



**SMALL
GROUPS
SUCCESS GUIDE**



Small Groups Success Guide, Edition 2.0

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TABLE OF CONTENTS



Deepening the Study: The Small Groups Coordinator's Role	1
The Big Picture	2
Time for Action	4
<i>Step 1: Get Oriented</i>	4
<i>Step 2: Build the Small Group Team</i>	6
<i>Step 3: Recruit Hosts</i>	8
<i>Step 4: Invite Participants</i>	10
<i>Step 5: Start Up</i>	12
<i>Step 6: Follow Up</i>	13
Campaign Timeline	15
Help for Hosts	15

HOW TO DEEPEN THE STUDY

What is the role of the Small Groups Coordinator?

- **Lead the** Small Groups Team.
- **Oversee the recruiting** and training of hosts.
- **Oversee the launch and support** of Small Groups.

Your church is about to embark on a journey of spiritual transformation. The key to making this campaign a success is the simple act of prayer. As you start down this path, prayer will be the most important thing you can do. When you and your leadership team spend time on your knees before God, his life-changing power will guide your every step and make these the most important days in your church's history.

Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track.

Proverbs 3:5–6 (MSG)

THE BIG PICTURE

Alignment

Through weekend services, small group studies, and regular reading assignments from the companion book, your entire church family will focus on the same spiritual themes for a concentrated period of time. Imagine for a moment the impact on your church when each person lives out the principles they read about. This impact grows as those individuals live in powerful community with their small group, and reaches its peak when those small groups come together to experience the power of the principles as an entire congregation! This concentrated time of alignment will bear lasting, eternal fruit in all levels of your church.

Dream Big Dreams!

Many churches make the mistake of putting God in a box by thinking too small. We challenge you to go on a faith adventure and “think impossible.” Pastor Rick Warren calls this concept “exponential thinking.” The idea behind exponential thinking is simply this: Identify the results you think you can achieve, and go beyond them to a goal that only God can reach. God will do far more through big goals than he ever will in the safety of small goals. Exponential thinking is God’s secret weapon in this campaign – stand back in wonder as he goes to work.

