



LIFEGROUP LEADER TRAINING MANUAL

2017-2018

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WELCOME!

Welcome to the exciting adventure of leading a LifeGroup! This manual is designed to equip you in your experience of being a LifeGroup Leader at Creekside Church. In it you'll find an overview of the culture that we're working to create at Creekside, communities of people who Follow Jesus, Love God and Love People. You'll see how that translates into LifeGroup ministry. You'll also find lots of tools and ideas that should prove useful as you lead a LifeGroup in the coming months and years.

My prayer for you is that God would use your experience of leading a LifeGroup to grow you more in love with Him and more in love with the people you lead.

May you experience His love, His power and His grace this year!

Jeff
Philippians 1:3-6

“They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”
Acts 2:46-47

CREEKSIDE'S DISCIPLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

At Creekside Church, we want to do all we can to help people become fully devoted disciples (followers) of Jesus. Our discipleship development strategy comes from this desire and is grounded in our church mission statement and the Bible.

Creekside's Mission Statement

Our mission statement is three short power packed phrases.

Follow Jesus. Love God. Love people.

Creekside Church is a growing faith community that welcomes everyone, wherever they are on their spiritual journey. We are passionate about helping people explore, encounter, live and share the life-changing message of Jesus, about facilitating authentic spiritual growth among Jesus' followers and about challenging and mobilizing people to serve – locally, globally and at Creekside.

How LifeGroups Fit into our Mission Statement.

At Creekside we believe that the best environment for spiritual growth happens in relationships. LifeGroup is a place where we practice activities that can form us in the image of Jesus. It is in a LifeGroup that we turn our chairs inward to face one another, where we build relationships, know each other on a deeper level, and experience the ups and downs of life in community.

LifeGroup is a place where we learn what it means to **follow Jesus**. As we discuss the weekly lessons, wrestle through how the Bible applies to our life, pray for one another and serve together, we live out what it means to be followers of Jesus.

In LifeGroup we learn what it means to **love God** with our heart, mind, soul and strength. In LifeGroup we encourage one another in ways we might love God more, not just on Sunday morning, but in the reality of daily life.

In LifeGroup we learn how to **love people**. It is in LifeGroup that we can be real about our struggles, our weaknesses, our sin. LifeGroup provides a context where we can love one another even though we discover that we are far from perfect. LifeGroup is a place where we can learn how to heal and grow our relationships with one another and other people in our lives.

HOW LIFEGROUPS FIT WITH THE BIBLE

Creekside Church exists to help people follow Jesus, love God and love people. The question is, how do we do that? We believe a key component of spiritual growth happens when we meet together in biblical community, in intentional relationships where we are encouraged to grow. We see community as the way God has grown people throughout history – it's a model we find over and over again in the pages of the New Testament. Let's take a look at three key images from the Bible that teach us about the role and nature of the church.

A Spiritual Family

One of the ways the New Testament describes the church is that we are a spiritual family, brothers and sisters in the family of God. As Christ-followers, our relationships go much deeper than having similar interests or things in common. There is a deep bond that holds us together – we are one in Christ, and we are called to live that out in the ways we live and interact with one another. LifeGroup is the basic family unit at Creekside. It is the place where we gather to do life together. It is in listening to each other, growing together, and caring for one another through the highs and lows of life that we experience what it means to be brothers and sisters.

(Gal 6:10; Eph 3:15; Eph 5:1; Rom 8:16-17; Phil 2:15)

The Temple of God

Another image we find in Scripture is that as the community of believers we are the Temple of God. This is a radical teaching that would have been packed with meaning for the first-century Jew who heard it. In the Old Testament, the temple was the place where the presence of God dwelt. It was the place people would go to experience the holiness of God. It was also the place of God's mercy – the place where sacrifices were offered and the sins of the people forgiven. How amazing, then, that in the New Testament we are told that as the church we are now God's temple! It is when we gather in relationship that we come face to face with the presence of God. It is through the community that mercy is offered and sins are forgiven. God is not confined to a particular place or building. It is wherever two or more are gathered in the name of Jesus.

(1 Cor 3:16; 1 Cor 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21)

The Body of Christ

Finally, we are told in Scripture that as the church we are the body of Christ. That is, we are the ones who are called to be the tangible presence of Christ in our communities and around the world. The life of our community is to reflect God's love to the world, and we are to be Christ's hands and feet as we minister to those in need. When Jesus was on earth, wherever he went he brought hope, mercy, grace, and love. The sick were healed, the lost were brought home, and sins were forgiven. Your LifeGroup is the body of Christ, ministering Jesus' love, mercy, grace and healing to a world that desperately needs Jesus.

(1 Cor. 12:12-31; Rom 12:4-8)

WHY LIFEGROUP?

Here are eight reasons why we believe LifeGroups are the way to go.

The Bible is better understood and personally applied in a small community

If you've ever listened to a Bible teacher and wanted to stop that person and say, "*But what about ...?*" or "*I don't understand!*", then you know why a small community is so important. Preaching and teaching is one-way communication – you listen while the speaker speaks. It's fine for imparting knowledge but less effective for personal application. In a smaller community, everyone can ask questions, participate in a discussion of the text, and hear others share insights and illustrations of the truth. The Bible must be applied personally and that happens best in a LifeGroup setting.

Being a part of God's family moves from theory to practice

Most people who have been a part of a group say that the greatest benefit is the close relationships they develop. Many group members connect with each other during the week to share an urgent prayer request or an exciting answer. It helps to know that others are facing the same difficulties, or have lived through them and learned spiritual principles in the process. Over fifty times in the New Testament, the phrase "one another" is used to describe our relationship to other believers. We are to love one another, encourage one another, pray for one another, accept one another, carry another's burdens, and build-up one another. We really do need each other. God never intended our relationship with him to be a solo effort. Joining his family means entering into intimate community and Sunday services are just not the best place to accomplish this. We all need an experience that in more intimate and interactive ways.

Prayer becomes more meaningful

Many people are hesitant to pray in front of others, especially in a large church. In a Life Group people can learn to participate in prayer by having a conversation together with God. No one is pressured to pray, but as they become comfortable, they'll be able to join in small ways. Beyond this, there are many promises in the Bible related to group prayer. Jesus said, "*Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything and ask for it, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.*" (Matthew 18:19-20) When we pray together in small groups we experience Jesus' presence with us and we find help for the needs in our lives.

Personal support is immediately available during times of stress and pressure

When someone contacts our church who is in crisis or has a practical need, one of the first questions we ask is, "Are you in a LifeGroup?" A LifeGroup can be the first point of contact for caring for it's members, by visiting a group member who is in the hospital, or arranging meals for a family in your group who is in need. Many at Creekside testify to the practical support they received through their LifeGroup during a difficult time.

