



LIFE GROUP LEADERSHIP GUIDE



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## What is a Life Group?

A Life Group is a small community (10 or less) that is being spiritually transformed, growing as a spiritual family, and revolves around a mission in a specific neighborhood or community.

## Vision of Life Groups:

At Scottsville Baptist Church, we believe there is no substitution for living life in community with others. We desire to eradicate loneliness and isolation in our community. What better way to accomplish this than multiply disciples of Jesus in the context of Gospel-centered community and mission? (Matthew 28:18-20).

- **Community** - As Life Group members gather together to eat, pray, worship, read Scripture, encourage one another, and serve others, they will grow as disciples of Jesus and discover the joy of taking part in a shared mission (Acts 2:42-47).
- **Mission** - As Life Groups are intentional about serving neighborhoods and/or workplaces, the people in our reach will witness a community that lives out the Gospel in tangible ways (Matthew 5:14-16).

## Who Can Belong in a Life Group?

Life Groups are communities that people can belong to before they believe. This means that Life Groups are a reflection of our entire church and are composed of mature Christians, new Christians and non-Christians. Simply put, we want everyone to be in a Life Group because that is where both community and mission take place.

## Core Values of a Life Group:

The values that drive Life Groups are UP - IN - OUT. Because of God's act of reaching DOWN to us in the Gospel, a Life Group responds with an upward movement toward God, an inward movement toward each other, and an outward movement toward others to represent Christ to their unique missional context.

### UP - Movement Toward God

In a Life Group, people will pursue God and grow in their love for Jesus. This may sound simple, but in our fallen world people seek to become their own gods. We often seek to live apart from God, preferring our independence over a relationship with our Creator. But through the Gospel, Jesus transforms our hearts and moves us to a place where we recognize God as King, Father, and Savior! It becomes our joy to know, serve, and worship Him. (Ephesians 2:1-3; 2 Cor. 5:17)

#### Examples that include UP

- SOAP - Reading and applying the Bible (see pg. 9) (2 Timothy 3:16-17, Joshua 1:8).
- Making regular time to reflect, pray, and praise God for His work. (Psalm 95:1-2)
- Engaging in discipleship Life Groups & Sunday School (2 Timothy 2:2, Hebrews 10:24-25) *Ask "How have I fed my soul or spent time with God?"*
- Worshipping God in creative ways (e.g., songs, communion, etc.). (Psalm 105:1-2)
- Confessing and repenting of sin, and reminding each other of the good news of Jesus Christ! (James 5:16)

### IN - Movement Toward God's People

In a Life Group, people learn to love one another. This means sharing each other's burdens, praying for each other, and forgiving each other as Christ forgave us. New people are not left out, but drawn in as they experience the family of God living in light of the Gospel. (Acts 2:42- 47, 1 Thessalonians 5:11)

#### Examples that include IN

- Make confession a vital part of your life (James 5:16). *Ask "How have I fed my flesh?"*
- Practice hospitality and care for one another in practical ways (prayer, meals, service) (Mark 12:30-31, 1 Thessalonians 2:8)
- Encourage each other and build fellowship by sharing testimonies (see pg. 8) (Psalm 22:22, 1 John 1:1-3).

- Engaging in discipleship within Life Groups & Sunday School (2 Timothy 2:2, Hebrews 10:24-25)
- Praying, praising, and worshipping God together (Psalm 95:1-2, 105:1-2)
- Practice 3rd Place (see pg. 11) (Mark 2:13-17).

## **OUT - Movement Toward God's Mission**

A Life Group has a defined and shared mission. In other words, we are a family on God's mission together. Our shared mission is made up of a neighborhood or a network of people. For example: neighbors who live on your block or in your school district, young families with kids, single parents, coaches, college students, or recovering addicts. This mission is a blessing to be a part of, as we get to take part in God's redemptive work in people's lives. (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 5:20)

### **Examples that include OUT**

- Practice 3rd Place (see pg. 11) (Mark 2:13-17)
- Invite people to your Life Group. Allowing the Gospel to be seen and heard in community is powerful and can help people see the joy of worshiping Jesus (John 13:35)
- Care for your neighbors in practical ways. Plan and organize service projects or events that meet a need in your community. (i.e. Organize a truck-or-treat, meal train for a family, or playground pick up) (Mark 12:30-31, 1 Thessalonians 2:8)
- Meet new people by participating in existing community events that have been organized by neighborhood groups, non-profits, or businesses. Jesus regularly attended community events (i.e. John 10:22-30)
- Ask the question "How have I fed others or shared the gospel with others?"

## Leadership Teams:

Life Groups are the primary context in which we hope to make disciples, build those individuals into maturing leaders, and experience Gospel-centered community. Because of the different giftings needed to maximize the impact of a Life Group, we believe in shared leadership.

*But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.*  
(1 Corinthians 12:18-20)

### **UP LEADERS – SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

- Help to create environments of worship, prayer & praise.
- Helps group members grow in their knowledge of God and application of the Gospel.
- Allows space for repentance and confession to take place regularly.
- Provides sound biblical teaching and content for group discussions.
- Overall purpose is to help people worship, know and experience Jesus.

### **IN LEADERS – COMMUNITY**

- Ensure new members or visitors feel welcomed and included.
- Help existing members get connected to Scottsville Baptist Church.
- Model and encourage hospitality both inside and outside of Life Group meetings.
- Facilitate and organize meeting spaces, hosts and meals.
- Create environments that allow members to connect and care about one another.
- Confront unresolved conflict, gossip, or relational tension.

