

Kick Off

2019 - 2020

STUDY GUIDE



REAL LIFE
GROUPS

This belongs to:

Table of Contents

Outline

WEEK ONE: RELATIONAL ENVIRONMENT p. 4

1. Event
2. Check In
3. Icebreaker

WEEK TWO: FACILITATE A DISCUSSION p. 5

4. Why Life Groups?
5. Vision, Mission, Process
6. Roles/Expectations
 - a. Group Roles
 - b. Here is what you can expect.
 - c. What expectations do you have?
 - d. My Part, Their Part, God's Part
7. Goals
 - a. Personal
 - b. Life Group

WEEK THREE: FACILITATE A DISCUSSION p. 9

8. Comfort versus Growth
 - a. Scale
 - b. Concentric Circles
9. Components of a group
10. Guidelines / Ground Rules (Life Group Specific)
11. Logistics/Roles
 - a. Leaders/Apprentices
 - b. Hosts
 - c. Admin - Rock
 - d. Breakout Leaders
 - e. Snacks
 - f. Childcare
 - g. Start/End Time
12. Calendar
 - a. Curriculum Schedule
 - b. Vacations/Breaks/Holidays
 - c. Fun
 - d. Breakouts

PRAYER REQUESTS p. 15

Week One

Relational Environment

AIM FOR WEEK ONE

Reconnect the members to each other (both new and old). Lay a foundation for group relationships for this season.

OBJECTIVES

- Set a tone and an atmosphere that is inviting, inclusive, fun, and relatable.
- Provide opportunities for group members to hear and share about where life is at this point.

EVENT

Have a BBQ, or something along those lines. Take advantage of the natural rhythm of the season.

- Ask everyone to contribute so they are involved. For instance, each couple can bring a side or dessert to BBQ to share.
- Meet at the Host Home for Life Group. This gets the rhythm started and the sets the stage for this group season.

ENVIRONMENT

Be *intentional* about the environment and interactions with each other. Mingling is good, but lead them for part of the time to interact. Intentionally have a time for Checking In and use an Icebreaker to help people get into the flow of interacting.

CHECK IN

How was your summer? What was the most fun?

ICEBREAKER

Check your Life Group Leadership binder, or ask your pastor or coach for icebreaker ideas. The purpose of the icebreaker is to provide a fun and creative way for the people in the group to share something real and personal about themselves with the group that encourages and fosters relationships.

Week Two

Facilitate a Discussion

AIM FOR WEEK TWO

Cast vision and create ownership with the group for the importance of Life Groups. Through facilitating a discussion, help people recognize how life group plays a part of what God is doing in the world through each person and through the body of believers at Real Life Ministries.

OBJECTIVES

- Discuss *why* life groups.
- Clarify roles and expectations for each other.
- Set some goals both individually and as a life group.
 - We want to reflect how we share *life* together as we grow spiritually.
 - We live out our God-given purpose of being and making disciples of Jesus throughout all of our lives.
 - Following Jesus and the relationships we have with one another are not intended to only be a once-a-week encounter in the place we meet.
 - This is where Jesus and real life meet together. We get to do that together in life!
 - As we begin this new season of Life Groups, we want to lay a solid foundation as we build a relational environment for us to do life together.
 - Let's remind each other of why we do what we do, what we are doing, and how we do it.

WHY LIFE GROUPS?

Leaders: You could ask the group why they have chosen to invest in life group, or why life group is important to them, or why they think life groups exist.

LIFE GROUPS PURPOSE STATEMENT:

“The purpose of the Life Group is to create an environment where relationships can develop and God’s word can be discussed so that people may grow in Spiritual Maturity as Disciples of Christ.”

- Respond to the purpose statement for life groups:

TAKE A LOOK: Matthew 28:18-20

- What do you see about God’s heart and plan?

WHAT'S THE VISION, MISSION, AND PROCESS WE HAVE AS PART OF REAL LIFE MINISTRIES?

- **Vision:** We will reach the world for Jesus one person at a time. (*Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 5:18, 20; Luke 19:10; 2 Peter 3:9*)
- **Mission:** We will create biblical disciples in relational environments. (*Matthew 28:18-20*)
- **Process:** We will be a church that makes disciples who make disciples of Jesus. (*Acts 2:42-47*)
- How does being a part of a Life Group help us work toward this vision?
- How does the Life Group and the church body work together toward this vision?

THE PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING PEOPLE TOWARD CHRIST-LIKENESS INCLUDES THREE PARTS: MY PART, THEIR PART, AND GOD'S PART.