WHY LIFEGROUP?

Another opportunity for outreach is made available

Some of your friends and neighbours would never visit our church on a Sunday morning, but they may be open to coming by your place for a Christmas party with your group, or even joining your group for a few weeks for a study. A LifeGroup is a place where seekers can see Christian community in action, where they can experience the difference Jesus makes in a life. Your group could well be the most powerful experience of Jesus your friends or neighbours have.

Leadership skills have the chance to develop in a safe environment

The Bible teaches that every believer is given certain talents or “gifts” to benefit others in the family of God. Unfortunately most Christians remain Sunday morning spectators all their lives because large group meetings are primarily “sit and listen” situations. As people share and participate in a LifeGroup, they can naturally grow their strengths and abilities to minister to others. A key role you have as a leader is to invite your LifeGroup members to take on roles in the group. This moves your group members from spectators to participants and it stretches their faith muscles. Getting involved, even in a small way, can be a key spiritual growth step for your members!

Worship can take on new and deeper meaning

Many people mistakenly believe that “worship” only happens on Sunday morning when we meet together for church. Actually, we ARE the church and worship is our LIFE! A key part of LifeGroup is to help people experience God in worship. We are not just to talk ABOUT God in group, but to talk TO Him, to praise Him for who He is and for what He’s done. In LifeGroup, group members can experience God on a new level and learn to worship Him in new and meaningful ways.

The New Testament becomes 3-D

The books of Acts is some of the most exciting reading in the Bible! In this book we get to read about the acts of the early church, what God did in and through them. But God doesn’t just want us to read it. He wants us to live it! In LifeGroup, you get to be the continuing story of the church. Connecting with God and each other in LifeGroup makes the New Testament 3-D, because together you get to experience being the church!

LEADING A LIFEGROUP

Qualifications of a LifeGroup Leader

The role of the LifeGroup Leader is to provide spiritual leadership and shepherding to members of the group. A leader will fit well into the following description. A LifeGroup leader has ...

- 1) A deep desire to follow Jesus.** You don't have to be perfect. (that's a relief!) We are looking for people who are surrendered to Jesus and who have a track record of spiritual integrity. (Philippians 3:12-14)

- 2) A desire to see group members grow.** The ideal leader is a person who is intentional about helping their group members follow Jesus, love God and love people. This person is mission-minded. They are fired up about what God can do in their group. They develop and execute a plan of how to encourage their LifeGroup members to grow spiritually. They enjoy building relationships with their group members and listening to their life stories. They are able to lead an effective LifeGroup meeting, are able to manage conflict in a healthy way and are intentionally praying for and sharing leadership responsibilities in the group. (1 Peter 5:2-4)

- 3) A heart to serve.** A group leader naturally wants to serve their group members, because this is what Jesus did. They also have a vision to serve in our region in order to have an influence in our community for Christ. (Matthew 20:28)

- 4) A chemistry with our Leadership Team.** The leader should love Creekside Church. The leader should get excited by our mission and strategy, and relate well with our Leadership Team. The Leadership Team is a family. Our love for each other should be evident. (1 John 3:11)

- 5) A member of Creekside Church or pursuing membership.** A leader is someone who has participated in our class, "Explore Creekside". A leader knows and resonates with the vision of Creekside Church. Membership at Creekside is simply a commitment to be part of the Creekside family. Please contact Jeff or another staff member to learn more about the process for becoming a member at Creekside.

What is the process for becoming a LifeGroup Leader?

Anyone wishing to become a LifeGroup Leader in their existing LifeGroup or to launch a new LifeGroup should first contact the LifeGroups Pastor. The LifeGroups Pastor will then walk them through a process for determining their suitability for the role. This may include conversations with the leader in their current LifeGroup, as well as time spent getting to know the potential leader. If a decision is made to continue to pursue the role, the potential leaders will then go through the training process and complete the Life Group Leader Profile (see back of binder). The LifeGroups Pastor will make the final decision to affirm someone as a LifeGroup Leader.

Overview of the Training Process:

Training Manual Overview:

Every LifeGroup leader should work their way through the content of this manual.

LifeGroup Leader Meetings:

This year our goal is to gather as LifeGroup leaders 3 times – September will be our LifeGroup Leader kick-off meeting, then we'll meet again in January and in May. Our goal in meeting together is to inspire you with our vision for LifeGroups, to equip you with a practical skill and to huddle together with other leaders for encouragement and prayer.

The Navigator Small Group Network:

You will have opportunity, along with other leaders from Creekside, to participate in a leadership training day and a small group symposium with leaders from other churches across K-W. As part of the Navigator Small Group Network Creekside benefits from these live training opportunities as well as ongoing resources and support. www.smallgroupsnetwork.net

Don't Lose Heart: A Leader's Vision

You are a strategic player in the heavenly realm. Helping a few others grow in Christ could put you squarely in the sights of Satan himself. 1 Corinthians 15:58 (NASB) says, "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Leading a group is not always going to be easy.

Here are the keys to longevity and lasting joy as a leader:

- Be sure to refuel your soul as you give yourself to others. Ask a person to meet with you for personal coaching and encouragement. When asked (over coffee or lunch) to support someone in leadership, nine out of ten people say, "I'd love to!" So why not ask?
- Delegate responsibilities after the first meeting. Doing so will help group members grow, and it will give you a break as well.
- Most importantly, cultivating your own walk with God puts you on the offensive against Satan and increases the joy zone for everyone in your life. Make a renewed decision right now to make this happen. Don't give Satan a foothold in your heart; there is simply too much at stake.

Source: Doing Life Together magazine – fall 2012

THE CORE PURPOSES OF LIFEGROUPS

LifeGroups at Creekside Church are designed to help group members follow Jesus, Love God and Love People. What follows is an overview of how these three core purposes translate into Life Group.

FOLLOW JESUS

Each of us has a unique story about our relationship with God. Some of us grew up going to church every Sunday. Others of us didn't attend a church before Creekside. No matter what your experience, a LifeGroup gives you a place where you can take the next step in following Jesus.

The weekly meeting should be an environment where people have the chance to grow spiritually. Here are three things we can offer people as we seek to equip and encourage them in their growth.

Knowledge – People need to UNDERSTAND

- Have you prepared for the meeting by reviewing the LifeGroup curriculum?
- Is the group encouraged to summarize and restate biblical truths?
- Do people have an outlet for their questions?

