



life
groups
northview church

Playbook

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Small Groups Pastor, Derek Irvin

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 mountain top 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.

Blessings,
Derek Irvin, Small Groups Pastor

CORE VALUES

NORTHVIEW CHURCH

Who We Are:

Vision

To be and to make a community of Christ-followers.

Mission

Connecting people with God ... Connecting people with people.

Purpose

To proactively live out the three core values of: spiritual growth, relationships, and reaching out.

W+2

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.



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

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.

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 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.

Take the Next Step

One of the ways that God often grows us spiritually is by calling us out of our comfort zone. 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 stepping out of your comfort zone are:

- Go on a Global Outreach Trip
- Serve in Children's or Student Ministry
- Attend the Discipleship Walk
- Get involved in Hilltop Sports & Fitness
- Attend a Northview University Class
- Take the Alpha Course
- Get baptized
- Attend the SHAPE Class
- Go to Prayer Ministry

Stepping out of your comfort zone certainly isn't limited to ministries at Northview. God will begin to stretch you in all areas 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 together within the context of a Life Group?

1. Power of personal connection. If you can focus on something or someone who has a personal connection to someone in your group, you better the chances of getting to your group members' hearts. If the group is stumped on what to do, suggest the group pray individually throughout the week asking God to reveal to them what good works He has prepared in advance for them to do. (Ephesians 2:10)
2. 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.
 - 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. This is another good reason to create a handful of small wins (acts of kindness and blessings).
 - Money Trap - Avoid the temptation to just give money toward the problem or situation.
 - Beware of serving taking over the group - It may become necessary to set a time limit for example: 15 minutes, on how long this topic is discussed in a Life Group meeting.
 - Reach Rep - Consider having the person who suggests the project be the project coordinator/organizer. After all, they are the one with the personal connection.
3. It is our desire that we all be Good Neighbors. A tool we provide you with is our Good Neighbor web site. Use this web site for more information on how your group can serve together, living out our core value of reaching out.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A LEADER



PREREQUISITES OF LEADERSHIP

- Trusted in Christ
- Relate well with people
- Pursuing Christ in your daily life
- Be willing to partner with us in ministry by becoming a member of Northview Christian Life Church
- Facilitate/manage group dynamic

Sometimes it is quite possible for all of the above to be true, but there are personal life circumstances (i.e. marriage/personal/family struggles) 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 related to sustaining a healthy environment. It is at these times, in particular, that 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, often times 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 leader who can lead collaboratively; a consensus builder as opposed to an autocratic leader.
2. A leader who will lead by example and has these character traits:
 - Teachable
 - Example of integrity
 - Transparent
3. A leader who delights in seeing God work in people's lives

Additional Thoughts:

The role of a Life Group Leader is not intended to be that of a teacher. Often times the Life Group leader will facilitate the group, however, this is a role which can be shared.

POSITION/JOB DESCRIPTION

Primary Responsibility

To encourage the group and individuals in the group to proactively live out the three core values of Northview Christian Life Church.

Primary Functions

- Liaison to the Life Group Ministry
 - Periodically connect with the Small Groups Pastor or another person on the Life Group Ministry team
 - Attend leader events
 - Update Life Group staff with your current curriculum, group information/roster changes using Small Group Manager

- Create and Sustain Healthy Environments
 - ❑ Manage the physical and relational environment (see page 12)
 - ❑ Provide structure for the meeting
 - ❑ Keep the group on track in implementation of the agreed-upon Life Group Agreement (i.e. safe, confidential, core values)
 - ❑ Share roles within the group (ie. facilitator, host, snacks, reach rep, prayer, worship)
 - ❑ Handle conflict well
 - ◇ Communicate by phone or in person rather than e-mail when addressing difficult situations. It is amazing how much conflict can be avoided by not using e-mail to communicate emotion or to handle difficult situations.

- How to use Small Group Manager
 - ❑ Go to www.nvcl.org/toolbox
 - ❑ Click on the “Life Group Manager” link

A GREAT WAY TO START

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 starting event occurs during the September church-wide spiritual growth campaign. This campaign kicks off the Life Group season. There are also Life Group starting events in the winter and spring.

LIFE GROUP MANAGER INSTRUCTIONS

Below are instructions on how to set up your Group Manager. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

1. Go directly to www.northviewchurch.us/lgmanager) and then click in Browse Small Groups.
2. Type in your last name-group name to find your group in Browse Small Groups.
3. Click on your group name (in bold and by last name)
4. Enter your group password-this is the head of household's six digit birthday (ie. January 1, 1980 = 010180)
5. Click on Group Information and make sure the group info is updated (ie. Group description, time group meets, size, frequency, and address where group meets).
 - a. You determine your group size. You set this in Group Information. Once your group reaches it's maximum size it will not show up on the website. Until then, people can automatically join your group on-line.
 - b. This program will use your address to map distance and location for people looking to join a group.
6. Click on Group Profile and update your group stage of life, marital status, etc.
7. At the bottom of the green box select Add Member(s)
8. Click on today's date

9. Select the members to add to your group and then click Add Selected Members. If your member is not listed, then click on Add Member Who Is Not On The List and enter their personal information. After you enter their information, they'll automatically be entered into your group.

