to their spiritual growth that they've ever received! As you care for Shepherd leaders, take into account the whole person and work to care and coach them in all facets.

3. Be Great Commissioned Focused

All of the Scripture points to Christ, and Christ has given us a mission, to lead people to trust and follow Him. Shepherd leaders attempt to create a culture for discipleship that leads to mission. In our coaching, we must spur them onto greater love for Christ and commitment to His mission. We also want to be people who model the mission for those we are leading.

4. Lead people to follow Christ more intimately

Lord willing, you have people in your life who are spurring you on to trust Christ more each day. Current Shepherd Leaders are attempting to do this for each individual in their group. Healthy coaches are getting cared for spiritually, and out of the overflow of their own spiritual health, they are doing the same for others.

5. Encourage and celebrate the small victories

Leaders, by definition, create change and lead through the transition. Leadership change and sanctification both do not happen overnight. Instead, it takes time of incremental steps to see change. In those we are leading, notice the small victories and celebrate them. Do not wait until they have completed the goal to celebrate, do so all along the journey.

6. Review notes, pray, process

After your meeting, healthy leaders write down notes and highlights from their meetings. These notes will help you twofold. First, in the future, when you are to meet again, it's good to reflect on previous meetings to check in with them and also track progress. The second is to review notes, pray through them, and process potential next steps in your coaching relationship. Reflection and prayer are important aspects of being effective in your role.

7. Equip leaders to grow in their abilities and expand their ministry

Many leaders have the ability to do great things, but are either not confident or don't feel competent for the task ahead. Shepherd leaders are not an exception to this. In our coaching, we want to draw untapped potential from our leaders. Have them speak to their goals and desires for

the group while also helping them formulate a plan for that growth. Helping a leader grow in their ability ultimately expands our impact in DFW and expands the global kingdom.

8. Hold Leaders Accountable while Still Being an Encouragement

Good leaders know how to manage expectations without being harsh. The truth is, we all need accountability. We need someone who will tell us that we are not meeting expectations and that we need to step it up. But the tone in which we receive that matters tremendously. As a Hub leader, we want to hold the expectations high of our group leaders while simultaneously encouraging their hearts towards Christ and shepherding.

9. In every meeting, listen, encourage, and pray.

Understanding that life gets busy, things get hectic, coaching meetings don't always go as planned. If all else fails and you don't know what to do, listen deeply, encourage meaningfully, and pray diligently. These three should be a staple of every meeting. If you center yourself (like the asterisk) between these three at every gathering, you will succeed.



Evaluating your Coaching Relationship:³

- Does your relationship with each leader increasingly feel like a friendship? Are you growing in your ability to trust each other?
- Would you feel comfortable if you had to say something hard to them?
- Are your touchpoints (in person or phone call) intentional? Are they moving beyond “check-in” and starting to sound like discipleship? Is your coaching reactive or proactive?
- Are you starting to get a feel for where they need to grow spiritually and how to walk alongside them in that process?
- Are you growing in your love for them? Are you affected and moved by their sins and sorrows?

³ The ‘Evaluating your Coaching Relationship’ section comes from Frontline Church in Oklahoma City as part of the Community Collaborative. Permission was given by J.J. Seid.

Six Questions for Holistic Coaching⁴

When you enter into a coaching conversation, you never know precisely what you are walking into. You could be walking into a leader who is seeing great fruit and looking into ministry expansion, or you could walk into a situation where the leader is burnt out and dealing with significant struggles in their group. The questions below allow you, the coach, to give them open-ended questions where they can answer honestly and even in areas that do not pertain specifically to their ministry.

