



GROUP LEADER TRAINING GUIDE

VIDEO 1 - Introduction to Life Group Leadership

The number one priority of a Life Group Leader is to point others to Christ and make disciples.

- You're not running a support group.
- This is a Life Group with the purpose of connecting and learning to better follow Jesus together while abiding in Him.

Disciple-maker

- Mathew 28:19-20
- The main role of a Life Group Leader is to make disciples.
- Life Groups are more than a weekly Bible study - they are Discipleship ministries.
- Our greatest need is a relationship with Jesus Christ and your group will help each other follow Him better.

Shepherd

- Proverbs 27:23
- Show your group that you care for them, will protect them, and want to see them grow.
- Point your group to the Great Shepherd so they can learn to shepherd one another.
- Work the Gospel into group time every week.

Delegate responsibilities

- You are the leader but the group belongs to everyone in it.
- Share some responsibilities with others in the group.
- Find someone to help with communications, event coordination, or hosting.

Consistent attendance starts with you

- Show up on time each week ready to lead.
- Attend any scheduled group leader training sessions.

Lead from your own walk with Christ

- Tend to your walk with Christ first.
- Don't replace your quiet time with the Lord with your prep time for group.

Model what being a disciple looks like

VIDEO 2 - Attributes of a Life Group Leader

Shepherd

- You are an overseer of the group.
- You want to protect your group and help them stay spiritually healthy.
- Your goal will be to help your group become shepherds of one another.

Facilitator

- You don't have to be a teacher to lead a group.
- Your goal is to get everyone in your group talking and sharing.
- Resist the urge to be profound and let others share what they are thinking.
- You are all there to sharpen one another.

Modeler

- Model what being a disciple looks like and what disciple making looks like.
- Life Groups are more than just Bible studies.
- The goal is to learn to better follow Jesus together and you can model that for those in your group.

Authentic & Accountable

- The more transparent you are, the more transparent the group will be.
- Model what it looks like to confess sin and ask your group to hold you accountable.

Relational

- You have to like people and want to see them flourish.
- Show your group that you genuinely care about them.
- Be available for your group and have regular touch points with them throughout the week (call, text, groupme, schedule time to have coffee or lunch with them).

Be a Good Listener

- Encourage your group but also be ready to balance grace and truth as you hear their needs.

Trainer

- Remember, you are making disciples with the goal of them making disciples.
- Show them what it looks like and then be willing to walk with them through that process as they begin to disciple others.

VIDEO 3 - Characteristics of a Strong Group

Reliance on the Bible

- Everything we do as a church is based on God’s Word and everything you do in your group should be the same way.
- You want to be in the Word every week.
- Use it to drive your conversations and help counsel each other.
- Hebrews 4:12

A safe place

- Life Groups are a safe place to connect with each other.
- The environment should be warm and nurturing.
- What is said in the group must stay in the group.

Your group should be authentic

- This starts with you as the leader.
- You want to promote an environment of transparency that will help others feel comfortable being transparent.

A place where everyone shares

- Everyone in the group should contribute to the discussion.
- It’s okay to have uncomfortable silences after you ask a question.
- It’s not uncommon for 30 seconds to pass or longer before someone responds.

People should focus on themselves

- Everyone in your group should be focused on their walk with Christ and how they are growing to be more like Him.
- You may have to redirect a conversation or completely shut it down if someone starts talking about their spouse or someone else in a way that’s demeaning or trying to take the focus off of themselves.
- Tell them to draw a circle around themselves and fix the one in the circle.

Your group should be encouraging

- Model this for your group.
- You want to encourage them to love and good works.

Your group should care for each other

- The ultimate goal is for your group to start shepherding each other.
- If anyone in the group has a need (physical, spiritual, emotional) - the group should be the first place they turn.

Everyone is committed to the group

- Group should be a priority.
- Have everyone sign the Life Group Covenant and hold them to it.
- Check on people who are absent and stress the importance of this if anyone misses group consistently.

VIDEO 4 - Group Meetings and Rhythms

GROUP MEETINGS

1) Connecting

- The first 30-60 minutes should be a time to catch up with each other.
- Talk about how the week went - you can do this over dinner or snacks.
- Ask what is something they were thankful for and something they were challenged by over the last week.
- Ask how they grew and who they shared Jesus with.

2) Learning

- The next 60 minutes is spent discussing the Life Group Guide, Scripture, Bible study, or a book that your group is using to better understand Scripture.
- The Bible should be the centerpiece of your discussion.
- You may use books to supplement Scripture but they should never replace it.
- Review the Scripture or the content that was studied that week and then discuss it as a group.

3) Following

- Spend the last 15 minutes or so discussing how each person will grow and where they will go over the next week.
- Share any additional prayer request.
- Close the group in prayer or have someone in the group pray.

4) Abiding

- Be sure your group is challenged to have a quiet time each day where they read and study Scripture and pray.
- Ask them how often they are doing this each week at group.

GROUP RHYTHMS

1) Weekly

- Groups should meet weekly as frequently as possible.

2) Monthly

- Just hang out together and have fun. Ideas: Bowling, Top Golf, a day at the park, BBQ, lake day, etc.

3) Quarterly

- Serve in your community. Ideas: Have a cookout and invite your neighbors, adopt a local school, spend time with international students at Cumberland University, participate in the Foster, Adoption, or Jail ministries.

4) Annually

- Go or help send someone on a mission trip. We have partners in Phoenix, AZ; Socorro, Philippines; Rome, Italy; and possible Turkey.

VIDEO 5 - Group Rules & Conflict

RULES

- 1) Set group rules early and enforce them immediately.
 - A listing of rules can be found in your manual.
 - There should be a balance between each person getting to share without any one person dominating the discussion.
 - You are not there to fix anyone. Remember, each person should stay in their circle. Each person should be focused on themselves.
 - Your group must be committed to not sharing any information outside of the group except in the event of the threat of physical, emotional, or spiritual harm to someone else.
 - Each person should be allowed to talk without being interrupted.

PERSONALITIES

1) The Dominator

- Every group almost always has someone who tries to dominate the discussion time - be aware of this and redirect the conversation if that happens.
- Be aware that if you can't identify the dominator in your group then it may be you!

2) The Rambler

- This person tends to just ramble on without getting to a point - help them reach a conclusion.
- You may rephrase what they say and then try to lead them to a conclusion.

3) The Mute

- Don't allow someone to just sit and never contribute - call them out by name if necessary to get them talking.
 - You may want to take them to coffee and talk about why they are so quiet and how to get them involved.
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4) The Interrupter

- Some people do this to redirect the attention onto themselves or to take control of the discussion - address this behavior immediately.
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5) The Venter

- Don't allow someone to slip into venting and just express frustration about something - refocus the discussion on the topic.
 - You may have to take this person to a separate room to discuss what's going on.
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HANDLING CONFLICT

You are leading a group of sinners so inevitably there will be conflict

1) Less severe issues

- General statement to the group as a whole at the next meeting may be sufficient.
- Let the group know you're aware of the issue and are addressing it - they need to know you are the leader.

2) More severe issues

- Address the issue privately with the individual(s).
- Affirm them but let them know the issue needs to be resolved.
- Always take someone with you if possible.
- Ask for the person's help and permission to address them if their conduct re-occurs.
- The Discipleship Pastor is always available if you encounter a situation that you don't know how to deal with.