

LIFE GROUP PLAYBOOK



TABLE OF CONTENTS



CORE VALUES..... 4

WHAT DO THE THREE CORE VALUES LOOK LIKE IN THE CONTEXT OF A LIFE GROUP?

- Relationships..... 5
- Spiritual growth..... 6
- Reaching out..... 8
- What is a Reach Rep?..... 9

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A LEADER

- Prerequisites of leadership..... 10
- Position/leadership description..... 12
- A great way to start..... 13

LIFE GROUP LEADER HUB INSTRUCTIONS.....14

- Attendance..... 15

CREATING ENVIRONMENTS

- Physical environments..... 16
- Relational environment..... 18
- Life Group Ground Rules..... 20

HOW TO STRUCTURE THE LIFE GROUP MEETING..... 22

- Sample meeting structure..... 23
- How often should my group meet?..... 24
- Curriculum..... 24
- Managing the Life Group season..... 25

THE TOP 10 CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE GROUPS..... 26

THE TOP 10 RESULTS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE GROUPS.... 27

FEELING STUCK OR DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO?..... 28

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS..... 30

APPENDIX..... 34

DEAR LIFE GROUP LEADER,

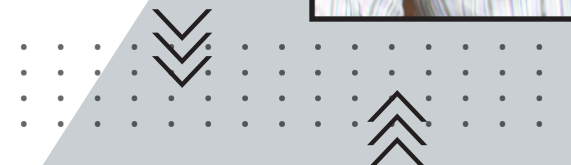
NOTHING STIRS MY HEART QUITE LIKE SEEING GOD CHANGE AND TRANSFORM PEOPLE'S LIVES. ISN'T IT AMAZING THAT GOD WOULD USE PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND ME TO ACCOMPLISH HIS AWESOME PURPOSES? AS A LIFE GROUP LEADER, YOU ARE IN A PIVOTAL LEADERSHIP ROLE TO BE USED BY GOD TO SEE PEOPLE'S LIVES TRANSFORMED.

YOU ARE IMMENSELY VALUABLE TO US AND GREATLY APPRECIATED!

UNDOUBTEDLY, YOU WILL HAVE SOME MOUNTAINTOP EXPERIENCES AS A LEADER. ALSO, LIKE ANY NOBLE CALLING, I'M SURE THERE WILL BE CHALLENGING TIMES FOR YOU AS YOU LEAD YOUR GROUP. LET ME ENCOURAGE YOU TO PRESS ON. THE LIFE GROUP MINISTRY TEAM AND ALL OF US AT NORTHVIEW ARE HERE TO SERVE YOU AS YOU SERVE YOUR GROUP.

LOVE YA,

STEVE POE, SENIOR PASTOR



Purpose of a Life Group:

To proactively live out the three core values of:

- spiritual growth
- relationships
- reaching out

Northview is a church whose mission is to connect people with God and connect people with people. We are the kind of church that meets you right where you are in life and is passionate about helping you find and fulfill God's purpose.

At Northview, it is our strong desire that every person connected with our church would attend worship services weekly, be active in a Life Group, and make serving God a way of life by volunteering within and/or outside the walls of our church.

RELATIONSHIPS

How do you build relationships effectively in the context of a Life Group?



Learn each other's story

It is amazing how hearing where someone has come from can help you to understand and love a person in your Life Group. Sharing each other's stories is a powerful means of connecting a group relationally.



Here's an idea: Take turns over multiple weeks having an individual or couple share their story in about 10 minutes.

Get together outside of your regular meeting time

Groups that invest in each other's lives outside of their regular meeting time are the groups that typically form a strong relational bond.

Get together with others of the same gender outside of your regular meeting time

Meeting with just the guys or gals will often allow for greater freedom in personal sharing and accountability.



SPIRITUAL GROWTH

How do you grow spiritually in the context of a Life Group?

Focus on where truth meets life

It is possible for groups to focus exclusively on truth and not take time to share with each other how it applies practically to their life. It is also possible to spend so much time sharing the issues of life that the group neglects to seek God's truth and how it applies to them personally. The goal is to see lives changed through the application of the truth of God's Word.

Share your spiritual journey

Some think of spiritual growth as something that happens in the Life Group meeting itself. While this is possible, the bulk of a person's spiritual growth is what happens in between the Life Group meetings. Life Group is a place to share what God has done or been doing in your life since you last met and to discuss how to apply new biblical truths to your circumstances. It is the sharing of your journey that often is a catalyst in someone else's faith walk.



