



Life Groups

Connecting
Newcomers...
Engaging Insiders

LIFE Groups

AN INTERACTIVE DISCOVERY AND EXPERIENCE MODEL

(AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE TEACHER/LECTURE MODEL)

- L... Learning, from God's word, life with Jesus and one another.
- I... Interceding to the Lord on behalf of each other (prayer).
- F... Fellowship in the spirit of the Lord.
- E... Exalting the Lord and Evangelizing the lost.

WHAT IT IS LIKE

Joe decides to take a friend up on an invitation to attend his LIFE Group. Joe is readily accepted and quickly connects with others because the environment makes it easy to make friends, share thoughts, express concerns and receive encouragement! What Joe finds is a small group of people (or a number of small groups in the same large room) growing together as they discuss the Bible and learn to live like Jesus.

It's easy to follow along and participate in the discussion as the Bible verses and questions are on the handout everyone receives. Besides the obvious care for one another, it's clear the focus is on Christ and His will for everyday living.

Prayer is a key activity and Joe soon discovers that, when someone is hurting or in need, others are quick to respond. It's the kind of place he would be proud to bring a friend... a place where someone can experience and meet the Lord Jesus.

WHAT IT IS NOT

- A lecture with one person doing most of the talking.
- Impersonal assembly type seating.
- A passive, non-interactive environment.
- Indifferent to newcomers.

WHY LIFE GROUPS

- In this isolated world, people need help connecting with others in a healthy social environment.
- People have a deep longing for community; to feel they belong.
- People grow best in the Lord as they live it together:
 - By learning of Him and His will from His Word,
 - By loving, caring for, and encouraging each other.
- People need a place to bring 'outsiders' to connect with others and the Lord.

WHERE WOULD THEY MEET

- Be flexible... this could be a group of 5-12 people meeting in a home, school, work, coffee shop, nursing home or church, etc.
- Or it could be multiple groups (5-12 people each) meeting in one location, e.g. a room with multiple round tables each with 5-12 people:
 - This could be an alternative to SS, mid-week, or even a typical worship service,
 - In a multiple group setting, the opening and closing is directed from 'up front' by a Lead Person. Table Leaders then facilitate the discussion and prayer time (see sample schedule),
 - You may want to offer specialized groups for new believers, singles, special needs, by age, etc.

WHEN WOULD THEY MEET

- Be flexible... any time that is convenient for the group(s).
- Or during regular church hours (e.g. SS, mid-week, Sunday or non-traditional worship times).

WHAT'S A SAMPLE SCHEDULE LOOK LIKE

- Welcome: 5 min.
- Short introduction to the lesson: 7 min. (by Lead Person).
- Discussion of the lesson: 20–45 min. (lead by Table Leader; handouts provided).
- Short wrap up to the lesson: 7 min. (by lead person or delegated to a Table Leader).
- Time of prayer for one another: 5–15 min.
- Options (depending on time available):
 - Time of singing,
 - Time for corporate prayer,
 - Time for gifts and offerings,
 - Time for refreshments and/or a meal.

LEADERSHIP NEEDS

- One Table Leader per table/group of 5-12 people.
- It's good to develop 'assistants' at each table for future growth or when the Table Leader is absent.

WHAT STUDY MATERIAL TO USE

- What ever works for you:
 - By topic (family, relationships, compassion, etc.),
 - By book of the Bible,
 - Work from your pastor's sermons,
 - Develop material from resources like the Serendipity Bible, Lifeway or Gospel Light curriculum, etc.,

- Provide a handout (see sample) for each participant. Include Discussion Questions and any other pertinent information (provide scripture verses for newcomers who would be embarrassed when they could not locate them in the Bible),
- Perhaps provide additional notes and handout (via internet) to the Table Leader(s) in advance to help them prepare for the lesson.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Provide host/hostess to welcome people as they enter and assist any newcomers... ushering them to a group and introducing them to the Table Leader.
- Nametags are essential (many will know each other but this is extremely helpful and appreciated by newcomers to the group).
- Refreshments, especially something to drink, help people relax and 'settle in'. Be sure to offer and assist any newcomers.
- Important... be intentional in finding out if newcomers are Christians. Do this when the timing is appropriate... for some it might be the first visit; for others down the road a bit. Do this in a sensitive, discrete way but make sure you do it and don't wait so long that it gets overlooked:
 - Consider using a "Registration" or "Welcome" form including things like: name, contact information, spouse and children's names and ages, hobbies and special interests, church background. Add a spiritual discovery question or two like, "The Bible talks about having 'life to the full', how fulfilling would you say your life is on a scale of 1-10?" or "Are you 100% certain you will go to heaven?" and/or "If God asked you why He should let you into heaven, what would you say?" There is nothing more important than making sure those God sends our way will be in heaven with us!
 - Using these questions as springboards to a spiritual conversation makes it easy to follow up on newcomers who lack assurance of their salvation or those who do not know Jesus personally. Plan to meet with them one-on-

one so you can dialogue with them to clearly share the Gospel and deal with questions that come up or clarify any misunderstandings. People are much more likely to understand salvation and make a commitment when they have the opportunity to carry on a conversation and ask questions that come up.