- **MY PART** (the discipler): Only you can do your part.
- **THEIR PART** (the disciple): Only they can do their part.
- **GOD'S PART:** God will always do His part.
- What do you think your part is? What do you have to offer this season? What do you need this season?

- As a Life Group, we are here to encourage one another to grow spiritually—in following Jesus, and in being His disciples.
- We want to encourage each other to grow in loving God—abiding in Him, trusting Him, and responding to Him.
- We also help each other in loving others—in our homes, toward our fellow believers, and toward those we encounter as we work, live, and play.

TAKE A LOOK: Matthew 22:34-40 and Ephesians 4:12-16

- What do you see from these passages that helps us function as a life group?

ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS

Leaders: You can refer to the Life Group Leader Basic Training Manual for more detailed information.

Let's discuss the roles and expectations we have for each other in our Life Group. We want to be a great team that works together, that does life together, and that is unified.

- What do you expect from the Life Group leader?
 - **Leader:** Each group might have an Apprentice Couple, a Women's Breakout leader, and/or a Men's Breakout leader. Talk about their roles and expectations as appropriate.
- What do we expect from our host home?
- What does the host home expect from us?
- What role do you as members play?
 - Grow and mature spiritually.
 - Practice being a disciple of Jesus, and practice making disciples.
- What expectations do we have of each other?
 - We chase after people if they start to stray from the group.
 - Help unconnected people get connected into Life Group and church services.

Leaders: Here are some specifics for roles and expectations that might be helpful for you as you help your group discuss what roles and expectations to have with each other in life group this year.

LEADER

- Disciple someone in the group and help others to be discipled by others in the group.
- Facilitate relationships within the Life Group with God and others.
- Practice the essential elements of:
 - Abiding with Christ
 - Reaching the lost
 - Chasing the strays
 - Connecting unconnected people to God and others
 - Intentionally investing in someone for the benefit of spiritual growth
 - Identifying potential leaders
 - Helping the Life Group work together as a team
- Lead discussions and ask good questions.
- Model honesty and transparency in relationship and discussions.
- Build relationships that extend outside of group time.
- Challenge and resolve conflict.
- Be trained and equipped by Real Life Ministries' leadership.

MEMBER

- Commit to being in relationship with God and others—both being a disciple and discipling others.
- Commit to the purpose of the group and participate in the way it functions.
- Commit to be honest and transparent in relationship and discussions.
- Be a part of practicing the essential elements of:

- o Abiding with Christ
- o Reaching the lost
- o Chasing the strays
- o Connect unconnected people to God and others
- o Intentionally investing in someone for the benefit of spiritual growth
- o Working with the members of the Life Group like a team
- Build relationships that extend outside of group time.
- Support the leader of the group and their leaders.
- Resolve conflict within the Life Group biblically.
- Accept challenges by leaders.
- Pursue your gifting so you can serve others.

GOALS

Leaders: Lead your group in a discussion to set some goals for the year—both personal goals and group goals.

PERSONAL:

- What personal goals do you have for the coming year?
- How do you want to grow in your relationship with Jesus this coming year?
- How do you want your family to grow spiritually this coming year?

LIFE GROUP:

- What Life Group goals do you have for the coming year?
- How can we help each other stay focused on growing spiritually, loving God, and loving others?
- How do you want to grow in making disciples this year?
- In what ways do you want your Life Group to grow this coming year? What's your part?

Week Three

Facilitate a Discussion

AIM FOR WEEK THREE

Last week we covered roles, expectations, and goals. This week, we are going to discuss creating environments that help us grow relationally, personally, and spiritually.

OBJECTIVES

- Be aware how being stretched and challenged brings growth.
- Examine some biblical components of healthy relational environments.
- Recognize we get to create and participate in environments inside and outside of the group.
- Review group guidelines.

COMFORT VERSUS GROWTH

We often think we grow best when we are in the “perfect” environment. Sometimes we equate being comfortable as a key essential to a growth environment. Actually, environments and situations with some challenges are the best growing environments. The reality is if we are too comfortable, we will not grow—or not grow much. And the reality is if we are *always* in crisis or in a stress/panic/fetal zone, we will not grow, either. Eagles, when they are getting their eaglets to fly, actually begin to take some of the feathers and comforts out of the nest to help the eaglets begin to use their wings. But they typically don’t just drop the eaglet out of the nest and hope for the best.

Leaders: Present the table below to your group, explaining that their comfort in group is directly tied to their growth. This scale can be used in different areas of the group as it relates to their comfort and growth. For example: spiritual maturity, participation in group, or serving. The table below is just a visual element for how comfort and growth tie together by the columns.