Here's an idea: Periodically substitute a God-sighting for prayer request time where group members share how they have seen God work in their lives in the past week.



Take the next step

One of the ways God often grows us spiritually is by calling us *into new experiences that will require trusting him*. A Life

Group is a great place to find the mutual encouragement and accountability to take the next step of faith in your walk with God.



Examples of next steps could be:

- Attend Next Experience
- Serve in Northview Kids or Northview Students
- Attend the Discipleship Walk
- Get baptized
- Enter your Next in the Growth Plan found on the app

Stepping out of your comfort zone certainly isn't limited to ministries at Northview. God will begin to stretch you in all of your life. The key is to develop the practice of listening to God and obeying His prompting.

REACHING OUT

How can a group effectively reach out and serve together within the context of a Life Group?

- »»» 1. Make it a priority. All Life Groups should serve together once per quarter. northviewchurch.us/outreach
- »»» 2. Identify a personal connection. Focus on serving someone who has a personal connection to someone in your group.
- »»» 3. Keep the activity simple and contained. Some group members will immediately embrace the idea of serving and in their enthusiasm, may commit to more than they can manage.
- »»» 4. Keep a steady pace. Whether it is curriculum or serving, people have a tendency to be eager in the beginning and lose steam over time. Beware of this trend and avoid discouragement.
- »»» 5. Beware of the money trap. Avoid the temptation to just give money toward the problem or situation.
- »»» 6. Don't let serving take over the group. It may become necessary to set a time limit on how long this topic is discussed in a Life Group meeting.
- »»» 7. Nominate an outreach representative (*Reach Rep*). This person is a liaison to the Missions department and helps keep outreach values a priority.

(Consider having the person who suggests a project be your group's Reach Rep. After all, they are the one with the personal connection.)

WHAT IS A REACH REP?

(Quick Tip Video: [Serving Together](#))

A Reach Rep is a designated Outreach Representative who keeps the core value of reaching out a priority in your group. There is huge value in having someone who owns this initiative in your group.

WHO CAN BE A REACH REP?

Anyone in your group can be a Reach Rep. Often the person in your group with a passion for service makes a great candidate.

HOW DO I NOMINATE A REACH REP?

The best way to nominate a Reach Rep for your group is by asking them personally. If you see someone in your group who would be good at this role, you can explain the role and why you think they would be great at it.

WHY DO I NEED A REACH REP?

A tremendous amount of spiritual growth can happen when someone decides to serve. The community is changed along with the members of your group. Having someone to champion that initiative allows him/her ownership and responsibility within the group.



Keep in mind: The key is to get everyone to participate; be careful that this doesn't just create another "position" in the group and the rest just sit back. Maybe rotate this assignment.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A LEADER

PREREQUISITES OF A LEADER

(Quick Tip Video: Role of Life Group Leader)

- Trusts in Christ
- Relates well with people
- Pursues Christ in daily life
- Is willing to partner with the church by becoming an engaged regular attendee of Northview Church
- Able to facilitate/manage group dynamics

Sometimes it is quite possible for all the above to be true, but there are personal life circumstances that make it best not to serve as a leader for a season. However, joining a group is still recommended.

WHY DOES A GROUP NEED A LEADER?

Having an identified leader is important because, at times, challenges will arise within the group. There is incredible value in having a person who has responsibility and permission to address the challenge presented.

When people object to the idea of a group having a leader, oftentimes the underlying issue is not about whether the group needs a leader. The real issue is the kind of a leader the group needs.



WHAT KIND OF LEADER DOES THE GROUP NEED?

1. A person who can lead collaboratively; a consensus-builder as opposed to an autocratic leader
2. A person who will lead by example and has these character traits:
 - Teachability
 - Integrity
 - Transparency
 - Self-awareness
3. A person who delights in seeing God work in people's lives.



Keep in mind: The role of a Life Group leader is not intended to be that of a teacher. Oftentimes, the Life Group leader will facilitate the group. However, the role can be shared.



POSITION/LEADERSHIP DESCRIPTION

Primary Responsibility:

To encourage the group and individuals in the group to proactively live out the three core values of Northview Church. The core values are spiritual Growth, relationships and reaching out.

