



EQUIPPED

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

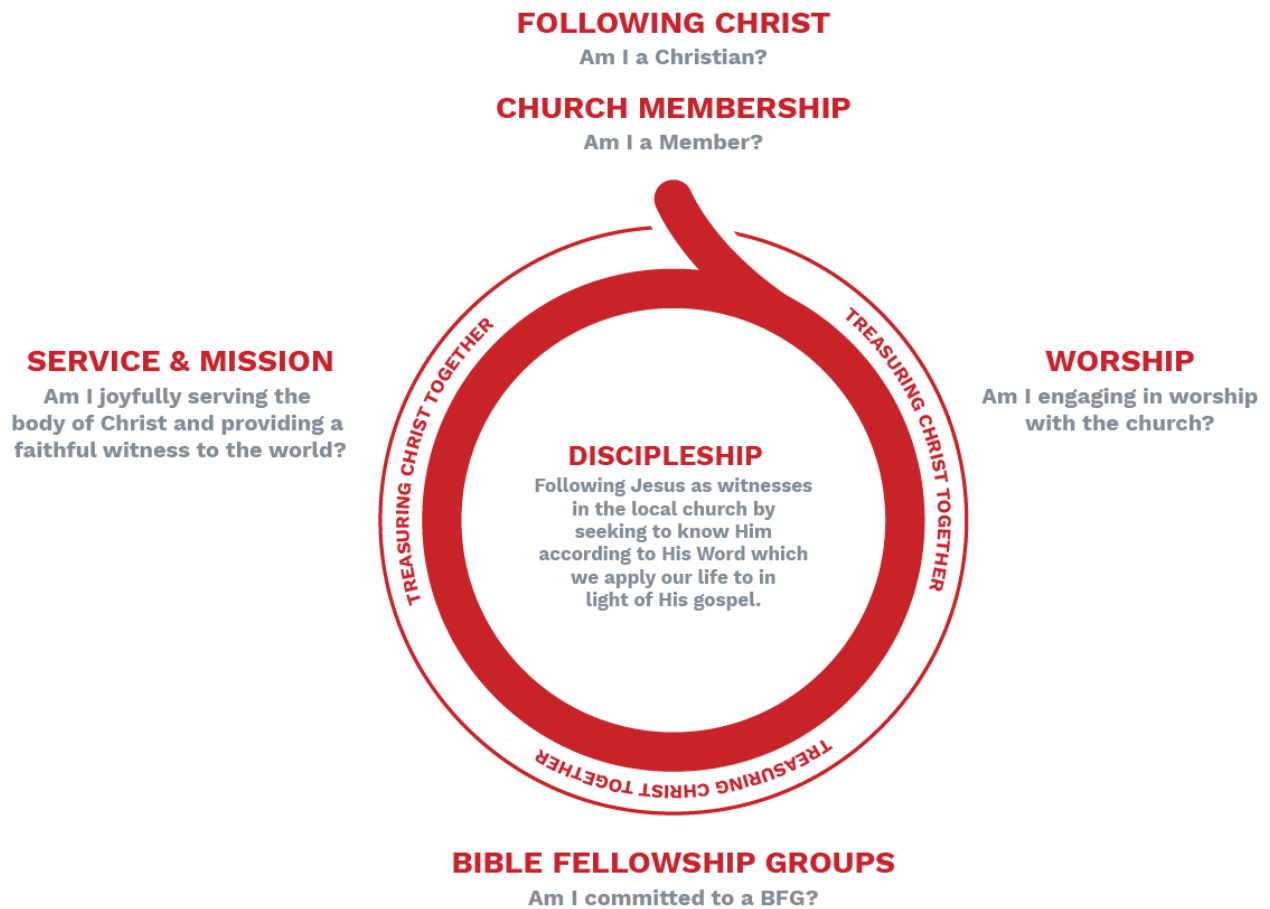
SECTION 1

Vision of Role

The Body of Christ

In Ephesians, God calls the church the Body of Christ (Eph 1:23). Jesus is the Head and leads the church. As He leads, the church follows, fulfilling His work to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19,20). The church fulfills Jesus' work by obeying God's Word and doing His will. Comprised of diverse members with each believer's skills and abilities working together, the church produces fruitful work. Each part is vital to the body's health and effectiveness (1 Cor 12:12-26). There are no lesser or greater members.

Your pastors desire to "equip the saints for the work of ministry" (Eph 4:11-16) so that this local church can effectively fulfill our portion of Jesus' mission. We want to ensure that the members of our church are "doers of the Word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22) – that they're disciplined well. We seek to do this through the "Essentials at Ashland:"



The Essentials are the "bones" (or structure) of our discipleship. In this discipleship ecosystem, God's people are coached to greater love and faithfulness to Jesus and His mission.

For a more detailed explanation of our Essentials, go to ashland.church/essentials.

Where You Fit in this Body

Focused on spiritual transformation through applying God's Word, Bible Fellowship Groups (BFGs) are fertile arenas for disciple-making. Because of this, healthy and competent BFG Leaders are vital to our success in making and developing disciples of Jesus. Without BFG Leaders, our church's ministry is greatly hindered. Your pastoral staff desires to equip you to be an effective leader of your BFG.

So, how does a BFG contribute to disciple-making? Where do BFG Leaders fit in the disciple-making process? To answer this question, we must understand a BFG's goal and the Leader's role.

