

Lighthouse Small Groups – Fall 2026

The Sermon on the Mount (The Gospel of Matthew)

I. Logistics

Schedule Overview

Week of...	Small Group Session
8/30	Opening Dinner
9/6	Session 1 – Matthew 6:1-4
9/13	Session 2 – Grandparents Sunday
9/20	Session 3 – Matthew 6:5-8
9/27	OFF WEEK
10/4	Session 4 – Matthew 6:9-15 (Part 2)
10/11	Session 5 – Matthew 6:9-15 (Part 3)
10/18	Session 6 – Matthew 6:16-18
10/25	OFF WEEK – Fall Festival
11/1	Session 7 – Matthew 6:19-24 (Part 2)
11/8	Session 8 – Matthew 6:19-24 (Part 3)
11/15	Session 9 – Matthew 6:19-24 (Part 4)
11/22	OFF WEEK – Thanksgiving Week
11/29	Session 10
12/6	Closing Dinner

Key Church-Wide Events to Promote In Your Small Groups (January – May)

NOTE: Much of this is TBD. So please do not announce this to your group – this is for your reference only!

September

- September 12 – Prayer Gathering
- September 13 – Child Dedication and Grandparents Day
- September 20 – Membership Class begins
- September 18-21 – Mexico Homebuilding Missions Trip
- September 26 – Children’s Ministry Conference

October

- October 3 – Men’s Anchored
- October 10 – Personal Evangelism Training & Sending
- October 18 – Valor Commissioning
- October 18 – Baptism Class
- October 23-24 – Feed My Starving Children
- October 31 – Fall Festival

November

- November 1 – Fall Business Meeting
- November 6-7 – Women’s Conference
- November 10 – Gospel Centered Counseling Training Class begins
- November 22 – Baptism Service
- November 26 – Thanksgiving
- November 29 – Membership Induction

December

- December 5 – Women’s Christmas Breakfast
- December 20 – Christmas Sunday
- December 24 – Christmas Eve Service
- December 25 – Christmas

Registration

- **New Attendee Early Enrollment goes LIVE on Sunday, August 16th @6pm until Monday, August 17th @6pm** via Church Center. Each small group has a cap of 4 spaces for early enrollments. You will receive notification of all early enrollments.
- **General registration goes LIVE on Tuesday, August 18th @6pm** via Church Center.
- **Registration will CLOSE Sunday, September 20th (after Session 2).** If however you would like to keep your group open, please let us know.
 - During the registration period or until your group fills up, we’ll regularly update you with the attendee’s registration information.
 - If groups fill up early, we will contact you with any waitlisted attendees or if there are any other changes.
- **Once your group fills up** please send out a welcome e-mail to your group explaining things like but not limited to:
 - Zoom information such as Zoom ID, Zoom password, etc.
 - Home address and parking restrictions
 - Reminder of where to find online study guides – website as well as Groups Page.
 - Contact information for things such as care if needed
 - Any other relevant information (i.e., if you have a pets, how to get into the gated community if applicable, etc.)

Weekly Leader & Study Guides

- An email will be sent out every Sunday evening via MailChimp of the upcoming week’s leader and study guides (this includes suggested ideas for opening and closing dinners).
- *Please let us know if you are not receiving these e-mails.*

Corporate Prayer

In the past, we chose a few meetings per season (about once a month) when we would provide a prayer guide and have a dedicated time of praying together. Instead, we would like to pray for these things more frequently, but with just 2-3 prayer items each time. At the beginning of the small group leaders’ guide, we will include 2-3 prayer items. They will generally fall into these categories:

- Church Family and Spiritual Growth: Praying for our own hearts and spiritual growth, leadership, specific groups of people (e.g. students, parents, marriages, unemployed, health issues)
- Lighthouse ministry or event: Praying for a Lighthouse ministry and some of their specific needs, an upcoming ministry event, etc.
- Outreach/The World: Praying for missionaries, ministries, current events outside of Lighthouse

This time is intended to be short, but frequent enough so that it hopefully becomes a normal rhythm of the small group time. For example, at the beginning/end of the group discussion when it is time to open/close in prayer, the small group leader can select a couple volunteers to also pray for the listed prayer items.

Valor Christian Academy Support

- Each small group will be assigned 1-2 staff/teachers from Valor Christian Academy to pray for this coming semester. We will send you a PDF card as well as give you physical cards of the teachers you'll be supporting through prayer.
- Take a picture during one of your sessions (e.g. opening dinner) and email it to those who you are praying for so they know who you are!

If Meeting Through Zoom

- **Zoom Login:** Every group should have one leader who will have the designated Zoom pro account from Lighthouse.
- **Zoom Meeting Guides:** Please see "Zoom Instructions" and "Zoom Instructions – Private Meetings."
- **Small Group Caring:** Every small group has a "location" to their registration. While we will NOT be meeting together in person, the locations are more for "care" if needed. In other words, should members need physical care, it is to their advantage and to yours if they're able to attend a small group that is generally within their vicinity. So please let them know that is the purpose of the location when they sign-up for your group.