1. **How are you doing?** Coaches should begin with this question because it sets the tone for the relationship. This question demonstrates personal care rather than simply getting down to business. This question also helps you know what tenor to take in the conversation. If someone is discouraged, you can focus on encouraging them in the gospel. If someone is neutral, use it as an opportunity to inspire them. If someone is doing well, use the conversation to challenge them to provide some new direction.
2. **What are you celebrating?** Listening to the answer to this question helps you understand two things. First, it enables you to identify and encourage the leader in what is going well. Secondly, what people celebrate tends to indicate what they value. If individuals consistently talk through the excellency of relationships within the group but rarely celebrate outsiders participating in community, they likely value intimate relationships above mission. Over time you will see trends within answers. This allows you to coach them towards a potential weakness.
3. **What challenges are you facing?** This question also gives two perspectives on the individual and the group. First, where sinners gather, there are always challenges. Suppose there isn't a response to this or are consistently sharing shallow challenges. In that case, it is likely the group isn't pursuing the vision for community groups and discipleship groups particularly well. Second, this question also indicates misplaced values within the community. If "dealing with children" is consistently a challenge, there is likely an overemphasis on the meeting and study while lacking the importance of demonstrating missional community to children.
4. **What are you doing about those challenges?** This question is vital because you first want the shepherd leader to address the challenges on their own and present creative solutions before the coach chimes in. Ownership in leadership is expressed through problem-solving—resist the temptation to solve problems for a leader! As they are

⁴ This is a conversation template (originally created by Todd Engstrom of The Austin Stone Community Church) that is helpful for coaching leaders.

processing solutions to challenges, continue to probe into their ideas through questions to help them fully develop the solution.

5. **How can I help you?** This question enables you to respond constructively and meet any leader's needs or the community groups. It is also an opportunity to listen for both the strengths and weaknesses of the leader. Suppose they are consistently requesting articles or books. In that case, it's likely they are a learner and predominantly lead through teaching, for example. If they often do not give you an answer, you can latch onto helping them through the challenges they just brought up.
6. **How can I pray for you?** Finally, you can care best for a leader by committing to and following up with prayer. It's imperative to do right on the spot! Additionally, this question helps identify particular areas of concern that the leader has, which may not be skill-based issues. Often here, a leader will reveal a deep issue plaguing their community or express concern for a problem that needs to be addressed by a pastor.

This conversation pattern will be tremendously helpful for coaching shepherd leaders apprentices, in our discipleship, and in many circumstances where we're just getting to know someone. This template is more like a flow chart and not prescriptive. The more coaches have these types of conversations; you will develop the art of transitioning to the next question. Remember to show care through listening and not a rote mechanical conversation.

Other helpful questions...

- What's the greatest need of your group? How are you going to meet that need?
- Do the leaders and members clearly understand the purpose of the group?
- Do you sense that people in the group are growing into spiritual maturity?

What does a Healthy Community Group Look Like?

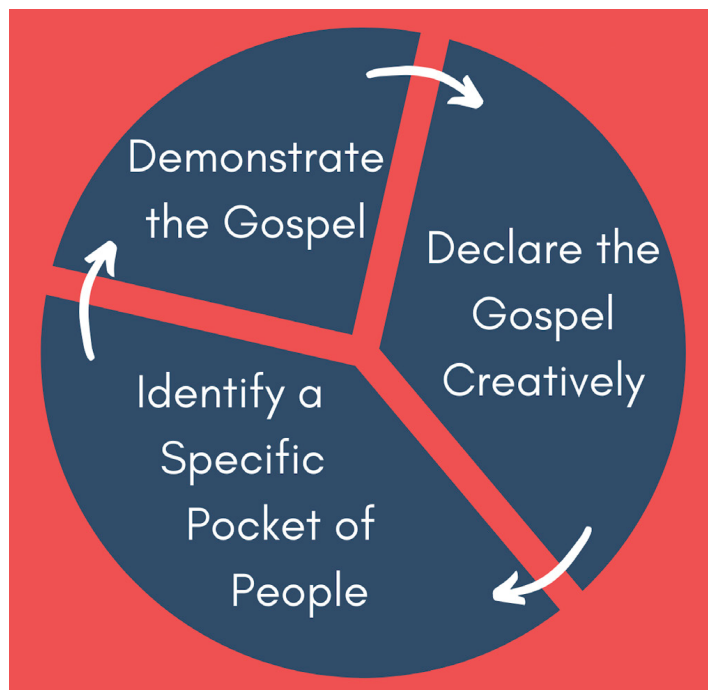
One of the key areas Hub leaders are coaching shepherd leaders in is Community Group ministry. I pray thus far you have seen our coaching model as holistic, coaching people in their personal life, emotionally, physically, spiritually, and in their leadership. One of the key functions of a shepherd leader is similar to that of a hub leader, except the focus is on shepherding their flock (community group) well. This section will look at aspects of a healthy community group. This will be particularly helpful for conducting group visits. This document will not dive into detail for each of these sections below, like the *Shepherd leader Field Guide*. Instead, it will give a light overview of the 'why' for each section and why we are coaching towards this direction/outcome. For more information on Community Group ministry, leadership qualifications, vision for Community Groups, shepherd leader job description, the ins and outs of

group ministry, and much more, check out the Shepherd Leader Field Guide (Ask the Spiritual Formation Pastor if you need a paper or digital copy).

