



2025

# What is a CIRCLE

and how do I start one?



GRAND POINT CHURCH





## **Thank you for your interest in Circles at Grand Point Church!**

Circles are our unique small group environments at Grand Point where each person can be *known* and *grown*. They are a vital part of our desire to help as many as possible take their next steps to find and follow Jesus Christ. As we create and experience life-giving Biblical community, God, through His Spirit, His Word, and His people, can change us to become more like Jesus.

At every GPC campus, you'll be able to find genuine connections, conversations, and care through a variety of Circles. Just as circles in our world come in a mix of sizes and functions, each of our small groups will look and feel different depending on the focus of the group and, of course the people within.

Our purpose in this booklet is to help you grasp the greater vision for Circles, and your Circle specifically, and to walk you through making that vision a reality. *So, let's get started!*

## What values guide our Circles?

Circles at Grand Point strive to be:

1. **Relational** – Circles will be a place of BELONGING, where everyone is valued and welcomed. How? *We connect relationally.* We will strive to **keep an open seat** to anyone God brings our way.
2. **Intentional** – Our Circles will be a place of BECOMING, where each person will be challenged to take their next step with Jesus. How? *We converse intentionally.* We will strive to **keep an open mind** to where God is leading and changing us.
3. **Missional** – We also need a place of BUILDING, where together we can make a difference in each other's lives, and in those within our spheres of influence. Circles can be that place. How? *We care missionally.* We will **keep open eyes and hearts** to how God wants to use us to influence those around us.

While it can be difficult sometimes to connect with the larger church body when we gather for worship or larger events, Circles create the space and environment where the larger church is made small, and each person can be known and grown. Large group or small, at Grand Point we want everyone to know ***You Belong Here!***

## The Free Market group philosophy:

This way of thinking about small group community is redefining how we do Circles at Grand Point. Everyone has interests and passions. Free Market groups are *created to reflect the passions and interests of our people as we seek to take next steps toward Jesus together.*

- Free market groups provide a natural context for people to **connect relationally**.
- They leverage the existing passions and interests of leaders and group members, using that platform as an on-ramp for **intentional conversations** and next steps.
- Free market groups are also open to everyone, not just those in our church family, thus **missionally** expanding the reach and impact to our greater communities.

We can create a Circle around almost any activity, interest, topic, book, curriculum, or study and use the experience to help each other take our best next step for Christ. Examples:

- |                |                           |                       |
|----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| • Star Wars    | • Running                 | • Spiritual Formation |
| • Sports       | • Hiking                  | • Bicycling           |
| • Cooking/Food | • Fly Fishing             | • Race Relations      |
| • Movies       | • Hunting                 | • Golf                |
| • Evangelism   | • History                 | • Pets                |
| • Book/Author  | • Bible Book or Character | • Sport Parents       |
| • Marriage     | • Gardening               | • TV Show             |
| • Weight-Loss  | • Spiritual Warfare       | • Fashion             |
| • Fitness      | • End Times               | • Parenting           |
| • Finances     |                           | • Sewing              |
| • Leadership   |                           | • Motorcycles         |

There are a few exceptions, but the possibilities are almost endless. The dream is to empower leaders to discover their own unique vision for reaching and discipling others, and equip them to do so through the Circle they create. The steps below can help you leverage your interests, passions, or hobbies as a catalyst for disciple-making conversations within the sphere of influence where God has placed you.

## How to create a Circle experience around your interest, passion, or hobby:

1. Decide on the 'one thing' you are passionate about: (answering the following questions may give you clues)
  - What is something you lose track of time doing or talking about because you enjoy it so much? \_\_\_\_\_
  - What brings you 'bliss'? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - What is something those who know you say is your 'thing' or you are 'all about'? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - What is something you've helped others learn to do just because you enjoyed it? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - What is something you seem to know a lot about, or other people come to you about? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\* My 'one thing' is: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Determine the logistics of your group:**

- When will you meet? (Day/time/length) \_\_\_\_\_

- How long? (8-12 weeks, other) \_\_\_\_\_

- How often? (weekly, bi-weekly?) \_\_\_\_\_

- Where will you meet? \_\_\_\_\_

- Who is the target? (Men/women, everyone, young adults, couples/singles) \_\_\_\_\_