II. The Study

Topic: *The Sermon on the Mount* (The Gospel of Matthew)

What is the greatest sermon you have ever heard? Or who is the greatest preacher you have ever heard? The Sermon on the Mount has been famously described as the greatest sermon ever by the greatest preacher ever.

In our study of Matthew, we have focused on the truth that we exist *for King and kingdom*. The Sermon on the Mount builds on this theme by showing us what it truly means to be a citizen in God's kingdom. It confronts us with some of the most demanding challenges we find in Scripture, such as Jesus' words about lust, anger, anxiety, prayer, and loving our enemies. In his commentary, John Stott described the Sermon on the Mount as "the best-known part of the teaching of Jesus, the least understood, and certainly the least obeyed ... It is [Jesus'] own description of what he wanted his followers to be and to do."

And yet, as challenging as the Sermon on the Mount is, it isn't devoid of gospel grace. In fact, the very first word of the sermon is, "blessed." This is because being a citizen of God's kingdom isn't just about what we do, but who we are. We will be challenged by the demands of the King, but we will also be comforted and encouraged by the grace

of the gospel. As D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones put it, “The Sermon on the Mount crushes me to the ground again and again. But after the crushing is over, it raises me up.”¹

Study Guides: The study guides will be found on the small group webpage under “Resources” and in the Groups Page. Only the leader guides will have the answers to the questions as well as other suggested resources to help the discussion times.

III. Shepherding Training

General Guidelines for Leading Discussion Times

A. Key Attitudes

- Quick to love
- Slow to judge
- Humble yet bold in teaching
- Willing to walk with someone (following-up)
- Always praying
- Anticipating friendships – even with those with whom you don’t naturally click

B. Key Tools for Discussion

- **Follow-up Questions**

These questions help clarify concepts for the group, help individuals think more about what they’re sharing, and show that you are a good listener and that you care about what others are saying.

- **Be Comfortable with Silence**

Don’t assume silence means people don’t have anything to say. It may simply be that they haven’t had the time to process the information like you have. Also, be aware of the temptation to be a people pleaser who is worried what people may think of you or your small group when there are frequent bouts of silence.

- **Value Other’s Answers More than Your Own**

Your answers may in fact be “better,” but you should be more interested in hearing what they have to say than about saying everything that you’ve prepared to speak on.

- **Be a Good Listener**

Don’t only seek to minister well in the group, but look for shepherding opportunities outside the “curriculum.” Enjoy the occasional tangent but keep the group on track.

If someone offers a wrong answer: be humble and gracious. Try to pull out truth that might exist; get the group back to the truth. Follow-up when necessary (if it is a serious error make sure that no one is led astray by it – address why it is wrong and what the wrong understanding should be).

¹ From the *The Gospel of Matthew: For King and Kingdom* notebook.

- **Study Faithfully and Diligently**

1. Have time to find the answers to the questions that you have when going through the study guides.
2. Be ready for tough questions from the group
3. Figure out which questions from the study guide deserve the most attention that week.
4. Come up with good application questions to fit your groups particular life-stage, current struggles, etc.
5. Teach trust that people may not see at first and to broaden application in ways others may not have considered.

- **Get Feedback from your Co-Leader**

Regularly ask your co-leader and your WCS (if applicable) to share with you areas you can improve.

Women Care Servants: In order to help support the small group leaders with shepherding and caring for the women, each small group is assigned a Women's Care Servant (WCS). Generally their responsibilities are:

- A. Leading discussion for the women
- B. Cultivating a Gospel-centered community amongst the women
- C. Help identify and practice spiritual gifts and empowering the women to steward those gifts
- D. Keep the SG leader up to date on any significant issue that may need to be addressed
- E. Support the SG leader and their endeavors to shepherd the group.

***In as much as possible, the WCS will do their best to care for the women without further outside involvement. *However, there may come times when the issues that are brought up are significant enough that they feel it is significant to discuss it with the SG leader.* When this happens, please do the following as needed:

- Discuss w/ your WCS as to how to best care for that person.
- Encourage that person toward the counseling ministry.
- Set up a meeting with the SG pastor.

Raising Up New Leaders: As we think about the future of SGs and your personal involvement in the ministry, one of the things we want to begin to think about is raising up new leaders. In order to do that, please do the following this upcoming season:

- Identify two individuals in your group who can be potential leaders. Have this done by the start of Session 3 (Week of 9/20)

Discuss with your co-leader and approach those individuals to see if they would ever *consider* leading a SG in the future. Here are things to consider in your observation:

1. Do they exhibit godly character? (1 Tim 3:2-3, 7)
 - i. Humility
 - ii. Genuine desire to know and honor Christ in their lives
 - iii. Gentle, self-controlled, not quarrelsome
2. How is he as a leader at home and with others (1 Tim 3:4)