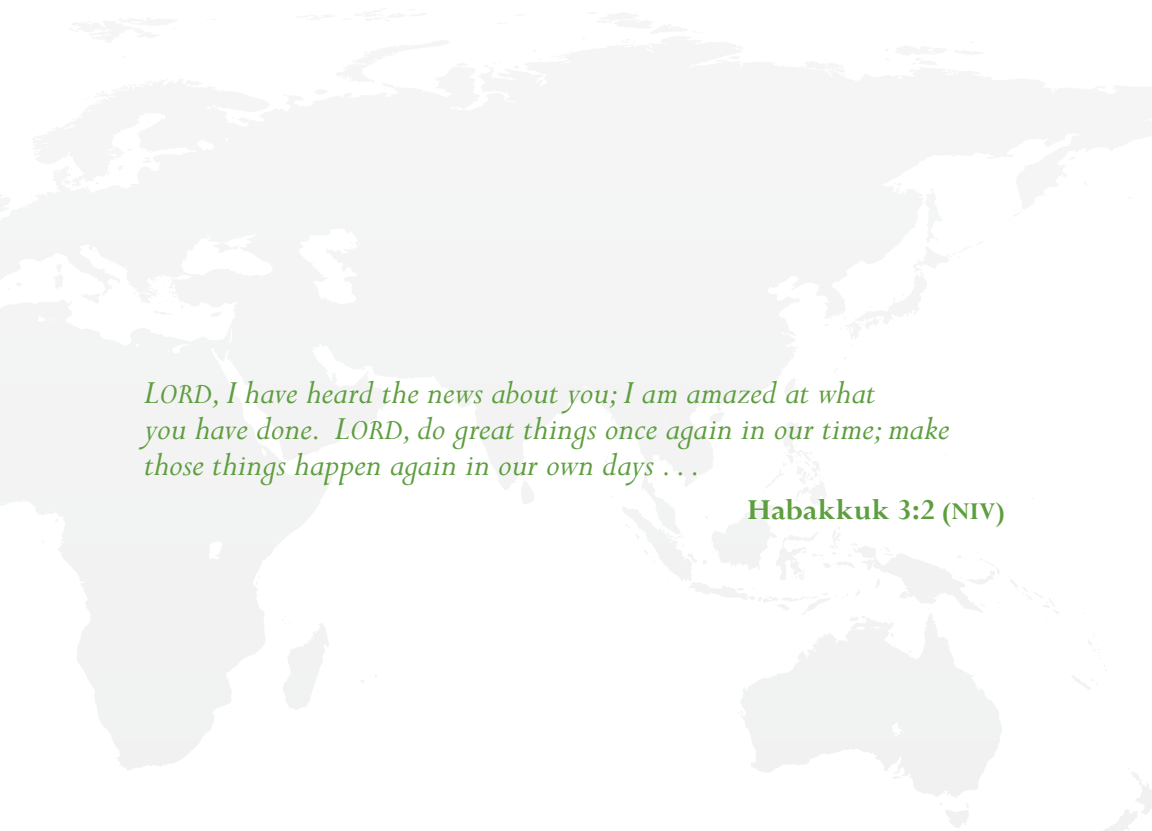
Role and Principles

God never intended for his followers to live the Christian life separated from the rest of the body of Christ. The church must provide an environment where people can share the real stuff of life and find support, encouragement, honesty, openness, grace and biblical trust.

Principle 1: Every Christian needs a spiritual family. We all need a safe place to know others and be known. Meeting in host homes removes some of the limitations of Sunday School: limited time for discussion and fellowship, limited space for multiple groups, and limited locations because everyone has to meet at the same place. A home environment is far more conducive to the type of spiritual accountability and vulnerability that leads to life change.

Principle 2: Every Christian needs a laboratory for life. The phrase “one another” appears more than fifty times in the Bible. We are to love one another, pray for one another, encourage one another, forgive one another, and stimulate one another to love and to do good deeds. Small groups cultivate an environment where we can have these “one another” experiences in real life.

Principle 3: Staying in your building limits your growth. Churches that report a 10-30% increase in group participation during the campaign are usually those whose groups meet in their church building. On the other hand, churches that move out of their building and start home groups experience an average increase in participation of 100-300%! Don't miss out on the exponential blessing of “thinking outside the brick box.”



LORD, I have heard the news about you; I am amazed at what you have done. LORD, do great things once again in our time; make those things happen again in our own days . . .

Habakkuk 3:2 (NIV)

NOW IT'S TIME FOR ACTION

One pressing question may have been running through your mind since you were first asked to become the Small Groups Coordinator: What do I do now? Don't worry. These campaign materials grew out of the experiences of Saddleback Church and thousands of other churches that have gone through Saddleback's spiritual growth campaigns. Everything you need to know to run a successful campaign can be found in these campaign materials.

STEP 1

GET ORIENTED

Review the rest of the Success Guides to familiarize yourself with roles and responsibilities of each team member. Think through how you want to promote, start up, and manage new small groups.

Go to www.saddlebackresources.com and explore the campaign website for your chosen campaign. Check out the Resources and Tools to see what is available for your particular area for Small Groups. Look for sample chapters of the study guide and sample videos of the Small Group DVD. See if your pastor ordered a campaign kit. Inside the kit is one study guide and one small group DVD. Not all campaigns have campaign kits. Familiarize yourself with the Campaign Overview Timeline found on the website and at the end of this Success Guide to get an idea of the steps you need to take in the weeks leading up to the campaign. Call Customer Care at 1-800-723-3532 if you have questions about the resources.

Decide who will order the small groups resources. Some campaigns have coupons for discounts for Small Groups resources, so the person who may have ordered a campaign kit (where applicable) will do the ordering under his/her account. If there is no campaign kit or coupon, anyone can order. When in doubt, call Saddleback Resources Customer Care Monday through Friday, 6:00 am to 4:00 pm, PST at 1-800-723-3532.

Customer Care Staff

If you have any questions or issues that are not addressed by the campaign materials, please contact our Customer Care staff at 1-800-723-3532. You may also email questions to info@saddlebackresources.com. A representative will be happy to assist you.

STEP 2

BUILD THE SMALL GROUP TEAM

The Small Groups Coordinator is responsible for overseeing the formation, support, and ongoing care of small groups. The team you recruit will be launching new small groups and will support new hosts with training, phone calls, follow-up and prayer.