Primary functions:

- Liaison to the Groups Ministry Team
- Periodically connect with your Life Group Coach, Ministry Associate or Groups and Teams Pastor
- Attend leader events
- Use the automated attendance email to post attendance or to connect with someone on the Groups Ministry Team
- Keep Life Group details up to date
 - Utilize the Life Group Manager at northviewchurch.us/lifegroupleaderhub
- Create and sustain healthy environments
- Manage the physical and relational environment
- Provide structure for the meeting
- Keep the group on track in implementation of the agreed-upon Life Group Ground Rules (See page 20-21)
- Share roles within the group (i.e. facilitator, host, snacks, Reach Rep, prayer, worship)
- Handle conflict well
- Deal with relationship tensions proactively before they become major problems
- Praise publicly. Correct privately.



Keep in mind: Communicate by phone or in person rather than email or text when addressing difficult situations. It is amazing how much conflict can be avoided by not using email or text to communicate emotion or to handle difficult situations.



A GREAT WAY TO START

Encourage individuals in the group to proactively live out the three core values of Northview Church. The core values are spiritual Growth, relationships and reaching out.

A great way to start is to give people an opportunity to test-drive a Life Group. The Life Group ministry team assists groups in putting people together for a six-week Life Group experience.

Over the course of the six-week experience, the groups meet independently in someone's home and are led by a Life Group HOST. At the end of the six weeks, each group decides whether or not they want to continue meeting.

The biggest Life Group kickoff event occurs during the fall, church-wide Spiritual Growth Campaign. This campaign ignites the Life Group season.

LIFE GROUP LEADER HUB

INSTRUCTIONS



1. Scroll down to the Life Group Manager section on the [Leader Hub](#).

2. Log into Life Group Manager.



Helpful Hint: If this is the first time you are logging in, you may be asked to register first and create a password.



3. Once you are logged into your account, select the group you lead from the list on the right side of your account page.

4. This will take you to your group's details and roster.

- Make sure the group info is **ACCURATE**. **YOU CAN CLICK THE CONTACT GROUPS TEAM BUTTON TO MAKE ANY CHANGES.**

- You determine your group size. Indicate how many people you are able to add to your group in the details section. Someone from the Groups Team will contact you before adding a new member.

5. To add or remove members to your group, please **CLICK THE BUTTON THAT SAYS CONTACT GROUPS TEAM.**

ATTENDANCE

The day of your group meeting, you will receive an email reminding you to post your group's attendance. **You have the option to click a button that says, Group Met or Group Did Not Meet.** A new window will pop up with a list of your group members. Select the members that were in attendance and click **Save**.

- If you are not receiving this email, please notify someone from the Groups Team.

- If you did not meet on a given week, please note that on your attendance report.

- If your group is taking a break from gathering and you want to put the email reminders on pause, notify someone on the Groups Team with the date that you plan to reconvene.

You can also post your attendance from your Life Group Manager account.





The goal is to create environments that enable the group and its members to grow together relationally, spiritually, and in their effectiveness to reach out to others. There are different things to manage in the environment of your life group:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Most of the components of the physical environment are directly related to where the meeting is being hosted. Hosting is a group role which is often shared by various members in the group.

Create an environment that is welcoming and relaxed

- Have comfortable chairs arranged in a circle
- Make sure outside lights are turned on
- Give yourself 10 minutes to “decompress” and pray before guests arrive
- Have snacks and drinks available

Limit distractions

- Have TV turned off
- Have pets in a separate part of your gathering space
- Silence cell phones
- Make sure the host home is reasonably clean
- Make sure the room temperature is comfortable
- Alcohol policy: We ask that alcohol not be served at home group functions
- Agree upon a plan for childcare as a group



Helpful Hint: Collect money multiple weeks in advance for childcare so the group has the funds available to pay the sitter, even if some couples miss a meeting.



RELATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Create an environment that is collaborative, safe, authentic and feels like family.

Collaborative:

- Share ownership of group roles
- Share communication
- Everyone is engaged; no one is dominating conversation
- Share commitment to the group; people notify others if they'll be absent or late

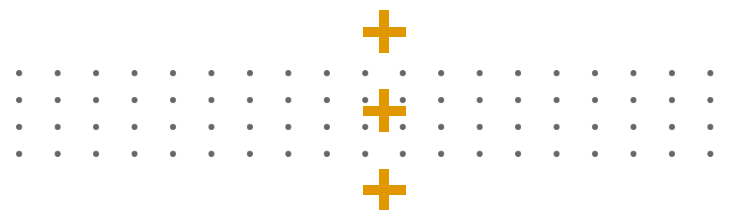
Safe:

- Confidentiality should be vigorously respected unless a person is engaged in illegal activity or is a danger to themselves or others



Helpful Hint: Seeking guidance from one of the pastors at Northview about a Life Group situation is not considered a violation of group confidentiality.

