



EQUIPPED

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

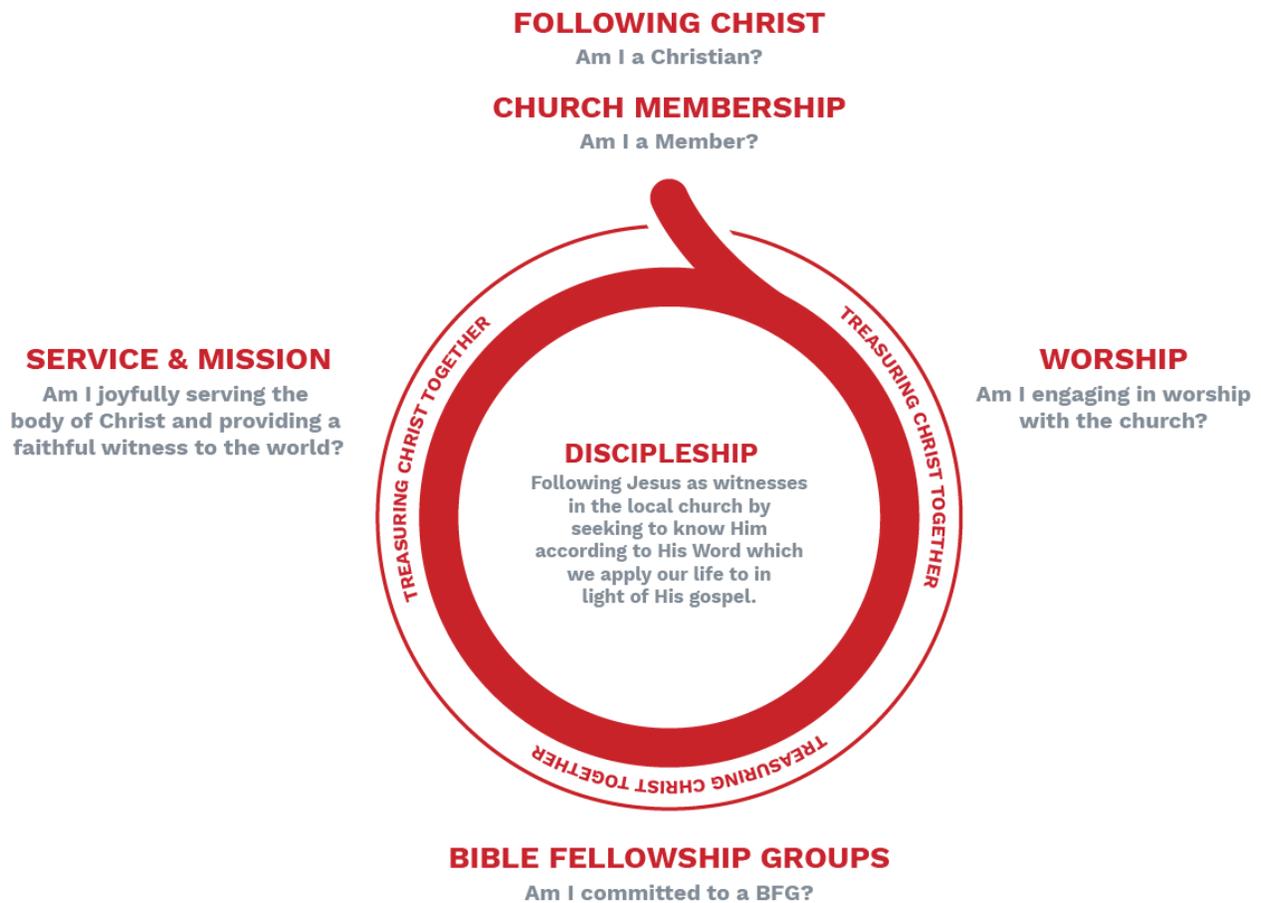
INTRODUCTION

Vision of Role

The Body of Christ

The church is the Body of Christ (Eph 1:23). Jesus is the Head and leads the church. As He leads, the church follows, fulfilling His work to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19, 20). The church fulfills Jesus' work by obeying God's Word and doing His will. Comprised of diverse members with each believer's skills and abilities working together, the church produces fruitful work. Each part is vital to the body's health and effectiveness (1 Cor 12:12-26). There are no lesser or greater members.

Ashland Church members are "doers of the Word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22). We seek to do this through the Essentials at Ashland:



The Essentials are the structure of our discipleship. Every Essential is based in Scripture and works together to help God's people grow to greater love and faithfulness to Jesus and His mission.

For a more detailed explanation of the Essentials, go to ashland.church/essentials.

The Essentials of Discipleship

Everyone in a BFG needs the whole church to grow towards greater love and faithfulness to Jesus, not just the BFG Leader. If the church is Christ's body, then each part needs every other part for the body to function well.

While the discipleship mandate is not solely the responsibility of the BFG Leader, he will play a massive role in influencing those in the BFG to engage with the whole church.

As you lead your BFG, encourage the members of your BFG to evaluate their engagement in discipleship at Ashland in light of the following questions:

1. Am I following Christ?
2. Am I a church member?
3. Am I participating in worship with the church?
4. Am I committed to a BFG?
5. Am I joyfully serving the body of Christ?
6. Am I pursuing intentional gospel friendships and accountability?

Leading people to follow Jesus more deeply is more than asking good questions and meeting regularly (though those are healthy and necessary practices). It's shepherding their hearts well, and you can't do that alone. It requires the whole church, under the preaching of God's Word, to serve together to spread God's Kingdom and glory from our city to the ends of the earth.