Who to Ask

In order to properly recruit and support your hosts, try to have at least a 1-to-15 ratio of team members to hosts on your team. In other words, for every fifteen groups you think you will have, recruit at least one person for your team. That way you can adequately handle the administrative detail and provide support for all your hosts. Look for people with one or more of the following characteristics:

- A heart and passion for small groups.
- Ability to influence and inspire.
- Ability to prepare hosts to effectively lead their groups.
- Desire to come alongside hosts to encourage, motivate, and problem-solve.

First Team Meeting

Here are some topics to cover during your first team meeting. Don't rush this discussion. You may need to stretch these discussions over more than one meeting.

1. With your team, read through the sections in this success guide called Dream Big Dreams and Role and Principles. Discuss how they can be applied to your church.
2. Consider the following questions:
Where in our church do people have a safe place to honestly share their life struggles? Where in our church do people live out the "one another"

experiences of the New Testament by doing life together? Where in our church do people study God's Word and discuss how it practically applies to their lives? What is "biblical community" and what would it look like in our church?

Arising out of this discussion, draft a single statement that captures your team's vision for the small group emphasis in this campaign.

3. Review the small groups resources provided for your campaign and discuss how they could be used in your church.
4. Commit to pray for one another throughout this journey. Then, pray!



STEP 3

RECRUIT HOSTS

The strategy for starting new small groups is really quite simple: you recruit hosts and hosts fill their groups. Common barriers that prevent most people from leading a small group are removed. With the video-based curriculum you don't need to be a Bible expert, a leader, or spend hours in preparation for the study. Rather, hosts get to invest time in shepherding and loving the people in the group. They are hosts, not leaders. In situations where the host is uncomfortable leading the small group but would still like to open his/her home, assign a different discussion facilitator to that Host Home. This is not a long term commitment you are asking hosts to make. This makes it easier for them to say yes when asked to host a small group. Hopefully, the group will decide to stay together after the campaign is over. Small groups can go to the Small Groups site at www.saddlebackresources.com to get ideas for further studies.

Determine Your Need

Calculate the approximate number of new leaders you need to recruit by determining your average adult weekend attendance and dividing that number by ten. This is the number of hosts you need for the campaign. If you don't think you have enough people to host small groups you need to think exponentially and trust God for the leaders you need to accomplish the vision He has given you.

Make the Appeal

About six weeks out from the beginning of the campaign, start recruiting hosts. Allow three weeks to recruit hosts and three weeks to recruit group participants. Some keys to a successful host recruitment phase include:

Sermon:

Your senior pastor could launch the appeal for hosts with a special sermon devoted to small groups. If your pastor starts off the recruitment phase by

devoting an entire service to encouraging people to take a risk to make this short-term commitment so that people can benefit from being a part of a small group, this will go far in helping people to respond.

Announcements:

Spend time explaining the Host Home idea during every service for three weeks. It is best if these announcements are delivered by your senior pastor, and encourage the pastor to take some extra time in the service to explain the host idea thoroughly. It is important to give people time and information so they can arrive at a decision over time.

Welcome New Hosts:

As people volunteer to be hosts, it is important to affirm their decision and give them some coaching in their new adventure in order to alleviate any nervousness they may be experiencing. Invite new hosts to an orientation meeting. You may decide to run several orientation sessions as new people commit to being hosts. Screen the small group DVD so new hosts understand the format of each session and know how to navigate the menu, select subtitles, and any other features included in the DVD. Be sure they have a small group study guide and a copy of Ten Tips for Hosts found at the end of this success guide. Do all you can to make them feel comfortable being the host of a new small group.

H.O.S.T.:

Make use of the H.O.S.T. acronym when recruiting hosts:

Have a heart for people

Open your home

Serve some coffee

Tell your friends

STEP 4

INVITE PARTICIPANTS

When it comes to inviting people to join the new small groups being formed, there are two ways groups get filled:

- The host invites people from his/her sphere of influence to join the group.
- People sign up at church by completing a card or choosing a group from a list.

Host Invites People

With the Host Home method, the most effective way to publicize the group is one-on-one. The process of combining people into groups happens in neighborhoods instead of in the church building. In this scenario, the host is the primary source of contacts for who gets invited to the group. The result is a group that is more relationally-based for the host. The people who come into that home are for the most part friends and acquaintances of the host, which helps the group stay together after the campaign is over.