- Avoid quick answers, snap judgments, simple fixes or side conversations
- Maintain a sense of belonging—acceptance without judgment
- Help group members resolve conflicts when they arise



Authentic:

- Model for and encourage members to go beneath the surface and be transparent in conversations
- Model for and challenge each other to grow spirit- ually with gentleness and respect
- Model active listening skills by connecting things shared by members, allowing them to feel heard and supported
- Celebrate growth in the three core values periodically

FEELS LIKE FAMILY

- Proactively care for one another
- Get together outside of the meeting
- Create excitement and energy in the group. Use icebreakers to get to know one another and laugh with one another. Celebrate the growth and successes in each other's lives. (Note: Creating a collaborative and safe environment will increase the chances of group members becoming more authentic and, ultimately, in creating a sense of family. A familial environment can be encouraged and directed, but not forced.)
- Create an open environment that communicates: "This is our group (not my group), and it will be what we make it. So, if there is something we would like to see improve, let's improve it."
- Have periodic group "check-in." Create time in your group meeting to discuss how everyone feels the group is progressing.
- Use the Life Group Ground Rules to review what everyone hopes to achieve out of the Life Group.



Here's an idea: Ask: "What is our group's greatest strength and in what areas would you like to see the group grow?" Then follow up with: "What practical steps can we take to move forward?"

Use the Life Group Ground Rules

(Quick Tip Video: [Life Group Ground Rules](#))

Life Group Ground Rules can be a great tool to collaboratively establish expectations related to creating a sustaining a healthy environment. It can be used to gain mutual "buy-in" as to what the group is about, what roles different people will play in the group, and to evaluate how the group is doing.

How to add people to the group?

Before adding anyone to your group, be sure to discuss and decide as a group how you would like to add people.

The most effective way to add people to your group is by personal invitation. Think about your neighbors, friends and coworkers that may not be connected to a Life Group and would be a great fit for the group. Encourage the others in the group to do the same.

Life Group Ground Rules

Northview Life Groups are all about living out the three core values: spiritual growth, relationships, and reaching out.

Go around the room, each person reading one rule. Agreeing to these rules will help everyone get the most out of the group experience.

(Helpful hint: It is a good idea to review these ground rules when new people join the group and/or you begin a new study.)

We agree to the following ground rules and expectations:

- Show up: I'll prioritize the scheduled Life Group meeting and call in advance if I'm going to miss the meeting.
- Show respect: I'll accept everyone without judgement. I'll listen well and refrain from giving quick answers, simple fixes or engaging in side conversations.
- Be self-aware: I'll stretch myself to be as open and honest as I can with my perspectives and experiences. I understand that some of us are talkers and some are quieter, so I'll be aware of not dominating the discussion or always leaving the weight of it to others.
- Take ownership: I'll do my part to help create the group (translation: "I won't stick the host/leader with all the work"). The group will be as good as I make it. I'll share roles within the group and help challenge everyone to grow.
- Face conflict: Community can be very messy, and conflicts may arise. I'll offer grace to others and won't leave the group over disagreements, realizing that God might use conflict in my spiritual formation in some way I don't currently understand.
- Keep it confidential: I'll vigorously respect confidentiality. What I hear and say in the group stays in the group (unless a person is a danger to themselves or others or engaged in illegal activity).



Helpful Hint: Seeking guidance from one of the pastors at Northview about a Life Group situation is not considered a violation of group confidentiality.



HOW TO STRUCTURE THE LIFE GROUP MEETING



STRUCTURE

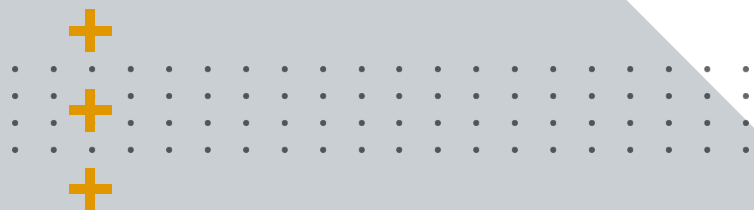
Structure provides freedom. Typically, people are more at ease and willing to share when they know what to expect. However, keep in mind that the structure is a tool to serve the group, not the group to serve the structure. Strive to maintain a balance between keeping the meeting on schedule and responding to the unexpected.