The Essentials through BFG

During our worship service, we hear God's Word preached. During Bible Fellowship Group (BFG), we answer the question, "What now?" BFG provides a context for us to consider and apply how to be doers of the Word we've just heard.

Because BFGs are fertile grounds for disciple-making, healthy and competent BFG Leaders are vital to making and developing disciples of Jesus. Without BFG Leaders, the church's ministry is greatly hindered. For BFGs to thrive, we must understand a BFG's goal and the Leader's role.

SECTION 1

BFG Fundamentals

The Fundamentals of a BFG

A BFG is a small group of people committed to living out the gospel together, applying the Word of God to their life circumstances.

BFGs have three goals: (1) **Spiritual Growth**, (2) **Biblical Friendship**, and (3) **Mission**.

To fulfill these goals (spiritual growth, biblical friendship, and mission), we must not neglect a regular and focused gathering. **BFGs should ensure that they meet 10 times between January through May and 10 times between August through December.** These meetings must be intentional and include the following components:

1. Pray together
2. Discuss and apply the Bible
3. Mobilize group members for ministry

Spiritual Growth

The Goal

The overarching goal of a BFG is that people would become more like Christ. BFG should be a place of spiritual activity centered on the Word of God, where we seek to conform all of life to God and His Word by the power of the Spirit. This happens as BFGs...

- Contemplate, discuss, and apply God's Word together
- Sacrificially serve and care for one another, the church, and their community
- Pray for one another
- Confess sin and seek accountability

How To Lead It

Prayer

- Ask each person to share a prayer request
- Have others to pray for one another
- Encourage various "types" of prayer requests
 - Physical provision for self or others (finances, health, safety, etc) ([Matt 6:11](#); [Psalm 31](#); [Prov 30:7-9](#))
 - Spiritual blessing/sanctification (specific spiritual areas where we'd like to grow – patience, wisdom, time in Word, forgiveness) ([Matt 6:12-13](#); [Eph 1:15-22](#); [Col 1:9-11](#); [1 Thess 5:23](#); [2 Thess 2:16-17](#))

- Advancement of God’s kingdom ([2 Thess 3:1](#); [Matt 28:18-20](#))
- Personal and corporate fruitfulness and good works ([Phil 1:1](#); [2 Thess 2:16-17](#); [Eph 2:10](#))
- Our church ([Acts 4:23-31](#); [Ephesians 1:16-17](#); [Ephesians 6:18](#); [Philippians 1:3-4](#))

Sermon Application Discussion

- Ask application-oriented questions based on that day’s sermon
 - Sermon application questions are usually provided by the pastors (in the Ashland Leaders GroupMe or at www.ashland.church/blog). If they’re not supplied on a given Sunday, the BFG Leader is responsible for generating change-oriented questions (see Appendix 1 — “Head | Heart | Hands”).
 - Keep the discussion focused on the practical application of Scripture
 - Theological discussions rooted in the Word of God are good! Your goal isn’t to avoid them, but to ask, “Because of this truth...”
 - “...what do I need to do?”
 - “...what do I need to believe?”
 - “...what do I need to change?”
- Allow for contemplative silence. The BFG Leader does not need to fill every gap in conversation.

All of this must be saturated in the gospel. The BFG Leader must constantly remind the group that it is only by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone that we have fellowship with God. Spiritual growth isn’t a means to “get in good with God.” In Christ, the Christian is accepted, approved, and beloved by God. Spiritual growth is a byproduct of His acceptance and our fellowship with Him. This fact should encourage honesty and engagement within the small group.

Biblical Friendship

The Goal

Growth in Christ towards His likeness is a community project. God calls us to live with Him in the context of relationships – especially with members of our local church.

BFGs provide the context for developing “biblical friendships.” By biblical friendship, we mean there’s a gospel-fueled, sacrificial commitment to another’s good no matter what it costs. We foster these biblical friendships by:

- Praying for one another
- Caring for one another through trials and bearing one another's burdens
- Celebrating joyful occasions
- Serving side-by-side in our church and community
- Sharing God's Word for encouragement and accountability
- Confessing our sins to one another, pursuing repentance and reconciliation

How To Lead It

- Ensuring the group meets at least 10 times from January through May, and 10 times in August through December
- Organizing care in crisis
- Encouraging participation in church-wide events (Ashland Family Potluck, Cajun Hoopla, VBS, Fall Fest, etc).
- Planning and promoting "Life Nights" (fun, leisurely activities for your group)
- Celebrating milestones in members' lives (birthdays, marriages, baptisms, etc.)
- Arranging follow-up meetings with members as needed

Mission

The Goal

BFGs are not "holy huddles" where Christians get together to merely talk about the Bible. They're gospel battalions that march the gospel forward. They strategically and sacrificially serve the community around them. BFGs are on a mission to proclaim the excellencies of God and His gospel.

Just as God has arrayed His church with diverse gifts, the members of a BFG will have differing gifts. The BFG Leader must seek to discover, cultivate, and leverage these gifts for maximum gospel-proclaiming effectiveness.

BFGs pursue Christ's mission by:

- Encouraging and supporting one another to participate in church mission trips/events
- Fostering an environment for one-on-one disciple-making relationships to form
- Holding one another accountable to share the gospel with non-believers
- Actively inviting others to church/BFG

- Serving with local mercy ministries to bless our community (see www.ashland.church/localoutreach for ways to serve)
- Pray together for the salvation of lost neighbors and nations (see www.ashland.church/pray for ways to pray)

How To Lead It

- Ensure BFG members are serving the local church in some way (e.g., Ashland Kids, Creative Team, Ashland Students, Frontline, Young Adults, Production Team, etc.)
- Encourage members to invite others to the BFG meeting
- Recruit for Ashland mission trips and promote missions events (see www.ashland.church/globaloutreach for more information)
- Encourage each member to share the gospel
- Organize service projects for the community, church, and individual members (see www.ashland.church/localoutreach for ideas)

Responsibilities of a BFG Leader

The responsibilities of a BFG Leader are best summarized in the tasks of leading the meeting, facilitating planning and communication, supporting church events, and partnering with the pastors in the counseling and care of BFG members.

