

LIFE GROUP

LEADERSHIP ESSENTIALS

What are Life Groups?

Life groups are small groups of *8-10 people* who will meet weekly for *7-weeks* for the purpose of:

- 1) Building Friendships.
- 2) Serving our Gifts.
- 3) Gathering around Scripture.
- 4) Praying for and with each other.

Why are we doing Life Groups?

The early church met at the temple and also house to house (Acts 2:46)

Strengths of our Big Gatherings:

- 1) It is a time for people to refuel, learn, and encounter God. Worshipping in an auditorium full of people is a rich experience.
- 2) People who are trying to reconnect with God find themselves looking for a church service to attend. We get to be a witness to them.
- 3) It's a time to meet new people.
- 4) We realize that we are part of something bigger. It's a time our leaders can keep imparting vision so the church can continue to advance.
- 5) It's a time where our children can be instructed in the ways of God and brought to an atmosphere of worship.

Need for Small Groups:

- In a traditional church service with more than 80 people, it is more challenging to connect deeper, serve our gifts, and be cared for and supported.
- Also a traditional church service is an open door policy, where you never know who you will and will not see, therefore it's not as conducive towards building friendships.
- The larger the crowd gets, the less noticed each individual becomes. Since there is no relationship, we can't easily track the growth and progress of the attendee.
- Friendship is also key in closing the back door to a church, for churches become stickier when they can make friends.
- Most people are not given the capacity to lead fifties or hundreds or thousands, but many are capable of leading a small group.

“(The only way a church can continue to grow beyond 80 is small groups). The group dynamic theory that underlies this is the rule of 40. 40 people is the ideal size for everyone to maintain face-to-face relationship with everyone else. In a church setting the group can expand to 80 and sustain most of the interpersonal qualities. However, when it goes past 80 towards 200, the relationships are increasingly strained. By the time it gets to 150 most groups are so stressed out that they can no longer handle the thought of strangers entering the group and thereby increasing the stress.” - Peter Wagner

“Imagine the potential as increasing numbers of lay people are related to be co-ministers of care and nurture. Meeting in groups of approximately 10 people- the time-tested, the scientifically validated size, that allows for optimal communication...” - Warren Bird, Carl George.

What is a Life Group Leader?

A Life Group Leader is someone who serves a group of 7-10 other people through:

1. Extending friendship and care to the group.
2. Facilitating the weekly gatherings. (All study materials will be provided, so prep time is minimal, however we encourage you to prayerfully lead.)

3. Monitoring the group and communicating to the Life Group Director.
4. Identifying future leaders.

What are the requirements for a Life Group Leader?

1. Commitment to serve during the 7 weeks (Permitted to miss once and the co-leader can facilitate in your absence.)
2. Participating in our *Leadership Training*.
3. Listening to the Sunday message.
4. Send Weekly Reminders to the Group.
5. Filling out the weekly "PRAISE REPORT" to our Life Group Director.

What is a Life Group Host and what is required of them?

A **Life Group Host** is someone who will host a group of 7-10 people (adults) weekly for 7 weeks for 2 hours.

(However, there may be co-Hosts in a group, to put less weight on just one Host. The Host also is required to participate in Leaders Training 2.5 hour training so we are all on the same page.)

When will these groups start and end?

Each group meets for seven weeks straight in (Feb-March), (May-June), and (September- October). There are breaks in between.

If someone wants to transfer groups, they can let their Life Group Leader know and you can report to the Life Group Director, who will assist them in finding a new group. (Life Group members may switch groups in the first three weeks only.)

Would Life Groups shift members as the seasons go on?

Each season is 7-weeks, and if the Life Group wants to remain together for the next season, they can. There will be three seasons a year. We hope some groups would be able to stay together for extended periods of time and really do life together.

Now, if the Life Group Leader wants to mix up their group, or you lose some members, and you are open to new ones, you can find new members to join the group or the Life Group Director will recommend people looking for a life group.

As the Life Group Leader, you are only signing up for one season, although you are welcomed to serve again in the next season. We are not locking you into serving the same group for years.

What will be the study material?

- The material will be going deeper in the current series our church is on. An icebreaker and three discussion questions will be provided by our Teaching Team.
- We want to be on the same page as a church, having the same seasonal focuses and learning to speak the same language, so we can continue to grow in unity as a church, as we we bring hearts back to God.
- If your group chooses to meet off season, you can choose whichever material you want.

Will I get to pick my own group?

- Yes in that we believe our Life Group Leaders and Hosts are our number one recruiters. Please invite people personally to your group.
- However when the slots are full, we will close the groups, for we do not want the groups to become too large that we lose our purpose.

- If there are openings in your group, people will be able to apply online or sign up for the remaining slots at the Life Group Fair.
- The Life Group Coordinator will lead people to your group as well, if they apply online.

How do I fill out a weekly PRAISE REPORT?

Go to: www.jesuscenter.com/leader

It will take you about two minutes to fill out. Please submit right after the meeting or at least within 24 hours of your meeting time. You can have your co-leader send it in your absence.

Your Role as a Leader

The Life Group Leader's primary role is to create an environment where friendships can be developed and people will feel they belong and are safe.

You are developing a smaller community (Life Group) within a larger community (Jesus Center).

Life Group Leaders are not responsible for the individual's growth.

"6I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. 7So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth." (1 Corinthians 3:6-7)

We do the **planting**, through sharing words.

We do the **watering**, through extending love.

God does the transformation.