The Goals of a BFG

A BFG is a small group of people committed to living out the gospel together, seeking to apply the Word of God to their life circumstances.

BFGs have three goals: (1) Spiritual Growth, (2) Biblical Friendship, and (3) Mission.

Spiritual Growth

BFG should be a place of spiritual activity centered on the Word of God where an awareness of the Spirit and a desire to conform all of life to Christ and His Word is cultivated. This happens as BFGs...

- Contemplate, discuss, and apply God's Word together
- Sacrificially serve and care for each other, the church, and their community
- Pray for one another
- Confess sin and seek accountability

Biblical Friendship

The Christian life is not lived in isolation. Growth in Christ towards His likeness is a community project. God calls us to live with Him in the context of relationships – especially relationships with members of our local church.

BFGs provide the context for developing “biblical friendships.” By biblical friendship, we mean there's a gospel-propelled, sacrificial commitment to one another's good no matter what it costs. We foster these biblical friendships by:

- Caring for one another through trials and bearing one another's burdens
- Celebrating joyful occasions and enjoying one another's company

- Serving side-by-side in our church and community
- Sharing God's Word for encouragement and accountability
- Confessing our sins to one another and pursuing repentance and reconciliation

Mission

BFGs are not “holy huddles” where Christians get together to merely talk about the Bible. They're gospel battalions that march the gospel forward. They're conduits through which new disciples of Jesus are made and brought into the church. They also strategically and sacrificially serve the community around them. BFGs are on a mission to proclaim the excellencies of God and His gospel. BFGs pursue Christ's mission by:

- Encouraging and supporting one another to participate in Ashland mission trips/events
- Fostering an environment for one-on-one disciple-making relationships to form
- Holding one another accountable to share the gospel with non-believers
- Actively inviting others to join the BFG
- Serving with local mercy ministries to bless our community
- Pray together for the salvation of lost neighbors and nations (see www.ashland.church/pray for ways to pray)

The Role of the BFG Leader

A BFG Leader ensures that spiritual growth, biblical friendship, and mission are the core of the BFG's culture.

Promote Spiritual Growth

Each meeting revolves around Jesus and the Word of God. You'll do this by:

- Leading the group to pray
 - Ask each person to share a prayer request
 - Have others to pray for one another
 - Encourage various “types” of prayer requests
 - Physical provision for self or others (finances, health, safety, etc) ([Matt 6:11](#); [Psalm 31](#); [Prov 30:7-9](#))

- Spiritual blessing/sanctification (specific spiritual areas where we'd like to grow – patience, wisdom, time in Word, forgiveness) ([Matt 6:12-13](#); [Eph 1:15-22](#); [Col 1:9-11](#); [1 Thess 5:23](#); [2 Thess 2:16-17](#))
- Advancement of God's kingdom ([2 Thess 3:1](#); [Matt 28:18-20](#))
- Personal and corporate fruitfulness and good works ([Phil 1:1](#); [2 Thess 2:16-17](#); [Eph 2:10](#))
- Leading the group in sermon application discussion
 - Typically, the pastoral staff provides sermon application questions (in the Ashland Leaders GroupMe or at www.ashland.church/blog). If they're not supplied on a given Sunday, you're responsible for generating change-oriented questions (see "Section 2, Head | Heart | Hands").
 - Keep the discussion focused on the practical application of Scripture
 - Theological discussions rooted in the Word of God are good! Your goal isn't to avoid them but to ask, "What do we do because of this truth?"
 - Ensure the discussion stays centered on Christ and anchored in Scripture.
 - Promoting the practice of spiritual disciplines (Scripture reading, prayer, engaging in corporate worship, etc).

All of this must be saturated in the gospel – that by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, we have fellowship with God. Spiritual growth isn't a means to "get in good with God." In Christ, you're accepted and approved – you're good with God. Spiritual growth is a byproduct of His acceptance and our fellowship with Him.

Cultivate Biblical Friendship

Biblical friendship involves accountability, care, and encouragement to follow God more faithfully. You have the opportunity to encourage and foster relationships as the leader of your BFG.

You do this by:

- Ensuring your group meets at least 10 times per BFG semester
- Organizing care in crisis
- Planning and promoting "Life Nights" (fun, leisurely activities for your group)
- Celebrating milestones in members' lives (birthdays, marriages, baptisms, etc)
- Arranging follow-up meetings with members as needed

Lead in Mission

Just as God has arrayed His church with diverse gifts, your BFG has folks with differing gifts. Seek to discover, cultivate, and leverage these gifts for maximum gospel-proclaiming effectiveness. Here are some ways you can practically lead your BFG towards greater Kingdom effectiveness:

- Ensure they're serving the local church in some way (e.g., Ashland Kids, Music, Frontline, Young Adults, Tech Team, etc)
- Organize service projects for the community, church, and individual members (see www.ashland.church/localoutreach for ideas)
- Encourage (and if you're gifted in this way, train) each member to share the gospel
- Encourage members to invite others to your BFG
- Recruit for our Ashland mission trips and promote missions events (see www.ashland.church/globaloutreach for more information)

The Commitment of the Pastoral Staff to You

You're not alone in this task. We want to give you the necessary tools and training to be an effective leader. We'll partner with you to care for those in your group. We'll be accessible and approachable when needs arise. We're all responsible for the spiritual care of those in your group, and we'll walk beside you as you aim to be faithful to lead those under your care.