### **OUT LEADERS - MISSION**

- Define and cast vision for the overall shared mission (Neighborhood or Workplaces).
- Help organize and oversee service projects, community outreaches and partnerships.
- Work to inform/educate the Life Group of the existing physical and spiritual needs within your missional context.
- Provide resources and to train and equip Life Group members for living on mission.
- Overall purpose is to help members experience the joy of living on mission while growing the group through missional efforts.

## How to Share your Testimony:

Each of us have a story to tell how Jesus came into our lives, saved us from our sin, and called us to Himself. Sharing our story is important because it helps us move from strangers to family. All of our stories are different, but there is one enemy; Satan and the effects of sin, and one hero; JESUS. When we hear other testimonies, we see just how much we have in common in the saving work of Jesus Christ!

Use the 3 sections and questions below to help you write out your story.

### **1. Before I Accepted Christ (or gave Him complete control) •**

- What was my life like that will relate most to the non-Christian?
- What did my life revolve around the most? Where did I find my security and happiness? (The non-Christian is relying on something external to give him happiness)
- How did those areas begin to let me down?

### **2. How I Received Christ (or gave Him complete control)**

- When was the first time I heard the gospel?
- What were my initial reactions?
- When did my attitude begin to turn around? Why?
- What were the final struggles that went through my mind just before I accepted Christ?
- Why did I go ahead and accept Christ?

### **3. After I Accepted Christ (or gave Him complete control)**

- Specific changes and examples of the changes Christ has made.
- Why am I motivated differently?

### **Helpful Hints**

- Write the way you speak; make the testimony yours.
- Practice this over and over until it becomes natural.
- Keep it short – 2-3 minutes. At that length, it's easily something you can put into a conversation without it becoming a monologue.



## How to SOAP:

When you have your daily time with God use, SOAP to help you think through what you're reading.

### **Scripture**

Copy down the verse or verses that stuck out the most. When reading, ask: Who is the author? Who is in the passage? What happened before and after this passage? What things are repeated or emphasized? Then summarize the passage in your own words.

### **Observation**

Write down what you noticed. How do you think the author wants his audience to respond? What does it reveal about mankind? What does it reveal about God? How does this point to Jesus and Gospel? Write down thoughts, feelings, questions, or ideas that come to mind.

### **Application**

How can you apply what you learned? What thoughts or attitudes do you need to turn from? What truths about the Gospel do you need to believe? Getting practical with the Bible helps it come alive in your life.

### **Prayer**

Write a prayer to God based on what you just learned and ask Him to help you apply this truth in your life.

## **EXAMPLE OF SOAP**

### **Scripture: John 15:1-11**

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Jesus and His disciples are celebrating a final Passover Feast before Jesus is arrested and crucified. Jesus is teaching about abiding in Him and bearing fruit.

**Observation:** We don't naturally abide in Jesus so He commands us to abide. Following this command is not burdensome, but actually for our benefit. Jesus is the true vine and if we abide in Him we will bear fruit. The fruit we bear is glorifying to God. Jesus says that He taught all of this so that His joy would be in us. The joy Jesus gives is full, complete, and better than any other joy.

**Application:** How am I abiding in Jesus? In this passage "abide" is such an intimate word; to always remain in Jesus. What are ways I can remain in Jesus? Jesus says I

will abide in Him if I keep His commandments, but am I actually doing that? Abiding in Jesus allows me to experience the fullness of joy that Jesus has for me. I can continue to abide in Him through developing a deeper prayer life, and reading the Bible to actually connect with Jesus instead of doing it just to look smart in front of my friends.

**Prayer:** Jesus, thank You for saving me! Please always remind me of how amazing Your Gospel is. I confess that most of the time I would rather do my own thing than abide in You. I try to look good for others and that only steals more of my joy in You. Teach me more about what it means to abide in You and I pray that abiding in You would result in great fruit for Your glory!

### **How to use SOAP in Life Groups:**

Each member of your Life Group will SOAP throughout the week in their personal time with God. Then have members share one or two things they heard from God. Ask and share with each other how you are going to obey what God spoke to you or how they have fed others. Have members confess sin that may have surfaced and talk about what repentance would look like then pray as a group.

## Third Place:

A Third Place is neutral ground that is informal and non-committal. It naturally fits into the rhythms of your lost friends lives, and we do it regularly.

So where do we gather for a Third Place? It depends on the people you're trying to reach. Ask the question, "Where do people already spend time and naturally go? How can we gather there?"

For those of you who work downtown, this may be an after work happy hour. Downtown professionals naturally gather there after their workday. For families with younger kids, this might be a park where other families and kids play throughout the day.

A third place creates space where someone can belong to before they believe. We want to do it regularly, and invite those who don't know Jesus to participate often.

### **INVITE IN – Activity Ideas**

- Neighborhood picnic and grill out
- Hiking
- Disc Golf or Frisbee
- Lake day with Kayaks and Canoes
- Restaurants
- Go get ice cream
- Book club
- Game nights
- Shooting range
- Pool Party
- Escape Rooms
- Tubing the James River
- The Gym
- Kids play dates
- Go to the movies
- Sports League (softball, basketball, etc.)

### **JOIN IN - Scottsville/C-ville Rhythms**

- Scottsville – Saturday Farmers Market
- Monthly Jam Sessions @ the Pavilion
- James River Tubing
- Hiking in Shenandoah National Park
- James River Brewery
- Color Run or other local 5k races
- Virginia Discovery Museum
- Loads of Winery's
- Fishing Tournaments
- Harry Potter Festival
- July 4th Parade
- Tubing the James River
- Library Story Times
- Volunteer at the Boys & Girls Club