

**vineyard**tuttlecrossing

# Life Group Leader's Manual

Let's Do Life... Together!

Vineyard Tuttle Crossing  
Life Group Leader's Manual

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# Welcome!

We have designed this Life Group Leader's Training Manual to be used by Life Group Leaders to train their apprentices in the principles and procedures for starting, leading, and planting a Life Group.

We realize that every person has a different background and experiences that have shaped and molded their idea of what "church" should be and do. They may also have different ideas of what Life Groups are and do.

One of the purposes of this manual is to put all of us at Vineyard at Tuttle Crossing (VTC) on equal playing ground as we pursue God and the vision He has given us for Columbus area.

We would ask that you diligently study this manual, and if you have any questions, please bring them up with your Life Group Leader.

Chapter One:  
**Vision-**  
**The Indispensable Ingredient**

# vision: the indispensable ingredient

*"Where there is no vision, the people perish"*  
Prov. 29:18

As our church grows and develops, the need for communicating the vision the Lord has given us for our ministry here at VTC becomes greater and greater. Any organization or organism must have a vision for where it is going and what it wants to accomplish if it is going to accomplish anything.

## 1. What is Vision?

George Barna, in his book *The Power of Vision*, defines vision for ministry like this:

"Vision for ministry is a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants and is based upon an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances."

## 2. Vision is Essential

Without vision, people don't know where they are going, and therefore aren't excited about getting there. They begin to perish. They either go to church because they think they have to, or they stop going altogether. They are not excited about church or about God.

## 3. Vision is Clear

*"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*

*This is what the ancients were commended for."* Heb. 11:1

Vision is a picture held in your mind's eye of the way things could or should be in the days ahead. It is not a maybe or a might, it is a clear picture given by God of what a ministry is to be. When the children of Israel left Egypt, God gave them vision for the Promised Land by describing it to them:

*"When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites and Jebusites — the land he swore to your forefathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey ..." Ex. 13:5*

Notice that God didn't say "if," but "when." Fourteen times in the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) God told them what their future was going to be like by describing it to them. In our speech, hopes, and expectations, we also should speak of our future in this way.

#### **4. Vision Speaks of Change**

Vision is never about maintaining the status quo. Vision is about stretching reality to extend beyond the existing state.

*"As it is written: 'I have made you a father of many nations.' He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed —the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were." Rom. 4:17*

"When" you get to the Promised Land is calling things that are not as though they were.

#### **5. Vision is Responding to the Future Today**

Vision concentrates on the future. It focuses on thinking ahead rather than on dwelling upon or seeking to replicate the past. However, the future is made up of today. Vision plans for tomorrow today.

#### **6. Vision is Realistic but Knows the Greatness of God**

Vision reflects a realistic perspective. Vision is not dreaming the impossible dream, but dreaming the most possible dream. To some, however, true vision may appear lofty and unrealistic because it always focuses on what could be done, not on what has already been done. Without faith and hope, vision is impossible.

#### **7. Vision is Modeled, Taught and Lived by Leadership**

Leadership is critical within the church. People begin to behave like their leadership and become like them. If, as Life Group Leaders, we model the nature of Jesus as The Great Shepherd, the people we minister to will also become like this.

True vision is lived out, first of all in leadership, if it is ever to be carried out by the people we minister to. "Do what I say, not what I do" never cuts it in real life. People do what you do and not what you say.

#### **8. True Vision is Birthed and Bathed out of Prayer**

As Christians, prayer is the most important thing we can do. As Life Group Leaders, we need to learn to pray and to ask God to remove the deception from us regarding the power of prayer. We need to ask God to make us a praying people. A recent study showed that 33% of all Christians who pray spend only 1 to 5 minutes per day in prayer and only 6% pray 30 minutes or more daily. We need to develop personal and corporate prayer lives if we are to accomplish the vision that God has given us for Northwest Columbus.

## Our Vision Statement

*Changed by the love and grace and God, we are passionate, authentic community devoted to demonstrating that love and grace to our neighbors and the world, so they might also become followers of Jesus.*

As Life Group Leaders and apprentices, you need to be familiar with the vision that the Lord has given our congregation. Post this vision statement somewhere where you will see it daily, and in your times of prayer, bring this before the Lord and let Him burn it into your heart!

### 9. Vision for Your Life Group

Just as every organization/organism must have a clear articulation of the vision God has given them in order to accomplish that vision, so do our Life Groups also have a clear purpose and vision.

It is important to share the vision each week with your Life Group. Sharing vision builds faith and expectancy in Life Group members. It enables them to respond to God's call as individuals and as a group.

We believe our Life Groups at the Vineyard are purposed to accomplish three things over the course of the meeting times. These three things also make up the vision for each individual Life Group. Although each Life Group will take on its own "personality," we still need to remember that we are unified in vision and purpose and should pray and act toward that end

The three things that comprise the vision of our Life Groups are:

1. Vision for outreach to unbelievers
2. Vision for the growth and multiplication of the Life Group
3. Vision for intimacy and healing relationships within the Life Group

Each aspect of this vision is equally important and must be held in balance. If we neglect growth and evangelism, our groups will become ingrown and unhealthy. If we become resistant to the eventual multiplication of our group, we will also stagnate and become closed off to new people. If we neglect intimacy and healing relationships, we will never develop community, a theme we will discuss later in this manual.

These three emphases are the heart of the Gospel. Any group of people that have these three things in balance will be very fruitful in affecting their world for Christ. Because of this, the enemy will continually challenge us and try to cause us to become unbalanced in our expression of these three truths. Knowing this, we want to challenge you to stay in prayer as you go through this manual. Remember, you won't learn all there is to learn about leading a Life Group during your first group. Ministry is a lifelong process and the Lord will continue to teach us as long as we have ears to hear. It is our desire that as long as you are alive, the grace of God would grow in you and you would become "thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:17)

Chapter Two:  
**Who is a Life Group Leader?**



## **Who is a life group leader?**

In this chapter we will answer the questions, "What are the characteristics of a life group leader, and what does a life group leader do?" At Vineyard Tuttle Crossing, all of the responsibilities of tending for the flock of God are delegated through the Life Group Leaders. While this can be a great privilege and will produce great joy, it is also a great responsibility.

Corresponding to great privilege comes great responsibility. Jesus said:

*"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." Luke 12:48b*

In light of this, we expect our leaders to consider seriously both the privilege and corresponding responsibility of being a Life Group Leader. We have outlined the requirements for our Life Group Leaders in this chapter. While we feel it is absolutely necessary for those in leadership to hold to a high standard, caution must be exercised so that we don't begin to think that by keeping these standards, we attain to some higher level of righteousness or holiness. God, as always, is concerned with our hearts. That we would be clean before Him and eager to be obedient to Him out of our love for Him is our desire.

# LIFE GROUP LEADER CHARACTERISTICS

Since a life group leader is in a leadership role and is a role model for other followers of Jesus, a life group leader should be a disciple of Jesus, as evidenced by:

## **Commitment to Christ:**

- Profession of faith
- Baptism
- Regularly practices spiritual disciplines (i.e. prayer, worship, scripture, meditation)
- Service
- Pursues a growing relationship with Jesus

## **Commitment to Community:**

- VTC Member (Complete Newcomers Class and sign covenant form)
- Member of VTC Life Group
- Gives a tithe (10%) of income to VTC
- Personal ownership of the vision and values of the Vineyard
- Loyal to the pastors and the church

## **Commitment to Cause:**

- Actively serving others and using spiritual gifts in mission
- A "team player"- works with and encourages others to participate in mission

## **Character:** (I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9)

- Stable and in order, self-controlled
- Faithful, reliable, and dependable
- Teachable, trustworthy, willing to be held accountable
- Servant's Heart- leading because you want to care for people
- Has a good reputation among Vineyard members and others in daily life

## **Capabilities:**

- Proven ability to pastor, nurture, and lead and/or influence people
- Share the vision for what God is leading your life group to do
- Ability to facilitate all aspects of a life group meeting according to Vineyard values
- Application of ministry and values taught in Kingdom Ministry classes
- Awareness of spiritual gifts and depends on the work of the Spirit in ministry

## **Vineyard Tuttle Crossing Life Group Leader Job Description**

*"Building communities of people who are growing  
in their devotion to Christ, His Community, and His Cause."*

First, Life Group Leaders are followers. Above all leadership responsibilities, their aim is to experience a growing relationship with Jesus.