Questions to Consider

- What are the three goals of a BFG?
- In your own words, what is a BFG leader's role?
- List specific ways you can encourage spiritual growth in your BFG.
- List specific ways you can cultivate biblical friendship.
- List specific ways you can lead in mission.

SECTION 2

The Art of Facilitation and Discipleship

The Heart of Change

The will of God for each believer is that they would be like Jesus ([1 Thess 4:3](#); [1 Peter 1:14-16](#)). The Father loves Jesus perfectly ([Matt 3:17](#)). Jesus loves the Father perfectly and pleases Him, doing His will from the heart ([John 8:29, 14:31, 15:10](#); [Luke 22:41-44](#)).

God's not interested in mere outward appearances. He wants all of who we are ([Matt 22:35-38](#)). More than a superficial confession of sin or mere outward behavioral change. God wants to change us from the heart. The "heart" is the core of a person's beliefs, values, feelings, and decisions. In Luke 6:34-45, Jesus says to His followers:

“ ‘For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.’ ”

The heart ultimately dictates our words and actions. *You do, think, believe, and are what you love.* We need a heart change – a heart that truly loves God.

As BFG leaders, we aim to help others understand their circumstances, struggles, and sins as they relate to the heart. We want them to understand their need to be transformed by the Word and the Spirit in their thinking and desires.

Only the living Word of God can pierce and discern the heart ([Heb 4:12](#)). True change in a person's life is only possible through applying the Word of God by the Spirit of God. Because of this, we base our entire meeting time around the Word of God and dependence on the Spirit of God.

Arrows in the King's Hands

We, in and of ourselves, do not possess the power to change our own or anyone else's heart. No matter how hard we strive, think, strategize, and agonize, we can't transform a heart of stone into a heart of flesh. But, good news, God can (and does). God promised this heart change long ago through the prophet Ezekiel, “ ‘I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules’ ” ([Ezekiel 36:26-27](#)).

We receive the fulfillment of this promise by grace through faith in Jesus. When someone trusts Jesus to save them from sin, they are immediately changed. The Holy Spirit indwells them, giving them the power to fight sin and obey the Father ([Eph 1:13-14](#); [Titus 3:5-6](#), [2 Peter 1:3-4](#); [1 John 4:13-15](#)).

Only Jesus can unlock this gift of life change, so we must consistently point our people to His life-changing and life-saving power. We are not the solution to our people's problems; we are simply arrows pointing to the One who is.

Question to Consider

- Why must we embrace and employ a Jesus-centered approach to change?
- How are you believing and acting like you're the solution to others' problems and/or sinful habits and actions? What does this reveal about your heart?
- What can you do to lead yourself and others to believe and act like Jesus is our only helper?

Head | Heart | Hands

We must understand that life change does not happen outside of the work and Person of God. While this is true, God graciously delights in using us as instruments in His hands. We can serve as guides to help others understand their circumstances, struggles, and sins through the lens of their own heart. We can help them see their need to be transformed by the Word and the Spirit in their thinking, desires, and actions.

We do this by asking the right questions.

“Head” Questions

These questions gauge your people's understanding of the Biblical text and the preached Word from that morning's sermon. You're answering the question, "Do they get it?"

Examples:

- Paul says in this text that he's a “slave to Christ.” What does he mean by this?
- How does a gospel-centered view of diversity differ from our culture's thoughts of tolerance?
- How does being upfront about our sin lead us to the grace in the gospel?

“Heart” Questions

These questions reveal and analyze the heart of your people. Whereas "head" questions can be answered generally, "heart" questions are deeply personal. They dig up the "why" in people – their motivations, assumptions, & desires – and "how" they respond to God pressing into their lives.

Examples:

- What have you told God you won't do? Why? What's keeping you from obeying Him in this way?
- In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus tells His disciples to “not be anxious about your life.” Read the passage. How do you respond to His teaching? How should you respond?
- What are some good things God has given you that you've turned into idols?

“Hand” Questions

These questions seek to answer, “What will you do?” “Head” questions gauge a person's understanding, “heart” questions gauge a person's responsiveness to the Word, and “hand” questions press those two together, asking, “Now what?”

These questions seek to graciously apply pressure towards being “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22).

Examples:

- How will you resist worry this week?
- God showed us the greatest hospitality by welcoming us into His family. How will you show this gospel hospitality this week?
- Who will you share the gospel with this week?

Head, Heart, and Hands Together

Each type of question helps lead people towards greater love and faithfulness to Jesus. How do they work together?

Read Romans 8:1-4. What are some Head, Heart, Hands questions you could ask your group?

The Heart is the Target

We do, think, believe, and are what we love. Our affections lead us to certain beliefs and actions. So, we must turn our affections to love the right object. As the leader of your BFG, your goal is to help your people understand and do this. This is hard. It's common for group members (and ourselves) to want to move immediately toward practical help or superficial change without addressing the heart. Here's an example:

Problem: "At my work, they're laying people off like crazy, and I think my department is next. I'm worried I'm going to lose my job!"

Response 1: "My company has been hiring lately. Maybe I can help you get on." (*This is helpful, generous information, but doesn't address the heart*).

Response 2: "Are you reading your Bible before you go to work? I think if you did that, it'd help you with your stress on the job. It helps me." (*Good practice, but doesn't adequately apply the Word to this specific situation and the response of the heart to it*).

Response 3: "The Bible says, 'My God shall provide for all your needs.' You just have to trust that God will provide." (*True and good, but to find this trust, we have to dig deeper into who God is, how we fail to believe Him, how to discard the false beliefs we have about Him, and then lay hold of His promises*).