Meet

This is the most essential part of leading a BFG. A BFG only thrives when it meets. Leaders must commit to meeting **10 times between January and May and 10 times between August and December.**

What qualifies as a meeting?

- Gathering in a home
- Praying together
- Discussing life-application questions from the Scripture/sermon

Social gatherings and celebrations should take place in addition or in tandem to regularly meeting for focused sermon application discussion; they should never be treated as a replacement during or instead of the BFG meeting.

BFG Leaders are specifically tasked with leading the BFG meeting – leading in prayer, asking questions, and facilitating discussion. The task is one of spiritual leadership and is unique to the BFG Leader (or an upcoming BFG Leader).

Planning & Communication

BFGs will meet most consistently and fruitfully when communication is clear and timely. The BFG Leader must ensure that all essential details are shared and that each BFG member has every opportunity to engage and participate. Effective communication involves a clear, planned **schedule**, details about how members can **contribute**, and an accessible platform or **tool** for organizing and sharing information

Schedule

A **schedule** is an essential resource, and it can be planned several months at a time. The schedule should indicate when the BFG plans to meet, church-wide events that might disrupt the meeting pattern, and when the BFG is participating in the Access meal.

Member Responsibilities

BFG members should **contribute** to the various responsibilities involved in a BFG meeting. These details may include childcare plans, meal coordination, or coverage for a leader or host home. This information can be included in the BFG schedule, and the entire group will benefit from as much advanced notice as possible.

Communication Tool

A **tool** to organize the information and to communicate regularly will prove to be a vital resource. The group may employ email or a multi-person text message to coordinate. However, several smartphone apps may offer useful features. For example, GroupMe allows users to share information across different types of smartphones more easily. This app also allows users to share images, manage events, and create polls (which can also be used as surveys or sign-ups).

Communication needs to be frequent, clear, and precise. Whatever communication tool is used, ensure that both men and women can see all communication. Also, remember that communication should not always be transactional. The BFG members should be actively encouraging one another throughout the week, as well as sharing concerns, needs, and reporting on the grace of God they experience.

Support Church Ministry & Events

Men's & Women's Ministries

Leaders need to promote and encourage participation in the Men's & Women's Ministries of our church. For more information, visit www.ashland.church/men & www.ashland.church/women

Equipped Groups

An Equipped Group is a small group of men or women that meets for 6-8 weeks to study a recommended book or resource. The goal is to know God through His Word and to live it out by the power of the Spirit in light of the gospel.

There's flexibility in how often these groups meet, with some choosing to meet once a week, twice a month, or once a month.

For more information on Equipped Groups and the Equipped Discipleship plan, go to ashland.church/equipped.

BFG Breakouts

Many BFGs will have a men's/women's breakout time, where the men and women of the BFG will discuss the sermon separately or go outside of the home for a time of gender-specific fellowship. This breakout could happen during the BFG's typical meeting time or serve as an additional time of fellowship.

- **Encouraging Men**
 - In a men's meeting, opportunities exist for men to grow in their biblical understanding and conviction to lead, protect, provide, and serve in the context of their home, workplace, and community.
 - In each meeting, the leader should remind the men of their God-given call and privilege to grow in biblical masculinity. These breakout groups can ask accountability questions, read a book together, or work through other discipleship content. For help determining what resource to use, visit ashland.church/equipped-groups/#resources.
- **Encouraging Women**
 - The leader's wife or other woman leads the women in her group by encouraging the values of biblical womanhood through her example and their discussion. In doing this, women may increasingly orient themselves as Christian women to their God-given faith ([Titus 2:3-5](#)).

- In each meeting, women should be reminded of their God-given call and privilege to grow in biblical femininity. These breakout groups can ask accountability questions, read a book together, or work through other discipleship content. For help determining what resource to use, visit ashland.church/equipped-groups/#resources.

Ashland Events

Ashland Family Fellowships (Ashland Family Potluck, Cajun Hoopla, Fourth On the Farm, and Fall Fest) are strategic annual events designed to strengthen church-wide relationships and connect members beyond their regular BFGs. While a BFG Leader's primary responsibility remains shepherding his group, leaders are also tasked to help mobilize members to serve at these events.

Access

Access exists to connect young adults and college students (18-25 years old) to our church body for discipleship, community, and the advancement of the Gospel. BFGs play a role in this discipleship by providing a free meal. At the beginning of each semester, Leaders receive a schedule detailing which Sundays their BFG serves (either in a lead or supporting role). Working with a partner BFG, the Leader ensures the meal is planned, staffed, and runs smoothly.

Partnering in Pastoral Care

BFG Leaders help shepherd members alongside pastors, recognizing that most struggles can be addressed through gospel-centered fellowship. BFG Leaders discern whether an issue reflects normal immaturity, a need for focused discipleship, or a true crisis. In crises, pastors must be informed promptly, discretion maintained, and long-term support provided, even when outside help is required.

For a detailed explanation, read "Counseling Triage" on page 28.

Questions to Consider

- What are the three goals of a BFG?
- In your own words, what is a BFG leader's role?
- List specific ways you can encourage spiritual growth in your BFG.
- List specific ways you can cultivate biblical friendship.
- List specific ways you can lead in mission.