HOW DOES NORTHVIEW ORGANIZE LIFE GROUPS?

Our group categories are:

- Singles
- Adults (couples) with no kids
- Parents of preschoolers
- Parents of elementary-aged children
- Parents of teens
- Empty nesters (50+)
- Multigenerational/Mixed
- Women
- Men

Although members of groups organized by stage-of-life tend to have more in common, anyone is welcome to join. For example, if a couple is 37 years old with no children, they may choose to join a group that is predominantly made up of parents of elementary-aged children because they view that as their peer group. The fact that they do not have children is not meant to exclude them from the group. We also have a number of successful multi-generational men's and women's groups.



HOW DO I STRUCTURE A MEETING?

The following is an example of how one group structures their meeting. Other groups will vary the structure to fit their group's personality.

- 1. 7-7:20 p.m. Welcome / Snacks:** People will arrive at different times, and this allows everyone to meet each other informally and catch up with one another.
- 2. 7:20-7:30 p.m. Icebreaker:** An icebreaker is a question designed to get people talking and sharing. The question can be fun and random. For example: If you could see any singer (living or dead) in concert, who would it be and why? The icebreaker could also be a question related to the topic you'll be discussing in your Life Group. The person in charge of the icebreaker question answers first and in so doing, sets an example for how much detail to give and amount of time to take in answering the question.
- 3. 7:30-8:15 p.m. Study:** Most studies/curricula make this an easy role to share. A DVD study will prompt you through the video and study guide step-by-step.
- 4. 8:15-8:40 p.m. Application:** During your discussions, talk about how what you've learned is affecting and impacting your lives. Discuss how you are putting this knowledge into action in your lives. Use questions like the following: How has God been at work in your life? Where is God stretching you in your life? What is God teaching you as you read the Bible and pray throughout the week?
- 5. 8:40-9 p.m. Prayer:** Group members will share prayer requests and the group prays together. For some people in the group, this will be the first time they have ever prayed out loud. Please remember to be patient with them and avoid putting them on the spot.



HOW OFTEN SHOULD MY GROUP MEET?

Some groups choose to meet every week. All Life Groups meet at least every other week. For groups that meet every other week, it is important to be intentional in keeping a strong relational connection because if a person misses one meeting, they will not connect with the group for a month.

Some groups meet for two or three weeks in a row and then take one week off, finding it helps to keep the group connected but also gives a break. Discuss and decide as a group which option works best for you.

CURRICULUM: (Quick Tip Video: Selecting Your Next Study)

1. How do I know what options are available?

Northview Church has partnered with an online video library called RightNow Media, which offers more than 2,000 Christian Bible study, training and leadership videos from respected teachers and leaders. This streaming service, which is essentially the Netflix of Bible studies, is a great learning tool for Life Groups. Watch any RightNow Media video instantly from your computer, mobile device or TV. Visit northviewchurch.us/rightnowmedia to gain access to these study options.

2. How do I choose a group study?

The **Groups Team** will often make recommendations of a particular study for Life Groups. These recommendations can be located at northviewchurch.us under the Resources Tab. Unless it is part of the fall Spiritual Growth Campaign, it is not necessary for your group to use the recommended studies. Choose a study with input and collaboration from your group.



Helpful Hint: When choosing the next study for your group, select two or three options based on the group's preferences. Allow the group to give input based on your selected studies.



MANAGING THE LIFE GROUP SEASON

(Quick Tip Video: Life Group Seasons)

Think of your Life Group as having a season (*similar to the way a sports team has a season*) that runs concurrent with the school year. The Life Group kicks off the season in September and plays the championship game around the end of May. Summer is a time to celebrate a successful season, as most Life Groups will typically have some kind of alternative schedule. (*i.e. meet once a month for socials*).

As the new season approaches, individuals have the option to sign up for another season with their previous Life Group or try a new Life Group experience.



Helpful Hint: The benefit of thinking of your Life Group as having a season is that it helps sustain commitment and momentum over time and helps prevent people from feeling like they are "stuck" in a group.