Shepherd Leaders who Lead the Mission

The overall mission of a shepherd leader is to lead out in the mission. To be a ‘model’ Christian in the context of community will strengthen the disciples in the group. Shepherd leaders who lead the mission in their group demonstrate the gospel both in their personal life as well as in the group rhythms. They will work to declare the gospel creatively both to those disciples they are discipling as well as those who are currently far from Christ. Another key role in leading the mission is helping the group identify whom they want to try and reach with the gospel and strategies for individuals to progress in a life on mission.

As Hub leaders, we are coaching towards this mission. Is your coachee doing a good job in their group leadership of demonstrating the gospel? What about declaring the gospel creatively or helping to identify a specific pocket of people? As the group gets off the ground and into a healthier place, these are coaching questions. If a group is not executing its mission, coaching will strive to help the leader see the vision and implement it.



Understand What Group Phase They Are In

Healthy Groups progress in the phases of Group Life. Every group has life phases, and they are all in different phases depending on how healthy they are and how long they have been together.

As you coach Shepherd Leaders, knowing what phase the group is in is beneficial. Knowing what phase they are in helps you gather information and enables you to ask questions to get the leader thinking about steps to take to progress to the next phase. The phases of group life are listed below.

Connection (2-3 months in this phase)

This stage of group life is generally at the beginning for most groups. Usually, this phase takes about two to three months and involves getting to know each other. There is early on excitement about being together in a different setting. Take some time to hear each other's testimony, spend quality time together, and have fun. Quality time and developing relationships are some of the foundations for a healthy group in the future. People will be asking questions such as, "Do I belong? Do others like me? Am I accepted in this group?" As the leader, do your best to build relationships with each individual and encourage other group members to connect.

Partnership (2-4 months in this phase)

After a season of connecting and developing gospel-centered relationships, we move forward to partnering together as a group. As the group becomes more cohesive, we will mobilize the group to disciple one another and move into missional engagement. This all begins with a heart change for the group. The honeymoon of connecting is over, and the group is ready to begin the growth process. We will take small strides toward discipling and missional activity during this season. This is the beginning step of where we want to be in the future. Continue to point the flock to the mission of the group.

Growth and development (6-9 months in this phase)

This phase will have plenty of overlap with the partnership phase. At this point, the group is hitting a stride. The purpose of the group is becoming clearer, to grow in their discipleship and to reach those far from Christ. The group should be aspiring toward the practice and sustainability of each of the primary rhythms of a community group. This includes the 4 rhythms of your group gathering (Fellowship, Scripture, Prayer, Hospitality) and monthly rhythms. As the group grows in their discipleship and begins to reach those far from Christ, we want to be sure we are developing future leaders. Leadership development is a critical component that will help us transition to the next phase.

Multiplication (2-4 months in this phase)

At this point, our group is strong in leadership and attendance. As we are deployed into the world and those far from Christ come to know Christ, it is time to multiply our group. Multiplication is a beautiful gift from God that we should celebrate! Once other leaders have been developed and are ready to lead out, we begin preparing the group for multiplication. Below is a section on how we multiply our groups.

The 4 Rhythms of Group Gatherings

What should groups do when they gather? The 4 Rhythms of Community group gatherings are...

- Fellowship
- Scripture
- Prayer
- Hospitality

For more information on what these rhythms look like practically, check out the *Shepherd Leader Field Guide*. When executing a group visit (later in this guide), you will rely heavily on observing how they are doing in these 4 rhythms. If a group is struggling in fellowship, not healthily executing in the Scripture time, or the group is not praying, coaching can help steer the group in the right direction. We recognize that leaders and groups are not perfect, but we want to strive to be as healthy as possible. The role of coaching is to help them assess how their group is doing in these rhythms and aid them in group improvement. Lord willing, over the course of a year and a couple of group visits, the group grows in their rhythms and maturity in Christ. But overall, healthy groups operate in these 4 rhythms consistently. Of course, there may be seasons where there is more fellowship than hospitality. Still, by and large, the group should see these rhythms as equal in importance and function.