SECTION 2

Hospitality and Hosting Best Practices

Hosting Fundamentals

Where to Meet - The Home & Biblical Hospitality

The home is to be a place of fellowship where the gospel is known and experienced.

Relationships are to be formed, not just socially, but through applying the gospel to our lives. Host homes must create an atmosphere for this to happen by embracing biblical hospitality – "welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you" (Romans 15:7).

Hospitality is more than welcoming at arm's length. The host home is inviting others to experience family, not a fortress of social isolation or a "comfort castle." The host home must create an environment where people aren't nervous about spilling drinks and breaking things. Give your "things" eternal value by using them for gospel ministry.

Good hospitality includes creating a low-distraction environment where people can process the Scriptures.

When to Meet

All BFGs meet on Sundays, though they meet at various times from the afternoon to the early evening. Each BFG must meet at least 10 times from January through May and an additional 10 times from August through December. If there's a church-wide event (Cajun Hoopla, Fall Fest, etc.), BFGs do not meet (they're expected to be at the church event). If a BFG is serving at Access on a particular Sunday, the BFG Leader can decide whether or not to still meet later in the day. Outside of these exceptions, church leadership should be made aware of missed meetings (or planned cancellations).

Childcare

A distraction-free environment is an important ingredient to meaningfully engage one another in the Word. Children are a blessing from the Lord, but they can cause a distraction among group members when they're trying to process how the Word is working in their lives.

Create a context where children do not disrupt the conversation. Host homes should strive to have a room dedicated to childcare and to provide dedicated supervision in that area.

There are numerous ways to handle childcare. Here are some ideas:

- Plan and assign members to a weekly rotation where everyone has to serve. Do not leave coverage for childcare as an open question.
- Hire someone outside your BFG to organize and facilitate childcare. Group members may pitch in to cover the cost.

- Some BFGs assign a per-child amount. Some pay a flat rate, regardless of how many kids attend.
- Ask a college student or young adult from our church who has already participated in a BFG or small group

Because BFGs are a ministry of our church, it's important that we follow the same safety guidelines as our kids' ministry. Our priority is to ensure all children are cared for in a safe, secure environment. For this reason, every BFG must follow the following security guidelines:

- Background Checks - Every person helping with children must have a completed background check.
- Two-Person Rule - We strongly recommend having two adults present with children at all times. One of those adults must be a woman. A male should never be alone with children.
- Restroom Policy - Only a child's parent or guardian should take him or her to the restroom.

Food

Meals are a sign of intimacy. While not required, food helps create a "family" atmosphere. Everyone can participate "potluck style" and bring food for less than the cost of eating out. While it can be helpful for everyone to bring their own food from a drive-through, it is wise to consider the cost for large families.

Invite

Most people yearn for real friendships. A simple invite is typically all it takes to initiate a gospel friendship. BFGs grow when members look for guests at church, build relationships within their neighborhoods, welcome coworkers, and invite folks from the ball field.

When inviting, be clear about time, place, and directions. Share the meeting schedule and explain how BFG members contribute. Allow guests to participate initially in a way they are comfortable. After they've attended, BFG members should actively follow up to discover how the guest may want to continue to be involved. Most people attend BFG because they're looking for a community. Efforts to invite and engage interested people are usually met with success.

Alcohol policy

BFG leaders and host homes must refrain from consuming alcohol in and around BFG activities.

Attendance

Discipleship is most effective when it's consistent. In order to ensure that BFGs are healthy and actively ministering to those involved, **BFG Leaders must record attendance.**

The BFG Leader is responsible for member and guest engagement. BFG participation, recorded via attendance, is vital for the church's discipleship ministry, as personal issues often surface first in this small group. Pastoral Staff use BFG involvement as a gauge in counseling and often direct members to a BFG for spiritual health. Church leadership also uses attendance data to plan group growth and multiplication.

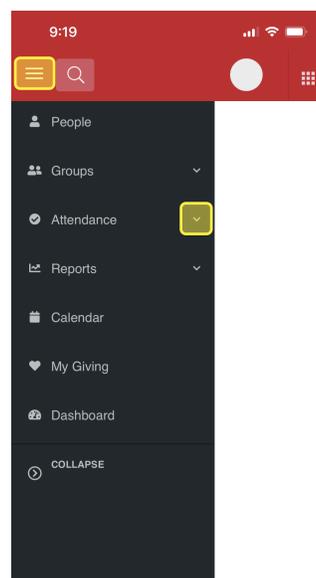
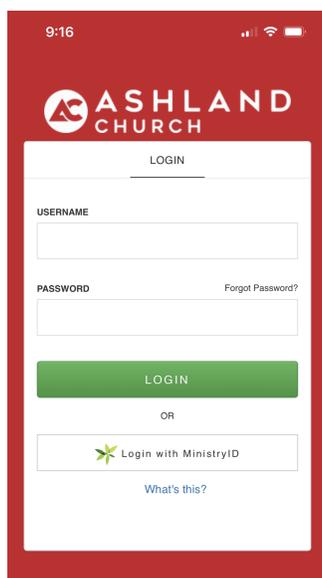
Elexio

Elexio is the software used to log BFG attendance. BFG leaders are assigned a login to access the database. Once accessed, BFG Leaders will be able to see a roster of their current BFG members.

