

LAUNCH KIT

LEADING YOUR FIRST
GATEWAYGROUP



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Welcome to your GatewayGroup

We believe that we are not meant to do life alone - but that God has placed people in each of our lives that we have the opportunity to impact.

Groups are how you can do just that. They are an opportunity to build community, and are how you can make the church feel smaller. They are an opportunity for you to make a lasting impact on the lives of people all around you, helping them to grow in their faith and life.

You see, groups are all about people. Gathering people into communities where you can laugh, learn, and grow - together. Each of our groups may look a little different, but we believe that each is equipped to fulfill a specific role in seeing people's lives changed and fulfilling God's mission on the earth.

Leading a group is not about being perfect or having all the answers; it's about being committed - committed to loving others; committed to seeing people encounter God; committed to being there for people even when life gets tough.

As you move through this journey, know that we believe in you and that we are here for you.

We believe that you are uniquely positioned and gifted to make a difference in people's lives.

We want to be here to equip you, encourage you, and empower you to become the leader God has called you to be.

We are so excited to see what God will accomplish through you and your group. There are some incredible things ahead!

The Gateway Group Model

At Gateway, we believe that our church needs to grow both **larger** and **smaller** at the same time in order to increase our impact on our city.

We grow **larger** in order to reach as many people as possible with the love of Christ; while growing **smaller** in Small Groups to help build community, allowing people to connect, grow and serve together. Which is why outside of our large Sunday Services and Special Events, our focus is on creating as many spaces as possible for people to connect in groups.

Ultimately, Gateway is being built to be a church of Small Groups - not a church with Small Groups.

What a Gateway Group Looks Like

At Gateway, we follow a **free market** approach to Small Groups. This means that we have designed our groups to be as flexible as possible - we want people to gather based on the things they enjoy and that are important to them. Essentially, we encourage all of you to take the things you are already doing in your life, and with a little bit of training, to turn that into a group!

Free Market leaders can form their group around their **gifts** or **interests**.

From sports groups to knitting groups, moms groups to bible study groups, prayer groups to fitness groups, our groups are as varied as we are; typically falling into one of four categories:

Men/Women

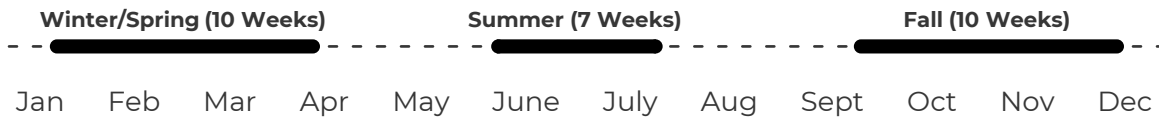
Marriage/Families

Common Interests

Life Groups

Group Semesters & Structure

Gateway Groups meet throughout the year in three separate semesters:



The purpose of the Group Semester model is to create simple avenues for new people to join groups. Research shows that the average person is unlikely to join a pre-existing group, but is way more likely to join a brand new group (or even a group being advertised as new). With the start of each new semester, groups will also have the opportunity to market themselves to new people - helping us get more people connected in Small Groups.

Groups will meet **weekly** or **bi-weekly** during each semester in a variety of places such as homes, parks, restaurants, coffee shops, and at Gateway.

No matter what kind of group you run, each group meeting should be composed of three crucial things:

1. **Casual Fellowship:** This is a laid-back time where you have no agenda other than allowing group members to talk and get to know each other.
2. **Activity or Discussion:** Depending on your group, this could be playing Hockey, a time of worship, or a discussion about a book or the Sunday Message.
3. **Prayer:** Regardless of if your group is diving deep into the Bible or just playing board games, each group should spend some time at the start and/or end of each group meeting asking for prayer requests and praying for one another.