IDEA: Give each study break-out group a piece of paper with the heading "The Big Idea". Before they begin answering any of the LifeGroup questions, have them read through the passage that is the focus for the night and summarize it in one sentence. Have them write this sentence on the piece of paper to share later with the group.

Trust – People need to feel SAFE

- Is your group structured for consistent relationships?
- Is there an environment where weaknesses and struggles are dealt with?
- Are you modeling vulnerability for the group?

IDEA: Have one member of the group share his or her "testimony" or spiritual story at the start of each meeting. This kind of sharing can often act as a springboard to greater openness in discussions in the group.

Strategy – People need to have a PLAN

- Are group members reading the Bible? Encourage them to check out www.creeksidechurch.ca/bible and check out the resources in Appendix F

IDEA: At the end of the meeting, have everyone write their commitment in response to the week's study on an index card. Encourage them to put it in a place where they can see it all week, then bring it to the next meeting to report their progress.

THE CORE PURPOSES OF LIFEGROUPS

LOVE GOD

Our Sunday morning teaching makes a great springboard for a dynamic LifeGroup study. LifeGroup is a place where we can discuss, debate, analyze, digest, and ultimately seek to live out the truth that is introduced in the teaching.

We encourage all our LifeGroups work through the Sunday curriculum, especially at key times of the year such as when we have a campaign in the fall and in the winter/spring.

Here are two great reasons to encourage your group to use Creekside's study:

- ☛ The Big Idea. God wants to do something collectively in our midst, to change and form us as a church community to be more like Jesus. As we all focus together on the same topic, God works to form us as his family.
- ☛ We need time to focus on what God wants to do in us. We believe this is best accomplished as we focus on one message, or theme, in a week.

Here are a few thoughts on making the most of your LifeGroup questions in group:

Review the study ahead of time.

You don't need to spend hours looking up every verse in three different commentaries. All you need to do is stay one step ahead of the group. Arrive at group with a basic overview of the questions and Scriptures in mind. When it's available, watch the "leader lifter" for the study before you meet. These practices will help you be ready to lead the group meeting effectively.

Treat the study as a resource, not the law.

The success of your LifeGroup meeting is not measured by whether you are able to check off every single question for the week. The LifeGroup study is meant to be a helpful tool, and you should feel free to adapt it to your particular group context as needed. Sometimes this will mean focusing on one particular question for deeper discussion. Other times you may have different breakout groups to look up different passages and report their findings at the end of the study. Other times you may let go of the LifeGroup questions all together, and follow another thread raised by the weekend teaching or need in your group.

Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know."

As the leader, you are not expected to have all the answers! Your goal is to facilitate a process of community learning where everyone brings their knowledge and their questions to the table. At times, questions will come up in your LifeGroup that leave the group feeling stuck. In these times, it is usually good to make a note of the question and have someone agree to report back the following week with an answer.

THE CORE PURPOSES OF LIFEGROUPS

Q & Eh

Some of us want to go deeper than we can go with the LifeGroup questions. How can we continue to grow?

It depends on what you mean by going deeper. Often in Western Christianity we have associated this with simply growing in our knowledge of the Bible – learning more information through study and discussion. This is a great thing to do, but it's incomplete if we stop there. We want to be intentional about always moving from information to transformation. If what you mean by your question is that you have routinely incorporated the weekly teachings into the daily flow of your life and are living them out consistently, then that's great. (Hey, you deserve a pat on the back). If you mean you want to dig deeper into the details of Scripture, learning more about the historical context, theology and exegesis, we would just advise that you be careful about doing this at the expense of personal application. At Creekside we see "going deeper" in a holistic way. By going deeper we mean growing in how we FOLLOW JESUS, LOVE GOD, LOVE PEOPLE. This well rounded approach seems to best reflect what Jesus describes in the Great Commandment and Great Commission.

There are people in our group who are into the social side of LifeGroup, but don't seem interested in really growing. What can we do to encourage them to take spiritual growth seriously?

That's a great question. It shows that you are really aware of how people in your group are doing, and that you want to be intentional about challenging them in all the right ways. We would encourage you to work to create a climate in your LifeGroup where opportunities for significant spiritual growth are the norm. How people respond to those opportunities is out of your hands, and you can let yourself off the hook for feeling that it is your responsibility to "make them grow". What you want to avoid is lowering the bar to the point that those who are really hungry for growth are feeling that it's lacking in the group. Focus your energies on those who really do want it, and invite others to jump in as they're ready.

THE CORE PURPOSES OF LIFEGROUPS

LOVE PEOPLE – Deepening Relationships in your Group

LifeGroups are designed to help build significant relationships with other group members. As you meet, your friendships can naturally develop to the point that you are connecting with one another outside of the group meetings and contacting each other for help and encouragement. As you do this, you can encourage each other to grow spiritually and walk with each other through the joys and challenges of everyday life.

Helping people feel at home

From the moment they walk through the door, people should have the sense that Life Group is a place where they can be comfortable and free to be themselves. Before digging into Scripture and being challenged in their spiritual growth, before being called and mobilized to serve in the community, people need to feel loved.

Here are some thoughts on how we can create an environment in LifeGroup that helps people feel at home from the beginning.

- Get To Know Each Other, Especially When Your Group is New:

If your group is new, you should focus significant time and energy on getting to know each other. Some may object and say, "But we joined this group to get into the Word!" While it's true that LifeGroup is a great place to study the Bible, we must know each other well enough to be used by God to help one another live out what we're reading. You'll find some great tips on how to build relationships on the next page.

- Create a welcoming environment

A relatively tidy home, a pot of coffee brewing, pleasant music in the background ...all these little things send signals that people are welcome. Prepare in a similar way to when you have good friends over for dinner. Let them know how much you value their presence. To counterbalance this, the LifeGroup experience isn't a competition to see who can be the most like Martha Stewart! The goal is to create a relaxed environment, not a black tie affair.

- Manage your time well

People are busy and many are making a sacrifice to attend LifeGroup. Make sure you use your time well. This means starting and ending on time, and keeping the evening focused and productive.

- Explain what you're doing

For someone who is new to Creekside, or to Christianity in general, almost everything at LifeGroup has the potential to be new and intimidating. When your group is first starting, or when someone new visits your group, try to explain what you're doing as you proceed through the meeting, in language that someone from outside the church can understand. What is worship? Why are we studying our Bibles? Does everyone have to pray out loud during prayer? Quick comments on each of these can help set people at ease.

- Let people participate at their own pace

Unless you know a person well, it is usually not a good idea to single people out to answer a question or lead in prayer. Some people may want to hang back for awhile. Allow time for people to get used to the LifeGroup environment and join in at their own pace.