Response 4: "What exactly do you fear? How does your fear reflect what you believe about God?" (*This is the best a group can give. It gets to the heart, helps root out fear that may grow from pride and a denial of who God is, and cultivates faith in the character and promises of God*).

We don't neglect the practical needs of the group members – far from it! Our primary concern, however, is to target the root sin issues of their hearts and apply the gospel to them.

The Essentials of Discipleship

You're not the sole discipler of those in your BFG. Everyone in your BFG needs the whole church to grow towards greater love and faithfulness to Jesus. If the church is Christ's body, then each part needs every other part for the body to function well.

While the discipleship mandate is not solely your responsibility, you play a massive role in influencing those in your BFG to engage with the whole church. You do this by encouraging engagement in the Essentials at Ashland.

As you lead your BFG, it's your responsibility that the members of your BFG evaluate their engagement in discipleship at Ashland in light of the following questions:

1. Am I following Christ?
2. Am I a church member?
3. Am I participating in worship with the church?
4. Am I committed to a BFG?
5. Am I joyfully serving the body of Christ?
6. Am I pursuing intentional gospel friendships and accountability?

Leading people to follow Jesus more deeply is more than asking good questions and meeting regularly (though those are healthy and necessary practices). It's shepherding their hearts well, and you can't do that alone. It requires the whole church, under the preaching of God's Word, to serve together to spread God's Kingdom and glory from our city to the ends of the earth.

Men, Women, and Jesus

God created both men and women as His image-bearers. Each is equal in personhood, worth, and dignity ([Gen 1:27](#)). Both men and women are to exercise godly dominion over the earth. Yet, while they share this calling, God made men and women different, assigning distinct and complementary roles ([Gen 2:15-23](#)).

Because of this distinction, we disciple men and women together and separately. Practically speaking, this means that, at times, men need to be with only men, and women need to be with only women. A single-sex context promotes the freedom to appropriately discuss sensitive topics, allowance for more specific confession of sin, and unique opportunities for men to deepen relationships with men and women to do the same with other women.

We do this through a variety of contexts:

Men's & Women's Gatherings

When in session, Men's Gatherings are once-a-month meetings focused on teaching and discussion related to biblical manhood. They occur on the first Saturday of every month (excluding summer months).

When in session, Women's Gatherings are once-a-month meetings focused on teaching and discussion related to biblical womanhood. They occur on the first Tuesday of every month (excluding summer months).

Equipped Groups

An Equipped Group is a group of 4-6 men or women that meet for 6-8 weeks to study a recommended book or resource. The goal is to be equipped with the knowledge of God as revealed in His Scriptures while applying His wisdom to our lives by the power of His Spirit in light of the gospel.

We encourage everyone at Ashland to take personal ownership to walk down the Equipped Path through the study and practice of (1) Theology, (2) Bible Study, and (3) Spiritual Disciplines. In Equipped Groups, we intentionally engage in the Equipped Path on a deeper, more personal level.

In addition, a group can walk through a series of accountability questions (provided by the church), applying the gospel to each situation in each member's life. There's flexibility in how often these groups meet, with some choosing to meet once a week, twice a month, or once a month.

For more information on Equipped Groups and the Equipped Discipleship plan, go to ashland.church/equipped.

BFG Breakouts

Many BFGs will have a men's/women's breakout time, where the men and women of the BFG will discuss the sermon separately or go outside of the home for a time of gender-specific fellowship. This breakout could happen during the BFG's typical meeting time or serve as an additional time of fellowship.

- Transferring Biblical Manhood
 - In a men's meeting, opportunities exist for men to grow in their biblical understanding and conviction to lead, protect, provide, and serve in the context of their home, workplace, and community.

- In each meeting, the leader should remind the men in some way of their God-given call and privilege to grow in biblical masculinity. These breakout groups can ask accountability questions, read a book together, or work through other discipleship content. For help determining what resource to use, visit ashland.church/equipped-groups/#resources.
- Transferring Biblical Womanhood
 - The leader's wife or other woman leads the ladies in her group by transferring the values of biblical womanhood through her example and their discussion. In doing this, the ladies may increasingly orient themselves as Christian women to their God-given faith ([Titus 2:3-5](#)).
 - Recognize that while practices may differ among the ladies in your group, biblical principles of femininity will remain the same. We recommend these breakout groups read a book together or work through other discipleship content (found in the same Resources area, as mentioned previously).

It's the responsibility of each BFG leader to:

1. Encourage members to attend the upcoming Men's/Women's Gathering.
2. Lead BFG Breakout times.

Counseling Triage

By God's grace, you are sufficient to help!

As you help your pastors 'shepherd' the lives of others in your BFG, they will no doubt confide in you concerning sins and struggles in their lives. This will be overwhelming at times. It's important to know that not every struggle is a crisis. You do not have to feel inadequate as a leader when it comes to helping others. We are empowered by the Spirit of God and equipped with the all-sufficient Word of God to walk with one another as we all seek to walk with Jesus. While serious issues needing supplemental help exist, most of what folks in our church are dealing with can and should be first addressed within the context of gospel-centered fellowship and biblical friendship.

How to discern to help?

Is this an issue of immaturity?

As Christians, we are all in the process of becoming more like Jesus. Our church includes so many people from every stage in life. We are all trying to understand how to walk with Jesus by applying the wisdom of the gospel in a new season in life.