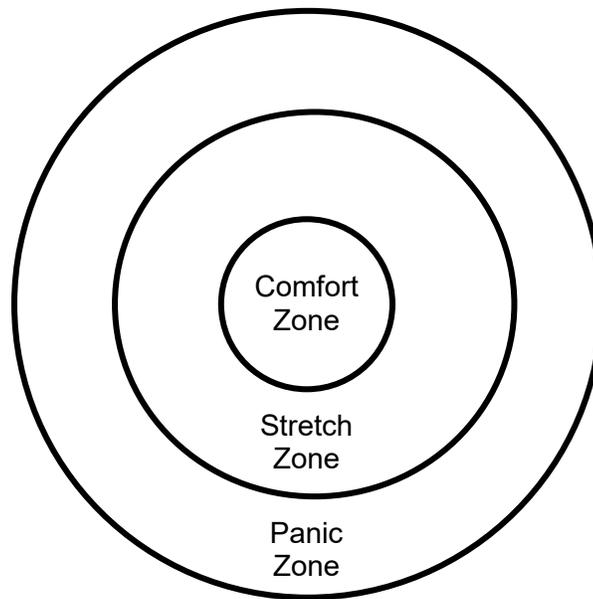
- What number would you choose for your growth in Spiritual Maturity this year?
For example: If you choose high comfort (8) then you will get low growth (2). The goal is for you to commit to getting out of your comfort zone and to give your Life Group leader permission to challenge and stretch you this season.

SCALE:

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---------|
| Growth: | Minimum | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Maximum |
| Comfort: | Maximum | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Minimum |

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES:

Below are the target zones that people will experience in group as we ask questions and open up with where we are spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. We hope to move past our comfort zone of answering questions about the weather, or our favorite sports team, in group. We want people to move into the stretch zone where growth happens as we discover where we are and where God is asking us to grow. Panic zone is usually where people will freeze, fight, or flee. Hopefully as a group, we will not push too much—at least not long or frequently—into this zone, causing people to panic and not come back.



- What would being stretched look like? How would we recognize a panic zone?

TAKE A LOOK: Take a look at Colossians 3:12-17.

- What stands out to you about how Paul instructed them to interact with one another?
- What do you think the environment would be like as people treated each other this way?
- What would it take to create that kind of environment in our Life Group?

PARTS OF A LIFE GROUP THAT HELP US CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RELATIONSHIPS AND GROWTH

Remember, we want to build relationships both inside and outside the group together.

INSIDE LIFE GROUP

Let's go over some components that we regularly have during the life group time together:

- Welcome/Opening Prayer
 - We will get to welcome new people to our group. We want to connect unconnected people to God and to relationships with people who love Jesus. We want to reach lost people. Our Life Group is a place to team with each other in living that out.
 - Talk about how to create a welcoming environment.
- Guidelines
 - We will be discussing guidelines on the next page.
- Announcements
 - We are all connected to the body at Real Life, but there are many things going on all over the county and/or in our group.
 - We don't want to give the impression that we're independent from the church as we meet during the week. Our announcements help everyone feel like they're a part of the many things that are happening.
- Icebreaker
 - Our purpose for the icebreaker is to provide a fun and creative way for us as a group to share something real and personal about ourselves with the group that encourages and fosters relationships.
- Sermon Debrief
 - We want to know if you were able to make it to service each week.
 - We want to help dive further into the sermon.
- Today's Passage
 - We will explore God's Word together and have some great discussion time.
 - CURRICULUM: Sometimes the Life Group curriculum will follow along with the sermon (*there will always be questions on the bottom of the sermon notes*). There will also be times when the curriculum will not follow along with the sermon. Depending on where our group is at and the season of our group is in, our group leader may decide to go through something different. Our group leader will discuss this with our Community Pastor and Women's Discipleship Leader.
- Discussion/Discovery
 - We will help each other apply what God is saying to us and challenge each other to take next steps.
- Prayer Time
 - We get to pray for and with one another.
 - We can also pray for over some of the things that came up during group.
- Next Week
 - We will encourage each other to spend time with God and the next lesson.
 - We want to help prepare for the following week.
 - We want to celebrate any spiritual growth that we see in each other with the entire group.

OUTSIDE LIFE GROUP

As we follow Jesus and be His people, we get to do life together. That takes investing time with each other both inside and outside the Life Group time.