Belonging Beyond the Weekly Meeting

You can only develop so much community in a couple hours a week. The LifeGroup meeting is not the only place we invest in and enjoy relationships with others in our group. In fact, if we limit ourselves only to the formal meeting, we will find that we miss out on much of the best that LifeGroup has to offer. Think of the weekly meeting not as an end point, but as a starting point – a springboard to gatherings, conversations, and connections that can happen throughout the week.

Social Events

A healthy LifeGroup experience will definitely include regular times where the group gets together just for fun. You will find that moving beyond the context of a living room brings out a different side of people you thought you knew, and allows people to express their gifts and talents in amazing ways. It is also fertile ground for those unplanned conversations and memorable moments that are the stuff of community life. Below are some things you might want to consider doing as a group. No doubt you will think of many others!

- Pot luck dinner
- Pool party
- Fall hike
- Group bike ride
- Bowling night
- Sporting event
- Movie night
- Super Bowl party
- Bonfire
- Attend a concert or play
- Join a soccer league
- Games night
- Picnic or BBQ in a local park

The Importance of Follow-up

People want to feel that they are a part of things, that if they weren't there they would be missed. Following up regularly with people outside of weekly meetings - whether by phone, email, or over coffee – is perhaps the single most effective way to help people feel that they are an important part of the group.

There are three main groups of people you will want to follow up with in some intentional way:

First Time Visitors – When someone visits your group for the first time, try to have someone contact them within a day or two to thank them for being there. This can be a great chance to find out how they felt about the meeting, answer any question they might have, and invite them out for the next week. This simple act may be the difference between them deciding to become part of the group or not.

Regulars who are Missing Meetings – If someone has been a fairly regular attender, and suddenly misses two or three meetings in a row, it is a good idea to check in to see how they're doing. Even if nothing is wrong, it can mean the world to people to know that they are thought of and missed.

People in Crisis – If someone is connected with your group in any way, and you know they are going through a difficult time, a phone call can be a great way to show you care. Whether they are dealing with the death of a family member, or just preparing for a stressful job interview, let them know they are on your radar during the week.

Dealing with the Challenging Group Member

In your role as LifeGroup Leader, you will likely at some point come across someone who is a challenge to the dynamics of the group. This is part of what happens when we get people together in community, so don't be discouraged! By being prepared and having some strategies and tools for dealing with various challenging group members, you can minimize disruptions and distractions. First, a few key reminders as we head into this topic ...

All of us can be the challenging group members at times

When we talk about challenging group members, we're not just talking about a few "problem" people. All of us at different times or in different contexts can be the challenging group member. It might be something we are doing to get on others' nerves or just a blind spot that keeps us from seeing how we affect group dynamics. Realizing that all of us can fall into these traps keeps us humble as we approach these situations.

Take ownership of the process

When someone is disrupting the discussion or causing an unhealthy dynamic in the group, all eyes are on you as the leader to do something about it. This is the time to step in and take the lead. Don't assume that group dynamics issues will sort themselves out on their own – they usually don't.

Apply the love ethic – What is best for this person?

When we talk about dealing with the challenging group member, we're not talking about techniques for shutting people down. Remember, our ultimate goal is to work towards what is best for them *and* the group.

Stages in Dealing with Group Disruptions

Step 1 – Prevention

Establish group guidelines at the beginning of the year and review them periodically as a group – this can save you a lot of awkwardness later.

Step 2 – Redirection

Use your group process skills to graciously redirect on the spot. If necessary, repeat the group norms conversation with everyone, giving particular emphasis to the pertinent issue. When that conversation is fresh in mind, do "on the job training" by reminding people as the issues come up.

Step 3 – Confrontation

At times it will be necessary to have a one-on-one conversation with the person involved, either before or after the meeting, or during the week. If you feel the issue has reached this level, be sure to involve your LifeGroups Pastor and look through the guidelines below.

Some Biblical Advice

- Matthew 7:1-5
- Galatians 6:1-5
- Matthew 18:15-17

Dealing with the Challenging Group Member

Preparing for Confrontation

1. Do your “plank-check” (Matthew 18:15-17): take some time to write down how you respond to this person, what your issues are that make you react so strongly.
2. Meditate on the person in question:
 - Condition – Does the difficulty stem from a medical condition that is causing the issue?
 - Crisis – Is the person going through a season of life that is particularly difficult?
 - Character – Is something broken inside of the individual that needs to be mentored and developed?
3. Pray for the person
4. Think about a reasonable outcome and plan your conversation to that end.
5. Talk to other leaders for input.

Q & Eh

Our LifeGroup is taking a long time to develop community. It’s hard to get a conversation going during the meetings, and as soon as we close in prayer they head out the door. What are some things I can do to help foster a sense of community in the group?

Begin doing things outside your regular group meeting. Include some food. Give people plenty of notice so they can be there, and make it fun. Once you get people outside the context of a living room discussion where they feel pressure to come up with insightful comments about the Bible, it is amazing how things will open up. You can also try to think of simple ways to break the routine. End your meeting early and walk to the local ice cream store. People will naturally strike up conversations on the way and friendships will begin to form.

One of our group members is pulling our meetings off track almost every week and I need to speak with him about it. But he’s so sensitive that I’m afraid if I say anything, he will just leave the group. How can I approach this so he won’t be offended?

The question you ask refers to a common problem – we are afraid to hurt someone’s feelings so we shy away from a tough conversation. In fact, both the person and the group are usually better served by an honest, direct, and loving conversation about the issue. Also, you do not need to feel that everyone needs to stay in the group at all costs. If someone is appropriately confronted about a legitimate issue and decides to leave the group, sometimes the appropriate response is just to let them go.

Celebrate Recovery www.creeksidechurch/cr

Our Celebrate Recovery ministry exists to minister to anyone with hurts, habits or hang-ups and to help them experience Christ-centered recovery. This can be a great place to refer anyone in your group who is struggling. Consider visiting Celebrate Recovery together as a group!

THE CORE PURPOSES OF LIFEGROUPS

LOVE PEOPLE – SHARING JESUS' LOVE IN OUR REGION

When Jesus was here on earth, he influenced people around him by loving and serving them. Today we are Jesus' hands and feet. A key way to reach out to people outside the church is to share Jesus' love with them through serving.

This year your group will have opportunity to give back to our community through regularly engaging in practical service. Our dream is to connect LifeGroups with serving through *Saturday-4-Serve*, a monthly serving event your whole group can participate in, and through connecting your group with agencies in our community where you can establish relationships and have influence over time.

