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The Case for Groups

We meet the preached-about, Bible-informed version of God in rows on Sunday. But we meet a much more personal version of God in the circles of a small group. Faith changes from a noun into a verb—and God changes from a nice-to-have into a need-to-have—as small group members get involved in one another’s lives.

Around here we’ve noticed [five things that seem to be a common thread in most people’s story of faith:](#)

- **Practical Teaching** (exposure to the Bible and relevant preaching)
- **Providential Relationships** (people who seem placed in our path by God)
- **Private Disciplines** (daily routines like prayer and quiet time)
- **Personal Ministry** (serving others)
- **Pivotal Circumstances** (major life events—good or bad)

Looking at that list reveals why groups are so necessary: all of the things God uses to grow our faith are experienced or encouraged in the context of a small group. *God uses other people to grow us. And he uses us to grow other people.*

The potential of a small group is best reached when that group puts hands and feet to the faith they talk about each week—when they bring casseroles after babies, share couches for crashing, and speak wisdom before bad decisions.

Those things don’t happen in rows on Sunday morning.
They don’t usually happen in circles on Tuesday night either.



Watch the Freemans’ story, a 4-minute video recapping how of one of our groups responded with action when the totally unexpected happened to one of their own.

So here’s the rub for us as church leaders: what can we do to equip our groups to experience this action-oriented form of community?



The Case for Curriculum

Our staff meets one-on-one with group leaders for check-ins throughout their time shepherding a group. Often these meetings include coaching through a sticky situation—a group member who needs professional help or group dynamics that need an adjustment. But the question we hear over and over again is, “What should we study next?”

So as church leaders, we’re asking ourselves, “What can we do to equip our groups to experience action-oriented community?” And our group leaders are asking, “What should we study next?” These questions share a common answer: *we can point them to great curriculum.*

Great group curriculum can change lives. When group members watch—and encourage—each other to get out of debt, or reconcile with their parents, or start praying aloud as a couple...that’s when circles really are better than rows.

A group of people unpacking a study topic together and translating it into real world steps is community at its most effective. In fact, we saw our [Starting Point curriculum](#) be so effective at this that we built [an entire ministry](#) around it.



Watch Rachel’s baptism video. She’s one of the hundreds of folks who have experienced real life-change thanks to *Starting Point*.

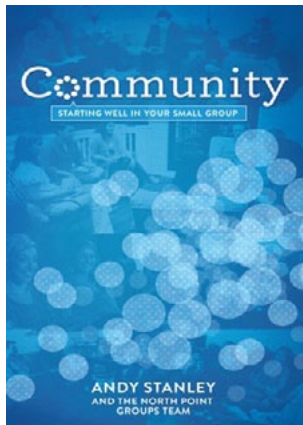
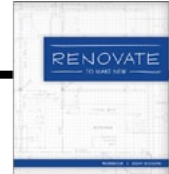
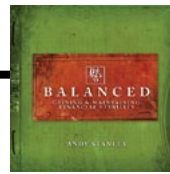
There is certainly value in academic studies that parse Scripture and in the Sunday school model of teacher and class. But remember, we’ve seen groups reach their highest potential when they’re putting hands and feet to the faith they talk about each week.

And curriculum is a means to that end. Curriculum helps our group members get to know one another. And ask safe questions. And take real steps to surrender their finances to God. And finally make peace with their past.

So here are the studies our groups use (and why). They’ve led to great discussion, stories, and questions for our group members. When we find something that works around here, our Resources ministry shares it with others. So we hope these studies serve your groups well too.



Our Curriculum Track

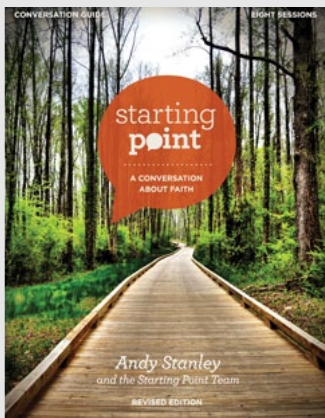


1st Study

[Community: Starting Well In Your Small Group](#)

Details: 8 parts; 1 DVD per group; 1 study guide per person/couple

Why we use this study: Joining a group can be unnerving; there's new people to meet, new routines to learn, and talking about God—out loud! in public!—can be scary. This study introduces the concept of community, helps group members share their story with one another, and sets clear expectations of what the group's experience will look like. We've found that this study increases our groups' "stickiness" (i.e., lower member drop-out rates, higher commitment from group members).