Group Essentials

**What to know before
you lead.**

- 1. Your Role as a Leader**
- 2. Creating Atmosphere**
- 3. Leading Discussion**
- 4. Power of Prayer**
- 5. Healthy Relationships**
- 6. Grow Your Leadership**

Your Role as a Group Leader

God has a part for each of us to play in His kingdom and church, and as Gateway Group Leaders you have the unique opportunity to come alongside the Gateway staff to help care for people, build them up in their faith, and equip them to move forward in the life God has for them.

Our groups place a high priority on community and connection, but ultimately your primary role as a group leader is to help your group members **move one step forward** in their walk with God.

Each person is different, but here are some examples of next steps you can help people can take:

- Start attending church
- Start reading the Bible or praying regularly
- Give their lives to Christ
- Get baptized
- Join a Gateway Team
- Start giving
- Attend Gateway Academy or Intern at Gateway
- Invite a friend or neighbor to church or a Gateway Group
- Attend a Group Leader Training to become a Small Group leader

How to be successful as a group leader:

1. **Pray daily** for your group
2. Partner with one or two co-leaders & connect with your coach
(see "Grow Your Leadership", page 14)
3. Connect with your group members during the week & invite them to attend church and events with you
(see "Building Meaningful Relationships", page 13)
4. Have fun with your group
(see "Creating Atmosphere", page 10 & "Building Meaningful Relationships", page 13)
5. Rally the group around a member going through a crisis
(see "The Power of Prayer", page 12)

Leadership Support

As a part of our Gateway Groups team, know that you are never alone. We have coaches, pastors, and staff who believe in you and want to see you succeed - so if you have an issue or need anything - **don't hesitate to reach out to us, let us be there for you - you're not alone.**

We have a number of different support options, including:

- Monthly Group Touchpoints (optional)
- Connect directly with other Group Leaders
- Meet with your Group Coach
- Contact Church Staff

Your Group Coach

As a Gateway Group leader, you will be paired with one of our Group Coaches who will help support you as needed throughout the semester. Their entire role is to help you handle tough situations, manage issues that may arise, give you someone to talk to about the high's and low's of your group, and most importantly - to **pray for you daily**.

Here are three things you can expect from your group coach:

1. They will **CONNECT** with you weekly or bi-weekly to check in, pray with you, get to know you and help you.
2. They will push you to **GROW** in your faith, in your confidence, and in your leadership; helping encourage you, challenge you, and cheer you on.
3. They will **SERVE** you by offering you support and praying for you and your group daily

Remember - if you have any issues, need any help, or even just need to talk...

Don't hesitate to reach out to us & let us be there for you. You are not alone.

Creating Atmosphere

Typically, the last ten percent of your preparation is the first ten percent that people notice. And since first impressions matter, that makes that last ten percent vitally important.

First impressions are all too often what determines whether a person joins a Gateway Group long-term or leaves after the first meeting. Though simple things like adjusting the room's lighting, ensuring your home smells good, or arranging the furniture might not seem to make a difference, it can very well be the tipping point for helping new people connect into your group.

Here are a few easy ways to create a space where people will feel comfortable and welcomed:

1. **Brew coffee, light a candle, or bake cookies.** Filling your house with pleasant smells helps people feel more comfortable - which for first time visitors is incredibly important. Remember; for some people this is an unfamiliar place - so do the little things to help them feel at home.
2. **Clean up.** Your house doesn't have to look perfect and spotless, but nobody wants to visit a messy house. Before your group starts, take a few minutes to clear any mess - as it will make a huge difference.
3. **Set the Mood.** Simply playing background music, having soft lighting, and removing potential distractions can help people stay engaged and feel more relaxed as they arrive and get settled.
4. **Provide enough seating.** By having more than enough seats for everyone attending, you show that you are prepared while demonstrating that you value them.
5. **Start and End on Time.** Some people won't care about time; but it is quite important to others - especially new people. Starting and ending on time demonstrates that you respect your groups time, and allows people to leave at a set time - while letting others stay and chat.

Leading Discussion

Every Gateway Group looks different - but despite all their differences, they all have one thing in common that sets them apart from your regular, run-of-the-mill gathering of people - a Christ-centered, meaningful discussion.

