



ORLANDO GRACE
CHURCH

FORMATION GROUPS

What are Formation Groups?

Three or four men or three or four women gathering roughly 15 times over an 8 month time period to process and practice God's work in their lives.

What does "Formation" mean?

Formation is a wholistic term that encompasses all of the ways in which we are made, shaped, formed, and influenced. Formation includes our thoughts, desires, and actions.

What is the goal of Formation Groups?

Maturity of the whole person – head (our thoughts), heart (our emotions), and hands (our actions).

How do Formation Groups accomplish this goal?

Formation Groups create a safe relational structure where people can be more transparent and vulnerable about their influences, rhythms, and habits with the goal of being more conformed to the image of Christ in all areas of life.

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How do I know if this Formation Group is successful?

Every person in the group would have a better understanding of who God is and what He has done (orthodoxy – right beliefs), a greater affection for God and emotionally healthy faith (orthopathos – right emotions), and more fruitful habits and rhythms of mission and ethics (orthopraxy – right actions). We hope that being in deeper community with one another will raise your level of interpersonal awareness somewhat on some or all of these five awareness areas – self-awareness, others awareness, awareness of how others perceive or experience you, emotional awareness, and cultural awareness. We also hope that through the exercises, conversations, and intentionality of habits and rhythms that people will see an overall increase in their purposefulness and fruitfulness in mission, vocation, relationships, and rest.

Why is this a need?

There are many aspects of the Christian life that require really small and intimate groups that are known for confidentiality and safety. Many of the things that we need the most help on are uncomfortable or inappropriate to talk about in larger group settings. From our missional survey and our overall sense of our congregation we perceive that we are educated beyond our obedience. We hope that this environment will help participants see their desire of God and their mission with God catch up to their knowledge of God.

How are Formation Groups different from what I might expect?

These groups are not focused on information and content, rather they are focused on helping one another shape healthy rhythms of life as kingdom disciples. In other words, the exercises in here are not meant to further educate, rather to increase our obedience by making us increasingly aware of ourselves and others so that we might be more well-rounded and fruitful kingdom disciples.

When do groups meet?

We suggest that groups meet bi-weekly from September to November, then take from mid-November to mid-January off and resume bi-weekly from mid-January until the end of April. It is up to each group to decide their own rhythm. If you want to meet more frequently or less frequently, you are free to do that. Do whatever is best for the participants in your particular group.

How do we decide when to cancel a meeting?

We suggest meeting every time that at least three people can attend and to cancel when it is two or less. We suggest that groups be precisely comprised of precisely four people, this way when one person cannot make it to the meeting it doesn't kill the meeting.

What boundaries are there in Formation Groups?

- Everything shared in the group is expected to be confidential unless expressly communicated otherwise.
- Gentleness and respect are expected between every participant.
- Active listening is expected by all participants.
- Advice or counsel is only offered when a participant asks for it and we hope that people would ask for counsel regularly.

What does it look like to start or get connected a group? Who should we have in our group?

Follow the discernment guide on page 5 of this resource.



Meeting Outlines

What do we do when we meet?

Meeting 1: *Introduction to Formation Groups*

The vision, goal, and outline of Formation Groups will be shared by the leader. The entire group will discuss chapter 1 of James KA Smith's *You Are What You Love* as well as group expectations, commitments, hopes and desires, and logistics.

Homework: Share Your Story prep

Meetings 2-3: *Share Your Story*

Each person in the group gets 45 minutes to tell their story. The purpose of these sessions is to give relational context to the many ways that our experiences shape and form us. On the vulnerability scale of 1 to 10 (1 = I would share this on social media and 10 = I would only share this with a spouse or a counselor), we are aiming to hear your story in the 6-8 range. Confidentiality is expected.

Homework: Time and Rhythm Inventory Exercise

Meeting 4: What Does Your Life Look Like Right Now? *Time and Rhythm Inventory*

Group participants will come having completed the time and rhythm inventory. Everybody will share how they spend their time and what regular habits/routines/rhythms they have.

Homework: Influence Inventory Exercise

Meeting 5: What Things are Influencing You Right Now? *Influence Inventory*

Group participants will come having completed the influence inventory. Everybody will share how the results of the influence inventory and unpack their information diet.