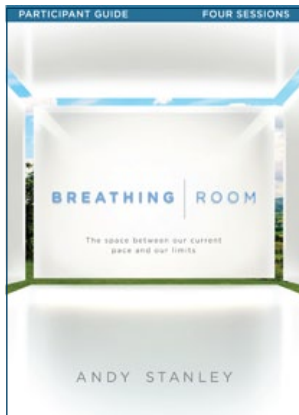


2nd Study

[Starting Point](#)

Details: 8 parts; 1 conversation guide per group member; optional DVD with weekly videos

Why we use this study: Most groups have members coming from many different spiritual backgrounds—everything from a believer for 20 years to not yet a believer at all. This study eases groups (with members all across the spectrum of spiritual maturity) into a discussion of the fundamental questions of faith. It tackles Jesus, sin, forgiveness, and grace. And does so by encouraging questions and conversation, not declaring any right or wrong answers.

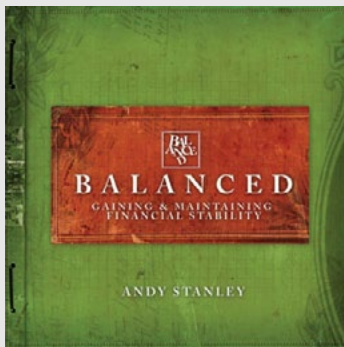


Between months 4 and 12

Breathing Room

Details: 4 parts; 1 DVD per group; 1 study guide per person/couple

Why we use this study: We love recommending studies that result in actionable life-change. This study covers topics relevant to every single type of group: schedule, finances, and work/life balance. So it's easy to recommend no matter whether the group is single men in their 30's or married empty nesters. And it's so practical that it creates the group moments we love—like someone committing to and getting group accountability for being home from work to eat dinner with his family more often.

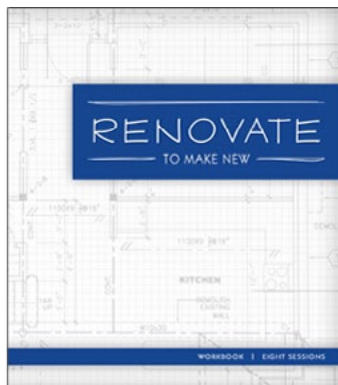


Between months 4 and 12

Balanced

Details: 6 parts; 1 workbook (with DVD included) per person/couple

Why we use this study: The Bible has so much to say about money. And we've seen finances be such a great gateway to trusting God with the details. So we encourage all of our groups to tackle the topic of personal finances at some point in their group life cycle (keeping in mind that money can be a sensitive topic so it's best addressed once the group has some relational momentum). We love the practicality of this study; the workbook equips group members with worksheets and real, usable tools.



Final Study

Renovate

Details: 8 parts; 1 DVD per group; 1 workbook per person

Why we use this study: This study grew out of our [re:new ministry](#), which provides one-on-one mentoring for anyone feeling "stuck" in life. The content proved so powerful that we adapted it for group use. It guides participants through the process of uncovering unhealthy thought patterns and replacing them with Biblical truth. As such, this study is best used in spiritually mature groups once members are comfortable being transparent with one another.



What do [Community Groups](#) look like at North Point?

We offer groups for:

- Men
- Women
- Married Couples

Group Size

Each group is led by a [Community Group leader or leader couple](#). Our leaders receive support and coaching from a staff member, and are offered the chance to attend training events like special speakers or [short-term theology classes](#).

Groups are made up of between 10 and 12 members (or six married couples) and are formed at an event called [GroupLink](#), where group leaders and potential group members have the chance to meet and mingle.

Group Schedule

Generally, groups meet once a week or three times per month in a group member or leader's home. Meetings last approximately two hours, with time for socializing, time for study, and time for prayer.

After connecting at GroupLink, each of our Community Groups spends eight weeks going through the [Community: Starting Well In Your Small Group](#) curriculum. This "trial period" allows members to ease into their commitment and begin getting to know one another.

Group Life Cycle

After completing the [Community](#) study, members commit to continue as a group for 18- to 24-months. We have found that our groups gain the most momentum when members have the chance to really get to know one another; therefore, our groups do not add new members during their two years together.

Rather, we encourage a model of multiplication; at the end of their two years together, groups divide into two or three new groups, adding new members to each.

Group Curriculum

All of our groups begin with the 8-week [Community](#) study, which guides new groups through a discussion about the value of "doing life" with others, helps group members share their story with one another, and clearly explains the expectations for their 18- to 24-months together.

After completing this study, our Groups staff provides guidance and recommendations on next studies and groups choose and purchase their own curriculum.