Gather, Grow, Go

Gather, Grow, and Go is how we break down the Community Group structure. Groups gather together to build relationships and encourage one another intentionally. The Grow aspect of our structure is D-groups (Discipleship Groups) that flow naturally out of existing Community Groups. Discipleship groups gather together in gender-specific groups for greater accountability, Scripture memorization, confession, and overall spiritual growth. The Go aspect of the structure is for being equipped in and through your gathering and growth for the sake of mission. A healthy group will be operating through the entire system of gathering together frequently, growing through D-groups, and going on mission.

Questions to ask to probe deeper into these structures...

- How regularly does your group gather together?
- How would you describe your group when you gather?
- Does your group have D-groups?
- What percentage of people are in D-groups?
- How regularly do your D-groups meet?
- What's the group's current missional engagement strategy and rhythm?
- Do you see your group members engaging in mission? How?

Desired outcomes

A healthy group will naturally exhibit these outcomes. Healthy gatherings, D-groups, and missions will prove themselves in these outcomes. To one degree, we are measuring groups based on these outcomes. Did the group overall progress in a healthy trajectory in the past semester? What areas are they weak in? Below is a brief description of the desired outcomes. Throughout your coaching and group visits, ask questions about these outcomes to keep leaders focused on where the group should be trending toward.

Gospel-Centered Community

Relationships are foundational in discipleship relationships. There is no discipleship without gospel-centered relationships! Good Shepherd Leaders will work to create environments where people feel they can belong and thrive. As groups spend more time together, they offer stories of hope, encouragement, care, and support that will rise as we live life alongside each other. Our group gatherings are an avenue for us to grow in our relationship.

Gospel Transformation

As we grow into deeper relationships with each other, apply the Scriptures together, pray for one another, and hold each other accountable, we will be transformed. Our Community Groups are a prime avenue for people to grow. D-groups that stem from our Community Groups will be the foundational spot where we dive deeper into God's Word and produce fruit.

Fruitful Mission

Faithful leadership helps group members stay accountable to Jesus and His mission and resources them to demonstrate and declare Christ in each sphere of influence. Although we cannot control who comes to Christ and who doesn't, it is our responsibility to be faithful in our sharing of the gospel. Monthly missional engagements and third place gatherings will be a prime avenue in which we aim to reach those far from Christ. We want to be leaders who are equipping and deploying the flock into where they live, work, and play.

Multiplication

As we build gospel-centered relationships, are being transformed by the gospel, and reach those far from Christ, we will need to multiply our efforts. Healthy groups will strive for multiplication when the time is right. We aim for multiplication so that we can continue to invest in our flock in a meaningful way and create space for those outside of Christ. As groups grow, new leaders will be identified and trained to lead the group that multiplies. This leader will be coached, trained, and sent.

This section can be fleshed out more in the *Shepherd Leader Field Guide*. But this section can be helpful for the times that you are struggling to get groups moving or getting a leader to look past minor details. In those moments, help them see the bigger picture and begin to move in the right direction.

The Science of Hub Leadership

The Science of Hub Leadership Explained

Coaching is both an Art and a Science. The previous section laid out holistic coaching questions, areas to focus on, and much more. The last section is an art, and working to figure out what the leader needs at each moment can take time to craft. This section looks at the science of coaching. What must we do, and what rhythms do we have in meeting with those we are coaching? Below are two charts; one is an example of what it could look like, the second is a blank one for you to fill in and begin to draft the science of your meetings.

Some things you will notice on the Science chart...

Semester Based

Hub Leaders operate on a semester-to-semester basis and take breaks in the summer. This does not mean we do not keep in touch, but no formal meetings or gatherings will occur in the summer. We want to focus on shorter stints, 4-5 months, to get the most out of the shepherd leaders and their development.