Regardless of if you are leading a bible study, a life group, or just hanging out playing football - groups are a safe place for people to explore their faith, share their struggles, and talk about life and God. And while **you may think you need to know all the answers, but the truth is - you don't**. As a matter of fact, oftentimes it's when you take a step back and start facilitating discussion within your group that people will be challenged to grow in their faith.

Here are a few tips & tricks to leading great discussions:

- **Start with something easy.** Kick the night off with a game, introductions, or some simple, casual conversation. Breaking the ice in this way helps people connect and participate at a deeper level.
- **Follow the 70-30 Rule.** Give your group the room to speak up instead of doing all the talking yourself. Throughout the discussion at least 70% of the talking should come from members, and only 30% from the leaders.
- **Ask follow-up questions.** Listen to what your group is saying, and don't be afraid to ask for more details, to challenge their thinking, or to see what the rest of the group thinks. People rarely share their full thoughts off-the-bat; follow-up questions will give them permission to fully express their thoughts.
- **Allow room for silence.** It can be awkward, but many people need to take some time to process their thoughts on a subject. So when you ask a question, give them a second - even if its uncomfortable.
- **End with encouragement.** As a group leader, part of your role is to help encourage your group to grow and succeed throughout the rest of the week. So no matter where your discussion leads, try to end with an uplifting insight, thought, or action step.

The Power of Prayer

As a church, we firmly believe in the power of prayer. We believe that prayer is not only a way for us to connect with God on a deep, personal level, but a way for us to partner with God in seeing powerful change happen across the world.

As such, a core defining aspect of all our groups is prayer. While some groups may be focussed on a shared interest or activity versus an in-depth discussion; we want all our groups to be places of prayer - so our expectation for every group meeting is that they will start and/or end with a time of prayer.

Here are a few easy you can pray with and for your group:

- **Ask for prayer requests.** This can be awkward at first, because people may not want to open up - but it is a crucial part of creating a culture of prayer within our groups. Start each prayer time with an opportunity for people to share requests, and then take some time praying over those requests as a group.
- **Pray Out Loud.** Praying out loud can be uncomfortable for some, but it will help people grow more confident in their personal prayer life. Gently challenge your group members to pray out loud for one another, as this will help them establish good prayer habits.
- **Surround.** Every once in a while, have your entire group surround an individual and pray over them at the end of your group meeting. While this may again be awkward, this can be incredibly meaningful to a group member who may be going through a hard time.
- **Pray for Healing.** We believe that God is the God who heals; so if someone in your group is in need of healing, pray for them as a group. You don't need to be on the prayer team to be used by God.
- **Group Prayer Chats.** Use a Facebook group, Messenger, emails, or a group text to give your group a space to share prayer requests throughout the week. This will help your group feel like a community, and reminds people that there are others supporting them.

Building Meaningful Relationships

The big idea behind our groups is to create a safe space where people can connect and build relationships with one another - helping make a large church feel small.

Yet as much as your regularly scheduled group meetings provide stability for people to connect and grow in their faith, very often your greatest impact will happen outside of your regular group meetings. Ultimately it's often the small moments you take to connect with your group members that matter the most.

Here are a few simple ideas on how to build deep, meaningful relationships with your group:

- **Meet outside of your group.** A simple meeting over coffee or dinner can often mean the world to someone - especially if they are struggling. It shows that you're not just committed to them as a leader, but as a friend.
- **Connect with them - regularly.** Investing in people's lives by including them in yours is one of the easiest ways to build relationships with them and to help them open up. Text them, call them, send them a DM to check-in, and do life together.
- **Celebrate and have fun with them.** Whether it's wishing a group member happy birthday or anniversary, celebrating a promotion or baby announcement, or even just breaking the norm and going to dinner as a group; being intentional to celebrate with your group and to have fun with them outside of your group time helps show that you are genuinely invested in doing life with them.
- **Invite them to join you at church.** Everyone at your group is likely coming to church on a Sunday, so why not invite them to join you & sit with you? Shared activities are a great way to connect and show you care, so be intentional in doing things together.