Homework: Vision and Values Exercise

Meeting 6: What Do You Want to Be True of You? *Vision and Values*

Homework: Roles, Goals, and Ideal Calendar Exercise

Meeting 7: How Do you Turn Your Vision and Values Into Reality? *Roles, Goals, and Ideal Calendar*

Homework: Practice Questions

Meeting 8: Missional Rhythms Exercise

Meeting 9: Practices

Meetings 10+: *Discuss the 4 Questions*

- How are you?
- How is God at work in and through you?
- How are you going to respond?
- How can we support you?

Final Meeting: Wrapping Up the Group

Discernment Guide

Discernment is an invitation to collaborate with God. We are asking God to use the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us towards faithful decision making. We are asking God's help in relinquishing control and asking Him to do as He pleases.

1. Ask the Spirit in prayer to guide you in discerning whom would be faithful and fruitful in linking up in a Formation Group in the months to come.

2. Write down a list of people you may ask to be in a group with you:

3. Pray for these people over a specific period of time, asking God to bring clarity for whom you might spend this time with.

4. List up to three people you humbly believe that the Spirit has direct you to form a Formation Group with. We ask that you hold these people lightly, recognizing while God does lead us discernment is not a perfect process.

5. Ask these people if they would prayerfully consider joining you as either a leader or participant in a Formation Group.



Meeting 1: Introduction to Formation Groups - Setting Expectations, Group Logistics, and Commitments

Chapter 1, You are What you Love: To Worship is Human

1. What does Smith mean when he writes on p. 6, “We don’t need less than knowledge; we need more. We need to recognize the power of habit.”

2. How do you process this paragraph by Smith on p. 23:

“Our idolatries, then, are more liturgical than theological. Our most alluring idols are less intellectual inventions and more affective projections – they are the fruit of disordered wants, not just misunderstanding or ignorance. Instead of being on guard for false teachings and analyzing culture in order to sift out the distorting messages, we need to recognize that there are rival liturgies everywhere. These pedagogies of desire are, in a sense, cultural liturgies, rival modes of worship.”

Setting Expectations

When talking about spiritual formation or discipleship people often bring a lot of conscious or unconscious expectations. The goal of these brief questions is to surface and verbalize some of those expectations so everyone in the group can form a common set of expectations.

1. What role(s) do you see your group facilitator having beyond the basics of organization, communication, scheduling, and keeping conversations on topic?

2. Do you see your group facilitator more as a peer, more as a spiritual leader/director/discipler, or somewhere in-between? (If you are the group facilitator respond in how you see your role personally)

3. What are your hopes for this particular group?

4. What are your fears for this particular group?

5. Why did you decide to participate in a formation group?

When, where, and how frequently will you meet?

Formation Group Commitments

In order to be formed into a whole-life disciple, I commit together with this Formation Group and with God's help to the following:

- ☐ To prioritize all Group meetings, unless providentially hindered. If I am unable to attend, I will contact my Group as soon as possible, and take responsibility to find out what was missed in my absence. As much as my schedule lies within my control, I will arrange work and other commitments so as not to conflict with my Circle.
- ☐ To be prompt in attendance. I understand that this Group will meet weekly on _____
(day of the week) for 90 minutes from _____ until _____.
- ☐ To practice the faith through crafting and cultivating my Rhythm of Life. I will continue to pursue and hone my Rhythm of Life so that it is truly forming me to love God and neighbor.
- ☐ To process the faith with my Group. I will be ready and willing to give an account of God's work in and through my life on a weekly basis. I will curiously ask and humbly listen for God's work in and through the other members of my Group.
- ☐ To protect the confidentiality of my Group.

I pledge to keep whatever is shared in this Group confidential, as far as prudence permits, so as to establish and encourage ongoing trust and transparency.

- ☐ I understand that the duration of this Group is for several months after which I will enter into a process to discern my next steps.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Meetings 2-3: Share Your Story Exercise

- On a vulnerability scale of 1-10 (1 = you'd share this on social media, 10 = you'd only tell your spouse, closest friend, or counselor), we are aiming for a story in the range of 6-8.
- Use the rubric below, as needed, to share your story.
- After someone shares their story, thank them for their willingness to speak about God's work in their story but do not offer advice or counsel. Q&A time is for gentle, curious questions about their story, not probing.
- Close with each person praying for the storyteller, thanking God for His work in their life and asking Him to continue His work.

Creation

- Where were you born? What was your family like? Where did your story begin?
- What shaped your vision of the good life, hopes, and dreams?
- Who or what most shaped the way you viewed your identity/value?