Next, they are servants. They use their spiritual gifts to serve the body of Christ and lead a life group of other believers to experience authentic community and grow in their devotion to Christ, His Community, and His Cause.

Finally, they are activists. They passionately pursue the causes of Jesus including reaching the lost, serving the poor, and recruiting others to join the Cause and pray for the Kingdom of God to come on earth as it is in heaven.

### **I. Followers...**

- A. Consistently take time to study the Bible, pray, and worship.
- B. Grow in their relationship with Christ and experience the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

### **II. Servants...**

- A. Lovingly challenge others in their group to grow in their devotion to Christ, His Community, and His Cause.
- B. Nurture community, loving relationships, and fun activities.
- C. Facilitate and guide life group meetings.
- D. Share the responsibilities of the Church by serving on a team
- E. Attend monthly life group leader meetings, quarterly leadership training meetings, and other training events to stay in tune with the vision of the church and receive personal support and encouragement.
- F. Communicate with their Coach and Pastors by filling out a life group report form.

### **III. Activists...**

- A. Envision the group to extend beyond itself in mission and outreach.
- B. Take time as a group to pray for friends and family who need Jesus.
- C. Provide support to Mercy Project and other ministries of the church.
- D. Recruit and challenge people to develop their character, spiritual gifts, and leadership skills by giving them opportunities to serve.
- E. Identify an apprentice and encourage everyone in the group to invite new people to the group, with the goal of planting a new group within 18 months.

### **What We Offer Vineyard Life Group Leaders...**

Life group leaders will receive consistent support and encouragement from your coach and pastoral staff. To this end, we plan and provide:

- 1) Regular meetings with your coach and other leaders to build relationships and provide an opportunity for encouragement, ministry, and envisioning.
- 2) A support team of Life Group Coaches and Pastors to offer personal support, prayer, encouragement, training, and problem-solving.
- 3) An annual appreciation event (free food, prizes, and fun!)

## **Life Group Leader Responsibilities/Duties**

Below you will find some specific responsibilities/duties of the Life Group Leader.

### **I. Lead the Life Group Meeting**

- A. Take an active, non-apologetic role in leadership.
  - 1. Lead them where the Holy Spirit wants them to go.
  - 2. Be willing to interact boldly in their lives.
- B. Determine God's direction for the group.
  - 1. The meeting time
  - 2. The meeting date
  - 3. The meeting place (rotating if possible)
- C. Conduct one Life Group meeting per week.
  - 1. One of these meetings per quarter could be a more social or relaxed time. (These meetings should be focused on inviting unbelievers that you have been praying for.)
  - 2. At least one hour each quarter (every three months) should be devoted to prayer. Entire evenings of prayer are good also.
- D. Be responsible for what happens in the meeting.
  - 1. Remember, there is no substitute for a good meeting.
  - 2. Ensure a proper environment.
  - 3. Be enthusiastic and prepared.
  - 4. Bring the presence of the Holy Spirit into each meeting.
  - 5. Take risks - step out beyond your comfort level.
  - 6. Have a focus for each meeting to avoid purposelessness.
- E. Develop a "leadership team."
  - 1. At a minimum, this requires a Life Group Leader Apprentice. At best, train everyone in the group to be a leader by delegating tasks, responsibilities, and authority. Equip the saints for the works of the ministry!
- F. Encourage Life Group life to spill over into the rest of the week.
  - 1. What happens between meetings is the most important part of Life Group Life. (A measure of success of the group is to what degree people's lives are beginning to mingle outside of the meeting.)
  - 2. Be involved personally in their lives during the week.

## **II. Provide "One-on-one Care" for Life Group Members**

- A. Seek to know each member as well as possible and lead him or her toward the place where they "feel a part."
- B. The Leader or Apprentice must contact each member weekly (at church, by telephone/e-mail, or by personal visit) to find out how they are doing.
- C. Pray with and for them on a regular basis, especially with respect to their specific problem areas.
- D. Encourage your people and let them know you are available to help them. Contact those who are absent from the meetings and tell them that they were missed, bless them in their daily walk, etc.
- E. Always pray for the sick among your group.
  - 1. Visit them at home or in the hospital as soon as possible. Take a team from your group if you can.
  - 2. Make arrangements to help with meals, babysitting, housekeeping, or transportation where applicable.
- F. Counsel as needed.
- G. Communicate special needs/problems to your Coach.

## **III. Recruit New Members to Your Life Group**

- A. You are responsible to keep your Life Group between 5-15 members.
  - 1. You may ask for help from your Life Group Coach.
  - 2. You may have others in your Life Group help you.
- B. Invite visitors at the Vineyard to attend your Life Group.
  - 1. Look for people you do not know at the weekend services. Introduce yourself and answer questions they might have.
  - 2. Arrange a personal visit with them (for dinner, coffee, etc.)
- C. Continuously invite those who regularly attend Vineyard but do not attend a Life Group to come to yours.
- D. Invite your friends, neighbors, co-workers, and relatives to attend your Life Group as well.

#### **IV. Develop New Leaders and Workers**

- A. Detect emerging leaders and workers through prayer and observation.
- B. Inform them about the various opportunities within the Life Group strategy, especially that of Life Group Leader/apprentice.
- C. Help them receive special training that will equip them. At the same time, inform your Life Group Coach of the emerging leader.
- D. Plan NOW for the future.
  - 1. Talk about planting a new group as early and as enthusiastically as possible.
  - 2. Identify and recruit an apprentice or apprentice couple (a couple that have the potential and call to lead a Life Group in the future). A Life Group may have more than one.
  - 3. Release them, after sufficient training, to work/lead in the group.
  - 4. Work closely with them to establish plans & goals for their new group.

#### **V. Complete Administrative Details**

- A. Fill out a Weekly Report Form no later than the following weekend.
  - 1. We want to know the status of every person every week.
  - 2. People who are not attending should be contacted immediately; they may need prayer, ministry, someone to talk to, etc.
  - 3. Submit name and address changes for group members to the church office so that our rosters will be current.

#### **VI. Other Expectations**

- A. Attend Life Group Leader meetings.
- B. Attend Life Group Leader Training events as scheduled.
- C. Regularly attend a weekend service.
- D. Regularly tithe (give 10% of your income) to the Vineyard.

#### **VIII. Reporting Relationships**

*As a Life Group Leader, you report to the Holy Spirit first. He needs to be consulted about your effectiveness as a leader, needs in the group, prayer concerns, etc.*

*Next, you are responsible directly to your Life Group Coach. Anytime you need help -- personally or with your group -- please don't hesitate to contact him or her. You are the Coach's first priority. Let your group know that they are your first priority.*

## Chapter Three: The Life Group Meeting

## **the life group meeting: what should happen?**

The purpose of this chapter is to give you an overall idea of how to actually guide the weekly two-hour meeting that we refer to as "Life Group," and to provide you with tools to effectively do so.

On the previous page you will find a chart that outlines our prescribed order of the evening. While this is just a guide, we do want each group meeting to encompass all of these aspects. Each meeting should include the "Five W's" - Welcome, Worship, Word, Works, and Wind. Let's look at each one of these areas more closely.

### **Welcome**

A Life Group must be recreated each time it meets. Icebreakers – simple sharing questions or activities – are a great way to help people get in touch with each other and buy into the meeting. They open the way for deeper involvement and sharing in the time that follows. Some principles to remember about Icebreakers are:

1. An icebreaker must be appropriate for the Life Group. If it is too childish, people will not feel comfortable. If it is too threatening people will draw back. Timing is important, also. There are a few icebreakers that are best used when the Life Group is just forming. There are others that must be delayed until the relationships of the group have been formed.
2. Some icebreakers can be used many times. For example, "What was the most important thing that happened to you this past week?"
3. Always go around the circle, making it plain that everyone is expected to share. Otherwise, shy persons will avoid talking.
4. One problem with icebreakers is that they can take up the whole session. Stop this from happening by answering the icebreaker first yourself and by not talking more than one or two sentences. Before going on you might say, "If each one of us takes no more than 30 seconds for our answer, we will all be able to share." If someone does talk too long, deliberately look at your watch.
5. Be alert for a person in crisis as the icebreaker is shared. It is not unusual for someone to signal they have a real hurt or problem during the icebreaker: "I heard this week that my mother has cancer." Either pray for that person immediately in the group or ask if she would like to have a few people pray for her in private.
6. There are many good resources for icebreakers. Ask your coach for ideas.