- Kids/Childcare? \_\_\_\_\_

- Space to grow as others invite? \_\_\_\_\_

- Who could co-lead with you? \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Who do you know already that is interested in this 'one thing'? \_\_\_\_\_**

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**4. Brainstorm how this 'one thing' helps you enjoy a greater connection with God, or where you see God represented. \_\_\_\_\_**

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**5. Generate a list of questions that could stimulate intentional spiritual conversations based on your interest, passion, or hobby; or questions about life in general you could ask while practicing your area of interest, passion, or hobby.**

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**6. Discern if there are any scriptures that relate to your interest, passion, or hobby and how you might integrate these scriptures into your group conversations.**

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**Additional space to brainstorm your Circle Plan:**

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## Tips for leading your Circle:

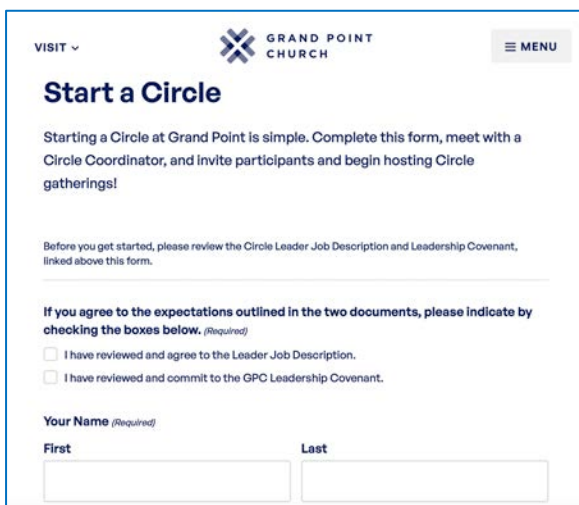
- Be clear about start & end times and the general flow of the gathering. Make sure to honor people's commitment by starting and dismissing on time. If you prefer, you are welcome to invite the group to stay after the gathering, but be sure the group is aware there is no obligation.
- You might find it helpful to develop a few common guidelines or expectations with the group near the beginning of the gatherings.
- Especially when starting out, focus on getting to know each other and building relationships. Connections and authenticity are key!
- Be sensitive toward safety and cleanliness. Recognize that some may be hesitant about in-home or in-person gatherings although they may not express it. Be open to suggestions from the group to create a safer, more comfortable environment for everyone.
- Between group gatherings, pray for each member of your Circle.
- Listen to the Holy Spirit and clues from your conversations for the 'one next step' each member could take as a result of this Circle experience, to:
  - ☐ Find help for a life situation
  - ☐ Explore their faith questions further
  - ☐ Connect with Grand Point or another church
  - ☐ Trust Christ as their Savior and Lord
  - ☐ Go public with Jesus through baptism
  - ☐ Lead/co-lead a new Circle
  - ☐ Find their place to serve based on their gifts/passions/people on their heart
  - ☐ Influence friends, family, or others for Jesus
  - ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Now that your plan is coming together, starting your Circle is simple!

1. Complete the Circle Start-up Form.
2. Discuss your plan with our coordinators.
3. Invite participants and begin hosting Circle gatherings.

### STEP 1: Complete the Circle Start-up Form.

Visit the Small Group Ministry page on our website ([grandpoint.church/smallgroups](http://grandpoint.church/smallgroups)) to complete the 'Start a Circle' form on that page.



The screenshot shows the 'Start a Circle' form on the Grand Point Church website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'VISIT' and a dropdown arrow, the Grand Point Church logo and name, and a 'MENU' button. The main heading is 'Start a Circle'. Below it, a paragraph states: 'Starting a Circle at Grand Point is simple. Complete this form, meet with a Circle Coordinator, and invite participants and begin hosting Circle gatherings!'. A note below that says: 'Before you get started, please review the Circle Leader Job Description and Leadership Covenant, linked above this form.' The form then asks: 'If you agree to the expectations outlined in the two documents, please indicate by checking the boxes below. (Required)'. There are two checkboxes: 'I have reviewed and agree to the Leader Job Description.' and 'I have reviewed and commit to the GPC Leadership Covenant.' Below this is a section for 'Your Name (Required)' with two input fields labeled 'First' and 'Last'.