Home Visits

A core way of knowing how group life is going is to visit the group. Male Hub leaders must visit each group that they support once each semester. In the following section, we will look at some things to look for while doing home visits. These visits are crucial for our care for the overall flock of MacArthur Blvd. but also for the encouragement and growth of the leader.

Visit Follow-Up

Visits are helpful, but it may not be fruitful for the leader without a visit follow-up. After each visit, Hub Leaders will host a visit follow-up to share observations, encouragement, and suggestions if needed. Visit follow-ups should occur within two weeks of the home visit.

One-on-One

One-on-ones are helpful in relationship building and diving deeper into your coaching and development of shepherd leaders. Often leaders can hide in groups and don't get the attention they need to grow. Consistent One-on-Ones are one of the most important items on your calendar. The goal is to have two of these types of meetings per semester.

Hub Leader Dinners

This gathering occurs once a semester. This gathering is a dinner for all leaders within a Hub. This dinner can be the male and female Hub Leaders, male and female shepherd leaders, apprentices, and even missional leaders within a hub. This dinner can be at a home, church, or a restaurant. The purpose is for continual care, appreciation, and relationship building.

Hub Meetings

Hub meetings are meetings run by Hub leadership for their Hub. The Pastor of Spiritual Formation will often give the topic, but each Hub can sometimes create its own content. This is a venue where we further equip our Shepherd Leaders for their specific ministry. Hub Gatherings will occur twice a semester in place of Shepherd Huddles on-campus.

Meeting with Leadership Team

Meeting with the Leadership team is meeting with the Spiritual Formation Pastor as a check-up and check-in for how things are going personally and in your Hub leadership and meetings as all Hub Leaders. These meetings are for accountability and care for you as a leader.









Whole Hub Party

Once a year, all Hubs will gather for dinner and fellowship. Time will be TBD on these events.










Announcements

Throughout the year, there may be various events to promote to your Hub for them to also share and promote with their group. Church leadership will keep Hub leaders updated with upcoming events that need to be promoted through Hub leadership.

The Science of Hub Leadership


	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May
Leaders and Groups		Visit group 1	Visit group 2	Visit group 3	Visit group 4		Visit group 1	Visit group 2	Visit group 3	Visit group 4
		In-person 'visit follow-up' meeting	In-person 'visit follow-up' meeting	In-person 'visit follow-up' meeting	In-person 'visit follow-up' meeting		In-person 'visit follow-up' meeting	In-person 'visit follow-up' meeting	In-person 'visit follow-up' meeting	In-person 'visit follow-up' meeting
		One-on-one with primary male leaders of groups 1 and 2	One-on-one with primary male leaders of groups 3 and 4	One-on-one with primary male leaders of groups 1 and 2	One-on-one with primary male leaders of groups 3 and 4		One-on-one with primary male leaders of groups 1 and 2	One-on-one with primary male leaders of groups 3 and 4	One-on-one with primary male leaders of groups 1 and 2	One-on-one with primary male leaders of groups 3 and 4
	Host hub dinner and training (community director co-leads))Travis Hosts this for all leaders						Host hub dinner and training (community director co-leads))Travis Hosts this for all leaders			
Coaching Team	Group Shepherd Huddle	Monthly hub leader/elder meeting	Group Shepherd Huddle and All Hub Meeting	Monthly hub leader/elder meeting	Group Shepherd Huddle		Group Shepherd Huddle	Monthly hub leader/elder meeting	Group Shepherd Huddle	Monthly hub leader/elder meeting
	1:1 with Spiritual Formation Pastor	Meet with Hub Team		Meet with Hub Team	Meet with Hub Team		Meet with Hub Team			Meet with Hub Team
Congregation and Church				Missional hub party or project (all c-group members)					Missional hub party or project (all c-group members)	
									Marriage conference	
					Church-wide women's gathering		Church-wide men's gathering			


The Science of Hub Leadership


	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May
Leaders and Groups										
						 Home Viiist	 Visit Follow-Up	 One-on-One	 Hub Dinner (All Leaders)	
Coaching Team										
						 Hub Meeting	 Meeting with Leadership Teams			
Congregation and Church										
						 Whole Hub Party	 Announcements	 Announcements		

Group Visits/Feedback/Development

CHECKLIST⁵

-  **Call ahead.** In partnership with the Shepherd leaders, select a date to attend their group, with the goal of connecting, observing, and giving feedback. The call is important because the leader could take that wrong if you randomly show up. (If you're finding it difficult to nail down a time with a particular set of leaders, pay attention to that dynamic of anxiety. Ask good questions and listen carefully. Perhaps the leaders are overwhelmed. Maybe they are embarrassed to have you visit their group. Perhaps from a previous church, they carry authoritarian notions of pastoral presence and are anxious about your visit's effect on the group.)