Grow Your Leadership

As your group grows and develops, it's important to consider your group's long-term goals and plans. If you had to suddenly step down, who in your group could take over for you immediately? Who do you see potential in to lead a group six months from now?

Fortunately, very often there will be a couple people in your group that you couldn't imagine your group running without - people who are gifted leaders, who sometimes just need a bit of help and support getting started.

When the time comes, ask yourself - how can I challenge these people to grow in their leadership and reach more people for Christ?

Here are a few simple ways to do just that:

- **Enlist their help.** Doing everything yourself can be exhausting - and is not a great way to lead. Empowering people in your group to handle different tasks helps them take ownership of the group, and helps the group thrive and grow. You may be gifted in some ways and weaker in others - so find people who can fill your gaps, and challenge them to step up and help you lead.
- **Challenge them to grow.** You may love every aspect of leading your group, but taking a step back and allowing someone in your group to lead the activity or discussion can make a huge difference. The simple act of challenging someone to step up and of demonstrating that you trust them to do a good job can help them grow in their confidence, and prepare them for further leadership.
- **Multiply your group.** If you see someone with great leadership potential, start giving them opportunities to grow under your leadership - and then set a goal for them to launch a group of their own. Empowering new leaders is the only way we can multiply our influence and give everyone a chance to connect with others in a group and grow in their faith.

Planning Center Groups

How to use it & keep
your group organized.

1. Logging In
2. Manage Your Members
3. Manage Your Events & Take Attendance
4. Add Group Resources

Using Planning Center Groups

We use Planning Center Groups to organize and manage all of our Gateway Groups. This platform allows you, as group leaders, to connect with your groups members, organize meetings/events, take attendance, and give your members access to different resources. It also allows new people to discover and join your group, while also having access to the calendar and resources you provide.

Please take every effort to keep your PC Group up-to-date.

Logging In

To login to Planning Center Groups, head to gateway.ac/groups/login

- **If you are not logged in:** you will be brought to a login page. To login...
 - Enter your email address* and password**
 - * Your email will be the one linked to your Planning Center Account. If you are uncertain about your email, contact us at groups@gateway.ac
 - ** If you do not have password, click "Need a password" and follow the instructions.
- **If you are already logged in:** You will automatically be brought to the Groups page.

Managing Your Group

Once you are logged in, you will be able to manage each of your groups. Click on your group, which will bring you to your Groups Screen. From here, you will see four tabs to the side of your screen (PC) or in a drop-down menu (Mobile).

- Members Tab (Email, Add/Remove Members)
- Events Tab (Add/Remove Events, Take Attendance)
- Resources Tab (Add Resources for Group to Access)
- Settings Tab (Manage Your Group)

Below you will find more information on each of these tasks, as well as support articles for further help as needed.

Managing Your Group (cont.)

MEMBERS TAB

Add/Remove a Member:

- To add a member, click “Add Member” and type in the person's name. If they are on Planning Center, select their name and click “Add person”.
- To remove a member, find their name in the Members List. Select the “Actions” dropdown menu and select “Remove from Group”.
- More Info Online: gateway.ac/groups/faq-members

Contacting Your Group:

- To contact your entire group via email, click the “Mail” icon (below the search bar). Type the subject and message, and click send.
- More Info Online: gateway.ac/groups/faq-contact

EVENTS TAB

Add/Remove an Event:

- To add an event, simply click “Create New Event”. Fill in the event name, the correct date, start time & end time, and ensure the location is correct. Click “Create Event” to finish the event creation.
- To cancel/delete an event, click on the event name you want to cancel/delete, and then click “Cancel” or “Delete”. Cancel will mark the event as cancelled, while deleting will remove the event from the calendar entirely.
- More Info Online: gateway.ac/groups/faq-events

Taking Attendance:

- You will automatically receive an email from PlanningCenter 10 minutes before the start of your group events requesting that you take attendance. You can do so by clicking the link, and clicking the checkboxes by people’s names and hitting “Submit”
- More Info Online: gateway.ac/groups/faq-attendance

Managing Your Group (cont.)