Ask the following questions:

- Is this person's struggle just a part of what it means to grow in their relationship with Christ and others?
- Will this change as they understand more about life and how the gospel applies at different stages of life?

If this is an issue of immaturity, encouraging them to be faithful to the gifts God has provided them in the local church such as worship, fellowship, and service is a good start to helping them. Ask if they are currently engaged in the Essentials at Ashland.

- Are they attending worship each Sunday?
- Are they engaged in a BFG, seeking to apply the word together?
- Are they serving the church in specific ways?
- Do they have friends to whom we are accountable who will confront sin?

Is the issue discipleship?

Maybe the struggle goes beyond mere immaturity that naturally resolves as the person grows. Perhaps they need more intentional accountability and discipleship. Beyond the Essentials at Ashland, the person may need someone who will walk more closely with them through a trial or struggle. They may need to be held accountable for repentance and refraining from sin. An older or more mature married couple meets with a younger couple to discuss marriage. A brother in Christ meets weekly with a man struggling with pornography. A sister meets with another woman to help with struggles of discontentment. Assigning a more mature Christian or Christian couple to engage with the person in these situations is key.

Is this a Crisis?

While many struggles are simply wrestling with the "thorns and thistles" (Gen 3:18) of living in a fallen world, some issues reach the crisis category. These are issues needing immediate and wise intervention. Some questions to consider in determining if the issue at hand is a crisis:

- In the Ashland Marriage Workbook, we have listed ways to tell if a marriage is in crisis. The section "Are We In Crisis?" helps married couples discern what kind of help they may need. If there is adultery, unfaithfulness, or someone is threatening divorce, make sure the pastors are aware. In these situations, you can say, "Given the gravity of this situation, one of the pastors needs to know what is happening. I encourage you to immediately reach out to one of them." Let them know that if they do not reach out, you will eventually inform us of the situation.

- If there is any kind of crime or sexual or physical abuse, the appropriate authorities should be notified immediately.
- Other crisis situations involve unrepentant, lingering sin. There could also be grievous sin that has hurt or harmed others where help with reconciliation is needed. There could be the confession of addiction or the abuse of illegal substances. In these situations, we will work to help them repent and get the help they need.

What do you do if it is a crisis?

- While calling the person to confess sin and repent, keep the circle of people who know small.
 - Not only do we want to avoid the sin of gossip and slander as church members, but we all must be on the same page with counsel or advice. As the circle grows, sometimes the help can become convoluted with multiple counselors. Wise, godly counsel from the Word of God is necessary. Many voices can confuse solid, biblical counsel.
- Let your pastors know.
 - God has called your pastors to shepherd the flock. Knowing the sins and struggles of members so we can help, especially when they are in crisis, is crucial to being faithful to this call on our lives.
- Be ready to help for the long haul.
 - Certain crisis situations will require not only the help of your pastors, but it could even mean consulting trained counselors or professionals to come alongside us for the good of those in need. Even then, your struggling friend will need you to continue to walk with them as they seek to walk with Jesus. Your pastors will continue to call on you for help and guidance as their immediate leader.

SECTION 3

Growth & Outreach

Growth²

To gauge the health of a BFG, we look at several factors. For this training, we'll focus on two specifically related to growth: (1) the spiritual growth of each BFG member and (2) the numerical growth of the BFG as a whole (including the attendance regularity of each member).

We've found that a positive correlation exists between these two variables. As members progress in their spiritual health (see also: love for and faithfulness to God and passion for His glory), the group attendance rises, too.

Some folks cringe at “numerical growth” in a ministry context. There's an assumption that a focus on higher attendance leads churches to sacrifice spiritual health and doctrinal clarity. In some church cultures, this is unfortunately true.

But this must not be the case at our church. Those numbers are not a mere metric of ministerial success, but people made in the image of God whom He loves and created for His purposes. The heartbeat of our church is to see others follow Jesus, so numerical growth in congregational worship and BFG attendance is seen as a blessing from God. Our mission is to invest the gospel of Jesus to as many people as possible. Because of this, we are robustly committed to growth.

As people come together to pray with and for one another, read the Scriptures together, confess sin, express how the Lord is working in their lives, and hold one another accountable, they grow in their love for and faithfulness to the Lord. As their love for God increases, their desire for others to experience His goodness also increases, compelling them to bring others into contexts where they can experience His goodness ([Matt 22: 37-40](#)).

Growth and Intentionality

Growth, however, doesn't happen unintentionally. While it's true that people will lean towards bringing folks in as they grow, an intentional, outreach-focused vision maximizes this initiative. From day one, the leader should cast the vision that the goal for the BFG is to bring in more people to experience the goodness of God through Christian community. This outward-oriented reorientation should happen regularly. Creating contexts where your members can invite others with ease is crucial. We'll explore this more in a later section.

Multiply, Don't (Just) Add

Adding new people to your BFG is a mark of a healthy BFG, but not the goal. The ultimate goal for every BFG is multiplication.

By multiplication, we mean establishing BFGs that start new BFGs that start more new BFGs that start even more new BFGs.

A BFG of 30 (or more) people is not the goal. For the depth of friendship and level of accountability we want in our BFGs, the ideal number of committed, regularly attending members is 8-12 adults (not including children). Why? People tend to be less transparent about their lives in larger groups and are less likely to contribute to the discussion when groups grow above these numbers numerically. Typically, if a group reaches over 20 active members, less than half of the members regularly contribute to the discussion, while the others only observe. Because people can easily blend into the background, attendance accountability decreases. People are less likely to attend regularly, and the leader is less likely to know who is consistently missing. This isn't helpful if our goal is a personal, sermon-based application with genuine accountability.