- i. Relationships with others – marriage, children, others in the church, those in the small group
 - ii. Loving, kind, patient?
 - iii. How does he contribute to the SG discussions?
 3. Able to teach (1 Tim 3:2)
 - i. Theology:
 1. Inerrancy of Scripture
 2. Centrality of Christ and His Gospel
 3. Trinity: One God, three persons, all equal.
 4. Complementarian: Authority of men in the home and the church.
 - ii. Is he biblical in the counsel that he gives?
- Assign those individuals to teach a session or two (at most three if needed). **Start of session 5 (Week of 10/11).** This is a time not only for them to not only test out the waters, but it is a way for you as leaders to assess them objectively:
 1. Leaders should meet with the prospective leaders *before* the session to go over what will be taught, what to anticipate, and for prayer before the session.
 2. Leaders should also meet with the prospective leader *after* the session to go over how the session went.
 3. When they're not leading, continue to encourage the prospective leaders to take initiative in leading/modeling gospel-centered conversations with the rest of the group, especially during sharing and prayer requests.
- Decide with your co-leader if you can recommend them as potential SG leaders. **Done by the end of the season (Week of 12/6).**
 1. If yes:
 - i. Ask the potential leader if they're still interested in serving as a SG leader, and if so that you'll recommend them to the small group pastor
 - ii. Submit their names and e-mail at the end of the season once you receive an e-mail requesting nominations.
 - iii. If they are accepted as SGLs, they'll be contacted and paired up with more seasoned leaders (or you!) for the next SG season.
 2. If not at the moment:
 - i. Continue to encourage them to grow and that we'll continue to walk alongside them during this process.
 - ii. Submit their information at the end of the season once you receive an e-mail requesting nominations. That way, all small group leaders can be aware of who the potential SG leaders are.

Respecting and loving host homes: Some of you are graciously offering your home to host small groups, or you have members who are offering their homes to host. One of the ways we can express our thankfulness and support of the host families is to make it a point to be good stewards of the host home. Throughout the season, please make it a point to remind the small group to be thoughtful of the host home and especially for child-friendly groups, to remind the parents/guardians to be thoughtful and responsible for their children. Here are some ideas to talk about with the host:

- **Clarify areas where the kids are allowed to hangout and areas that are off-limits** (i.e., bedrooms, offices, etc.).
- **Show the kids which restroom(s) they are to use.**
- **Explain to the kids that if they have any questions about what to do, what is allowed, or if they are having trouble with any of the other child(ren) in the group, to approach the adults who are supervising the kids.** When it comes to the actual host home, when in doubt ask the host!
- **Adhere to the schedule of the night.** Make clear when certain things will happen and what is acceptable and unacceptable. For example, it's acceptable to grab food/snacks during food/snack breaks, but not before (unless you make it an open table when they can go whenever).
- **Show children where they are allowed to eat their snacks and drinks during fellowship time and remind them to clean up after themselves.** If needed, there can be an adult to help serve the kids snacks and drinks to prevent spills and to provide appropriate portions to make sure there is enough for everyone.
- **Talk about how the last 7-10 minutes of small group time will be used to clean-up.** Aim to help the hosts and make it better than you found it!
- **Remind the kids to say “thank you” to the hosts and those who brought snacks that week.** This is a great way to help them practice thankfulness!

Policies for Children in Small Groups: Because we want small groups to be a safe environment for children, we're asking all small group leaders that are child-friendly to observe the following:

- **Never alone rule.**
No adult is ever allowed to be with a minor alone unless that person is the child's parent/guardian. There are absolutely no exceptions to this rule.
- **Child supervision.**
Children should always be supervised. How that is applied may vary from small group to small group and will be left to the wisdom and discretion of the leaders. Here are some potential ideas:
 - i. **Have a clear line of sight and immediate accessibility.**
Make sure that there is always a clear line of sight and immediate accessibility to the children so that children are supervised while in session. Be mindful of any “blind corners.”
 - ii. **Have a rotation of adult supervision.**
If children are in a different room that does not provide a clear line of sight or accessibility, have a rotation of 2 adults from 2 different families who will serve as adult supervision for that week so that: (1) There is accountability and; (2) It allows opportunity for the small group members to practice serving
- **Reporting**
Contact the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Child Abuse Hotline at (800) 540-4000 or visiting the website at <http://lacdcs.org/contactus/childabuse.html>.

IV. Small Group Leader Caring

In an effort to better care for you all and to equip you better, the following has been implemented for the small group season:

- Small Group Supervisors. Every small group leader has a small group supervisor assigned to them. The supervisor will contact you throughout the season to pray for you and even to help you think through specific issues that might come up in which you may need help with and also to help give the elders a pulse on how you are all doing. In general, here are three things to keep in mind:
 - **How are you doing personally as a leader?**
 - **How are your SG members doing?**
 - **Are there any specific issues/struggles that we can help you with – whether personally or in your small group?**
- **NEW! Training**. New developments!
- Small Group Leader Roundtables. TBD!

V. Prayer

Please group up with your co-leaders for the following:

- What are some of the ways that you've been blessed in small group? Not just the ways you've seen the Spirit work in other's lives, but the ways the Spirit has worked in your own – and give thanks for that.
- What are the ways God has used small group to convict you? What sins or areas of temptation/places that you're lacking faith has the Spirit impressed upon you – and humbly confess and ask for God's help together.
- What things that you are looking forward to with eager anticipation in small group? What are you hoping God will do during this season as He molds you into Jesus' image – and pray for God's grace in that.

Take time to pray for these things – and anything else that might come up.