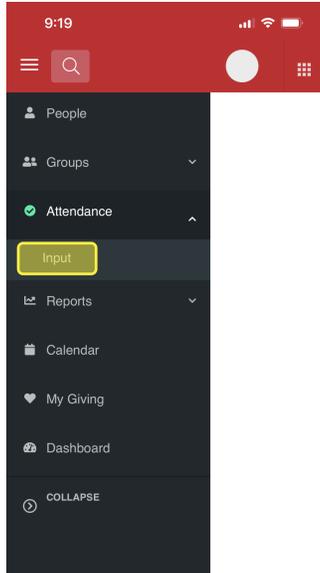
To log attendance, access the online portal at ashlandmc.elexiochms.com. Here's how it works:

Logging attendance tracking from a web browser

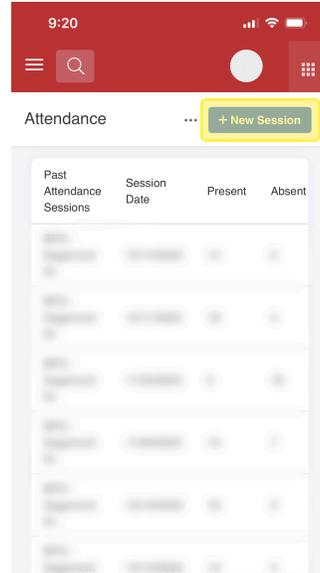
1. Log in to "www.ashlandmc.elexiochms.com"
Username is the First and Last name formatted in the following way: First.Last (the user password was established by the leader after receiving the welcome email)
2. Select the main menu by tapping or clicking the 3 horizontal lines in the top-left of the screen.



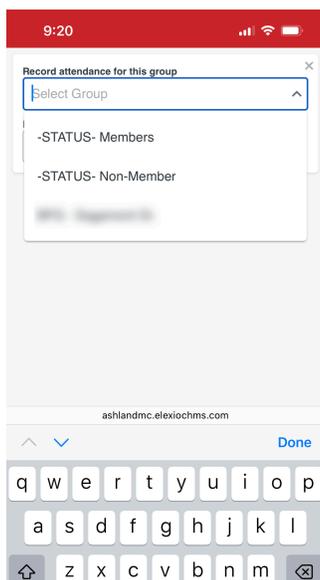
3. Click or tap the circled checkbox that says *Attendance* on the left menu on your screen. Click “Input.”



4. Click or tap *New Session* (blue button in top right corner)

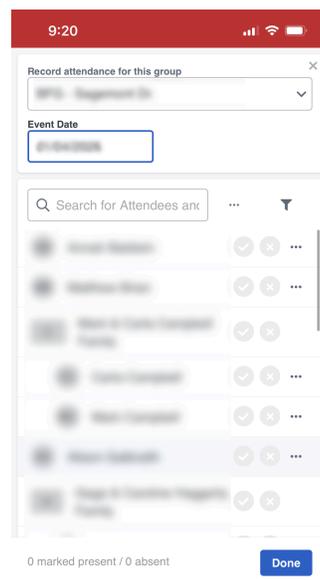


5. Select your *Group* (BFG). Input the correct date.



6. Check the names of the people present in your BFG in the “Present” column. When finished, click *Done*.

If someone attends who isn’t already on your roster, type a name in the search box and select *Create New Individual*.



SECTION 3

Growth & Outreach

Growth and Intentionality

The heartbeat of the church is to see others follow Jesus, so numerical growth in congregational worship and BFG attendance is seen as a blessing from God. Our mission is to share the gospel of Jesus with as many people as possible.

As people come together to pray with and for one another, read the Scriptures together, confess sin, express how the Lord is working in their lives, and hold one another accountable, they grow in their love for and faithfulness to the Lord. As their love for God increases, their desire for others to experience His goodness also increases, compelling them to bring others into contexts where they can experience His goodness ([Matt 22:37-40](#)).

The BFG Leader should cast the vision that the goal for the BFG is to bring in more people to experience the goodness of God through Christian community. This outward-oriented reorientation should happen regularly. Creating contexts where members can invite others with ease is crucial.

Multiply, Don't (Just) Add

Adding new people to a BFG is a mark of health, but not the goal. The ultimate goal for every BFG is multiplication, where a new BFG is created from developing leaders within a current BFG.

For the depth of friendship and level of accountability we want in our BFGs, the ideal number of committed, regularly attending members is 8-12 adults (not including children). Larger groups are less likely to engage in active and meaningful discussion.

BFG multiplication, therefore, has two complementary principles. The first is that discipleship and spiritual development work best in smaller, intimate groups. The second is that, through these smaller groups, BFGs are encouraged to multiply with the effect of exponential growth. Both quality and quantity are increased through these strategies.

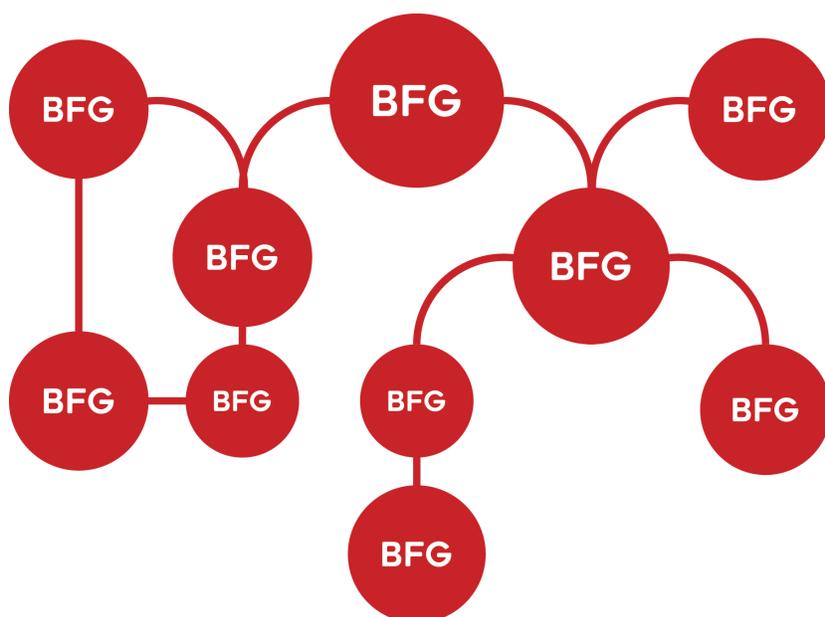
Multiply, Don't Divide

Multiplication must be in a BFG's DNA. Each member needs to know that multiplication is a goal and should actively pursue this goal. The leader should regularly discuss multiplication, even if it is a seemingly distant possibility. This way, when the time comes to multiply, it's not an unwelcome surprise, but a hoped-for celebration.