-  **Attend the group as a “fly on the wall.”** Remember that you are not there to lead the group— resist the urge to take over. That doesn't mean you should be cold or aloof. Be warm and encouraging. Move towards people and greet them. Ask questions and listen. Look for tangible things you can affirm. Be quick to encourage and praise. Cultivate a peaceful, pastoral, and prayerful presence. (The primary male hub leader's spouse and/or the female hub leader are welcome and encouraged to participate in group visits but are not required to participate.)

-  **Schedule a follow-up conversation.** After the group visit, meet with the group leaders— preferably in-person— to debrief and share encouragement, areas to grow, blind spots, etc. This allows you to “strike while the iron is cold” by giving you time to organize and prioritize your feedback prayerfully (e.g., instead of pointing out ten things, what's one thing they could work on right now?), as well as helping the leaders more easily receive any needed correction. Thoughtfully visiting the groups in your Hub will automatically increase your level of skill and insight, as you will no longer be attempting to coach your leaders based on their verbal description of their group alone. Instead, you will be able to coach your leaders based on an experience you have shared with them. Attempt to make this follow-up conversation within two weeks of your group visit.

Group Visit Diagnostic Questions⁶

In seeking to measure the health of a group, consider the following kinds of questions:

⁵ A portion of this material has been taken and adapted from Frontline Church in Oklahoma City. Permission was given by J.J. Seid, Pastor of Leadership Development.

⁶ A portion of this material has been taken adapted from the Fellowship Group Handbook, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Version 2.0, 1997.

1. **Do the leaders and the members clearly understand the group's purpose?** Is the purpose regularly being mentioned within the group? One of the main reasons people drop out of community is that they lack a clear sense of purpose. Attendance problems can often be accounted for by a failure to communicate the group's purpose to the members or a failure to achieve the communicated purpose. When the group's purpose is known and clearly articulated, it affects how the leader leads and affects the expectations, attitudes, and actions of the group members.
2. **What is the time breakdown among the group's various elements (Fellowship, Scripture, and prayer)?** A group should provide a balance between these elements. If the group is dominated by intellectual discussion and gives personal sharing and prayer the leftovers of the meeting, this will have an adverse effect on the group. Prayer should not be an afterthought to group gatherings but should be fundamental.
3. **What is the quality of the group's fellowship?** Is the house fairly quiet? Are there pockets of people conversing amongst themselves with little to no overlap among people? Are conversations general, or are people going deeper? Do these believers feel like friends or acquaintances? Are people aiming for the heart and speaking out of a desire to build others up and minister to them, or are they "speaking to hear themselves speak"? Fellowship is an integral part of groups as it allows relationships to grow.
4. **What is the quality of the group's Scripture time?** How much time does the group go through sermon-based questions? Does the group get below the surface level of the question? We do not want groups dominated by a bible study lesson by one person. Instead, we want groups that allow everyone to contribute to a conversation that leads to confession and spiritual growth. If they are giving a monologue rather than encouraging a dialogue about Scripture, then people's satisfaction with the group will decrease, and they will stop participating. Community group gatherings are not primarily intended to be a time for leaders to display their teaching gifts, however good they may be. Instead, it provides an opportunity for people to discuss what Scripture is saying, apply it to their lives, and articulate and develop their own beliefs. To facilitate conversation in the most edifying way, leaders should think of themselves as snipers. Their facilitation should be characterized by lots of vigilant listening, stillness, and drawing out of others' hearts, coupled with only very occasionally dispensing a thoughtful, concise, and well-aimed contribution.
5. **Is there an atmosphere of openness, warmth, honesty, sincerity, and genuineness?** Usually, the group leaders set the tone in the group for each of these things. If they lead with openness, honesty, warmth, humility, and sincerity, the group will usually follow and imitate what they observe. A stiff, wooden, flat, cold, religious, or hierarchical atmosphere will tend to drive people away.
6. **What is the quality of the group's prayer life?** A group maturing in prayer will find that its prayer is kingdom-focused—centered on God's purposes and accomplishment. Even personal prayer requests will have God's glory as their chief concern. The group will also be praying for the ministries of the church. The group's prayer life ought not to be always and only self-focused, or else it will become ingrown over time.