- What are ways we could serve together as a Life Group?
- How can we spend intentional time with each other outside of group time? (*Think of fun, shared experiences and ways to invest in each others' spiritual growth.*)
- What are some ways we can reach out to people who do not yet follow Jesus?

LIFE GROUP GUIDELINES

Let's walk through the guidelines we use in our Life Group. As we go over them, think about what the heart behind the guideline is and how it helps us create an environment like we see in Colossians. Remember what we saw in Colossians 3:12-17?

Though we call these Life Group Guidelines, these are also essential in all relationships and environments. These should be observed whether in a one-on-one conversation or in a group discussion.

- o Guidelines give boundaries for people to operate within.
 - o They help with the flow and pace of the discussions.
 - o They help us value one another.
 - o They help people to be more comfortable sharing deep and meaningful things.
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-
-
-

SAFE GROUP

Confidentiality is key—what is said in the group stays in the group. Be aware of how you are affecting the environment with your words, actions, and non-verbal communication. This needs to be a place where people feel comfortable opening up and sharing. We will strive to create an environment where everyone can be real, open, and honest with their struggles and victories.

NO CROSSTALK

Be considerate of others as they are sharing. No side conversations, checking phone, responding to texts or emails, etc.

LISTEN

Let's value one another by listening to what is being shared. Allow a pause after someone shares to allow them to finish and others to consider what was said. Eye contact and body posture play key roles in creating a positive or negative group environment.

NO RESCUING OR FIXING:

We are not here to fix each other; Jesus does that part. Avoid the tendency to rescue when someone is struggling to get the words out or shares a struggle or conviction.

USE "I" STATEMENTS:

It's easy to talk about the issues of others or respond with "we," "us," "the church," but for us to grow as disciples and build relationships, we want to use "I" statements.

DON'T OVER-TALK:

We want to create time for all members of the group to participate in the discussion. Be careful not to always be the first responder or regularly give long responses.

FIGHT FOR RELATIONSHIP:

It's not "if" conflict or hurt feelings will happen, but "when." We commit to fight for relationship with each other. Go to that person and share your struggle or seek wise advice if you are not sure how to handle the conflict.

- o If someone sins against you (Matthew 18:15-20)
 - o Restoring someone in sin (Galatians 6:1-5)
 - o Forgive a sinner (Colossians 3:12-13)
 - o Reconciling differences (Matthew 5:23-24, Matthew 7:1-5)
- Why are these guidelines important for us as a group? Think about both as a whole group and when breakout groups happen.
 - When we invite new people to our group, how are the guidelines helpful?
 - How can we create a welcoming environment for each other and for people who will join us?
 - What helps our group and our environment show hospitality to each other and others?
 - Talk about the importance of restoring relationships when conflict happens. What are your tendencies when conflict occurs?
 - How can we help each other practice what we see God saying about resolving conflict?

Let's do this!

LIFE GROUP DETAILS

Life Group Leader: _____

Life Group Location: _____

Life Group Hosts*: _____

Life Group Co-Leaders/Apprentices: _____

Life Group Breakout Leaders: _____

Life Group Admin: _____

Day of the Week: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

Snacks (sign-up sheet?): _____

Childcare**: _____

Ground Rules: _____

* Not all Life Groups will have all of these roles. Simply fill in what is applicable for your group.

** Life Groups are adult-focused and kid-friendly. How will we as a group make that happen?

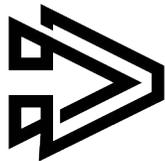
Leaders: If you and/or the host home already have an approach to this, please communicate it to the group.

CALENDAR

Leaders: Use your Group Action Plan pages from your Life Group Leadership binder to plan these.

INCLUDE:

- Curriculum Schedule
- Vacations, breaks, and holidays
- Fun
 - Plan outside of group, or instead of group, activities like game nights, bowling, movie nights, shooting, coffee house crawls, etc.
- Breakouts
 - Life Groups are a great picture of the whole body of Christ—men, women, different ages and stages. There is great benefit to being together. There is also benefit to growing intentional relationships with fellow Christ-followers of the same gender. We want the men in your group, and the women in your group, to grow together and speak into each other's lives. One to two times a month, we will do “breakouts” during our Life Group time. Break out groups are the men meeting with men, the women meeting with women. This could be for prayer, or to discuss a couple of the questions, or how to apply what was discussed.
 - We want to help each other be disciples and make disciples—both men and women. Some of us have been gifted with leadership abilities. We want to identify those abilities and equip people to use them. Our breakout times could be a time for developing other leaders.



REAL LIFE
GROUPS