# Worship

The purpose of this part of the meeting is to connect us to God in worship. Besides singing, this may include prayer or Scripture reading. The important thing is that you recognize and welcome the presence of Christ among you. Although this part of a Life Group meeting is usually simple and short, it is extremely important. If you are not looking to Christ, sharing and ministry in the group will be very limited.

How can you make worship as meaningful as possible?

1. Pick singable, familiar songs. It is easier to focus on God when you don't have to concentrate on the words and rhythm.
2. Create typed songsheets for those who may not know the songs by memory. This is very important if you don't want visitors to feel left out.
3. Don't use the time between songs to preach or talk. Let there be more of a flow so that the focus can turn increasingly toward Christ.

## Utilizing a Worship Leader

For obvious reasons, we think worship in a Life Group is best facilitated by a worship leader who can play an instrument. Usually, the best instrument to use is an acoustic guitar. This enables the leader to be seated among or facing the group. Maintaining eye contact and having group visibility are important for the worship leader.

## Using a CD or Tape Player

At times, a trained worship leader may not be available for your Life Group. We have CDs with live, Life Group-style worship prerecorded as a worship resource for you. We also have songsheets available with lyrics for those who don't know the songs. Check with your Coach or Pastor to get this resource.

## Characteristics of a Life Group Worship Leader

The position of worship leader in a Life Group is a servant position. Even though this position is considered "entry level" in worship ministry, there are still certain things that need to be considered before appointing a person as the worship leader in your group.

The minimum requirements for a Life Group worship leader are:

1. The person must be in regular (weekly) attendance in the Life Group
2. The person must not be a recent convert (at least six months of committed Christian service is a minimum)
3. The person must be in regular (weekly) attendance at the weekly services.

## Word

The focus of this time is to discover and apply God's will for our lives. In a Life Group meeting you aren't trying to convey volumes of new Bible knowledge. The goal is to discover and apply the simple truths of Scripture as people in your group reflect on their own experience. Your role as Life Group Leader is to use the inductive study or questions provided for you (or other resources approved by your Coach) in a way that will open minds and hearts to the voice and power of Christ.

Your role as a Life Group Leader is to be a facilitator, not a teacher. A teacher is someone who conveys knowledge. A facilitator, on the other hand, guides a group in discovering and applying insights on their own.

Jesus was the all-time best facilitator. He modeled his values as the disciples watched. He shared information in bits and pieces. He kept them in life situations, not classrooms. He sent them out to try their skills. He allowed them to make mistakes. He let them learn from their peers. He was patient when their values were wrong. He waited for "teachable moments" to occur. He used time as a shaping factor. He used outside circumstances to impart truth. Facilitating was not just a planned activity, but a lifestyle.

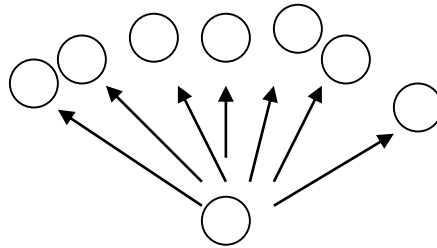
Because you are a facilitator and not a teacher, you won't use in-depth study questions like "How would people in the first century have understood what Jesus was saying?" Instead, your questions will typically be more simple and direct. These questions will be something like this:

- What stands out to you in this passage?
- What is the main point?
- Can you illustrate this truth from an example in your own life?
- In what area of your life do you struggle the most in applying this truth?
- What is God saying to you through this Scripture?
- Where do you need God's help right now?
- If you could ask God for anything right now what would it be?

## Successful Group Dynamics

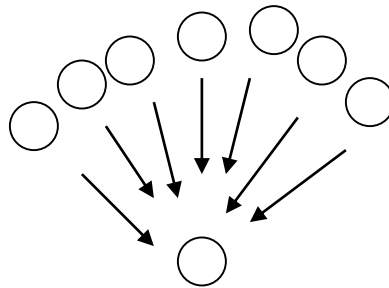
The following diagram illustrates how the discussion portions of your Life Group should be structured.

NOT THIS:



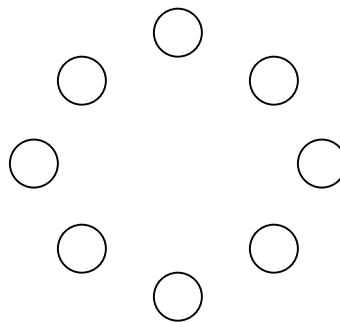
*1. Leader does all the talking, group members just listen*

NOR THIS:



*2. Members respond only to the leader in answering questions*

BUT THIS:



*3. Group members interact with each other, discussion guided by leader*

## **Works** ***(Sharing the Vision)***

Each Life Group session should include a time of "Sharing the Vision." Here groups recall that they are called not only to enjoy the presence of Christ and experience the power of Christ, but also to extend the purpose of Christ.

Sharing the Vision can take a lot of forms, but the purpose is always the same: to move from God ministering to us as a group to God ministering through us. Occasionally, you will have someone share a testimony of what the group has meant to them. Often, you will use this time to pray for unbelieving friends and family members. You can use this portion of your meeting to plan Life Group parties for reaching out and building relationships with these people.

## **Wind** ***(Ministry Time)***

This is simply setting time aside to allow the Holy Spirit to move. This is a time when personal prayer requests are taken and the members can receive and give personal ministry. At this time you will want to pray for the sick in your midst and lay hands on all who need ministry. Try to divide your group up for ministry in different ways. You may sometimes want women together and men together. You may want to number off. Whatever way you form your prayer groups, remember these things:

1. Try to have 3 people in each group.
2. Never have only one man and one woman pray together.
3. Begin ministry time 30 minutes before the end of your group. If your group begins at 6:30, begin praying at 8:00. If it begins at 7:00, begin praying at 8:30.

The Five W's of Welcome, Worship, Word, Works, and Wind provide a general framework for your Life Group meeting. At times you may alter the order of these parts or the amount of time you spend on each, **but your goal will always be the same: to lead the group to experience God as they receive Christ's presence, power and purpose.**

## **20 Principles to Follow in Facilitating a Life Group**

### **1. Participation is the key to success.**

- A. The goal of a leader is not to be the authority or teacher, but the guide.
- B. Arrangement of people will make a difference in the way people participate.  
The best setup is a circle with only one empty chair.
- C. Don't pressure anyone to pray, read or speak.

The leader does not directly tell anyone what to do. Instead, the leader will help even the most timid person to see that they, too, have something to offer -- but without pressure.

### **2. Begin and close with prayer.**

Bring the group immediately into the presence of God, tuning everyone to what the Lord wants to do in the meeting. In closing, make sure everyone has had a chance to receive prayer for any needs they may have.

### **3. Respond lovingly to a need expressed – immediately.**

There is something very unloving about letting a person “hang” when they have just shared a deep concern of their life. Love does not respond tomorrow, but immediately.

- A. How do you teach people to share their needs? (See James 5:16)
  - 1. Admit our faults to one another
  - 2. Pray for each other
  - 3. Become a healing fellowship
- B. Teach people by example: open up and share areas of your own life and request prayer.
- C. What are some other ways a group can respond to a member's needs?

Sometimes a chair can be placed in the middle of the circle while the people gather around the “hot seat” and gently lay hands on the person in the chair. God answers prayers of faith and love!

### **4. The Bible is our authority and guidebook.**

We believe the Word of God contains everything necessary for our salvation and Christian walk, so that we can be successful in every area of our lives.

### **5. Encourage everyone in the group.**

Each person must be made to feel that his or her ideas and questions are important.

**6. Don't allow doctrinal discussion that is divisive or argumentative.**

Sometimes people would rather discuss doctrinal differences than to give attention to what really needs to happen in their own lives.

**7. Practice mutual edification. (*Romans 14:19*)**

A Life Group is to be a team – helping each other be everything they can be for God. We want to build healthy self-esteem in one another.

**8. Lead in love.**

Love, acceptance and forgiveness are a way of life.