7. **Do you sense that people in the group are growing into spiritual maturity?** What is the evidence for this? Groups do not meet just for the sake of meeting. A community group can quickly become a place to merely hide in plain sight. Gospel community exists to enable us to better love God, love people, and reach the lost. With some reflection, the Shepherd leader ought to be able to point to particular ways in which individuals in the group are growing, inch by inch, into the likeness of Christ.
8. **Is the group growing as a spiritual family?** When a group grows in their sense of belonging, several things will happen. Individuals will feel a sense of responsibility for one another. They will be praying for one another outside of the group time. They will be spending time with one another outside of the group time. They will be sitting together and checking on each other on Sundays. Individuals will have a sense of being stronger when they are with the group.
9. **Does the group have a sense of being a part of the larger church?** The group should feel connected to the larger church, not isolated. If they do feel connected, they will be enthusiastic about what is going on in the life of the church. They will be praying for the ministries of the church. Individuals in the group will be becoming members, and they will increasingly be giving generously and serving faithfully. This will also play itself out with new people on Sunday morning. Are they actively inviting people to the group, whether church members who are not in a group or visitors?
10. **Is the group growing in size? Healthy groups tend to grow numerically.** As a result of the personal growth that people within the group are experiencing, they desire that others enjoy the same experience and invite them in.
11. **Does the group benefit from primary and assistant leadership?** In other words, is the group led by more than one household? A true plurality that brings with it a sharing of burdens and complementarity in gifting and perspective usually requires at least two families on the leadership team—regardless of whether each household consists of a single person or a married couple. Further, one of the marks of a healthy group is multiplication. However, a group that is not developing gospel leaders cannot multiply gospel communities. Healthy groups take leadership development seriously.
12. **Does the group begin and end on time?** People will be far more likely to faithfully come to the group if they can count on it beginning and ending on schedule. It is inconsiderate and breaks trust with people if the leaders regularly go over their announced ending time.
13. **What are the “on-ramps” to the other rhythms of community?** If people do not regularly hear about the need for spiritual formation and the opportunity to join a discipleship group or come to third-place gatherings, they are unlikely to participate in that rhythm. Likewise, groups that do not carve out time to pray for the lost or talk about ways to reach the lost in their city will rarely gather for mission.
14. **What is their rhythm for missional engagement?** The healthiest groups engage people missionally as individuals and as a group out of an overflow of Love for the Lord. How are they doing in this rhythm? How many gospel conversations have they been able to have? How often do they host an event or a new person in the group?