End well. When a Life Group decides to disband and stop meeting, have a dinner or a special time to celebrate the time the group has spent together. Avoid letting people know of the group's end via email and allow several weeks for the group to process the change that is coming. Talking with the Life Group ministry team prior to ending the group is recommended and appreciated.



THE TOP 10 CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE LIFE GROUP LEADERS

1. Deals with conflict well
2. Shares responsibilities and roles in the group
3. Spends time outside of group together
4. Shares with one another how God is working in their lives
5. Serves together
6. Has clear goals and clear expectations (Life Group Ground Rules)
7. Periodically “checks in” to evaluate how the group is progressing
8. Has a defined structure for the group meetings
9. Has spiritual accountability
10. Cares for each other in hard times



THE TOP 10 RESULTS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE LIFE GROUPS

1. Changed lives
2. A sense of belonging/family
3. Discovering and using spiritual gifts to serve God
4. Increased capacity to love others
5. Meaningful friendships
6. Increased desire to know and love God
7. People outside the group are impacted for Christ
8. The group cares for each other
9. The group encourages and challenges each other to grow spiritually
10. A sense of accomplishment



FEELING STUCK OR DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO?

NOTES



CALL US: Please don't feel like it has to be a major issue to justify calling us. We are eager to help walk you through any situation and pray with you and for you as you lead your group.



As a Life Group leader, there will likely come a time when you feel stuck or at a loss as to what to do. Please contact us. The Life Group ministry team's primary role is to be a resource for you.

EXAMPLES OF LIFE GROUP CHALLENGES

1. Challenging life circumstances for someone in the group
 - Someone in your group may share with you a difficult life situation that he/she is going through



Helpful Hint: Remember that it is much more important to be a good listener than it is to have a solution for the problem.

2. Challenging dynamics occurring in the meeting
 - Someone is introducing strange philosophies or ideas about God
 - Someone is dominating the conversation during the meeting
 - Someone asks a question you don't know how to answer



Helpful Hint: If you don't know the answer to a question, challenge the group to research the answer on their own and come back to the next meeting with what they have found.

3. Challenging relational dynamics
 - There is relational friction between some people in the group
 - The group feels like it has lost momentum
 - The group seems bored with its current curriculum
 - Some people in the group don't seem to be committed



HOW BIG SHOULD MY LIFE GROUP BE?

Ten to 14 people is a good target range. If there are too many people or too few people in a group, it may become difficult to create and sustain a healthy environment.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE REACH THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE GROUP?

Some groups will choose to close once they have reached a predetermined, maximum number of people. Some groups will continue to add people. Sub-grouping is a strategy which helps in this process. With this strategy, a group may have eighteen people meet together for snacks and fellowship and then break into two groups of nine, for example, once the discussion starts. This strategy allows a group to ease into multiplying.

HOW DO I BECOME A LEADER?

If you are interested in becoming a leader, let someone on the Life Group ministry team know. A great way to try out the leadership role is to launch a group. Another effective way to try out the leadership role is to ask your Life Group leader if you can co-lead with him/her. This provides on-the-job training for leading a Life Group well.

WHAT IF OUR GROUP IS DOING A STUDY THAT REQUIRES HOMEWORK AND NOBODY IS DOING IT?

If an upcoming study requires homework, talk up front about expectations. However, keep in mind that it is a common issue that a group will “bite off more than they can chew” when it comes to doing homework. Minimize a potentially frustrating situation by choosing curriculum where the homework is optional. Have different people responsible for leading discussion during the study. At least they will do the homework when it is their week to do the lesson. Err on the side of grace.

WHAT DO I DO IF PEOPLE AREN'T SHOWING UP CONSISTENTLY?

Define mutual expectations early on with the Life Group Ground Rules. If attendance becomes an issue with someone in the group, address it with him/her in person, not via email or text. Contact someone in the Life Group ministry prior to approaching the person to develop a plan and to have someone praying for you. Again, in this type of situation, err on the side of grace. Be in a place emotionally where you are more saddened that you didn't get to see the person at group rather than being frustrated that he/she didn't show up.

WE SPEND A HUGE AMOUNT OF TIME ON PRAYER REQUESTS. DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS?

Have people send their prayer requests via group message prior to the meeting. Emphasize the idea of praying for each other during the week. Explain that in the interest of time, everyone will pray for the one or two most pressing things for each person, but a more comprehensive message will be sent out so that the group can pray more thoroughly throughout the week. Have people share requests and pray together in smaller groups.