Through BFG multiplication, our gospel influence exponentially grows. As we start new BFGs, new people are engaged with the gospel as the members of each BFG seek to invest the gospel into their lives.

Multiplication is the “Finish Line” *and* the Starting Point

While the goal of each BFG is to multiply, it's vital to understand that this will not happen without “multiplication” embedded into a BFGs culture.

Multiplication must be in a BFGs DNA.

Each member needs to know multiplication is a goal and should actively pursue this goal. The leader should regularly discuss multiplication, even if it's far down the horizon. This way, when the time comes to multiply, it's not an unwelcome surprise but a hoped-for celebration.

Remind your BFG of this goal at least monthly (though you could easily plant this concept into each BFG meeting). We'll discuss *how* to multiply in a later section.

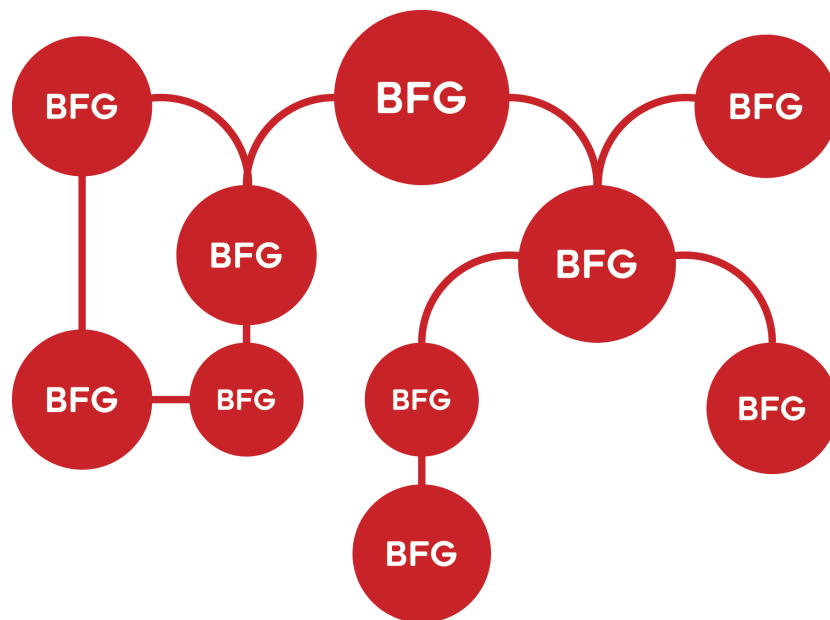
Multiply, Not Divide

We use the term multiply with great intentionality. Dividing or splitting carries a negative connotation, implying disunity or a lack of intentionality. Multiplying carries the idea of a mission and intentional growth.

A group that divides becomes two stagnate groups. A group that multiplies becomes two groups that multiply. The multiplying DNA of the first carries on into the second. As these groups seek multiplication, they start more groups with the same DNA. So, from one BFG comes many other BFGs, all having the same goal: multiplication.

We hope this multiplication repeats and we see a multiplying gospel impact in our community.

Does this mean that members of your BFG will leave to start a new one? Yes. Is this difficult? It is. But, if the DNA of your BFG is to reach as many people with the gospel as possible, that difficulty is overpowered by great joy. Through multiplication, we know that more people are being disciplined towards greater love for and faithfulness to Jesus.



How Do We Know that a BFG is Ready to Multiply?

1. Members attend faithfully. We measure this by...
 - The same people show up to each meeting, week-to-week
 - Members are actively engaged in sermon-based, application-oriented discussion and outreach events
2. There are 14+ adults regularly attending.
3. Core group of people present 70% of the time.
4. A reproducible leader is identified, developed, and ready to be sent out.

What Steps Need to be Taken to Multiply?

1. Embed multiplication in your BFGs DNA
 - Regularly communicate this goal. Remind people that this is a way we help fulfill the Great Commission ([Matt 28:18-20](#)).
 - Gauge each member's interest in leading and/or hosting a BFG. Ask them!
2. Develop a leader and establish an anchor family or families (see section below).
3. Launch! Let them go!

Developing Leaders

For multiplication to be successful, it's essential to develop leaders. Without a BFG leader, there is no BFG. We launch new BFGs by identifying, developing, and sending out new leaders.

Identify

What characteristics should I look for?

- Desire to lead
- Growing in godliness in their personal life
- Faithful to attend worship & BFG
- Active, helpful participation in discussion and outreach events
- Regularly serving the church
- Invites and brings others to worship service and/or BFG

Develop

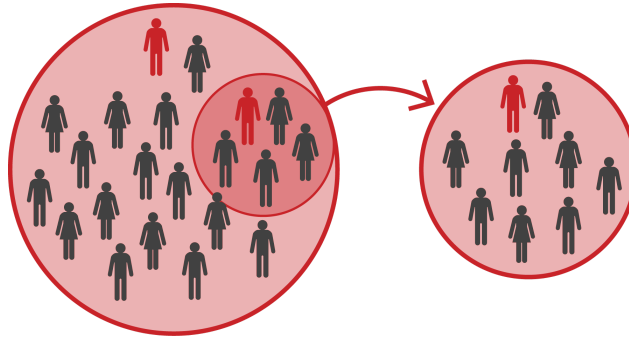
Give them opportunities to...