Multiplication is the preferred description for BFG growth, as it carries the idea of a mission and purposeful expansion. "Dividing" or "splitting" carries a negative connotation, implying disunity or a lack of intentionality. A group that multiplies becomes two groups that multiply.

The multiplying DNA of the first carries on into the second. As these groups seek multiplication, they start more groups with the same DNA; from one BFG comes many other BFGs, all having the same goals: spiritual growth, biblical friendship, and a mission of multiplication.

All members of a BFG will eventually leave for the difficult task of starting or contributing to a new one. While this may seem like a challenge and a bittersweet transition, this is how the church ensures that more people are being disciplined toward greater love for and faithfulness to Jesus.



Make a Big Church Meaningful for Everyone

Without a robust outreach culture, a BFG can become insular, and a "me-focused" BFG atrophies. Members' preferences take prominence, and the group can lose its purpose for gathering. To create an outreach culture, the BFG must:

- Regularly encourage your BFG members to invite others to your BFG and social events.
- Encourage members to orient their prayer requests toward those outside the BFG – especially those who need the gospel.
- Plan an outreach or service event intended to serve those in the local community several times throughout the year.

If a BFG consistently has more than 14 adults attending, then the need for outreach becomes an open question. BFGs in this situation should focus on the multiplication process in addition to helping existing BFGs that may be struggling to grow in participation or resources.

How Do We Know that a BFG is Ready to Multiply?

1. 14+ adult members are attending faithfully.
2. Core group of people are present most of the time.
3. New leader is identified, developed, and ready to be sent out.

What Steps Are Needed to Multiply?

Timeline: 6 months preceding the launch of a new BFG (January-June | July-December)

1. Embed multiplication in your BFG's DNA
 - Regularly communicate this goal. Remind people that this is a way we help fulfill the Great Commission ([Matt 28:18-20](#)).
 - Gauge each member's interest in leading and/or hosting a BFG. Ask them!
2. Identify and develop a leader (see **Developing Leaders** section below)
3. Establish an anchor family or families (see **Launch** section below).
4. Celebrate and Commission
 - At the end of the semester, celebrate that a new BFG is launching out. Make sure the group prays for the leader and other family(ies) going with him and sends them out strong.

Developing Leaders

For multiplication to be successful, it's essential to develop leaders. Without a BFG Leader, there is no BFG. We launch new BFGs by identifying, developing, and launching new leaders.

1. Identify

A potential BFG Leader should:

- Be an active church member for at least 1 year
- Be a member of your BFG for at least 1 year
- Have a desire to lead
- Be faithful to attend worship & BFG
- Actively and helpfully engage in discussion and outreach events
- Regularly serve the church
- Invite and bring others to worship service and/or BFG

Gauge their interest.

- Ask the potential leader about his willingness to lead a BFG.

- If he is interested, inform one of the pastors.

2. Develop

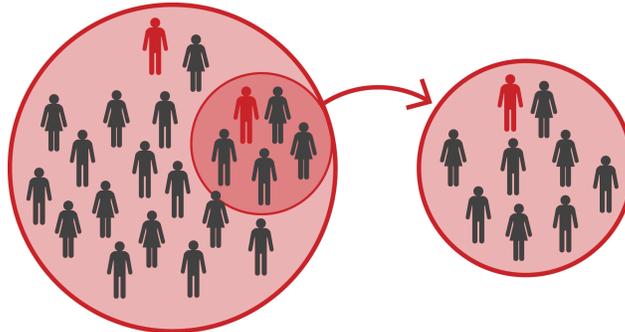
Give the potential leader opportunities to...

- Facilitate the discussion
- Lead the prayer time
- Plan ministry events (outreach, service, etc.)
- Organize/coordinate meals, hangouts, etc.

Provide feedback on these efforts, then repeat. Aim to ensure the future leader has all the necessary skills, demonstrated competencies, and experience to lead a successful BFG.

3. Launch

Once a leader has been established and it's time to send them out, it's best to partner them with **“anchor members.”**



Anchor members are those in your (or another) BFG who are committed to the vision of multiplication that will help the new BFG leader establish a healthy, growth-oriented BFG. These members or families already possess the multiplication DNA and will serve as reliable participants in the new BFG

The selection of anchor families between the current and new BFG should be collaborative. The current BFG Leader should actively seek the recommendation of the newly developed leader. The current BFG leader should then encourage those who are selected to go.

One or two families (2-5 adults) from your (or another) BFG is typically sufficient to start. The new BFG leader's responsibility is to engage new people to join their BFG, and the sending BFG should not lose so many people as to weaken its own participation.

Multiplication and Pushback

Some BFG members may consider the prospect of multiplication as a threat to the profound friendships they have developed. People have wept, praised, mourned, and celebrated life's lows and highs together. A desire to stay together isn't wrong, but a desire to see others believe the gospel and mature in their faith must compel us to multiply this gospel community elsewhere.

Jesus gives us a Great Commission to go and "make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" ([Matt 28: 29a, 20b](#)). To disciple the nations means that the church must surely disciple our neighbors.