Here are some suggestions on how to help your LifeGroup become a place where you're regularly sharing Jesus' love in our region through acts of compassion and serving.

Find a person in your group to be the SERVE Champion. Do you have someone in your group with a heart for meeting the practical needs of others? Is there someone in your group who has the gift of serving or administration? This may be the ideal person to help your LifeGroup serve together! The role of the SERVE Champion is to envision the group through praying for opportunities and searching for them, to mobilize the group through developing a practical plan, and to encourage the group to consistently serve over time.

Contact our LifeGroup Pastor for ideas. A number of people on our Leadership Team work together to provide you with a list of agencies and practical needs that could be fulfilled by your LifeGroup.

Choose one Serve Project and Stick With it for the Year. Consider serving with one of our local partner organizations, the Sunnydale Community Centre, or the Ray of Hope Community Centre. Info. at www.creeksidechurch.ca/localmissions

Watch for Opportunities to Express Compassion in Your Neighbourhood

Is someone in your neighbourhood out of work? Is a family dealing with illness or loss? What might your group do to help? The love of Jesus is keenly felt in times of crisis and need. You never know how your group's act of compassion may lead someone to Jesus.

Consider Going on a Short-Term Mission Project as a Group

Another dream we have for LifeGroups is that each year one or two of our LifeGroups would go on a short-term missions project. Carmen Bajo Church, our sister church in Quito, Ecuador, or Victory Christian Centre in Jinja, Uganda would be a great place to consider ministering as a group!

We dream of a day when every year, we would have groups that GO on a missions trip, and the rest of our Life Groups become SENDING groups, groups of people who pray and support those who are going. Contact Mike Onotsky, our missions team director, for more info: mike@onotsky.net

LOVE PEOPLE

– SHARING JESUS' LOVE IN OUR REGION

Q & Eh

We have a group member who is so needy that some of us in the group are beginning to feel burned out caring for him. I know we don't have to solve every person's problems, but how do we know where to draw the line?

Of course there are times we need to set boundaries. You and your LifeGroup cannot do everything for everyone. The question is where those boundaries lie. Your LifeGroups pastor and fellow leaders can be a great resource in helping you determine this.

How do I motivate our LifeGroup to become involved in serving when they just don't seem interested?

The first step here might be to try to discern what lies at the root of the problem. Are people unclear about what's being asked or unsure about what to do? Are there people who are struggling with apathy or distracted by other concerns? Facilitate a study or discussion on our call to serve others with compassion, and invite people to be honest with their thoughts and feelings on the issue. Once we understand what the real barrier is, we are much better equipped to try and remove it.

Our LifeGroup is excited about getting involved with serving, but we keep running into roadblocks. Either people's schedules don't fit together, or we are waiting on police checks to come through, or we plan something and only a few people show up. How can we get momentum when everything takes so long?

Now that's just crazy. We've never heard of anything like this happening before. Okay, okay, what you're describing is pretty normal. Almost every group experiences some hiccups in getting rolling with compassion as a regular part of group life. The truth is, this stuff can be really hard and it can be complicated. There are all kinds of organizational details and ingrained attitudes that can make it tough to get going. On the administrative side, we will do everything we can to help you be a success. We will help to investigate opportunities, set up meetings with groups and agencies and monitor progress. We want to make this a rewarding experience for you and free you as much as we can from the hassles. Keep at it and make it a priority. Consider attending the Saturday-4-Serve events this year to get your serving efforts started. This is such a core part of who we are called to be as Christ-followers that we cannot afford to make it an afterthought in our group life.

RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL LIFEGROUP MEETING

As you prepare for your weekly meeting, here are some basic tips:

PRAY: Begin with prayer: Pray for each of your group members, that God would work in their lives as you meet together. Pray for the meeting, that God would use your gathering to inspire each of you to follow Jesus, love God and love people. Pray for yourself, that God would bless your efforts and work through you!

PLAN: Plan for your meeting. A good meeting balances time to connect with God and with each other. You'll find some ideas for how to do this in the following pages.

PROVIDE ministry opportunities for others in your group: One of the most strategic things you can do as a leader is to invite others to have a role in your group meeting. This is not about off loading responsibilities, rather, when you invite your group members to have a role, it can be a key step in their spiritual growth! As you look at your meeting plan, ask God who you might invite to take on roles. Ideas: Have someone in your group create a snack schedule where everyone takes turns bringing refreshments. Ask group members to take turns hosting the group. Ask group members to take turns leading the study (hint: A video study can take a big load off people's worry about leading) .

Relax, and let the Holy Spirit lead.

Remember that the LifeGroup meeting is really God's meeting. As you prayerfully submit yourself to God's agenda for the meeting, God will use you and other group members to grow each other in Christ.

ESSENTIALS FOR THE WEEKLY MEETING

CONNECT WITH GOD. CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

Worship

Every LifeGroup meeting should have a time set aside to CONNECT with God. Often we think of worship in terms of musical worship – singing praises to God together. Many groups will want to do this, whether someone brings an instrument to play or you sing along to pre-recorded music. But there are other creative ways to worship, including speaking out praises or quiet reflection. Feel free to experiment and find out what works best in your own context.

(For creative worship ideas for your group, check Appendix A at the back of this manual)

Study

The study provides another great opportunity to CONNECT with God as we open our Bibles and hear what God has to say on a given topic. This is normally a time to dig deeper into teaching from the weekend, discuss any questions that people may have after Sunday, and look into scriptures relating to our topic for the week. If your LG has more than 10 members, consider creating smaller groups of 4 or 5 people, where everyone has a chance to share and participate. People learn best when they are actively engaged in the process.

ESSENTIALS FOR THE WEEKLY MEETING

CONNECT WITH GOD. CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

Prayer

We believe that LifeGroups should be a wonderful place to CONNECT with God and CONNECT with each other as we praise Him for who He is, thank Him for the blessings in our lives and bring our requests before Him. Jesus said in Matthew 18:19-20, *“Again I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”* James, the brother of Jesus, wrote, *“Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up.”* (James 5:16-18) Both of these passages indicate that God’s power works through people praying together in agreement. Everyone who comes to LifeGroup should have a chance to be prayed for as part of the evening.

(For prayer ideas and tips, see Appendix E)

Community

We need to make sure that our meetings include time for people to just hang out and CONNECT with each other. It is easy to dismiss this time of casual conversation or chatting over coffee as less “spiritual” or somewhat less important. In fact, it is one of the best expressions of what it means for us to be the church. There is nothing second-best about investing time in building relationships. Structure your meetings intentionally to include “unstructured” time. People will want to catch up on the week, share how they have been praying for each other, or get to know newcomers to the group. And, of course, it doesn’t hurt to have a little food around while all this happens!