Notes on Posting Attendance

1. After each meeting you will receive an e-mail reminding you to post attendance. Once you click on the link it will take you directly to the attendance page. If you are not receiving this email, please notify the Life Group Ministry Team.

You can indicate how often your group meets in Group Information. The email reminder will coordinate with your meeting frequency.

2. If you forget to post attendance, you will receive a “2nd of 3 reminders” and then a couple of days later, a “3rd of 3 reminders” e-mail notification. If attendance is still not posted, we will follow up with you personally.
3. The information that comes up on the attendance page is intended to create a meeting report for the people in your group. The default setting will send a copy of the meeting report to your group and the Life Group ministry team.
4. If you did not meet on a given week, you can register that information by clicking on “Did not meet this week”.
5. If your group met socially, put that in the notes and check who was all there.

CREATING ENVIRONMENTS

The goal is to create environments that enable the group and its members to grow together relationally, grow spiritually, and grow in their effectiveness to reach out to others.

There are two types of environments to manage:

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.

For example, the host might choose to:

- Have comfortable chairs arranged in a circle
- Make sure outside lights are turned on
- Give themselves ten 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 the house
- Turn phones off/silenced
- 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 child care as a group

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 call if they'll be absent or late

Safe

- Maintain confidentiality. Confidentiality should be vigorously respected unless a person is engaged in illegal activity, or is a danger to themselves or others. *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

Authentic

- Model for and encourage members to go beneath the surface and be transparent in conversations
- Model for and challenge each other to grow spiritually with gentleness and respect
- Celebrate growth in the three core values periodically

Feels Like Family

1. Proactively care for one another
2. Get together outside of the meeting
3. 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.*
4. 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."
5. Have a Group "Check-In" Periodically: A couple of times a year 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 hoped to achieve out of the Life Group
 - Ask: "What is our group's greatest strength and in what areas would you like to see the group grow?" and then follow up with "What practical steps can we take to move toward this ideal or use our strengths?"

Use the Life Group Ground Rules

This is a great tool to collaboratively establish expectations related to creating and sustaining a healthy environment. It can be used to gain mutual "buy in" as to what the group is about and it can be used to talk about what roles different people will play in the group.

LIFE GROUP GROUND RULES (SAMPLE)

Life Group Ground Rules

Clear purpose: Northview Life Groups are all about living out the three core values of 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 judgment. 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 a great 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*).

As a group discuss how you would like to:

- Grow spiritually
- Connect relationally
- Serve intentionally

Also discuss:

- Where we will meet?
- How we will handle child care?
- Meeting time (From/Until)
- Day we will meet

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

This can be found online at www.northviewchurch.us

How do I use the Life Group Ground Rules?

Use it as a living document and refer back to the Life Group Agreement on a periodic basis to evaluate how the group is doing. Refer back to the Life Group Agreement when a new member joins the group. *Note: A copy of the Life Group Agreement can be found on Northview's Web site in the Life Group Ministry section.*

How do I add people to my group?

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

The single 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.

You can also contact the Life Group ministry team for referrals of people who are looking for a group.



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 keep a balance between keeping the meeting on schedule and responding to the unexpected.

How Do We Organize Our Life Groups?

Our primary organizing principle for Life Groups is stage-of-life. One of the reasons for this is that it is easier for a group to make decisions on child care when they are all in a similar stage of life. Also, our experience has shown that when groups have stage of life and shared experiences in common they are more likely to stay together.

Our Group Categories Are:

- Singles
- Adults (Couples) with no kids
- Parents of preschoolers
- Parents of elementary-aged children
- Parents of teens
- Empty Nesters

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.



Sample Structure

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. **7:00 - 7:20 Welcome / Snacks:** People will arrive at different times and this allows everyone to meet each other informally and catch up with one another prior.
2. **7:20 - 7:30 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 created that is 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 time to take in answering the question.
3. **7:30 - 8:00/8:15 Discovery:** Most studies/curriculums 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 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 - 9:00 Prayer:** Group members will share prayer requests and the group prays together. For some people in the group this will be first time they have ever prayed out loud. Please remember to be patient with them and avoid putting them on the spot.