Consider the following methods to ease and facilitate the transition:

1. Keep Jesus' Great Commission the focus. Jesus' mission must be our mission.
2. Talk about multiplication often. Embed it into your BFG's DNA.
3. Make the multiplication collaborative. While we don't want people to "pick" which BFG they're in, allowing the new leader to strategically recruit one or two families is helpful.
4. Remind everyone of the good that comes with a tight-knit, gospel community. BFG multiplication is the best way to share this with others.
5. Be sensitive to the concerned parties. Listen to their concerns and respond appropriately.
6. If necessary, involve a pastor.

Questions to Consider

Growth & Attendance

1. Explain the concept of “growth” in a ministry context. How do you react to this?
2. Should we care about BFG attendance? Why or why not?

Multiplication Vision & Readiness

1. Explain the concept of “multiplication” in your own words. Why is multiplication so essential to us? How engaged are you in the process of multiplying your BFG?
2. Based on the three (3) criteria we use to measure a BFG’s readiness to multiply, what needs to happen for your BFG to multiply?

Leadership Development

1. Who is/are your potential future leader/leaders? How are you developing them? How can you do so more effectively?
2. Who are your “anchor families”?

Outreach & Mission

1. What events and/or service projects can your group do to maximize your outreach impact?
2. How can you encourage BFG members to embrace the Great Commission in their particular spheres of influence?

APPENDIX 1

The Art of Facilitation and Discipleship

The Heart of Change

The will of God for each believer is that they would be like Jesus ([1 Thess 4:3](#); [1 Peter 1:14-16](#)). The Father loves Jesus perfectly ([Matt 3:17](#)). Jesus loves the Father perfectly and pleases Him, doing His will from the heart ([John 8:29, 14:31, 15:10](#); [Luke 22:41-44](#)).

God's not interested in mere outward appearances ([Matt 22:35-38](#)). More than a superficial confession of sin or mere outward behavioral change, God wants to change hearts. The "heart" is the core of a person's beliefs, values, feelings, and decisions. In Luke 6:34-45, Jesus says to His followers:

“ ‘For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.’ ”

The heart ultimately dictates a person's words and actions. *People do, think, believe, and are what they love.* People need a heart that truly loves God.

BFG leaders aim to help others understand their own circumstances, struggles, and sins as they relate to the heart. BFG members should be led to understand their need to be transformed by the Word and the Spirit in their thinking and desires.

Only the living Word of God can pierce and discern the heart ([Heb 4:12](#)). True change in a person's life is only possible through applying the Word of God by the Spirit of God. Because of this, we base our entire meeting time around the Word of God and dependence on the Spirit of God.

Arrows in the King's Hands

People, in and of themselves, do not possess the power to change hearts. No matter the striving, thinking, strategizing, and agonizing, people can't transform a heart of stone into a heart of flesh. But, good news, God can (and does). God promised this heart change long ago

through the prophet Ezekiel, “ I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules” ([Ezekiel 36:26-27](#)).

The promise of a changed heart is received by grace through faith in Jesus. When people trust Jesus to save them from sin, they are immediately changed. The Holy Spirit indwells them, giving them the power to fight sin and obey the Father ([Eph 1:13-14](#); [Titus 3:5-6](#), [2 Peter 1:3-4](#); [1 John 4:13-15](#)).

Only Jesus can unlock this gift of life change, so we must consistently point our people to His life-changing and life-saving power. We are not the solution to our people's problems; we are simply arrows pointing to the One who is.

Question to Consider

1. Why must we embrace and employ a Jesus-centered approach to change?
2. How are you believing and acting like you're the solution to others' problems and/or sinful habits and actions? What does this reveal about your heart?
3. What can you do to lead yourself and others to believe and act like Jesus is our only helper?

Head | Heart | Hands

Life change does not happen outside of God. While this is true, God graciously delights in using people as instruments in His hands. A BFG Leader can serve as a guide to help others understand their circumstances, struggles, and sins. A BFG Leader helps reveal the need to be transformed by the Word and the Spirit in the thinking, desires, and actions of the group by asking the right questions.

“Head” Questions - What do you know?

A “head” question gauges the BFG’s understanding of the Biblical text and the preached Word from that morning's sermon. These questions are answered factually and will involve a review of the passage or content from the sermon. Examples:

- Paul says in this text that he’s a “slave to Christ.” What does he mean by this?
- How does a gospel-centered view of diversity differ from our culture’s thoughts of tolerance?
- How does being upfront about our sin lead us to the grace in the gospel?

“Heart” Questions - What do you believe?

A “heart” question reveals and analyzes the heart of the BFG. Whereas “head” questions can be answered generally, “heart” questions are deeply personal. They dig up the “why” in people – their motivations, assumptions, & desires – and “how” they respond to God pressing into their lives.

Examples:

- What have you told God you won't do? Why? What's keeping you from obeying Him in this way?
- In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus tells His disciples to “not be anxious about your life.” Read the passage. How do you respond to His teaching? How should you respond?
- What are some good things God has given you that you've turned into idols?

“Hand” Questions - What will you do?

A “hand” question prompts the BFG to answer how they will apply their understanding and personal reflection into action. These questions seek to graciously apply pressure towards being “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22).

Examples:

- How will you resist worry this week?
- God showed us the greatest hospitality by welcoming us into His family. How will you show this gospel hospitality this week?
- Who will you share the gospel with this week?

Head, Heart, and Hands Together

Each type of question helps lead the BFG toward greater love and faithfulness to Jesus.