**9. "Follow-up" of members between meetings is essential.**

Those who are absent should be called and encouraged that very evening. New people are called in friendship and invited to participate. Regular attenders are called and given words of appreciation. Facebook, email and text are helpful tools.

**10. Bringing new members into the group will keep it alive and growing.**

We want our groups to have an empty chair at each meeting for the new person who will come in next week to sit in. New people will help keep a group from becoming ingrown and too comfortable.

**11. Handle problem grace builders away from the group on a 1-to-1 basis.**

A disturbed person cannot be allowed to become the center of attention in the group. The leader must lead, making it clear that they are loved but "no dumping allowed."

**12. Don't allow people to confess anyone else's faults but their own.**

If this happens, the leader must lead by reminding the group of this principle.

**13. Don't allow anyone to do all the talking.**

If this situation persists, perhaps a statement is needed such as, "Thank you for your comments. Now let's hear what someone else has to say." Or "Let's continue with our lesson."

#### **14. Be tuned up spiritually yourself.**

The Holy Spirit will be hindered if the leader is spiritually indifferent or troubled with unconfessed sins. A person not free to the workings of the Holy Spirit in his own life can hardly be a channel for His working in the group. Be a Spirit-filled Christian!

#### **15. Keep learning – don't have all the answers.**

We do not expect leaders to know all the answers, but they do need to be learners. The best leaders are good learners.

#### **16. Hang loose and maintain a relaxed spirit in the group.**

- A. Have an honesty and openness that is not afraid to discuss or consider other points of view. Trust the Holy Spirit to be the teacher.
- B. It is a tremendous asset when the leader accepts themselves as a person of worth and then can reach out to others and make them comfortable in who they are.

#### **17. A good sense of humor is a valuable asset.**

According to Proverbs 17:22, laughter releases tension, relaxes our bodies, rests our spirits, renews our hearts, and reorients our life perspective.

#### **18. When you have a need in your own life, ask your Coach for help.**

We never outgrow our need for the help of other Christians. The best leaders are those who keep admitting that they need the help of others.

#### **19. When you have problems or need help, go to your Coach immediately and ask for it.**

At the Vineyard, we accept each other where we are and work hard to help each other be overcomers, successful in life and ministry.

#### **20. Remember, it is Christ who does the leading, not us.**

A good Leader is a good follower of Christ – no more, no less.



# Conclusion

*In review, the Life Group is not a meeting; it is an experience founded upon relationships in which we become dependent upon one another. This includes our relationship with and dependence upon God. Through the Holy Spirit and the Life Group, God takes our lives and works to remold us into the image of His Son. When problems arise in our lives, we are not alone. Because of the interdependence of our lives with God and our Life Group family, there is no obstacle too big to overcome. As Life Group members continue to grow in Christ, they join together on a mission with Christ to rescue men and women from the kingdom of darkness and bring them into the wonderful family of God.*

## The Five W'S

The Life Group Order of the Evening (usually begins with 10-15 minutes of social time)

<b>Welcome</b>	Icebreaker	You to Me (15 minutes)
<b>Worship</b>	Songs/Prayer	Us to God (20 minutes)
<b>Word</b>	Scripture	God to Us (30 minutes)
<b>Works</b>	Vision	God through Us (10 minutes)
<b>Wind</b>	Ministry	God in Us (30 minutes)

# Life Group Essentials

## Vineyard at Tuttle Crossing

*As members of this group, we agree to do our best to live by the following essentials:*

- **Priority**

Commitment to this life group means giving top priority to the meetings, and especially to the other members.

- **Participation**

Participation is open to all; no one dominates. This is *our* group, not *my* group.

- **Respect**

Everyone is given the freedom to express his or her own opinions.

- **Confidentiality**

Personal information shared within the group is never to be repeated without explicit permission.

- **Empty Chair**

We are always visitor friendly, and welcome new people into our group.

- **Accountability**

We are learning to offer, provide and receive mutual accountability.

- **Support**

We give permission to call on each other in any time of need, no matter what.

- **Shared Ministry**

We are learning to serve faithfully and cheerfully, from the heart, and we all participate wholeheartedly when our group is scheduled for shared ministry.

## Chapter Four: Equipping Leaders

## equipping leaders

*"He told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.' He told them still another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.'" Matt. 13:31 – 33*

The above parables illustrate a very important aspect of the Kingdom of God and Kingdom life – growth. Everything that is healthy grows. Some do so quickly and some more slowly, but growth is inevitable for any healthy organism.

In this chapter we will give you principles for the growth of your Life Group. Before we get started though, a word of warning – the enemy does not want your Life Group to grow. He will resist you in your endeavor to see the kingdom of God established through your Life Group. Leading a Life Group involves spiritual warfare. At times you will find yourself discouraged, tired, and ready to give up. That is why it is so necessary for you as a Life Group Leader or apprentice to stay in fellowship and to receive prayer for yourself on a regular basis. The encouragement to you is to "put on the armor of God" and "remain standing." He is faithful.

## get an apprentice!

The first and most important thing for you to be praying for (if you don't already have one) is an apprentice for your Life Group.

The Biblical way to teach and train is not necessarily in the formal classroom of a school or training institution, but in the informal classroom of life. Consider how absurd it would be to put a person through four years of school to teach them how to build a house! The kind of training that a carpenter needs is "on the job training" or apprenticeship. The best way to learn anything is by actually doing it.

"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." 2 Tim. 2:2

*Paul was anxious for Timothy to learn how to equip others. Note his reference to reliable men. Evaluating those who are to be trained is an important part of the discipling process. As leaders we are to be continually in the process of evaluating those whom we minister with so that we will be able to "entrust" the ministry of the Gospel to others.*

*Timothy's task was not only to pass on what Paul taught him, but to also pass on the method of equipping others. As Paul monitored Timothy, so Timothy would learn to watch those he had taught. He had to be sure the discipleship pattern could be recycled down to the third generation.*

Moses trained Joshua as an apprentice. Elijah had a school of the Prophets, but none of them developed as did Elisha, the apprentice. John the Baptist's apprentices followed him around, as did Jesus' disciples. Apprenticeship is the Biblical way of developing people.

Here's the pattern for apprenticing:

1. Your apprentice watches you.
2. You explain what you did, and why you did it.
3. You observe as your apprentice does the same thing.
4. You objectively explain strengths and weaknesses you have observed.
5. You provide remedial activity to strengthen the weaknesses.
6. You turn the task over to the apprentice.
7. You withdraw, using "benign neglect" as your strategy.
8. You closely monitor as your apprentice disciples a new apprentice.
9. You remain a close friend, now treating your apprentice as your equal.

Your apprentice will graduate from being a beginner to one developing as a servant, to becoming a mature Shepherd. Or, to put it as John did, he or she will move from the category of "children" to "young men" to "fathers."

Here are some tips for working with your apprentice, related to Life Group sessions:

1. Discuss in advance what you are going to do in each meeting, and explain why you are taking such an approach, be sure to plan all the aspects of the Life Group format.
2. After each Life Group, discuss what you have both learned from the meeting. Then, plan the next one together.
3. Discuss problems, such as a person who caused the group to get bogged down by over talking. Take your apprentice with you everywhere you serve!
4. As you discern your apprentice is ready for the experience, turn the group sessions over to him or her.
5. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses that are revealed as the meeting is facilitated. Frankly discuss your conclusions. Assign remedial tasks to help weak ministry skills further develop.
6. Turn the ministry of the Life Group over to your apprentice during the final month before multiplication time. By following this process, Life Group members will have confidence in their new Life Group leader when two groups are formed from the one.

# The Apprenticeship

*"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others."*

*- II Tim. 2:2*

1. Join a Life Group
2. Attend Training Classes (Life Group Leader/Apprenticeship training classes happen regularly).
3. Grow In Your Relationship with Jesus And Talk to Your Life Group Leader About Opportunities To Serve In Your Group
4. Wait For Your Life Group Leader To Approach You To Be An Apprentice  
(Behind the scenes, your life group leader will be encouraging you, coaching you, giving you opportunities to serve, and will be in communication with their coach and pastors to determine if you are ready to be an apprentice)
5. Discern If God Is Calling You To Be A Life Group Leader  
(If married, ask your spouse too!)
6. Become An Apprentice!
  - Discuss opportunities to practice leading and serving your life group with your leader
  - Read the Life Group Leaders Manual and discuss with your leader
  - Meet with your leader to pray and brainstorm ideas for your life group
  - Lead a life group meeting when your leader is there, and also when they aren't there (announcements, worship, discussion, prayer, follow-up, life group report form)
  - Work with your life group leader to gather enough people in your group for a healthy life group plant (10-12 people consistently)
  - Attend regular life group leader meetings
  - Meet with your leader, coach, and pastors to discuss timing and strategy for planting
7. Plant A New Group and Celebrate!
  - God has great things in store for you!