15. **What is the size of the group?** Once a group grows larger than twelve to twenty adults in attendance, one's ability to participate is significantly reduced. Inability to participate decreases satisfaction with the group and can lead to drop-out. (The range given is wide because other factors at play will affect how large a group subjectively "feels" to its members. Ten adults with fifteen kids might feel chaotic and unmanageable sooner than a group of seventeen adults with three kids, or twenty-one adults with no kids.)
16. **Do you sense that people bring enthusiasm and expectancy to the group gathering?** Why or why not? Usually, a lack of expectancy and enthusiasm is a function of the other diagnostic questions raised here. This is a helpful question to ask to prevent us from being dishonest about some of the other categories. A lack of purpose, a lack of participation, a failure to be ministered to or be able to minister to others, etc., can all lead to a lack of enthusiasm in the group. Then again, maybe everyone got to bed too late this week or is still recovering from a bout of Covid! It may take a couple of group visits to get your answer to this question.
17. **Does everyone participate in the group?** If not, why not? If people do not have the opportunity to participate, their sense of satisfaction will be greatly diminished. There are many potential reasons for the lack of participation. The group may be too large. The group may not perceive that there is an atmosphere of openness. Discussions may be led in too much of a monologue style, etc. You will have to determine the cause and how to address it, but make no mistake. Whatever the reason, it won't handle itself.
18. **Do people sense that they are valuable to the group?** Are they given ownership in the group through being encouraged to use their gifts? Are they able to contribute to the group by helping with various tasks? A healthy Christian community is marked by all its members becoming increasingly involved contributors to the life of the group. A person's sense of belonging is greatly enhanced when they believe they are doing things that are significant for the group's well-being. A person should have a sense that they would be missed if, for some reason, they were not in attendance.
19. **Is their attendance fairly consistent?** If not, to what do they attribute the inconsistency? Perhaps it is just the lifestyle of the broader culture that leads to sporadic attendance. However, it could also be that people don't understand the importance and the nature of Christian community—that we need each other and are interdependent. Or perhaps they do not sense that they are valued and don't believe they will be missed if they are absent. For this, check with the leader as to how often people attend.
20. **Do the leaders take responsibility for the health of the group?** Are they proactive (rather than controlling)? Are they patient (rather than grumbling)? Do they know how to avoid blaming themselves for the immaturity of their people on the one hand while still taking responsibility to humbly correct, encourage, and pursue those entrusted into their care on the other? Do they tend to blame shift and act helpless (rather than redemptively move towards, pray for, and correct those in their care)? We should slow down and listen carefully if a leader consistently attributes all the issues in their group to broad, ethereal cultural forces. In the end, the leader has to be mature enough to lead the group well and cannot blame the group for consistent issues.

Feedback and Development

Group visits allow for a follow-up coaching conversation to speak things into their life. In this case, Hub leaders give honest feedback to the Shepherd leader. Without feedback, how does someone grow? They have to find it out on their own. The problem is that most people are not self-aware of those things, or they are simply blind to see them. That isn't necessarily a negative thing; it is a part of human nature. Feedback is speaking honestly about how a person is doing on a task or their responsibility. Feedback can be positive or negative. We want to shoot for being honest, helpful, encouraging, and giving strategies and development plans to grow as a Shepherd leader. Depending on how the group and leader are doing, the development will look different. The development could be more character-based, leadership competency-based, theological, or group ministry-based. Feel free to counsel and develop as necessary. Also, use other Hub leaders and the Pastor of Spiritual Formation to develop Shepherd leaders further.

Hub Gatherings

Periodically, Hubs will gather together for a meeting. The goal is to get to know each other well with the purpose of personal care, partnership in mission, and group support. There are several purposes for the gathering, such as regathering leaders after times off (December and Summer months), celebrating how a semester went, group training and development, and modeling what a group gathering looks like. These gatherings will be twice a semester, depending on the Hub leader and the Pastor of Spiritual Formation.

For these Hub Gatherings, male and female Shepherd leaders, apprentices, missional leaders, and any other leader in the group should be invited. We do this as an encouragement for all leaders and a way to model what leadership can and should look like. The best place for these gatherings to take place is a home, over a meal. These can be a potluck, or one person can cook. If a home is not feasible, the church is another good option. The Hub leader does not necessarily have to be the host.

Every community group leader should have the opportunity to check in. Future/prospective leaders can listen in and don't have to check in necessarily. If there are too many people for every individual to share, hub leaders can ask married leaders to designate one person to share on behalf of their household. Alternately, leaders can be invited to share and check-in on behalf of the whole leadership team of their respective community group. Then the floor can be opened up for anyone else who would like to check-in or share something that is burdening them individually.

Hub leaders can update leaders on any upcoming church-wide or congregation-specific strategic initiatives or make general comments about hub-wide patterns of strength or weakness they've observed in the past semester as it relates to engaging in Community Group ministry. However, since one of the primary goals is to listen to and know each other well enough to pray for each

other on the spot, make sure plenty of time is left for prayer. Hub leaders should remain sensitive to the Spirit's leading and draw out or highlight anyone they feel needs the attention or prayers of the group. Periodically, these gatherings may involve a piece of training given by the Pastor of Spiritual Formation. At that time, either the Hub leaders can create the content for the topic, or content may be given to you in the form of video and discussion questions for the Pastor or Spiritual Formation.