People Sign Up At Church

In addition to personal invitations from hosts, the pastor will start to invite people to join groups starting three weeks out from the campaign, and continuing on into the first weeks of the campaign. As people turn in signup cards, distribute the names to the host homes. You may assign names geographically, list all the names and let the hosts choose people to call from the list, or some other method that works in your scenario. Hosts should contact these potential group members within one week of receiving their names. It is also important to publish a list of the available host homes so the process can go the other direction – potential group members can initiate a call to the host of the group they wish to join.

Last Minute Sign-Ups

Be prepared to continue to connect people to groups as late as Week 2 of the campaign. This is a great problem to have! Do not start up a new group for latecomers. Instead, incorporate them into existing groups. It is better for them to stay on schedule with the rest of the church.



STEP 5

START UP

Distribution

Give a set of curriculum materials to each host the week before the campaign launch. Ask hosts to return unused study guides to the church office after Week 1 so they can be redistributed to other groups.

Have the people begin reading the companion book on the Sunday of Week 1 and do the small group curriculum for Week 1 during the week following the Week 1 sermon. It doesn't matter which day of the week the group meets. The discussion questions are based on the small group DVD for the campaign and not necessarily on the companion book.



STEP 6

FOLLOW UP

There are three important follow-up points where your Small Groups Team should contact every host to offer support and encouragement.

Before the Campaign

Contact each new host after they first sign up to invite them to an orientation session, and to answer any questions they have. (Experienced hosts might not need to attend.)

Contact each host again the week before the campaign starts to see how well their group is being filled, to address any of their concerns, and to pray with them for their first meeting.

During the Campaign

Call each host at least twice to offer encouragement along the way. During these phone calls of support, ask the following questions:

1. How are you doing? (Be interested in them as a person.)
2. How is it going? (Discuss progress, problems, and plans.)
3. How can I pray for you? (Pray with them before you hang up the phone.)

At the end of the Campaign

Toward the end of the campaign, check with each host and find out their plans for after the campaign. Ask if the group is going to stay together, and if the host is going to continue to lead. Do what you can to encourage group participants to stay in a group, whether it is this group or another.

Be prepared to offer curriculum options for the group to choose from for their next study.

After the Campaign

Offer small group leadership training for hosts who wish to continue to lead a

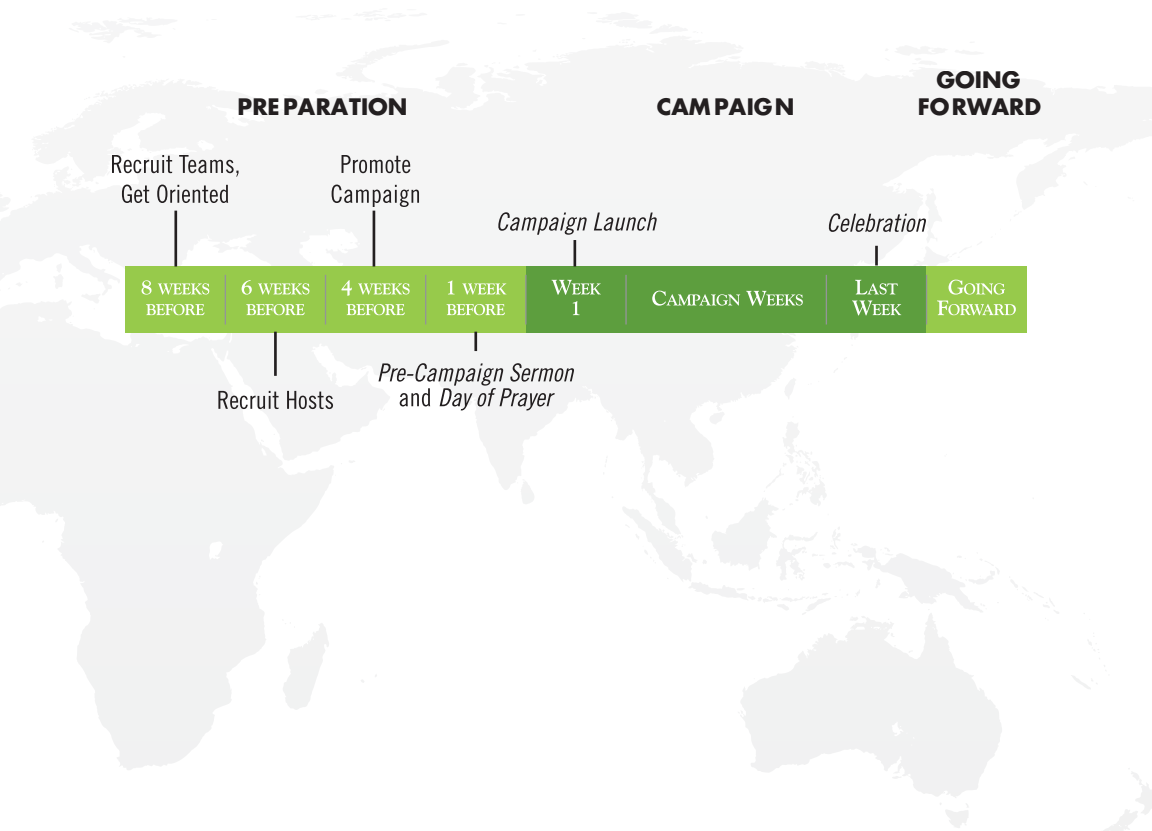
small group. You can find resources for training at <http://www.saddlebackresources.com/Small-Group-Training-C50.aspx>. Be prepared to keep the momentum going in groups by having people in place who can carry on where your team leaves off. Hopefully, some of the members of your team will wish to continue to minister in the area of supporting and equipping small groups. It is important to have people in place to step in and provide ongoing training, support, coaching, and encouragement to the new hosts from the campaign, so that the good work set in motion by the campaign will continue, grow, and multiply.