RESOURCES TAB

Add Resources:

- To add resources for leaders or members, click “Add a Group Resource”. From there, upload your file, provide a name, select who can access it (Leaders or Members) and click save. Please note, only PDF, Word Documents, Text Files, and small images or videos can be uploaded.
- More Info Online: gateway.ac/groups/faq-resources

SETTINGS TAB

Please do not make any changes to your Groups Settings. These are specifically setup to ensure maximum visibility for your group and cohesion across all our Gateway Groups.

Should something in your groups settings require a fix, please contact us via email at groups@gateway.ac

Choosing Your Group

How to pick what kind
of group you run.

1. Picking Your Audience
2. Picking Your Type
3. Setting up Your Group

Choosing your Gateway Group

For people to follow you, you've got to know where you're going - and we want to help you figure that out. When launching a new group, it's important to ask yourself - what kind of group do I want this to be? What is my goal for this group? How can I push myself and my group members to grow?

If any of those questions scare you - don't worry! That's normal. We're here to help you address all those questions and come up with a comprehensive plan for your group.

Picking Your Group Type:

There are a number of different types of groups you can run; each catering to a different kind of audience. Often your group type will revolve around:

- **Talking Together**

All groups talk, but some (such as our life groups) are focussed on creating opportunities for people to talk, eat, drink coffee, and enjoy one another's company.

- **Having fun together**

Quite a few groups are focussed around a shared fun activity like working out, sports, board games, fishing, hiking, or knitting.

- **Growing together**

All groups want to see people grow in their faith, but some are more intentional to create spaces for that to happen. These include bible studies, book studies, sermon discussions, and curriculum (such as Alpha or the Marriage Course).

- **Serving Together**

Some groups (such as our ForEdmonton team) are focussed on outreach, and supporting the people and organizations in need across our city.

My GatewayGroup will focus on:

Choose Your Audience:

The second part of choosing your group is picking your audience. What people do you want to reach? Is there a specific age range or type of person you feel called to target? Do you want your group to be composed of young adults? Moms? Men? Families? Seniors? The choice is yours!

My Gateway Group will target:

(Ex: Anyone, Adults, Dads, Families, Men, Moms, Seniors, Women, Young Adults)

Group Logistics:

An important aspect of your group is picking a day, time, frequency, and location; as these will help your target audience discover your group & figure out if they can attend.

My Gateway Group will get together every (week/two weeks) on these days at this time:

My Gateway Group will meet at a great place:

(Ex: Online, at my home, at a restaurant/cafe, at Gateway). Please note - groups meeting at Gateway are subject to availability based on our Church Calendar

My Gateway Group will offer:

Food Childcare Children Welcome

Your Group Specifics:

I will call my Gateway Group:

Think of a group name that is simple and inviting. A good name will match the purpose of the group, and should appeal to people who are not familiar with Gateway or your group. Please avoid using words or acronyms that people may not understand; churchy words or cliches, or wording that belongs in the group description such as "50+ Singles"

My Gateway Group description is:

Your description is what will either draw a person to connect with the group, or push them away depending on how it's written. Take some time to think of a description that explains what your group is about, while remaining personable, friendly, and informative. Your description should help clarify what type of person your group is for, be inviting to people who may not come to church, inform the reader about the purpose of the group, and if applicable, explain the content/curriculum your group is using.

My Gateway Group won't be empty because I'm going to:

Here are some simple ideas to help you fill in the blank above:

1. Invite people you already know (by far the best way to start!).
2. Sign up to serve at the Discover Gateway wall and personally invite people.
3. Participate in the Group Semester launch, meeting new people and promoting your group.
4. Invite people with shared interests - people you serve with, work out with, pick up kids with, or share a hobby with.
5. Respond quickly to people who inquire about your group on PC Groups.
6. Become a regular at a Gateway service and invite the people you go to church with.