Compassion

Every LifeGroup meeting should include some time focused on the compassionate work the group is doing whether together or on their own. Our hope is that your group would serve together in our region at least twice in the year.

Discover the Power of Pairs

The best resolutions get swept aside by busyness and forgetfulness, which is why it’s important for group members to have support as they pursue a spiritual goal. Have your group members pair up with

ESSENTIALS FOR THE WEEKLY MEETING

Ideas for Schedule

Here are some ideas for scheduling your meeting time. Consider changing your schedule occasionally to experience new dynamics of being a group together.

A Typical Life Group Meeting – Model A

7:30 pm	Gather and hang-out
7:45 pm	Worship
8:00 pm	Review study
8:10 pm	Breakout into discussion groups
8:50 pm	Prayer within breakout groups
9:10 pm	Debrief as a large group (discuss serve project plans)
9:20 pm	Hang-out and dismiss

A Typical Life Group Meeting – Model B

7:30 pm	Gather and hang-out
7:45 pm	Worship
8:00 pm	Breakout for prayer
8:20 pm	Review study and discuss as a large group
9:10 pm	Debrief as a large group (serve focus)
9:20 pm	Hang-out and dismiss

Scrap the Agenda!

Of course, sometimes your LifeGroup meeting should be anything but typical. From time to time you'll want to take a break from your usual rhythm and try something new;

- Devote an entire evening to prayer and worship
- Celebrate communion together
- Go for a prayer walk in your neighbourhood
- Go on a field trip
- Have a night where everyone brings something that represents them
- Hold a "guys" and "girls" night where each group makes their own plans
- Invite a special guest to visit you for an evening and share their story

PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING

How to Choose a Study

Many of our groups follow our Sunday Teaching Curriculum. During the months of September – May, Ken, Jeff and others on the Leadership Team put together a study based on the Sunday morning sermon. We find that many of our groups love the opportunity to dig deeper into how to apply what we've covered on Sunday.

This Sunday teaching curriculum is available on our church website at <http://www.creeksidechurch.ca/series.php> and hard copies are available at the Information area in the atrium. When you receive the study, take 15 minutes or so to look it over. Ask yourself which questions will be relevant to your LifeGroup this week. By the way, it's OK not to ask every question in the curriculum! You can choose as many or as few make sense for your group.

Your group is also free to pursue another study. If you're looking for study ideas, please feel free to contact Jeff, or you can also go to our LifeGroups website www.creeksidechurch.ca/lifegroups and click on "Study Topic Help" at the bottom of the page.

Study Resources for additional insights into the Bible:

- The New International Version Study Bible
- The Life Application Study Bible
- www.biblegateway.com - a great site to compare translations and to read commentary insights.

PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING

Here are some inspirational thoughts and tips for how to pray for your LifeGroup.

The most important thing you can do as a leader is to pray for your LifeGroup members and for your meetings. Without prayer, LifeGroup becomes just a religious activity. With prayer, we invite God to transform our lives as we meet together. Prayer is not only a value we find throughout the Bible, but research of more than 3000 small group leaders in more than 200 churches in 21 countries shows that the prayer life of the small group leader is the single most important factor in the health and growth of a LifeGroup! source [Small Groups Big Impact](#) Jim Egli.

For prayer ideas and encouragement, see "Preparing for Your Meeting" in this manual.

How to Pray for Your Small Group

Here are 10 tips to increase the frequency and effectiveness of your supplications.
by Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey | posted 4/23/2008 smallgroups.com

Many years ago, evangelist S. D. Gordon said, "The greatest thing anyone can do for God and man is to pray." After 25 years of leading small groups and coaching small-group leaders, I have come to one clear conviction: ***prayer is the most important activity of a small-group leader.*** In fact, if a group leader could only do one thing to make his or her group more effective, that one thing would be to pray.

Prayer is a fascinating tool for the person with a heart to minister to others. It is one of the simplest things we can do. All we need to do is sit down and lift someone up to the attention of God. Yet most of us will admit that prayer is one of the hardest things to do for others. We get busy. We get distracted. We get discouraged, and we just don't pray enough.

Highly effective small-group leaders view prayer as a non-negotiable aid in their ministry to others. They use it often and well. They build it into their daily schedules and make it a high priority. They don't just pray a little; they pray a lot.

Here are some tips to help you effectively pray for your small group.

1. **Have a set time, and a set amount of time, for prayer.** Those who don't have a set time for prayer rarely take the time to pray. Great people of prayer speak of their appointments with God. Most agree that the "when" of the time is not as important as actually having a time. So set aside a time when you will meet with God daily. Make it your unbreakable appointment with God.

It's also good to set a goal for the amount of time you will spend in prayer. A beginner may start with 10 to 15 minutes and grow from there. An hour in prayer would be a great goal to reach. If that seems like a lot, realize that the more we pray, the more God will work. The small-group leaders making the greatest impact are the leaders spending time in prayer.

2. **Have a usual place for prayer.** Our ability to focus and concentrate in prayer is enhanced by having a regular, private place for prayer. Jesus spoke of this private place in Matthew 6:5–7. He promised that the God who sees in secret will reward us openly by answering our prayers. Find a place where you can privately and passionately pour your heart out to God.

When my children were little, we lived in a very small house. I found that the best place for me to pray was the sidewalk of my neighborhood as I walked for exercise every morning. Now I pray in my office or as I walk on a nearby track in the mornings. I often go to a park and sit on a picnic table and pray. Again, where you pray is not important, but it's vital to find a "place" to pray.

3. **Have a plan for prayer.** Many great prayer warriors speak of using the disciple's prayer of Matthew 6:9–13 as a plan for prayer. They use it as an outline that includes worship (v. 9), petition (v. 10–11), and confession (v. 12). They cover these areas once or even several times when they pray.

Others use the acronym ACTS—Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication—as their prayer plan. But the specifics of the plan do not matter as much as having a plan in place.

4. **Have a place for recording requests and answers.** The weakest ink is better than the strongest memory. We do not want to forget someone's requests or needs, but often we do. It is valuable to have a list or, even better, a small notebook in which to record prayer requests. Then you have them right in front of you as you pray. It also becomes a testimony of the many prayers God has answered. When I get discouraged, I often get out one of my past prayer notebooks and look at all the answered prayers.
5. **Ask God to direct you to appropriate Scriptures.** Sometimes we are not sure what we should be praying into a person's life. When in doubt, Scripture is the best thing we can pray. Paul left some great examples of prayers he prayed for those under his care (Ephesians 1:17–19, 3:16–19; Philippians 1:9–11; Colossians 1:9–12; 1 Thessalonians 1:2–3). I have special verses God has directed me to pray regularly for my children, my wife, and my key leaders.