Fall

- In what unique and specific ways, has your life been affected by sin, suffering, and sorrow?
- What did you most live for before you came to Christ? What sins and idols dominated your life?
- How did God bring you to the end of yourself and to a posture of dependence on him?

Redemption

- Who loved you toward the kingdom? How did they make Jesus known to you?
- How has Jesus' life, death, and resurrection freed you from sin and freed you to live the way God intends?
- How has Jesus changed your heart and not just you changing your behavior(s)?

Consummation

- How has God used trials and suffering to shape you, encourage you, and make the gospel come alive?
- Where do you see Jesus making you new? How is he giving you a new heart, a new head, and new hands?
- What is your future hope for yourself and your story?

Meeting 4: Time and Rhythm Inventory

TIME	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
12 AM							
6 AM							
7 AM							
8 AM							
9 AM							
10 AM							
11 AM							
12 PM							
1 PM							
2 PM							
3 PM							
4 PM							
5 PM							
6 PM							
7 PM							
8 PM							
9 PM							
10 PM							
11 PM							

Spend 5 minutes having each person share their “average” week.

Morning Questions:

In a typical day, what are your first conscious thoughts? How do they shape your day?

What is the first thing you do when you wake up?

When do you look at a screen for the first time?

If you have a commute, how do you spend it?

If you work outside the home, what do you do when you arrive at work?

When do you pray for the first time?

Afternoon Questions:

What tasks in your daily work do you most enjoy? Least enjoy? Why?

What and when do you eat throughout the day?

If you work outside the home, how do you close out the workday?

How often do you think about God during the day?

When did you feel accomplished since the last time we met?

Evening Questions:

Who do you spend your evenings with?

What is your nightly routine?

When do you look at a screen for the last time?

What keeps you from sleep? What keeps you up at night? Why?

How many times have you paused to recognize God's presence today?

Rhythmic Questions:

When did you purposefully rest from work since we last met?

How many days per week do you work?

How many times per month do you participate in corporate worship? What do you do to prepare for that?

How many hours do you spend with people per week? Alone?

How many hours of screen-time did you average last week? (iOS: Settings > Screen Time; Android: Settings > Battery > Tap 3 dot menu > Battery Usage > Tap 3 dot menu > Show full device usage)

What does Sabbath mean to you? If you Sabbath, what does that look like?

Do you have time in your calendar where you invest relationally in lost people? What does that look like? How is that going? Does it feel like a natural part of your life?

Do you have time in your calendar where you invest relationally in younger Christians? What does that look like? How is that going? Does it feel like a natural part of your life?

Meeting 5: Influence Inventory Exercise

Instructions - work each column top to bottom starting on the left and ending on the right.

INFLUENCE MEDIUM	SPECIFIC CONTENT (website, game, book, etc..)	ESTIMATE HOW MANY HOURS PER WEEK	WHEN DO YOU CONSUME THIS?	ON WHAT DEVICE?	Is this consumed as background or primary focus?	What emotions does this content elicit in your soul?
Podcasts						
Shows (TV or streaming)						
Movies						
Facebook						
Twitter						
Instagram						
Other Social Apps						
Video Games						
Cable News						
Online News						
YouTube						
Other Online Activity						
Books/ Audiobooks						
Radio						
Bible						
Sermons						

Each person spends 10-15 minutes sharing their “average” influences and emotional outcomes from those influences.

What stuck out to you about the things that you consume?

Does anything bother you about what you see in your information diet? Why?

Is there anything in your consumption habits that is a point of conflict or tension to close relationships (God included)? If yes, why?

Was there anything in your consumption habits that you were embarrassed to list here?

If you were to reorder your consumption habits what would be some changes that you would make?

Meeting 6: Vision and Values Exercise

What are 10 adjectives that you or others would use to describe yourself?

When are you most stressed? Are you prone to anger, depression, or anxiety?

When are you most rested?

When are you the most joyful?

When are you the most hopeful?

What do you sense your body and soul need in this season?

What are your most important values?

What are your biggest hopes for this next year?

What are your biggest hopes for 5-10 years from now?

A personal vision statement encompasses what you hope and strive for regarding the future version of yourself. Here are a few examples:

“To glorify God through being an excellent husband, father, engineer, and churchman.”

“I want to honor Jesus through being a fruitful wife, mom, attorney, and volunteer.”