Your Gateway Group Vision:

Now that you have worked through all the logistics & details of your group, it's time to sum that all up into a simple vision statement for your group

My Vision for my Gateway Group is:

Need help filling in this space? That's okay! Your vision has to be something you believe in and can get behind, and must be God-inspired. Take some time to prayerfully consider the following questions to help you uncover your vision.

How will my group use my specific gifts and resources?

How will people in my group become better versions of themselves?

How will I grow because of my group?

How will I know my group was successful at the end of the semester?

Final Steps:

Once you have figured out all the details for your group, it is important that you fill out our Group Info form so we can set up your group online. You can access this form online by visiting gateway.ac/groups/info

Your First Group Meeting

It's time to lead your
first group! Let's do this.

Your First Group Meeting

You've signed up to lead a group, you've attended the Group Leader training, you've studied the Group Essentials and you've invited people over... now its time to lead your first Gateway Group!

If you're nervous - that's normal. Often when God calls us to do something incredible for him, it can be nerve wracking. Here are a few things to help you focus and make sure you're ready for your first group meeting!

Last Minute Checklist:

- Send everyone the address where your Group is meeting.
- Put a balloon on the mailbox, a sign in the yard, or something else to help people find your place.
- Prepare a few snacks.
- Clean up a bit and arrange the seating so people can see & hear each other.
- Turn on some music or sports, and set it to a low volume.
- Pray that God would work through you to help the people in your group.

Flow of the Night:

HANG OUT (15-20 Minutes): Welcome people as they arrive & talk!

ICEBREAKER (10-15 Minutes): Play an Icebreaker game, such as:

- **Two Truths & A Lie:** Have everyone share two facts about themselves & one lie, then decide as a group which is the lie!
- **M&Ms:** Have everyone grab M&M's from a bowl, then share a fact about themselves for each M&M they grabbed.
- **Human Knot:** Have everyone stand in a circle, and grab someone else's hand (from across the circle). Then work together to untangle the knot without letting go.
- **Biggest Fan:** Rock, Paper, Scissors tournament; except if you lose, you have to cheer for the person who beat you.

DISCUSSION/ACTIVITY (35-50 Minutes): Get to the core of the night/your regular group activity/discussion.

CLOSE IN PRAYER (5-10 Minutes): Allow the conversation to wrap up, and get people to share prayer request. Finish off the night by praying together.

Abuse Prevention

Gateway Alliance Church is a safe space for all people, and we do not tolerate any forms of abuse, regardless of if it happens in our building or in someone's private residence. In compliance with Alberta law, we take abuse allegations seriously, and will record or report every instance of suspected abuse; especially when the allegations pertain to children or vulnerable adults.

If you suspect someone is being abused or abusive, you are required by law to report it to the staff member who oversees the area in which you serve. Do not investigate the issue or confront the alleged perpetrator.

The 5 Types of Abuse:

Physical: Any substantial and observable injury to any part of an individual's body caused by the non-accidental application of force or agent to the body, including injuries sustained via inappropriate or cruel punishment; whether it be caused by the guardian or by the guardians failure to protect the individual.

Sexual: Anytime an individual is inappropriately exposed or subjected to sexual contact, activity or behavior (including prostitution related activities). In regards to children/vulnerable adults, this includes exposure to pornography.

Emotional: A pattern of behavior that attacks an individual's sense of self-worth, dignity & identity and causes impairment of their mental or emotional functioning and development.

Neglect: When the guardian is unable or unwilling to provide the individual with the necessities of life (food, water, etc); is unable/unwilling to obtain or permit a individual to obtain necessary medical treatment; or is unable/unwilling to provide the individual with adequate care or supervision.

Financial: When someone tried to take or control an individual's belongings for their own benefit, including their money, property or personal information.



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