6. **Season your intercession with thanksgiving for each member.** It is easy to get frustrated with the people we are called to lead. They sometimes act like sheep, wandering off in all the wrong directions. The apostle Paul seemed to keep amazingly free from the frustrations of spiritual shepherding. I think one of the reasons for this was that he persistently thanked God for those sheep. Notice that Paul consistently begins his letters and prayers with words of gratitude to God for his people (Ephesians 1:16; Philippians 1:3–4; Colossians 1:3–4; 1 Thessalonians 1:2).
7. **Mix fasting with prayer for greater effectiveness.** Many prayer warriors have discovered a "secret" of prayer: fasting. Fasting is voluntary abstinence. It generally involves abstaining from food for a period of time in order to focus on God and give ourselves more wholly to prayer. Typically, fasting lasts for one complete 24-hour period—usually from sundown to sundown. The early church fasted two days every week, Wednesday and Friday. Pharisees fasted Tuesday and Thursday. Other biblical fasts ranged from 3 to 40 days. Both individual and corporate fasts are seen in the Scriptures.

I generally fast for about 20 hours before my small-group meets on Wednesday evenings. This means I eat dinner on Tuesday evening and then don't eat solid food until late afternoon on Wednesday. When I fast, the group seems to flow better, and I seem to do a more effective job as the leader.

8. **Pray through all possible elements of the group meeting before hand.** It is better to pray before trouble comes. Think of all the possible elements of your small-group meeting and bathe them in prayer. From the attendance to the worship, from the prayers to the discussion of the Word, cover each section with prayer. This will give you peace and confidence that God will be able to do all he wants to do in your gathering.
9. **Pray for your apprentice(s), and for the birth of future groups.** A key here is to remember that your group cannot multiply unless you find and develop apprentices to lead future groups. Jesus told his disciples to pray for the Lord of the harvest to raise up laborers (Matthew 9:38). Good apprentices are harvest laborers in the highest sense. They help you reap and maintain your harvest, and will one day multiply it as they lead their own groups.

When leaders ask me where to find apprentices, my answer is always the same: On your knees. God is the one who can send you an apprentice. God is the one who can help you find untapped potential in the people of your group. God is the one who can guide you in bringing out the best in them. You just need to ask him.

10. **Pray for God's grace to help you.** Don't hesitate to pray about your prayer life! Ask God to help you build it into your schedule and your daily priorities. With prayer, all the other things you do will be better. Without it, all the other things you do won't amount to much.

Excerpted from chapter 2 of [8 Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders](#). Used with permission. Published by TOUCH Publications, Houston, Texas. 1-800-735-5865.

PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING

Meeting Preparation Checklist:

You may wish to use the following chart to help plan your first few meetings. Once you have used the meeting preparation checklist a few times, you will be able to plan a meeting in your head. The point is to have a meeting that flows well, has a number of people involved with leading various components, and wraps up at the agreed upon time.

Meeting Planner

Leader: _____ Meeting Date: _____

Agenda

Start	Finish	Item	Who
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

BUILD COMMUNITY THROUGH COMMUNION

Looking for a wonderful means of worshipping as a group? Why not lead your group in sharing the Lord's Supper? This can be a powerful way to experience God together as a group, as you remember what Jesus has done for you on the cross.

Steps in Serving Communion

1. Out of the context of your own experience, say something brief about God's love, forgiveness, grace, mercy, commitment, tenderheartedness or faithfulness. Connect your words with personal stories for your group. For example, "These past few weeks I've experienced God's mercy in the way he untangled the situation with my son." If you prefer, you can write down ahead of time what you want to say.
2. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. *
"The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."
3. Pray silently, and pass the bread around the circle. While the bread is being passed, you may want to reflect quietly, sing a simple praise song, or listen to a worship song.
4. When everyone has received the bread, simply remind them that this represents Jesus' broken body on their behalf. Simply state, "Jesus said, 'Do this in remembrance of me.' Let us eat together," and eat the bread as a group.
5. Pray silently and serve the cup. You may pass a small tray, serve people individually, or have them pick up a cup from the table.
6. When everyone has been served, remind them that the cup represents Jesus' blood shed for them. Simply state, 'The cup of the new covenant is Jesus' blood shed for you. Jesus said, 'Do this in remembrance of me.' :Let's drink together." Then drink the juice together as a group.
7. Conclude by singing a simple song, listening to a praise song, or having a time of prayer in thanks to God.

Practical Tips in Serving Communion

1. Prepare the elements simply, sacredly and symbolically.
2. Be sensitive to the timing of when you have communion in your meeting.
3. Break up pieces of cracker or soft bread and use juice instead of wine.
4. Have all elements prepared ahead of time.

* Here are some other good communion passages
Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:14-20, 1 Corinthians. 10:16-21 or 11:17-34.

Source: Doing Life Together magazine – Fall 2012

SKILLS FOR CONDUCTING THE MEETING

(the following material on Skills is adapted from Leading Life Changing Small Groups by Bill Donahue – 2002.)

The following list of skills will serve you well as you meet with your group.

1) Ice Breakers and Group Openers

The goal at the beginning of your group meeting is to help group members feel relaxed and ready to actively participate in the meeting. Your study will include ice-breaker questions each week. You may also choose ice breaker questions from Appendix D in the back of this manual. There are three categories of ice-breaker questions 1) warm up 2) digging deeper 3) probe. *Warm-up* questions are designed to be fun and light hearted. These are particularly useful for new groups who are just getting to know one another. *Going Deeper* questions are designed to encourage group members to open up a bit about who they are and what they're thinking. *Probe* questions are designed for groups who know one another well and desire to challenge each other in their depth of sharing together.

2) Facilitating Dynamic Discussion

Four Facilitator Actions

A leader ACTS to facilitate discussions by

Acknowledging everyone who speaks during a discussion.

Clarifying what is being said and felt.

Example: *“Let me see if I understand what you are saying ...”*

Turning it back to the group as a means of discussion.

Don't just be the answer person. Ask, *“What do others of you think about what was just said?”*

Summarizing what is being said.

Offer statements like, *“So far it seems like we have been saying ...”*

SKILLS FOR CONDUCTING THE MEETING

3) Questions (112-114)

Another key to facilitating dynamic discussions is generating the right kinds of questions and offering appropriate responses. Here are some guidelines for the kinds of questions and responses that would help your group engage in meaningful, challenging discussions.