## **When Should We Plant?**

Every healthy Life Group will eventually plant a new life group. The average lifespan for a Life Group before planting a new group is 12-18 months. Planting a new group is very important; it prevents the group from becoming stagnant and facilitates growth and expansion of the Kingdom of God.

The first thing to do to plan for the growth of your group and planting a new group is to plan for it. Talk about it with your group as a goal and as something that is good and desirable. Most negative feelings associated with planting a new group can be alleviated by the leader preparing the people for the inevitability of planting a new group.

The group size should be between 6 and 12 regularly attending, committed members. When your group attendance reaches 12-15 people you know that it is time to plant a new group.

### **Different ways to plant a new group:**

Life Group Plant (primary method to be used in VTC): The group leader leaves to begin a new group, turning the original group over to the apprentice; or the apprentice leaves with a small team to begin a new group and the original group leader stays.

Internal Multiplication: The group divides into two groups, roughly equal size; one led by the previous leader and one led by the intern.

Shotgun: The leader of the groups becomes a coach to two or three groups that begin simultaneously out of the original group.

Launch: A new group is created from scratch under the leadership of the Life Group ministry but not from a specific existing group. When this takes place the leaders usually have had previous Life Group leadership experience.

### **Give it away!**

- Pray for more leaders
- Encourage each person to take the next step in their Christian walk
- Involve everyone in ministry
- Give people responsibility before titles
- Send and take people to training and leadership events
- Work yourself out of a job



## **STARTING A NEW LIFE GROUP!**

Congratulations and thank you for your desire to start a new life group at the Vineyard! You are in for an adventure of working with God to make disciples, but it's also hard work! Below are a few things that will help get you started, help make your group more accessible to new people, and will help get you started off on the right foot...

### **BEFORE:**

- Read the whole Life Group Leader Manual and discuss any questions you have with your life group leader. You can get a copy of the Life Group Leader Manual from Troy downloading it from the Life Group page on our website.
- Work with your life group leader and practice the apprenticeship model in areas that you would like to grow in
- Decide which day of the week and time your new group will meet, and what phone number and email address people can most easily reach you at so it can be put on the back of the bulletin. Email Troy with this information
- Get a life group brochure from the life group area by the information table as an example, take a picture of yourself (or selves), and provide information to put in your new brochure. Send the information and the picture (.jpg) [venicestar1@yahoo.com](mailto:venicestar1@yahoo.com)
- Discuss how to fill out a life group report form with your life group leader.
- Discuss who your coach will be with your life group leader, your coach, and Troy

### **FIRST WEEK:**

- Make copies of the "Life Group Essentials" (see Life Group Leader Manual) and give out to people in your group. Review these a couple times a year, especially a couple weeks after someone new joins your group.
- Life Stories are a great way to begin building community in your new group. See your Life Group Leader Manual for more info.
- Fill out your first report form about how things went in your group!

### **FIRST MONTH:**

- The first few weeks are critical in setting the tone for how the group will be- cast vision to invite new people, give other people ownership in sharing the responsibility of the group, and PRAY!

Chapter Five:  
Prayer in the Life Group

## prayer in the life group

*It has been said (and rightly so) that prayer is the most important thing we can do as believers. This especially becomes true when we begin to obey the Lord by ministering to other people. The purpose of this chapter is to remind us of the importance of prayer and to give some practical advice on how to make prayer a regular part of your life and routine.*

Have you heard of J. O. Frasier? He left England many years ago to bring the message of Christ's love to the Lisus, an unreached tribal group who lived in the high mountain ranges of western China. The entry to the ranges was at their midpoint, a valley containing an outpost village. Frasier remained there until he found a Lisu who tutored him in the dialect. After weeks of study, he discovered this Lisu was from the northern range and the dialect he was learning would best prepare him for working in that area.

Frasier realized he would probably be the only missionary to this tribe for years to come. He prayed, "Lord, which way should I go? North, or South?" His Master said, "Both. Pray for the Southern Lisus from sunup to noon and evangelize the Northern Lisus from noon to sundown." This became the pattern of his life. For years and years, he used half of each day to intercede for Lisus in the south and used the other half to evangelize the Lisus around him. The work grew slowly. A few hundred Christians were the harvest for a decade of ministry.

After many years, he left the field for the first time to rest and get supplies in the outpost village. Now very familiar with the tribal tongue, he heard a Lisu speaking with a different dialect in the marketplace. He had met his first Southern Lisu! Lovingly, Frasier invited the man to come and stay with him in his rented quarters. As he heard the message of Jesus, the Lisu was quick to respond and accept Him as his Lord and Savior.

For several weeks, Frasier tutored the illiterate man, helping him to memorize passages of scripture. He told him story after story from the Bible, always praying that the Spirit would sharpen his ability to remember what he was hearing. As the men parted, Frasier urged him to tell all the Southern Lisus about Jesus. He then returned to the site of his own ministry, praying as usual for half of each day for those to the south. Years passed... and then a delegation of Southern Lisus arrived at his village. They reported the news that thousands of Southern Lisus had followed Christ and were in desperate need of someone to come and teach them more!

As tears of joy welled up in his eyes, the missionary realized his time invested in prayer from sunup to noon had caused a harvest hundreds of times greater than all his labors from noon to sundown. It was as though God was saying, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, shall the Lisus be reached."

(Story adapted from "The Shepherd's Guidebook," by Ralph W. Neighbor Jr.)

## How and When to Pray

Almost every Christian knows that prayer is important – few would argue this point. The problem is that for many, they don't know where to begin. Here are some tips for making your prayer life that is something natural, joyful and consistent!

### 1. Schedule a regular time for prayer.

The truth is, if we don't schedule a specific, regular time to be alone with God and listen to His voice, we probably won't be very consistent in our prayer life. Find a time every day that you can spend time with God. Start with something manageable – 15 minutes daily is a good starting point. As you are faithful in this you will find that 15 minutes is not enough... before you know it you will be finding more time to be with your Lord. It is important to think of prayer as an opportunity to hear from God, to receive His peace and His blessing and to share your heart with Him. Christians often think of prayer as a burden or a chore – just another “have-to” in a long list of duties and obligations. This kind of thinking will surely not bring life into your prayer time. The Christian life is a relationship with a person: Jesus Christ. Prayer is simply the opportunity to spend time with your Lord. Spirit-centered prayer is truly a joy. It is also something the enemy does not want Christians doing. Prayer destroys Satan's kingdom and weakens his hold on people. He will do anything to stop you from praying. The good news is that God is committed to us and wants to give us the grace to be a praying people!

### 2. Use a prayer list.

A good way to stay consistent in prayer and to pray the things that God puts on your heart to pray is to keep a prayer list. Keep it in your Bible or in a place where it is readily available. Sometimes Christians don't pray because they don't know what to pray or because when they finally get down to praying, they forget about needs and situations that need God's intervention. A personal prayer list will solve this problem.

Here are some ideas for making your prayer list:

Ask God to:

- Deepen hunger for God in members of the group.
- Reveal Himself more fully to the flock. (This is always needed for spiritual growth.)
- Produce a discontent with lifestyles that are contrary to Him.
- Quicken faith to believe He is going to do the unseen
- Give the flock new sensitivity to unreached persons.
- Prepare key individuals He is planning to use
- Enlarge your vision of the Body of Christ and your love for it.

Finally, pray for your own needs and for those of your family members.

### **3. Use a prayer journal.**

Journaling is simply keeping a notebook of one's prayers and what one senses to be God's answers. Journaling helps us discern the voice of God speaking to our hearts.

God is speaking to His children much of the time. However, we often cannot differentiate His voice from our own thoughts. Therefore, we are timid about stepping out in faith. If we have learned to clearly discern His voice speaking within us, we will be much more confident in our walk in the Spirit. Journaling is a way of sorting out God's thoughts from our thoughts.