- Facilitate the discussion
- Lead the prayer time
- Lead the Men's/Women's Breakout time
- Plan ministry events (outreach, service, etc)
- Organize/coordinate meals, hangouts, etc.

...and provide feedback, then repeat. After sufficient training, recommend the leader to the pastoral staff. Aim to ensure the future leader has all the necessary skills, demonstrated competencies, and experience to lead a successful BFG. Your oversight and guidance are vital in this process.

Launch

Once a leader has been identified and developed, with clear evidence of their ability to lead a BFG, send them out. A best practice to help them successfully lead a BFG is to partner them with “anchor members.”



Anchor members are those in your (or another) BFG who are committed to the vision of multiplication that will help the new BFG leader establish a healthy, growth-oriented BFG. They already possess the multiplication DNA.

When considering who should go with the new leaders, make it collaborative. Ask the leader who they want to take with them, and encourage those members to go.

We don't recommend that many members from your BFG are sent out with the new leader, as the goal here is multiplication. The new BFG leader's responsibility is to engage new people to join their BFG. One or two families (2-5 adults) from your (or another) BFG is typically sufficient to start.

Reach Out

A robust outreach culture feeds the mission of the BFG to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Without it, the BFG becomes insular, and a "me-focused" BFG atrophies. Members' preferences take prominence, and the group can lose its purpose for gathering. So, how do we create an outreach culture?

- Weekly Invites – Each week, ask the members of your BFG who they're going to invite or who they've invited to attend.
- At times, encourage your members to orient their prayer requests toward those outside the BFG – especially those who need the gospel.
- Plan an outreach or service event intended to serve those in your neighborhood or community each semester.
- Plan hangouts and have your BFG members bring other people.

What if your BFG is already past the recommended threshold (14+ consistently attending adults)? This is why a multiplying DNA and consistent leadership development are so important. Hopefully, you'll be ready to multiply when you reach this number. Realistically, this will not always be the case. So, should you continue inviting?

There's no clear-cut answer here. Consider your group dynamic and the physical space where you meet, and work hard to multiply. You could even encourage folks to attend other BFGs that may be less attended. Communicate with your group members about the BFG's status and seek solutions. It may be that, for a time, you cease bringing in new people. If you must do this, ensure that you work to keep an other-oriented, multiplying vision at the forefront of your members' minds.

Multiplication and Pushback

As you lead and encourage toward multiplication, you may receive pushback. Likely, profound friendships have solidified. People have wept, praised, mourned, and celebrated life's lows and highs together. Graduations, promotions, layoffs, births, deaths, spiritual growth, spiritual deserts, salvations, and sickness are all experienced by these tight-knit communities committed to each other's good. A desire to stay together isn't wrong. It's understandable. But, a desire to see others believe the gospel and mature in their faith must compel us to multiply this gospel community elsewhere.

Jesus gives us a Great Commission to go and "make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" ([Matt 28: 29a, 20b](#)). If we're to disciple the nations, surely we must disciple our neighbors.

Here are some considerations to help address pushback.

1. Keep Jesus' Great Commission the focus. Jesus' mission must be our mission.
2. Talk about multiplication often. Embed it into your BFG's DNA.
3. Make the multiplication collaborative. While we don't want people to "pick" which BFG they're in, allowing the new leader to strategically recruit one or two families is helpful.
4. Remind everyone we want others to have what we have. Many folks don't have a tight-knit, gospel community committed to their good. We're able to provide it by multiplying.
5. Be sensitive to the concerned parties. Listen to their concerns and respond appropriately.
6. If necessary, involve a pastor.

Questions to Consider

1. Explain the concept of “growth” in a ministry context. How do you react to this?
2. Should we care about a BFGs numerical growth? Why or why not?
3. Explain the concept of “multiplication” in your own words. Why is multiplication so essential to us? How engaged are you in the process of multiplying your BFG?
4. How are you intentionally leading your BFG toward a growth-oriented vision? How can you more effectively lead in this area?
5. Based on the four (4) criteria we use to measure a BFG’s readiness to multiply, what needs to happen for your BFG to multiply?
6. Who is/are your potential future leader/leaders? How are you developing them? How can you more effectively do so?
7. Who are your “anchor families”?
8. How are you currently building an “inviting” culture? How can you more effectively foster this culture?
9. What events and/or service projects can your group do to maximize your outreach impact? Think about the people in your group. What gifts and abilities are present? When will you do these events and/or service projects?

APPENDIX 1

Hospitality & Best Practices

When to Meet

Commit to meet each week a minimum of 8-12 times per semester unless there is a church-wide event or you've served during Access. If you are not meeting, please let church leadership know why.

Context: The Home & Biblical Hospitality

Your home is to be a place of fellowship where the gospel is known and experienced. Relationships are to be formed, not just socially, but through applying the gospel to our lives. Host homes must create an atmosphere for this to happen by embracing biblical hospitality, which we define by Romans 15:7 to "welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you."

Hospitality is more than welcoming at arm's length. It's inviting others to experience family. A home is not a fortress to protect but a weapon to wield for gospel ministry. Think "hospital" rather than "castle." Your goal is to create an environment where everyone feels at home anytime. Avoid creating an environment where people are nervous about spilling drinks and breaking things. Give your "things" eternal value by using them for gospel ministry. People and their faithfulness to and love for Christ is the ultimate priority.