“To experience Godly joy by pursuing faithfulness as a disciple, student, and friend.”

“I want to inspire people to follow Jesus by being fully present with my family, great in my work/studies, and promoting human flourishing in my city.”

Write out a draft personal vision statement:

Meeting 7: Roles, Goals, and Ideal Calendar

Instructions - work each column top to bottom starting on the left and ending on the right.

*SMART Goals: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time-oriented

ROLES	APPLIES TO YOU	FIRST TO LEAST IMPORTANT LAST	ROLE THIS YEAR?	RELEVANT AND TIME BOUND GOALS	*SMART GOALS INTO YOUR IDEAL CALENDAR
Disciple of Jesus					
Spouse					
Parent					
Vocation					
Church Member					
Civic Role (board member, volunteer, etc...)					
Grandparent					
Sibling					
Other					
Other					
Other					

Spend 5 minutes having each person share their goals within their prioritized roles.

Ideal Calendar

TIME	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
12 AM							
6 AM							
7 AM							
8 AM							
9 AM							
10 AM							
11 AM							
12 PM							
1 PM							
2 PM							
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4 PM							
5 PM							
6 PM							
7 PM							
8 PM							
9 PM							
10 PM							
11 PM							

Spend 5-10 minutes having each person share their “ideal” week including all activity needed to accomplish your SMART goals (refer to page 15)

Meeting 8: Missional Rhythms Exercise

Look back at your current and ideal calendars.

1. Identify and write down all the areas in your calendar where you are interacting with the same people on a regular basis (at least once a month). Areas include everything from work, play, gym, school, sports group, affinity group, club, neighborhood, coffee shop, restaurant or other activity.

Area 1: _____ People I see regularly here: _____

Area 2: _____ People I see regularly here: _____

Area 3: _____ People I see regularly here: _____

Area 4: _____ People I see regularly here: _____

Area 5: _____ People I see regularly here: _____

2. Does God keep putting any of these people on your mind or in your path? If yes, whom?

3. Of the people listed above, what 1-3 person(s) do you mutually connect with the most?

4. Will you commit to praying daily for these 1-3 person(s)? Will you commit to praying for the 1-3 person(s) of all the other members of your group?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Yes, but please keep me accountable

5. Will you commit to trying to connect relationally and naturally while you are sharing the same common activity, rhythm, vocation, studies, affinity, or neighborhood and see what God does?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Yes, but that scares me will you please keep me accountable

Meeting 9: Practices

Disciplines – *our loving response to what God has done and is doing*

What practices or disciplines help you pay attention to God in everyday life (prayer, Bible reading, fasting, giving thanks, serving, journaling, silence, ... etc.)?

How will you be shaped to grow in your desire for God?

Write down practices or disciplines you need to integrate or deepen in a regular rhythm to increase your listening and responding to God:

Rest – *our humble response to our limitations as dependent creatures*

When and how are you going to Sabbath?

What do you need to avoid or limit that pulls you away from being rested and present?

Write down everything you currently do or would like to do that brings you rest or joy:

Relationships – *our life with the people that God has providentially put in front of us*

Who are people that God seems to be drawing you toward relationally – include both believers and non-believers from the last meeting's exercise?

How are you going to prioritize your most important relationships (e.g. spouse, children, friends)?

How are you going to practice honesty, forgiveness, kindness, hospitality, transparency, and vulnerability?

Who is in your life that helps you grow in your self-awareness?

Who is in your life that helps you grow in your others-awareness?

Who is in your life that helps you grow in your awareness of how other people experience you?

Who is in your life that helps you grow in your cultural awareness?

Who is in your life that helps you grow in your missional rhythms?

Vocation – *our image-bearing activity to extend God's authority in all of creation*

What are ways you want to grow in simplicity (limiting accumulation) and generosity (giving freely) regarding your resources?

In what ways do you recognize that your labor/work/vocation is sacred and meaningful?

How will you help others see Jesus in your speech, actions, and attitudes in and through your labor?

Resources for Growth

Disciplines – *our loving response to what God has done and is doing*

Rest – *our humble response to our limitations as dependent creatures*

Relationships – *our life with the people that God has providentially put in front of us*

Vocation – *our image-bearing activity to extend God's authority in all of creation*

The Four Questions: process these questions with your group every week until the end of the year.

1. How are you?
2. How is God at work in and through you?
3. How are you going to respond?
4. How can we support you?