CAMPAIGN TIMELINE

How to Implement the Campaign

This section lists the major action steps for each team. The Campaign Timeline is your tool to make sure nothing slips through the cracks, to help you anticipate major deadlines, and to help your coordinators prepare for their major tasks in a timely manner. Each Campaign Coordinator has a more detailed timeline in his or her success guide(s) listing only the tasks related to that function.



GET ORIENTED

7–8 Weeks before the Campaign

Small Groups Coordinator

- Review the *Small Groups Success Guide* and the small groups training materials.
- Recruit a Small Group Team and begin meeting and praying.
- Set goals for the number of new groups you are trusting God to provide.

LAY THE GROUNDWORK

5–6 Weeks before the Campaign

Small Groups Coordinator

- Notify existing small groups of campaign dates.
- Recruit host homes and discussion leaders, using the Pastor as the primary spokesperson.
- Hold orientation meetings to coach new hosts in finding members and facilitating small groups.

BEGIN THE MOMENTUM

3–4 Weeks before the Campaign

Small Groups Coordinator

- Recruit small group participants using sign-up cards and a list of available host homes.
- Give names of people who sign up for small groups to a host in their area, who then personally invites them.
- Coordinate with the Weekend Services Team to set up ways to encourage last minute sign-ups for small groups.
- Coordinate with the Campaign Director to place an order for small group curriculum.
- Hold orientation meetings for hosts.

- ❑ Call hosts after they have attended an orientation to see how their invitations are going and to answer questions and pray with them.

PRE-CAMPAIGN

1–2 Weeks before the Campaign

Small Groups Coordinator

- ❑ Distribute resources to small group hosts.
- ❑ Continue orientation meetings for hosts.
- ❑ Continue recruiting group participants.
- ❑ Arrange a way for people to sign up for small groups after the Launch Weekend Services.
- ❑ Call hosts shortly before their first meeting to encourage them and pray together.

CAMPAIGN WEEK 1

Launch Weekend

Small Groups Coordinator

- ❑ Place new people who want to join a small group in existing groups.
- ❑ Do Week 1 of the curriculum.
- ❑ Start brainstorming with the Pastor about possible candidates for an ongoing leader to carry on the mentoring, support, and equipping of small group leaders.

CAMPAIGN WEEK 2 TO THE END

Doing the Campaign

Small Groups Coordinator

- ❑ Place new people who want to join a small group in existing groups.
- ❑ Call hosts and offer support and encouragement once or twice during the campaign.

Questions to ask during the host phone calls:

1. How are you doing? (Be interested in them as a person.)
2. How is it going? (Discuss progress, problems, and plans.)
3. How can I pray for you? (Pray with them before you get off the phone.)

- Coach hosts on options for transitioning after the campaign curriculum is completed.
- Provide new curriculum ideas to groups continuing after the campaign.
- Order new curriculum to have available at the end of the campaign.
- Coach groups to plan a closing “Celebration” social time.
- Plan follow-up training for new hosts who wish to continue leading a group.