Invite

Most people yearn for real friendships. A simple invite is typically all it takes to initiate a gospel friendship. Look for guests at church. Build relationships within your neighborhood. Welcome coworkers. Invite folks from the ball field.

When inviting, be crystal clear about time, place, and directions. Invite guests over during the week to hang out and see your home. Explain what happens with the meal. If they ask, "What should I bring?" tell them what to bring. After they've attended, feel free to ask, "Would you like to be on the text message / Facebook Group / GroupMe?" (whatever you use to communicate). Most people attend BFG because they're looking for a community. Don't be afraid to include them.

Communication

Communication needs to be frequent, clear, and precise. Whatever communication tool you use, ensure that both men and women can see all communication. Suggestions: Group texts, Facebook groups, GroupMe (app), Remind (app), etc.

Childcare

For folks to engage with the Word and one another, you want to create a distraction-free environment. Children are a blessing from the Lord but often cause distraction among group members when they're trying to process how the Word is working in their lives.

Create a context where children don't disrupt the conversation. We recommend having a room dedicated to childcare. Start a rotation of group members to watch children in that separate area. Assign members to a weekly rotation where everyone has to serve (rather than an "Alright, who wants to watch the kids tonight?" approach). Some groups hire someone outside their BFG to organize and facilitate childcare, and group members pitch in to cover the cost.

Food

Meals are a sign of intimacy. They are not required but helpful in creating a "family" atmosphere. Everyone can chip in, "potluck style," and bring food for less than the cost of eating out. While it can be helpful to "brown-bag it" (everyone bringing their own food from a drive-through), especially for host homes, it's wise to consider the cost for large families.

Alcohol policy

BFG leaders and host homes must refrain from consuming alcohol in and around BFG activities.

APPENDIX 2

Attendance Tracking

Attendance

Discipleship is most effective when it's consistent. In the context of a BFG, consistency in discipleship necessitates consistency in attendance. It's obvious, but we're better disciplers and disciples when we have consistent time with the same people showing up week after week.

So, why does keeping attendance matter? Is it so we can boast in some arbitrary metric? No. Recording attendance gives us a concrete understanding of how consistent we are with the folks God has put under our care.

Think about it for a moment. Can you name those who've attended or missed your last 6 BFG meetings? What about the name of that one guy with the blonde hair who came about 2 months ago? What was his name, again? Having a record of this information makes us better disciplers because instead of relying on our (often faulty) memory, we have sure data to which we can refer. It helps us answer, "Who do I need to reach out to?" "Who's 'in'?" It gives us the tools to be more consistent and better leaders.

Keeping a record of attendance not only helps your individual BFG, but it also helps the pastors and leaders of the church understand how the whole church is being disciplined through our BFGs. We use this information when considering the launch of a new BFG. This information helps in counseling situations. If the counselee hasn't attended a BFG in 9 months, one of the first lines of counsel is, "Get in a BFG."

BFG attendance keeping isn't flashy. No one is going to be impressed by it. But, it is vital in our pursuit of discipling well. Fortunately, we've made it easy for you.

Elexio

Elexio is the app we use to log BFG attendance. When you become a BFG leader, you're assigned a login that you'll use to gain access to the database. Depending on your role in the church, all you'll see when you log in is your own BFG roster and not much else.

The fastest, easiest way to log your attendance is to download the "Elexio Community" app on your smartphone. If you don't have a smartphone, you can do it via the online portal at ashlandmc.elexiochms.com. Here's how it works:

Setting up & logging attendance tracking with the Elexio Community app:

1. Download "Elexio Community"
2. Log in
 - "Domain" is "ashlandmc"
 - Username is your First and Last name, formatted in the following way:
First.Last
 - Your password is whatever you set it to be when you received the welcome email. If you need your password reset, let Mary Colliver know at mary@ashland.church.
3. Tap "Attendance"
4. Select your BFG group
5. Ensure the correct date is selected (the Sunday you met)
 - If you're logging the attendance of a previous meeting, tap the orange date box in the upper middle of the screen and change it from today's date to the correct date. Then tap "Okay" and log the attendance as you would in Step 6.
6. Tap the names of the people present in your BFG
 - If someone attends who isn't already on your roster, tap "+ add visitor" in the bottom right corner
7. Tap "Save" in the upper right corner
8. Click "Back" and you're done.
9. If you need to change the roster, simply repeat the process from Step 3 and select or deselect the appropriate people, then tap "Save" in the upper right corner of the screen.

Logging attendance tracking from a web browser

1. Go to "www.ashlandmc.elexiochms.com"
2. Log in
 - Username is your First and Last name, formatted in the following way: First.Last
 - Your password is whatever you set it to be when you received the welcome email
3. Place your cursor over the circled checkbox on the left-hand menu on your screen. Click "Input."
4. Select your BFG group
5. Input the correct date
6. Check the names of the people present in your BFG in the "Present" column
 - If someone attends who isn't already on your roster, tap "+ add visitor" in the bottom right corner
7. Click the green "Save" at the bottom of the screen.
8. Done.
9. If you need to change the roster, place your cursor over the circled checkbox on the left-hand menu on your screen, then place your cursor over "Reports." From that list, select "Attendance."
10. Click the correct "Session" you need to modify
11. Click the gray "..." (ellipses) on the upper right portion of the screen, then select "Edit"
12. Repeat the process from Step 6 on.