The Heart is the Target

People's affections lead them to certain beliefs and actions. The leader of a BFG must direct the affections of the rest of the group, which is a difficult task. It's common for group members (and leaders) to want to move immediately toward practical help or superficial change without addressing the heart. Here's an example:

Problem: “At my work, they're laying people off like crazy, and I think my department is next. I'm worried I'm going to lose my job!”

- Response 1: “My company has been hiring lately. Maybe I can help you get on.” *(This is helpful, generous information, but doesn’t address the heart).*
- Response 2: “Are you reading your Bible before you go to work? I think if you did that, it’d help you with your stress on the job. It helps me.” *(Good practice, but doesn’t adequately apply the Word to this specific situation and the response of the heart to it).*
- Response 3: “The Bible says, ‘My God shall provide for all your needs.’ You just have to trust that God will provide.” *(True and good, but to find this trust, we have to dig deeper into who God is, how we fail to believe Him, how to discard the false beliefs we have about Him, and then lay hold of His promises).*
- Response 4: “What exactly do you fear? How does your fear reflect what you believe about God?” *(This is the best a group can give. It gets to the heart, helps root out fear that may grow from pride and a denial of who God is, and cultivates faith in the character and promises of God).*

While it is important to never neglect the practical needs of the group members, the primary concern of the BFG Leader is to target the root sin issues of their hearts and apply the gospel to them.

APPENDIX 2

Counseling Triage

Sufficient to Help

BFG Leaders help the pastors “shepherd” the lives of those within the BFG. BFG members will confide in the leader their sins and struggles in their lives. Though this may be overwhelming at times, it is important to know that not every struggle is a crisis. The BFG Leader does not have to feel inadequate as a leader when it comes to helping others. The church is empowered by the Spirit of God and equipped with the all-sufficient Word of God to walk with one another as we all seek to walk with Jesus. While serious issues needing supplemental help exist, most people within the church are dealing with issues that can and should be first addressed within the context of gospel-centered fellowship and biblical friendship.

Discerning Help

Is this an issue of immaturity?

Christians are all in the process of becoming more like Jesus. The church includes many people from every stage in life who are all trying to understand how to walk with Jesus by applying the wisdom of the gospel in a new season in life.

Ask the following questions:

- Is this person's struggle just a part of what it means to grow in their relationship with Christ and others?
- Will this change as they understand more about life and how the gospel applies at different stages of life?

If this is an issue of immaturity, encouraging them to be faithful to the gifts God has provided them in the local church – worship, fellowship, and service – is a good start to helping them.

Ask if they are currently engaged in the Essentials at Ashland.

- Are they attending worship each Sunday?
- Are they engaged in a BFG, seeking to apply the word together?
- Are they serving the church in specific ways?
- Do they have friends to whom they are accountable who will confront sin?

Is the issue discipleship?

An individual's struggle may go beyond the mere immaturity that naturally resolves as the person grows. Perhaps a person needs more intentional accountability and discipleship. Beyond the Essentials at Ashland, the person may need someone who will walk more closely with them through a trial or struggle. He or she may need to be held accountable for repentance and refraining from sin. There are many possibilities for what this could look like:

- An older or more mature married couple meets with a younger couple to discuss marriage.
- A brother in Christ meets weekly with a man struggling with pornography.
- A sister meets with another woman to help with struggles of discontentment.

Assigning a more mature Christian or Christian couple to engage with the person in these situations is key.

Is this a Crisis?

While many struggles are simply wrestling with the "thorns and thistles" (Gen 3:18) of living in a fallen world, some issues reach the crisis category. These are issues needing immediate and wise intervention. Some questions to consider in determining if the issue at hand is a crisis:

- The Ashland Marriage Workbook details ways to tell if a marriage is in crisis. The section "Are We In Crisis?" helps married couples discern what kind of help they may need. If there is adultery, unfaithfulness, or someone is threatening divorce, make sure the pastors are aware. In these situations, the BFG Leader can say, "Given the gravity of this situation, one of the pastors needs to know what is happening. I encourage you to immediately reach out to one of them." Let them know that if they do not reach out, the Leader will eventually inform us of the situation.
- If there is any kind of crime or sexual or physical abuse, the appropriate authorities should be notified immediately.
- Other crisis situations involve unrepentant, lingering sin. There could also be grievous sin that has hurt or harmed others, where help with reconciliation is needed. There could be a confession of addiction or the abuse of illegal substances. In these situations, we will work to help them repent and get the help they need.

What do you do if there is a crisis?

- While calling the person to confess sin and repent, keep the circle of people who know small.
 - The sin of gossip and slander of church members must be avoided, but the pastors and BFG Leader must be on the same page with counsel or advice. As the circle grows, sometimes the help can become convoluted with multiple counselors. Wise, godly counsel from the Word of God is necessary. Many voices can confuse solid, biblical counsel.
- Let your pastors know.
 - God has called pastors to shepherd the flock. Knowing the sins and struggles of members in crisis is crucial to being faithful to this calling.
- Be ready to help for the long haul.
 - Certain crisis situations will require not only the help of the pastors, but it could even mean consulting trained counselors or professionals to support those in need. Even then, the BFG member will need you to continue to walk with him or her as they seek to walk with Jesus. In these situations, the pastors will continue to call on the BFG Leader for help and guidance as their immediate leader.

BFG Leaders are not meant to handle every struggle alone, but are equipped by God to walk alongside others with confidence in the Spirit and the sufficient Word of God. Most issues shared in a BFG are part of normal Christian growth and can be addressed through faithful participation in worship, community, service, and intentional discipleship. When deeper help or a crisis arises, BFG Leaders are encouraged to involve pastors and, when necessary, outside support, while continuing to walk faithfully with those in need. BFG Leaders play a vital role in shepherding others with wisdom, care, and long-term commitment as God brings growth and healing.