One of the greatest benefits of using a journal during your communion with the Lord is that it allows you to receive freely the spontaneous flow of ideas that come to your mind. This is done in faith, believing that they are from Jesus, without short-circuiting them by subjecting them to rational and sensory doubt. You can write in your journal in faith, believing the thoughts are from the Lord, knowing that you will be able to test them later.

One person explains, "I found that before I began keeping a journal, I would ask God for an answer to a question, and as soon as an idea came into my mind, I would immediately question whether the idea came from God or from myself. In so doing, I was short-circuiting the intuitive flow of the Spirit by subjecting it to a rational doubt. *He that comes to God must come in faith* (Hebrews 11:6). I would get one idea from God and doubt that it was from Him, and therefore get no more. Now, by writing it down, I can receive whole pages in faith, knowing I will have ample time to test it later."

It is as simple as using a spiral notebook to record your thoughts, feelings and prayer requests (and answers!). After several months of using a prayer journal you can look back and have a written record of God's faithfulness to you.

### **Intercessory Prayer**

A healthy prayer life consists of not only personal prayer times, but corporate or group prayer times. At the Vineyard, we have intercessory prayer meetings every Saturday morning and before each service. Make sure to be faithfully involved in lifting up the needs of the body and the Quad Cities by being a part of these intercessory prayer meetings. Below is the prayer list that we use for corporate intercession at the Vineyard. It is a good idea to pray for these needs in your Life Group also. Let the people in the group know the needs and vision for the body by sharing and discussing this prayer list.

# Vineyard Prayer List

1. Pour out Your Spirit on the Hilliard/Dublin area – Your Kingdom Come
2. Make us a people of prayer; give us a heart for intercession
3. Life Groups
  - Cause the vision for Life Groups to spread
  - Release of the Spirit in each group
  - Protection for Life Group Leaders and their families
  - Bring apprentices in every group
  - Live worship in every group
  - Nurturing, healing, accountable relationships
  - Cause evangelism to happen
4. Celebration Services
  - Bring the Presence of Your Spirit
  - Bring first time adult visitors each week
  - Give us the grace to assimilate them
  - Give us the grace to disciple the new believers
5. Laborers for the harvest (Matt. 9:37)
  - Send people to bring in the harvest in the QC's
  - Send skilled worship leaders and musicians
6. Finances
  - Bless our finances
  - Bring in our budget amount
  - Bless the people with good jobs
7. Outreach ministries/ministry to the poor
  - Give us your heart for the people
  - Make us a blessing to the poor
8. Make us a multi-ethnic congregation
  - Raise up strong, ethnic leadership in our congregation
9. Youth
  - Bless the youth of Infinity and youth leadership

## **The Prayer Chain: Harnessing the Power of Prayer in the Group**

A prayer chain creates a way to rapidly contact one another to share prayer needs. A copy of it should be given to each member. Each member should list their preferred method of contact (phone call, text, email, Facebook private message). If the person next on the list is not available, the following name should be contacted. ***Please keep prayer needs off of Facebook or Twitter unless the person involved gives permission.***

The chain should be prayerfully developed by the group, not just announced as an add-on to a meeting. Spend time talking about ways the chain will be used:

- Day or night, it's available when a crisis hits a member of the flock.
- It can call the group to intercession when an unbeliever being cultivated is at a point of commitment and a member will be meeting or talking with that person
- It binds the group together in special experiences of its members, such as a member who is ill, at a stressful point in their career, etc.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, prayer is the backbone of your spiritual life and the spiritual life of your group. Many times when we talk or teach about prayer, instead of being encouraged, many people become discouraged or guilty. Don't let the enemy do this to you! Start where you are and let the Lord teach you how to pray. You can do it, because God wants you to do this and He will enable you!

## Chapter Six: Evangelism in the Life Group



## evangelism in the life group

A mere mention of the word “evangelism” sends either fear or guilt into the heart of most Christians. So many of us feel like failures when we try to share our faith - all but the few who can really do it well. Why is this?

We could speculate and theorize about the answer to this question. There are many reasons that most Christians are uncomfortable with evangelism. Some may not know how to share their faith with others. Others may know the methods but feel petrified at the prospect of actually talking to someone about Christ for fear of being rejected. Many of us know that God is concerned about the lost yet realize that we have done little about the lost in our own communities, families, or neighborhoods.

We are convinced about three things with respect to evangelism.

1. God wants us to be soul winners and is committed to help us become that.
2. Most Christians want to be soul winners but just don't know how.
3. If we do evangelism God's way, it will work, and it will be fun!

### **How Do We Do It?**

In this section of the manual we are not as interested in describing detailed methods, as we are in communicating principles. Methods can and will change, but principles never change.

Fundamentally, we will only reach our world to the degree that we are willing to relate to our world. Another way of saying this is that we need to have friendships with unreached people.

Jesus modeled this perfectly for us. He was accused and criticized by the religious leaders of His day because he had relationships with non-religious people.

The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and “sinners.”’ Luke 7:34

But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered,  
“This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” Luke 15:2

We will need to grapple with this fact: Unless we are willing to befriend normal people, we will never be able to reach normal people. We may be able to get someone to make a verbal confession of faith in Christ, but how many of these types of “conversions” ever make it into the community of the Body of Christ?

## **The Blessing List**

Your Life Group is the place where you pray for, share about, and receive support in praying for the unreached people in your life. It is important for us as Christians to not only be building relationships with unreached people, but it is essential for us to also be praying for people who are not following Jesus yet on a regular basis. We have developed "The Blessing List" for this purpose.

Remember, evangelism is a process. The pressure is on God, not on us. We just need to do our part: cultivate friendships, pray, and (at the proper time) invite. As we train and equip people to live lives like this, we will surely change our world for Christ!

### **TIPS FOR USING THIS SHEET:**

- Each person in the group can add one person/family to the list
- Cast vision to the group for outward focus and helping their friends and family become disciples of Jesus
- Pray at home too!
- Focus on building relationships and loving the people on this sheet- celebrate when they move up a step!
- Consider planning events where people on this list can be invited to attend... neutral places are good for a whole group (i.e. sporting events, park, etc.), someone's house could be more effective for a specific friend
- Caution: If you pray for a friend, they might come to your group! Use discernment on whether to pray for this list if they are on it- they might really appreciate that you are praying for them, or could be scared away!

# BLESSING LIST

“Loving people and praying for people  
to help them become disciples of Jesus...”

Level 1: ATTENDING CHURCH, BUT NOT COMMITTED TO JESUS

LEVEL 2: CURIOUSLY SEEKING

LEVEL 3: OPEN TO THE MESSAGE

LEVEL 4: OPEN TO THE MESSENGER

LEVEL 5: NOT INTERESTED, UNAWARE

LEVEL 6: HOSTILE

## **Whom should we target?**

1. The people that we should target to build evangelistic relationships with are those that are not involved in a church or not yet in the Body of Christ – the normal people.
2. From the list of people you know, select those that are most likely to attend a Life Group meeting or church service.
3. They should be someone that is accessible enough that you could spend time with them on a regular basis.

### **Steps to take in building relationships that lead others to Jesus:**

#### Step One: Identification

1. Identify who your target people should be.
2. Write their names on your heart by faith and on The Blessing List.
3. Have your Life Group Leader place your target names on a master list.

#### Step Two: Prayer

1. Pray over your target people for one week before you make your first relationship-building contact.
2. Continue to pray daily for your target people to say “yes” to Jesus.

#### Step Three: Friendship Factor

1. Love is spelled T-I-M-E and “love never fails...” (1 Cor. 13)
2. Purpose to spend an hour a week with at least one of your target people.
3. The more time you spend with your target people the more effective you will be.
4. Learn to listen to them.
5. Find a way to be helpful to them; serve them

#### Step Four: Invite Them

1. After spending time building relationships with your target people, invite them to a Life Group meeting or other social gathering.
2. Continue with steps 3 and 4 until they begin following Jesus!