WHEN I ASK PEOPLE WHAT GOD IS DOING IN THEIR LIVES, I AM MET WITH SILENCE. HOW SHOULD I HANDLE THIS?

It is common for people to miss how God is at work in their lives. Sometimes people think that if they cannot share a major event or story then it is not worth sharing. Modeling how God is working in your own life in simple, tangible ways will help to set the stage. Encourage the group to start praying that God would reveal himself to them throughout the week. Pray for this together as a group.



SHOULD WE HAVE DINNER WITH OUR MEETING?

Ultimately, this is a group decision. Be aware that having a dinner will typically add significantly to the meeting time. If you have a dinner together, decide beforehand as a group how the evening will flow (i.e. Have dinner from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. and then have the normal meeting time from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.). In general, we would recommend not having a dinner with every meeting. Instead, consider having a dinner periodically throughout the year. Some groups will have a special dinner together after they finish a particular curriculum.

WHEN SHOULD I CALL THE LIFE GROUP MINISTRY TEAM FOR HELP?

Don't feel like it has to be something big or really important to call us. We love to be a sounding board for you. Call us early. Call us often.

IF I LEAD A LIFE GROUP, DO WE HAVE TO MEET IN MY HOME?

No. Many groups will share the role of having the group meet in their homes.

IS IT OK TO INVITE SOMEONE TO OUR GROUP THAT DOESN'T GO TO OUR CHURCH?

If the person has a home church, ideally they would get connected in his/her own church. Joining a Life Group provides a way to get to know fellow church attendees on a deeper level. While this is the general principle, there are times when it may be appropriate to make an exception. If the person does not have a home church, Life Group can be a great 'on-ramp' to the Christian faith and to getting connected to a local church.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE MEET?

During the Spiritual Growth Campaign, Life Groups meet every week. After the campaign, some groups continue to meet every week, while others choose to meet every other week. One of the challenges of meeting every other week is that if someone misses group, it will be a month since you have met with them. Therefore, groups that meet every other week will need to be intentional about looking for additional ways to build a sense of community. A third meeting option that works for some groups is to meet three weeks in a row and then take the fourth week off. This works with busy schedules while also helping to maintain a sense of community.



HANDLING CONFLICT

As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict.¹ We also believe that conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ.² Therefore, in response to God's love and in reliance on his grace, we commit ourselves to respond to conflict according to the following principles:

Glorify God

Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will rejoice in the Lord and bring him praise by depending on his forgiveness, wisdom, power and love as we seek to faithfully obey his commands and maintain a loving, merciful and forgiving attitude.³

Get the log out of your eye

Instead of blaming others for a conflict or resisting correction, we will trust in God's mercy and take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts—confessing our sins to those we have wronged, asking God to help us change any attitudes and habits that lead to conflict, and seeking to repair any harm we have caused.⁴

Gently restore

Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will overlook minor offenses, or we will talk personally and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook, seeking to restore them rather than condemn them. When a conflict with a Christian brother or sister cannot be resolved in private, we will ask others in the body of Christ to help us settle the matter in a biblical manner.⁵

Go and be reconciled

Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation—forgiving others as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, and seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions to our differences.⁶

By God's grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an assignment, not an accident. We will remember that success in God's eyes is not a matter of specific results, but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers will bring praise to our Lord and lead others to know his infinite love.⁷

- Matthew 5:9; Luke 6:27-36; Galatians 5:19-26
- Romans 8:28-29; 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1; James 1:2-4
- Psalm 37:1-6; Mark 11:25; John 14:15; Romans 12:17-21; ¹ Corinthians 10:31; Philippians 4:2-9; Colossians 3:1-4; James 3:17-18; 4:1-3; 1 Peter 2:12
- Proverbs 28:13; Matthew 7:3-5; Luke 19:8; Colossians 3:5-14; 1 John 1:8-9
- Proverbs 19:11; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8; Galatians 6:1-2; Ephesians 4:29; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; James 5:9
- Matthew 5:23-24; 6:12; 7:12; Ephesians 4:1-3, 32; Philippians 2:3-4
- Matthew 25:14-21; John 13:34-35; Romans 12:18; ¹ Peter 2:19; 4:19

Reprinted from The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict, Ken Sande (Baker Books, 3d ed., 2003). Peacemaker® Ministries. www.peacemaker.net.