- Seating options with multiple groups:
 - You may want to encourage people to sit where they wish. Let newcomers sit with their friends. If they did not come with a friend, be sure to seat them at a table where they will be made to feel welcome,
 - Or you may want to assign people to specific tables. (If you do this it is good to mix up the seating arrangements every 2-3 months to help people get to know others.)
- Find a way to let absentees know they were missed and you look forward to seeing them the next time you meet.
- To maintain an outreach mindset, it is good to have regular outreach projects.
- To help people get to know each other, you might include a “Show ‘n Share” time where a pre-arranged person (or couple) show or share something about themselves or something they have a special interest (just a few minutes; suggest doing this during the welcome time).

WHY IT WORKS

- Friends bring friends. When your needs are met, it makes it easy to invite others to enjoy the same experience.
- Walk-ins make friends easily and quickly.
- People feel significant when they are allowed to participate and contribute to the group.
- Group discussion allows for greater variety and perspectives.
- The Holy Spirit teaches and ministers as participants share and interact.
- As a group out-grows a table, just set up another table and birth another group.

Jesus Touches the Untouchables

Mark 1:40 - 2:12

☞ What would you like to praise God for today?

Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy

40 A man with leprosy came and knelt in front of Jesus, begging to be healed. "If you want to, you can make me well again," he said.

41 Moved with pity, Jesus touched him. *"I want to,"* he said. *"Be healed!"* **42** Instantly the leprosy disappeared--the man was healed. **43** Then Jesus sent him on his way and told him sternly, **44** *"Go right over to the priest and let him examine you. Don't talk to anyone along the way. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy, so everyone will have proof of your healing."*

45 But as the man went on his way, he spread the news, telling everyone what had happened to him. As a result, such crowds soon surrounded Jesus that he couldn't enter a town anywhere publicly. He had to stay out in the secluded places, and people from everywhere came to him there.

Mark 2

Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man

1 Several days later Jesus returned to Capernaum, and the news of his arrival spread quickly through the town. **2** Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there wasn't room for one more person, not even outside the door. And he preached the word to them. **3** Four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. **4** They couldn't get to Jesus through the crowd, so they dug through the clay roof above his head. Then they lowered the sick man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus. **5** Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, *"My son, your sins are forgiven."*

6 But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there said to themselves, **7** "What? This is blasphemy! Who but God can forgive sins!"

8 Jesus knew what they were discussing among themselves, so he said to them, *"Why do you think this is blasphemy?"* **9** *Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven' or 'Get up, pick up your mat, and walk'?"* **10** *I will prove that I, the Son of Man, have the authority on earth to forgive sins."* Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, **11** *"Stand up, take your mat, and go on home, because you are healed!"*

12 The man jumped up, took the mat, and pushed his way through the stunned onlookers. Then they all praised God. "We've never seen anything like this before!" they exclaimed.

Mark 2:1-12 (NLT)

☞ PRAY for God's guidance

1. What kinds of "things" make people feel unworthy to come to Jesus?
2. Why is the leper unsure of Jesus' desire to help? (See Leviticus 13:45,46)
3. What is significant about Jesus touching the leper prior to healing him?

What do the crowds expect?

4. In a crisis, even at 3 AM, which four friends would you call?

5. What would you be seeing and feeling if you were in this crowd (vv. 1-4)?

6. Why are the teachers so upset? In their minds, how are sin and the authority of God linked? (see John 9:1-3)

7. Why didn't Jesus just heal the man like everyone expected?

What new insight about the kingdom and Himself is Jesus revealing?

8. In what ways is sin like paralysis or leprosy?

9. What freedoms/healings has Jesus' word of forgiveness given you?

Wrap up: If you had friends who would take you to Jesus for healing today, what kind of healing would you ask for? A. physical B. spiritual C. emotional D. relational

Prayer: For one another

How can you pray for and "touch lepers" or aid "paralytics" you know?

LIFE GROUPS

A safe place to build friendships and grow spiritually.

- | | | |
|----------|--|--|
| L | <input type="checkbox"/> Learn..... | applying Biblical truth for everyday living |
| I | <input type="checkbox"/> Intercede..... | praying for one another |
| F | <input type="checkbox"/> Fellowship..... | nurturing Christ centered caring relationships |
| E | <input type="checkbox"/> Evangelism..... | reaching others with the hope of Christ |