# TEN THINGS TO PRAY FOR THOSE WHO ARE UNCONVINCED

**1. That God will draw them to Himself.**

*For people can't come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me... John 6:44 (NLT)*

**2. That they will seek to know God.**

*From there you will search again for the LORD your God. And if you search for him with all your heart and soul, you will find him. Deut. 4:29 (NLT)*

**3. That they will believe the testimony of Scripture.**

*Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. Romans 10:17 (NIV)*

**4. That Satan will be bound from blinding them to the truth, and that they will see through the deception.**

*Satan, the god of this evil world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe, so they are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News that is shining upon them. They don't understand the message we preach about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. 2 Cor. 4:4 (NLT)*

**5. That the Holy Spirit will work in them and guide them in the truth.**

*When he comes, he'll expose the error of the godless world's view of sin, righteousness, and judgment: He'll show them that their refusal to believe in me is their basic sin; that righteousness comes from above, where I am with the Father, out of their sight and control; that judgment takes place as the ruler of this godless world is brought to trial and convicted. ...When the Friend comes, the Spirit of the Truth, he will take you by the hand and guide you into all the truth there is. John 16:8-11, 13 (MSG)*

**6. That God will send someone to introduce them to Christ and invite them into God's kingdom.**

*He said to his disciples, "The harvest is so great, but the workers are so few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send out more workers for his fields." Matt. 9:37-38 (NLT)*

**7. That they will turn from their own agenda and welcome God's kingdom in its place.**

*Now turn from your sins and turn to God, so you can be cleansed of your sins. Then wonderful times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord, and he will send Jesus your Messiah to you again. For he must remain in heaven until the time for the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through his prophets. Acts 3:19-21 (NLT)*

**8. That they will trust and begin learning to walk with Jesus as Savior and Lord (Master).**

This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. John 3:16-18 (MSG)

**9. That they will be willing to yield all in order to follow Christ and experience God's kingdom daily.**

He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live to please themselves. Instead, they will live to please Christ, who died and was raised for them. 2 Corinthians 5:15 (NLT)

**10. That they will become vitally involved with a local church body, actively embracing the church's values, vision, and mission as a community of apprentices to Jesus Christ.**

Now all of you together are Christ's body, and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it.

1 Corinthians 12:27 (NLT)

Adapted from Discipleship Journal, Issue 34; NavPress

## ***Servant Evangelism***

God is passionately in love with unbelievers and can win them effectively through acts of kindness. Unassuming deeds done by Christians convince more people of the love of God than many words. Whenever people see the love of God in action, something is touched deep inside them.

Your Life Group will need to plan and carry out Servant Evangelism projects. As you make your plans, keep these things in mind:

1. Servant Evangelism is not simply service. Although helping a Life Group member move, clean, or paint are all good service projects, they are not evangelistic. In order to be an actual S.E. project, you need to do something for people outside your group.
2. In serving people we don't know, we still need to treat them as friends, not as "projects."
3. Be creative with your plans, but always let your Coach know what your group would like to do.

Check out [www.servantevangelism.com](http://www.servantevangelism.com) for thousands of awesome ideas! Another great site is [www.kindnessresources.com](http://www.kindnessresources.com).

A recommended book is Conspiracy of Kindness by Steve Sjogren. Please check out his Facebook and Twitter page as well!

## **Servant Evangelism Ideas:**

Project	Equipment	People	Cost	Weather
Pop giveaway at an event or on the street	Cans of pop, ice, cooler or clean plastic trash can	3+	For pop and ice	Warm or hot
Coffee Giveaway At event or bus stop	Coffee, carafe, cups, sugar, cream, stirrs	3+	Price of coffee, cups, condiments	Cool to cold
Car Wash	Hoses, water, soap, signs sponges, squeegees	10+	Minimal	Above 60, sunny
Windshield washing	Cards, squirt bottles, rags cleaner, squeegees	2+	Minimal	Cool to warm
Laundromat quarters	Quarters, cards	2+	1.50 per wash	Any weather, not Friday nights
Popsicle Giveaway	Cards, cooler, ice, Popsicles	3+	Minimal	Warm
Grocery Store bags (Aldi)	Money to buy bags, cards	2+	Cost of bags	Any
Balloon giveaway	Cards, helium tank, balloons	2+		Crowded park weather
Toilet Cleaning	Cards, cleaning supplies	Teams of 2	Supply cost	Any weather

For more about servant evangelism, check out these websites:  
[www.servantevangelism.com](http://www.servantevangelism.com)  
[www.stevesjogren.com](http://www.stevesjogren.com)



## Appendix I: Practical Guidelines

# Practical Guidelines for Life Groups

## Time Management

The leader has the responsibility to use the time very wisely and not waste this precious resource. What is it that we really want to accomplish? If we spend too much time on what doesn't matter as much and therefore run out of time to do what is really important, then we are not managing our time well.

Suggested time slots:

- **Gathering, connecting: 15 minutes.** People come in the door, grab some snacks and chat.
- **Welcome (Icebreaker): 15 minutes.** There are two primary purposes: 1) get the quiet people in the practice of saying something, so that they will also participate in the discussion and 2) get in the habit of self-revelation, so people will be more likely to reveal other things about their lives. If there are new people there, remember to have each person share their name. Announcements are given here, so as not to break up the flow later on.
- **Worship: 20 minutes.** Variety is good. How about mixing it up with variety, like writing a psalm to God or a letter to God? Breaking bread once or twice a month is a good thing. Life group worship is not a recreation of large meeting worship—let it take its own form.
- **Word (Discussion): 30 minutes.** One way to prepare for leading the discussion is to have your quiet times each morning between when you get the discussion questions on Monday and the night of your group. Study the passage. Determine what the key points are. Come up with your own questions that are in keeping with the theme the speaker is trying to convey in the questions that week. If you have more questions than you can use, that is fine. If you are not comfortable with a question, don't use it, because it is ineffective if you read the question but don't understand it or see its value. If a husband and wife are both leading the discussion, each one should have a discussion sheet in front of them and they should agree beforehand who leads which part.
- **Works (Sharing the Vision): 10 minutes.** Don't just read it off the sheet. This is not vision casting, because it means that you do not own the vision! Digest it, internalize it and share it with passion! Always remember to remind the group that our focus is to be outward in reaching out. Pray for the empty chair on a regular basis. Talk about inviting others to the group. Plan times to bring visitors. Talk about multiplying. Share a vision for becoming Christlike and dealing with our sins and shortcomings. If you don't have an apprentice, tell people that you need one, so they can be planning on becoming one.
- **Wind (Ministry Time): 30 minutes.** For most people this is the highlight of the meeting, because it is a chance to receive personal ministry. Be sure to manage your time so that you have enough time for ministry! Otherwise you are cheating people out of getting their money's worth!

- Assigning groups or picking a method to choose groups is perhaps the hardest part of this process. Normally, breaking up into groups of three is the most effective. Try to have one mature person in each group. This allows them to train the others in the group. If the total number in the group is a multiple of three, this is best. If not, have one or two groups of two. Normally, groups of two are better than groups of four. Here is why: it is a math thing.
  - Two people--two lines of communication
  - Three people--six lines of communication
  - Four people--twelve lines of communication
- If you have four people, there is less time for each person to share, and one or two people are likely to receive little or no ministry. Equally importantly, because you double the number of relationships, intimacy drops in half and people are less likely to share what is really going on.
- If you have two people, they should not be of the same sex. Also, do not have two inexperienced or immature people together.
- Methods for choosing prayer groups.
  - The most basic method is to figure out how many groups you are going to have, and then number off. If couples are sitting together, this automatically puts them in different groups. It introduces randomness so that different people pray together each time.
  - Separate men and women. At times, there are issues unique to the sexes that are best met in an all-men or all-women group.
  - If you have first time visitors, you may not want to use the random selection method, to help ensure this experience is the most positive for them. If it is a couple, perhaps the leader and their spouse should be with the visitor and their spouse.
  - If someone during the icebreaker has expressed a significant need, perhaps you as the leader should make sure you pray with that person for further ministry.
  - There are advantages of not having a couple in the same group. For one, they may need prayer about getting along with their spouse. From a pastoral perspective, if you are married and you and your spouse are in different groups, between the two of you, you probably will pray with someone from each family in your group. As shepherds, we are commanded to "Know well the condition of your flock." This allows us to keep a pulse on everyone for knowing how to pray and for possible follow up outside the group.
- Depending on the need of the moment, praying as a large group may be the appropriate thing. But the benefit has to outweigh the

advantages of each person receiving individual ministry. Things done in the group may include:

- Praying for a member of the group who has expressed a significant need during the meeting and is so large that the entire group should minister to that person. Even here, you can break into groups of two for ministry afterwards.
- A large group setting may be more appropriate for the use of revelatory gifts. The leader can encourage their use and wait on the Holy Spirit to show up and give the gifts. Remember, the Scriptural guideline for using the gifts is to build up the body of Christ. A large group can be a better environment than life groups for creating the critical mass for this to happen.