Every time the Life Group gathers, we want to be considering how we can stimulate our group in loving God, loving people, and doing good.

"and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."- (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Creating a Welcoming, Warm Atmosphere

- We want to make sure to welcome everyone within the first seven seconds they arrive at the gathering.
- Play some relaxing music as they come.
- Provide some refreshments if able to. (Decaf in the evening).
- If you are having a rough day, let people know, so they don't assume you're mad at them.
- Celebrate all the birthdays.
- Any other ideas?

Connecting with Your Group

3 Levels of Connection

- 1) **ACCEPTANCE.** Just hearing someone's present and past journey, preferences, aspirations. (Romans 15:7)
- 2) **AFFIRMATION.** Being able to give positive feedback and specific appreciation. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- 3) **ADVICE.** (Colossians 3:16-17, Galatians 5:16).

* Let us not be too quick to jump to level 3, without laying a strong foundation in levels 1-2.

3 Levels of Question Asking

- 1) **Low Risk:** Just simple get to know you questions. (hobbies, interests).
- 2) **Medium Risk:** Their beliefs, interpretation of situations, their stance or opinion on religion and politics.
- 3) **Higher Risk:** Asking for the revealing of weaknesses and struggles.

* Let us not be too quick to jump to level 3, without laying a strong foundation in levels 1-2.

Leader as a Coach, Not Player

As a leader, our goal is not to do all the sharing, but to get others to share. The leader is not primarily a teacher, but a facilitator. Our leaders are there to be relational with the group, serve the group in prayer and guidance, and being a willing listener. It's not the leader's show.

Ways we can encourage others to share:

- 1) Start with an ice-breaker, it makes it easier for people to share more meaningfully & openly.
- 2) While a discussion is taking place, ask the group:
 - Anyone want to follow up on that?
 - Does anyone want to piggy back off of what was shared?

When People Bring Up Their Personal Issues

We do not need to shy away from people's mess. However, we do not want to be quick to give counsel. We can gain a better understanding of the situation:

4 Questions to Better Understand Someone's Issue:

1. How long have you been dealing with this?

- When did this first occur.

2. Who knows about this?

- Have you talked to someone about this? How was it received?

3. Have you received advice on how to deal with this?

- What have they shared with you?
- Have you found any good resources?

4. What do you want to do from here?

- What are your next steps.
- How would you want me to support you?

Trouble Shooting Awkward Situations

Critical Person

- If someone is being really critical of what others share, take them aside and remind them of the purpose of Life Group is to stimulate each other towards love and good deeds, and share with them that you don't feel their contribution is doing that.
- Let them know that you are seeking to build an environment of belonging and security, and their comments and attitudes are counter-productive.

Quiet Person

- Take extra time to talk one on one with this person.
- Perhaps try making even smaller groups and see if this person may share more.
- Continue to make them feel safe and do not pressure them to open up.

Stage-Hog Person

- In the meeting, maybe encourage someone else to answer the question, before the Stage-Hog gets to take over.
- Take this person aside and address the issue. Explain to them that when any one person dominates the discussion it doesn't allow those who are more introverted to share. So validate their input, but ask them to be a team player for the sake of others. Ask them to monitor their own sharing.
- You may want to get to know this person better, they may have some leadership skills, but just need some coaching. Always share in love.

Needy Person

- Establish clear boundaries early. Let them know you only have a few minutes to talk.
- They may take thirty minutes explaining their prayer request situation. However, they are taking over the meeting. We may need to interrupt and let them know, we are running out of time, so before it gets too late, let's pray for you.

The Tardy Person

- Share with this person that when they make it on time, it is respectful for others in the group.
- They may have a legitimate reason for being late. It may be good for them to be able to share with the group too, if it's not too personal.

Prepping for the First Meeting

Contact Your Group One Week in Advance:

- Contact them at least a week before the first meeting. Their contact information will be available at jesuscenter.com/leader and will be emailed to you.

Take People Through “Life Group Covenant”

- It reminds everyone of the vision and expectations of Life Group. (This will be in your leaders kit).
- Name tags will help the first week. (They will be in your kit)
- Let people mingle and yet, give them a heads up “We are going to start in five minutes.”
- Use icebreakers.
- Give them the Life Group Covenant, go over it with the group, and ask them to Sign it and give it to you. The purpose of the covenant is to present it back to the Life Group Member if they are getting out of line.

SAMPLE: LIFE GROUP COVENANT

We will meet on _____ night for _____ weeks. Our final meeting of this quarter will be on _____.

We will arrive between ____ & ____ and begin the meeting at _____. We will depart from the gathering location at _____.

- 1) I will be accepting of others in my group (Romans 15:7).
- 2) I will be caring for others in my group (John 13:34).
- 3) I will be respectful of others in my group (Ephesians 4:25-5:2).
 - I will seek to be a good listener.
 - I will not engage in gossip, even during prayer time.
 - I will not put others down in my group.
 - I won't be quick to preach to or give advice to those in my group.
 - I will seek to preserve confidentiality as much as possible (unless someone is a danger to themselves or others).
- 4) I will let my Life Group leader know when and why I cannot make it to the meeting.
- 5) I will be open to the direction and guidance of my Life Group Leader.
- 6) I will try not to hog the meeting time.
- 7) If I need to transfer groups, I will let my Life Group Leader know. (You may switch groups in the first three weeks only.)

Initial here: _____

I'm supporting the vision of Life Groups to create an environment in which friendships can be developed and a community where people have a sense of belonging and safety.

Print Name: _____

Sign Name: _____

Date: _____