You'll need to know the day, time, and location where you would like to meet. You will also be asked about sharing your faith story (how you were able come to find and follow Jesus), which GPC location you attend, and other details needed to list your group profile online.

To become better acquainted with the responsibilities and expectations of a Circle leader, you will also be asked to review and agree to the [Job Description](#) and [Leadership Covenant](#) links also found on the same page. Should you have any questions or need clarification, you'll have a chance to express this as well on the form.

## **STEP 2: Discuss your plan with our coordinators.**

*We are excited to hear about your vision for your Circle!* Talk with your campus Adult Ministry or Circles Coordinator about your plan before you invite attendees or host gatherings.

## **STEP 3: Invite participants and begin hosting Circle gatherings.**

The easiest way to fill up your Circle is to *invite* those you know and cross paths with. After you secure a few committed members, another way to fill your Circle is by *listing it online* through the avenues below. **Do not** list your address publicly. We suggest only sending gathering details after people express interest in joining.

- Once we have the details from your 'Start a Circle' form, your group profile will be listed on our 'Groups' page ([grandpoint.church/groups](http://grandpoint.church/groups)) if it is open for others to join. Those interested will email you directly through the form inside your group's profile.

- We can help you create a group at [gpc.ccbchurch.com](http://gpc.ccbchurch.com) (GPC's secure online database and community builder) where you can send messages to the group, record attendance, and find contact information for those in your group. Those who search CCB can also request to join your group.
- You can also create a text group, or a private social media group, invite people to join, or allow others to find the group on social media and request to join. If you decide to use social media, review our guidelines at: <http://bit.ly/2020GPCGuidelines>. Finding the best way to communicate with your group will be important.

*You've registered your Circle, you have a few people that are planning to meet... now what will you DO during your Circle gathering?*

***Keep it simple, natural, and life-giving!*** Using questions 4-7 you brainstormed in the previous Free Market section (pgs. 4-8), and the suggestions in the Tips page (pg. 9), decide what content, conversation topics, or studies to incorporate in your gatherings.

Activity-based Circles can feel awkward or more difficult to have intentional, spiritual conversations, ***but it can be done***. Reflecting on a question or situation you encountered could be a great lead into a group discussion, or focusing on 'beyond the surface' conversations with individuals within the group can be a way to help those in your Circle take another step.

Our ‘*Intentional Discipling Conversations Guide*’ which contains questions you can ask to help people take their next step with Christ may also help. You can request a copy by emailing Doug at: [dcoldsmith@grandpoint.church](mailto:dcoldsmith@grandpoint.church). No matter what kind of Circle you have, it is best to have a plan before you jump in.

Video content is also popular, so if you are still undecided or unclear, one simple idea is to watch one of our GPC messages and then talk about it! You could watch the message together in your group gathering, or have everyone watch it before they arrive. Anytime you use video content in your gatherings, always test your hardware, internet connections, or signals **BEFORE** the group arrives to ensure everything is working properly. We also produce ‘Group Conversation Guides’ for the teaching series we offer at our campuses. Visit Guest Services to sign up to receive a copy of the guide.

## **To better facilitate the Circle experience:**

- ☐ Review the topic and conversation questions before the group begins. Try to discern the main point of your gathering, and what strikes you the most... let your passion come out a little! *If you are excited about it, they will be, too!*
- ☐ Allow time during the conversation for questions from your members.

- ❑ Watch for body language and don't be afraid to invite members that you haven't heard from in a while to share.
- ❑ When you have members who share a lot (or dominate), say something like, "Let's hear from a few others" or "from those who haven't shared yet" to encourage others' participation. You may need to speak with members outside the gathering about oversharing if it becomes distracting.
- ❑ If you pray together, especially for your first few gatherings, you as the leader offer a brief prayer. As the group becomes more familiar with each other and relaxed, you can begin asking for prayer requests, and later ask someone who is comfortable with praying in a group setting to offer prayer (*you may want to ask that person privately before the gathering begins*). One person offering prayer for the group tends to work better than open-ended prayer times.
- ❑ ***You've got this!***  
God is in your corner, so pray, ask Him to lead you, and depend on Him.

***Welcome to the amazing adventure of  
leading a Circle at Grand Point!***