A meeting should only officially last 120 minutes. People are welcome to stay longer for prayer, more snacks, and more fellowship, but we need to be courteous of people's time. If we can't have a good meeting in 120 minutes, we should ask ourselves if we are wasting time somewhere. Obviously, we need to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and let him take as long as he wants. That being said, we shouldn't blame a poorly guided group on the Holy Spirit!

Generally, the leader should have an idea of what will be emphasized that night. If it looks like the discussion will need a little extra time, than have a quick icebreaker and perhaps cut a song out of worship. If you end up taking more time for things early in the meeting, you may have to cut your discussion short so you have time for ministry. The discussion better be really really good if it is going to cut into the ministry time!

On the other hand, we need to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes, if God is really moving, we don't need to feel constrained to keep to a tight schedule. These are guidelines, not rigid commands. A rule of thumb might be that if perhaps one out of five meetings you deviate significantly from the suggested time spent on each of the above segments, no problem. If it is more often, perhaps you are being a little too unstructured. If it is less, perhaps you are too structured.

Overall, the leader must be aware of all the important things that you want to accomplish and manage the time accordingly. The biggest time waster is starting a meeting late. This encourages people to continue to come late and communicates to those who have made the effort to come on time, that their time is not valuable.

Finally, a time management tip is that it is better to cut something off while it is still good, leaving people with a wish that it would keep going, than to

run that segment too long and make people wish that segment would have already finished.

## **Logistics**

### **The Room**

- Well lit
- Everyone see each other
- Turn off the phone. Do you really need to take that call? (If you were meeting at someone else's place and missed the call, would that be OK? If you really need to take the call, leave the room.)
- At least one empty chair to remind us we have room to grow. (Then pray for the Lord to bring someone to fill it up!)
- The leader should not take the predominant place in the room, such as the "comfy chair," but rather where you blend into the group

### **Snacks**

- Simple—it doesn't have to be a meal
- Economical
- Nutritious choices like fruit, meat and cheese in addition to sweets. Ice water is simple, nutritious and economical and should always be offered.
- Just a little more than you need. Too much food promotes gluttony at worst and unnecessary resources at best. Too much food means more work and cost was exerted than necessary.
- Everyone shares responsibility equally.
- Simple plan: host provides all food, and then their responsibility is over for several months. If someone doesn't take a turn being host, then they should help out with food. Advantages include simple administration, appropriate selection and appropriate quantities, because the host is in control. If everyone brings food every time, control is lost.
- How about a monthly/occasional meal? When you do, involve everyone.

## **Meeting the Needs of New People**

How do we transition from a visitor to a person who is "knit in" to our group?

### **Social Issues**

Being new is very very uncomfortable, even painful for most people. People come to the group so that they can feel that they belong, and

when they don't feel that they belong, they may choose not to come, because the pain of feeling left out may be greater than the benefit of coming.

How do we make people feel like they belong? Socially, by having them be the focus of the informal conversations before and after the group. If a new person is left out of the conversation, they feel very uncomfortable. For a leader to allow that to happen is sin! They are putting their own personal interests above the new person's!

Leaders always need to see things through the eyes of the new person and make them as comfortable as possible. Resist the temptation to carry on "insider conversations" that leave out the new people. Be always mindful of the great pain they are experiencing as outsiders. Just because they are in the same room doesn't mean they are part of the group yet.

### **Explaining the way we do things to new people.**

We also help them feel comfortable by letting them know how we do things. The best way is for the leader to always be explaining what we do—the five W's—why we do things and what the rules are. But don't necessarily direct this to the new person(s) and make them the exclusive target of the communication. It is good to always be explaining this to everyone so that everyone is reminded why we do these things and always casting the vision.

Explain how we rotate where we meet and once they are officially part of the group, ask if we can meet at their house the next month. They will be glad to feel part of the group. When you meet there, ask beforehand if the first time the group can bless the house and pray for each room. Most people will love this!

Each group should have a phone list with each person's birthday and wedding anniversary so they can be celebrated. Before someone can be on the list, the leader should go over the Life Group Ground Rules with them, and they can agree to them. This can be done individually or as a group. Going over it as a group helps to reinforce these principles, and a new person is a great excuse to do so. Getting their name on this list is then kind of an initiation rite of sorts.

### **Affirmation**

If at some time during the group, someone shares something that is difficult or discouraging and shows some level of emotion, it is important for the leader to acknowledge that emotion and affirm it. Sometimes it

may be appropriate to stop and minister to that person in prayer as a group. It may be appropriate to have the life group leader or someone else who is mature to pray with that person in ministry time.

If someone is vulnerable enough to share something and the leader blows them off by not acknowledging them, it can discourage them from being vulnerable in the future. Even if we do not have “answers,” if we acknowledge and understand their pain, this in itself is very affirming and validating.

## **Life Stories**

Life Stories are designed to turbocharge the development of community in our groups.

When a group multiplies or is first formed, a sense of community should be formed as quickly as possible. One of the fundamentals of community is to get to know each other. Normally, this takes time—several months to several years. Life stories are designed to speed up this process. Most people feel that this is the best part of the cycle of a growing home group.

When a group first starts out, for the “Word” portion of the meeting, each week a different person takes about 30 minutes to share their life story. Only charter members of the group can share their life story. Hopefully, new members will begin to come during these first few weeks. We should explain that only charter members get to share their life stories, but that as soon as we multiply, they get to have their turn sharing their life story. (This is part of the continual process of creating an expectation that the group is designed to grow and multiply.)

The leader, and if applicable, their spouse, should be the first ones to tell their life stories, so that they can model this for the rest of the group. After this, the leader should ask whoever is the most vulnerable to go next, so that extreme vulnerability might be modeled. It may be helpful to ask someone who has been through giving their life story previously. Each person should be asked to have their life story contain three elements: their background, working out their salvation and their calling.

### **Our Family Background and How We Became Christians**

Our family background and life's significant events impact who we are today. Sharing this helps us get to know the person much better. Sharing our background and the struggles we have faced in the past helps lay the foundation for the next area, the things that we are struggling with today. Photos add a visual dynamic to this part.

### **Working Out Our Salvation**

Scriptures call us to “work out our salvation.” This is an ongoing process as we proceed on our journey to Christlikeness.



7 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Cor 12:7-10 (NIV)

Part of being a healthy community is being real with the issues that we face. God always makes sure that we have a "thorn in the flesh" or two to keep us humble and weak so that we might rely on him. As a sign of great maturity, Paul could boast about his weakness instead of trying to fool others into thinking that he had it all together.

The reason that the leaders should take the first turns in sharing their life stories is so that they can be extremely open about their struggles. We should talk about our sins, our addictions, our problems in our marriages and our shortcomings as parents and any other major struggles we are experiencing. In so doing, we will try to take ourselves off any pedestal that people may have us on and allow others to see that we struggle with things just like they do.

This in turn sets the tone with others who share their life stories, emboldening them to be real and vulnerable as well. Finally, even when life stories are done, this helps set the tone that we will continue to be open about the real issues in our lives during the discussion portion of our meetings, during the prayer times and outside the meetings.

Finally, if the whole group knows what we are struggling with, this facilitates accountable relationships on an ongoing basis. I can ask my brother or sister how it is going in their areas of struggle, and support them in prayer and council. They can do the same for me.

## **Where We Are Going**

We finish our life stories by sharing what we believe that God has called us to do in the future. This allows everyone in the group to support them in their calling and the exercise of their gifts and passions. For some people, they don't know where they are going. This should certainly get them thinking about it. And it supports the idea that home group is not a

spectator sport. Part of the package is that we are committed to helping each other grow in ministry.

### **Life Story Ground Rules**

- Be real.
- Don't put anyone or any other church or ministry down.
- Anyone can ask you a question.
- You don't have to answer it.

### **Ministry Note**

Particularly if someone has bared their soul and shared how what they are currently going through is a difficult struggle, it may be best for the whole group to minister in prayer for the person.