POST-CAMPAIGN CELEBRATION WEEK

Going Forward

Small Groups Coordinator

- Encourage groups to hold Celebration social events.
- Follow up with hosts to make sure they have the materials needed to move on to their next study.

HELP FOR HOSTS

CONGRATULATIONS! As the host of your small group, you have responded to the call to help shepherd Jesus' flock. Few other tasks in the family of God surpass the contribution you will be making. As you prepare to facilitate your group, whether it is one session or the entire series, here are a few thoughts to keep in mind.

Remember you are not alone. God knows everything about you, and he knew you would be asked to facilitate your group. Even though you may not feel ready, this is common for all good hosts. God promises, "I will never leave you; I will never abandon you" (Hebrews 13:5 TEV). Whether you are facilitating for one evening, several weeks, or a lifetime, you will be blessed as you serve.

1. **DON'T TRY TO DO IT ALONE.** Pray right now for God to help you build a healthy team. If you can enlist a co-host to help you shepherd the group, you will find your experience much richer. This is your chance to involve as many people as you can in building a healthy group. All you have to do is ask people to help. You'll be surprised at the response.
2. **BE FRIENDLY AND BE YOURSELF.** God wants to use your unique gifts and temperament. Be sure to greet people at the door with a big smile . . . this can set the mood for the whole gathering. Remember, they are taking as big a step to show up at your house as you are to host a small group! Don't try to do things exactly like another host; do them in a way that fits you. Admit when you don't have an answer and apologize when you make a mistake. Your group will love you for it and you'll sleep better at night.
3. **PREPARE FOR YOUR MEETING AHEAD OF TIME.** Review the session and write down your responses to each question. Pay special attention to the Putting It Into Practice exercises that ask group members to do something other than engage in discussion. These exercises will help your group live what the Bible teaches, not just talk about it.

4. **PRAY FOR YOUR GROUP MEMBERS BY NAME.** Before you begin your session, take a few moments and pray for each member by name. You may want to review the Small Group Prayer and Praise Report at least once a week. Ask God to use your time together to touch the heart of each person in your group. Expect God to lead you to whomever he wants you to encourage or challenge in a special way. If you listen, God will surely lead.
5. **WHEN YOU ASK A QUESTION, BE PATIENT.** Someone will eventually respond. Sometimes people need a moment or two of silence to think about the question. If silence doesn't bother you, it won't bother anyone else. After someone responds, affirm the response with a simple "thanks" or "great answer." Then ask, "How about somebody else?" or "Would someone who hasn't shared like to add anything?" Be sensitive to new people or reluctant members who aren't ready to say, pray, or do anything. If you give them a safe setting, they will blossom over time. If someone in your group is a wallflower who sits silently through every session, consider talking to them privately and encouraging them to participate. Let them know how important they are to you—that they are loved and appreciated, and that the group would value their input. Remember, still water often runs deep.
6. **PROVIDE TRANSITIONS BETWEEN QUESTIONS.** Ask if anyone would like to read the paragraph or Bible passage. Don't call on anyone, but ask for a volunteer, and then be patient until someone begins. Be sure to thank the person who reads aloud.
7. **BREAK INTO SMALLER GROUPS OCCASIONALLY.** With a greater opportunity to talk in a small circle, people will connect more with the study, apply more quickly what they're learning, and ultimately get more out of their small group experience. A small circle also encourages a quiet person to participate and tends to minimize the effects of a more vocal or dominant member.
8. **SMALL CIRCLES ARE ALSO HELPFUL DURING PRAYER TIME.** People who are unaccustomed to praying aloud will feel more comfortable trying it with just two or three others. Also, prayer requests won't take as much time, so circles will have more time to actually pray.

9. **ROTATE FACILITATORS OCCASIONALLY.** You may be perfectly capable of hosting each time, but you will help others grow in their faith and gifts if you give them opportunities to host the group.
10. **ONE FINAL CHALLENGE (FOR NEW OR FIRST-TIME HOSTS).** Before your first opportunity to lead, look up each of the six passages listed below. Read each one as a devotional exercise to help prepare you with a shepherd's heart. Trust us on this one. If you do this, you will be more than ready for your first meeting.

MATTHEW 9:36–38 (NIV)

When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

JOHN: 14-15 (NIV)

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.”

1 PETER 5:2-4 (NIV)

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; ³not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO
KNOW TO RUN A SUCCESSFUL
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