Other Creative Ideas for Group Structure

Here are some additional ideas for you to use that add a bit of variety to your group meetings:

- **Communion:** This can be a very moving experience for the entire group and may also be the first time some have ever shared communion outside of a church service. You can use bread or crackers and juice for the elements as we do here at Northview. This can be done in several ways. One way for example: take turns reading the scripture in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 and pass around the elements as scripture is read. End with a prayer of thanks to God or a song.
- **Worship through Song:** The keys to making this a positive experience in using this in Life Group are to have the words printed out for each person of the Life Group and to play the recorded music loud enough so that people don't feel self-conscious about participating. You can also play a song and have group members quietly listen to the song.
- **Worship through Prayer:** Have each group member personalize scripture from the study and pray it out loud in the group. Create: Have each member create or bring something that reveals something about who they are and share it during group time.

- **Share your Story:** Some groups have had each group member share their story of how they came to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. One group member shares their story per meeting. This is a great way to connect relationally and get to know more about others in your group.
- Have a cookout, game night, or theme party to celebrate the end of a study together or to break up your time together during the middle of a study.

Curriculum

1. How do I know what options are available?

There are a number of curriculum options available for loan free of charge in our Life Group Library. Capstone has a number of options available for purchase.

If the Life Group Ministry does not have the curriculum to check out, the individual Life Group is responsible for purchasing the material. If your group purchases a video curriculum, please consider donating it to the Life Group Library for other groups to use.

2. How do I choose a group study?

The Life Group Ministry Team will often make recommendations of a particular study for Life Groups and have extra copies available for purchase at Capstone Café and Bookstore. Unless it is part of a church-wide campaign it isn't necessary for your group to use the recommended study. Choose a study with input and collaboration from the group. For a list of our current DVD studies email the Director of Group Development & Assimilation. Please keep the Life Group Ministry team updated on which study you are using.

Note: The purpose of the group study is to serve your group in growing closer to God and to each other, not for your group to serve the study. In other words, if the study becomes the focus and purpose of your group feel free to make appropriate changes.

HOW TO MANAGE THE LIFE GROUP MEETING



MANAGING THE LIFE GROUP SEASON

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. *Note: There are some groups which choose to continue to hold a regular schedule during the summer.*

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

The benefit of thinking of your Life Group as having a season is that it helps to sustain commitment and momentum over time and helps prevent people from feeling that 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 e-mail 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 TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE LIFE GROUPS

1. Deals with conflict well (see appendix)
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 (Manage the Season)
8. Has a defined structure for the group meetings
9. Has spiritual accountability; same gender meetings in addition to regular meetings are a great way to make this a reality. The purpose is to encourage and challenge each other to grow spiritually.
10. Cares for each other in hard times



TOP TEN 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 of 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?

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 they are going through

Tip: Remember that it is much more important to be a good listener than it is to have a solution for their 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 for which you don't know how to answer

Tip: One way to deal with this situation of not knowing the answer is to 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 a 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

Tip: 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.

RESOURCES

Carmel Campus

Derek Irvin - Small Groups Pastor

317.846.2884, ext. 148 | derek.irvin@northviewchurch.us

Liz Erickson – Director of Life Group Placement and Resources

317.846.2884, ext. 128 | liz.erickson@northviewchurch.us

Ruth Stinnett - Small Groups Ministry Assistant

317.846.2884, ext. 158 | ruth.stinnett@northviewchurch.us

West Lafayette Campus

Rita Gick

765.385.5145 | rita.gick@northviewchurch.us

Northview's Web site– www.northviewchurch.us

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How big should my Life Group be?

Ten to 12 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 our group?

Some groups will choose to close once they have reached a predetermined, maximum number of people. Some groups will continue to add people with the idea that they will multiply at some given point. 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 them. This provides on-the-job training for leading a Life Group well.

What do I do 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 Agreement. If attendance becomes an issue with someone in the group, address it with them in person not via e-mail. 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 than you are frustrated that they didn't show up.

We spend a huge amount of time on prayer requests. Do you have any suggestions?

Have people pre-send their prayer requests via e-mail 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 e-mail 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 life, 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 (ie. 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 real 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 home.

Is it alright 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 their own church. One of the benefits of people joining a Life Group is it provides a way to get to know people they go to church with 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.

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

APPENDIX

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

¹Matt. 5:9; Luke 6:27-36; Gal. 5:19-26.

²Rom. 8:28-29; 1 Cor. 10:31-11:1; James 1:2-4.

³Ps. 37:1-6; Mark 11:25; John 14:15; Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Cor. 10:31; Phil. 4:2-9; Col. 3:1-4; James 3:17-18; 4:1-3; 1 Peter 2:12.

⁴Prov. 28:13; Matt. 7:3-5; Luke 19:8; Col. 3:5-14; 1 John 1:8-9.

⁵Prov. 19:11; Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-8; Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 4:29; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; James 5:9.

⁶Matt. 5:23-24; 6:12; 7:12; Eph. 4:1-3, 32; Phil. 2:3-4.

⁷Matt. 25:14-21; John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:18; 1 Peter 2:19; 4:19.

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