

Life Groups #1: Introduction

WHY LIFE GROUPS?

Mark 3:13-15

Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.

A BIBLICAL MODEL

1. The model that Jesus gave us was group ministry.
2. Jesus lived His life surrounded by people both men and women. (Luke 8:1-3)
3. There are many New Testament examples that teach us as Christians how to relate to one another. Some of these examples are:
 - Be devoted to one another. (Romans 12:10)
 - Agree with one another. (Romans 12:16; I Corinthians 1:10; I Peter 3:8)
 - Love one another. (Romans 13:8; I Peter 1:22; I John 3:11; I John 3:23; I John 4:7; I John 4:11-12; II John 1:5)
 - Accept one another. (Romans 15:14)
 - Greet one another. (Romans 16:16; Ephesians 5:19)
 - Serve one another. (Galatians 5:13; I Peter 4:9)
 - Bear with one another. (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13)
 - Be kind and compassionate to one another. (Ephesians 4:32)
 - Forgive one another. (Ephesians 4:32)
 - Teach one another. (Colossians 3:16)

- Encourage one another. (I Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 3:13; Hebrews 10:24-25)
- Fellowship with one another. (I John 1:7)
- Walk in humility towards one another. (I Peter 5:5)

Acts 12:12

*“When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where **many were gathered together and were praying**” (emphasis added).*

- The early church typically met in homes. (Acts 2:2; Acts 5:42, Acts 8:3; Acts 20:20; Romans 16:5; I Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2)
- Meeting in a house provides a more natural and welcoming environment.

Acts 2:42-47

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

- The early church devoted themselves to:
 - The apostles’ teaching. (Acts 2:42)
 - Fellowship. (Acts 2:42)
 - The breaking of bread. (Acts 2:42)
 - Prayer. (Acts 2:42)
- “Devoted” means, along with other things, “to continue to do something with intense effort in spite of possible difficulty.”
- Their devotion and fellowship resulted in the Kingdom of God expanding rapidly, despite persecution.

LIFE GROUPS AND DISCIPLESHIP

1. Life groups help facilitate the discipleship process.
2. Life groups are a place where an individual's foundations can be seen and solidified.
3. True transformation takes place in an atmosphere where:
 - The Word is shared.
 - People are open and transparent.
 - Prayer and outreach are happening.
4. Life groups are a place where the 4E's can be lived out:
 - Engaging the lost.
 - Establishing believers.
 - Equipping the saints for the work of ministry.
 - Empowering and releasing ministers.
5. Life groups are a place where practical needs can be met, such as hospital visitations, providing meals, household needs, etc. (Acts 2:45)

MAIN OBJECTIVES

1. The 3 C's of a life group are:
 - Connect with God.
 - Connect with one another.
 - Connect with the world.

CONNECT WITH GOD

1. Connecting with God in a life group setting happens through:
 - Worship
 - Prayer
 - Discussing the Bible

CONNECT WITH ONE ANOTHER

1. Warm-up questions help us learn about each other's stories, things we enjoy, etc.
2. As the Word is discussed, we can be edified by the insights and experiences of others.
3. Part of connecting with others in a life group is helping each other apply the Word of God to our lives.
 - We can help one another find practical ways to apply the Word to our every day lives.
 - We can hold one another accountable.
 - We can pray for one another to have the grace to apply the Word.
4. Praying together paves the way for transparency in the group and allows for times of encouragement.

CONNECT WITH THE WORLD

1. Creating a loving and welcoming environment that an unsaved person would feel comfortable in is a vital part of a growing a healthy life group.
 - Start and end on time.
 - Offer refreshments.
 - Have engaging warm up questions.
 - Discuss the Word and offer prayer for any of their needs so God can reveal Himself to them.
2. Plan intentional outreach opportunities to invite unsaved people to your life group. (ex: game night, bowling night, potluck, etc.)
 - As a life group, plan intentional outreach opportunities to serve the church and community together.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the importance of Life Groups in the context of discipleship.
2. What is the difference between equipping and empowering a believer? Give examples.
3. Have you or your family ever had a practical need met by a Life Group or other believers? Have you and/or your life group ever been a part of meeting someone else's practical need? What did it look like?
4. Have you ever been to a life group and seen the Acts 2:42-47 principles applied? If so, what did it look like? If not, describe what the Life Group was like.

HOMEWORK

1. If you lead a Life Group, plan one intentional outreach opportunity for your Life Group during the next month. *(If you attend or co-lead a Life Group, ask your leader if you can help them plan an outreach opportunity during the next month).* Write a paragraph report answering the following questions:
 - What group of people will you be reaching out to? (homeless, widows, unsaved, local church, etc.)
 - How will you reach out to them?
 - How can your Life Group continue building a relationship with this group of people?
2. If you are not in a Life Group, visit one in the next three weeks. After visiting, write a paragraph report answering the following questions:
 - What is the makeup of the group? (men, women, married couples, co-ed, etc.)
 - What was the discussion about?
 - How long did the Life Group meet?
 - Were the 3 C's accomplished in some way? If so, how?