Opening Questions

Use an opening question to help the group warm up to each other, get to know one another better, and to let them hear their own voices. Opening questions are speculative and thought-engaging.

Broach the topic of discussion with a short, creative illustration or story that will answer the question, "Why do I want to discuss this topic tonight?"

Examples:

"What do you look forward to as you grow older?"

"What is it that often drives us to fear intimacy with one another? What can we do as a group to diminish this anxiety?"

Launching Questions

Knowing the goal of the discussion, the group leader prepares to launch questions designed to generate group interaction and feedback. These questions are typically designed to answer the question, "What do I know, what do I feel, what should I do?"

Examples:

"What do we learn from seeing the obstacles Joseph faced and how do we overcome them?"

"What do you think was going through Peter's mind at this time?"

Some questions do not necessarily launch a discussion, but they do solicit responses and feedback. Leading questions and limiting questions are two categories.

Leading questions usually produce a short answer.

Examples

"Would you be tempted in this situation?"

"Do you agree or disagree with this statement?"

SKILLS FOR CONDUCTING THE MEETING

Limiting questions indicate that you have a specific answer in mind. They do not promote much discovery. However, they can help clarify facts.

Examples

"What three commands do we find in this passage?"

"What two things does Paul say we must do?"

Caution: Do not use leading and limiting questions
--

Guiding Questions

Even the most well prepared leader will need to spontaneously guide discussion at times.

Examples:

Rephrase the question: *"You seem to be asking, 'How can we develop trust as a group?'"*

Personalize the question: *"How would you respond if Jesus asked you that question?"*

Test for consensus or decision: *"Are we saying that everyone must obey this command?"*

Summarizing Questions

Summarizing after a series of questions allows for the leader to acknowledge group member's contributions while maintaining biblical integrity and direction.

Examples:

An affirming comment can be made with good eye contact and a smile by saying, *"Thanks for sharing that"* or *"That's a good point"* or *"Okay, that is a response worth considering; are there other thoughts as well?"*

A summarizing response might be, *"So what we see in this passage is ..."*

SKILLS FOR CONDUCTING THE MEETING

Application Questions

The goal of the small group study is not _____ but _____.
All studies should have application questions. This type of questions answer the question, "What do I want them to do?"

Examples:

"What changes will you make this week as a result of our direction tonight?"

"What differences does this make to you and me?"

RESPONSES (114-115)

How you and other members of the group respond to questions or statements will either foster or fizzle discussion. Here are some tips about how to respond appropriately to questions or comments made by group members.

Affirming responses

These responses acknowledge each person's value. They promote intimacy and openness. Such responses send a strong signal to group members, telling them that they have been heard, understood, and respected.

Example:

"I understand this sharing is painful for you. I feel bad about the way your boss treated you last week."

Participatory responses

These responses invite others to join in the discussion. They not only affirm a participant's sharing, but also invite others to engage in the process.

Example:

"Has anybody else here had to deal with the kind of grief Dave has gone through?"

SKILLS FOR CONDUCTING THE MEETING

Paraphrasing or "going deeper" responses

Paraphrasing allows you to repeat the thoughts of others and enables them to share more deeply. It summarizes what has been heard and allows the group to explore personal feelings, thoughts, and actions.

Example:

Transitioning from a common moment to a holy moment.

"It's so great to hear that things are going well with your relationship with your husband, Sue. How has this impacted the way things are going with your relationship with God?"

GROUP PRAYER (117-118)

Here are some things you should do to facilitate meaningful prayer in your group ...

Model it

This is what Jesus did for his disciples. Regularly pray for your group and for God's leadership and direction for it.

When you pray out loud in group, make your prayers honest, authentic and from your heart.

Remember this prayer guide -

- Short
- Simple
- Spirit-led
- Silence is OK

Guide the prayer time

- Include prayer each time you meet
- Ask people to keep the request time short
- Use a variety of prayer methods - variety is the spice of life!
- Include praise in your prayer - this is a vital part of worship!
- Don't always just pray in a circle
- Let people know that it's OK not to participate

SKILLS FOR CONDUCTING THE MEETING

Creative Ideas for Group Prayer (118)

1. Pray through a Psalm out loud together
2. In a couples group, have spouses pray for each other
3. Vary prayer time between the beginning, middle and closing of the meeting
4. Pick a portion of Scripture to pray for one another during the week (Col. 1:9; Eph. 3:14-19)
5. Contact the Director of prayer for specific church related requests
6. If someone is in crisis, stop and pray for them right then
7. Do a study on prayer - ex. *Too Busy Not to Pray* Bill Hybels
8. If there is someone in your group with the gift of faith or encouragement, ask that person to be the prayer coordinator who writes down requests each meeting and keeps track of answers. If a group member has an emergency, then call the prayer coordinator, who will notify all the other members to pray for them.
9. Have each member write down prayer requests for the week on a piece of paper. Fold the piece of paper and put it in a hat. Pass the hat, each member agreeing to pray for the person they pick and to call and encourage them during the week.
10. To cut down on the time your group spends talking about prayer requests, give everyone a 3x5 card to write down prayer requests for the week and have them exchange cards with another member of the group.

FAMILY LIFE GROUPS

Proverbs 22:6 teaches, *'Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.'* In family small groups, members can influence and reinforce the values that you, as parents, want to instill in your children. Imagine a small group of friends who raise their kids together, a place where you can share your challenges, pray for one another in the huge role of parenting, and encourage each other to do it well. This is the goal of family LifeGroups!

Childcare

Family LifeGroups have a unique challenge – what do we do with the kids? 😊

There are many options your group can consider. Here a few:

- Hire a babysitter and have the kids together in another part of the home where you meet.
- Take turns having parents in your group watch the kids when you meet.
- If your group members live close together, have the kids in someone's home who lives near by the home where you meet for your study.
- Have group members find their own childcare solution, then come together with the kids for one group social per month.
- Integrate the kids into the study. There are some great studies out there that are designed for moms, dads and kids to do together.

The reality is, there are no perfect solutions when it comes to what to do about childcare. As a group, you'll need to find what works best for you.

When to Meet:

At Creekside we've had a number of family groups who meet earlier in the day, on a Sunday afternoon or early evening, for example. If a group meets at 5:30 pm, there should be time for an early supper at home before the group, and the group can wrap up by 7:30 pm.

Study Ideas for Family Groups

- 21st Century Parent. Focus on the Family DVD study.
- Shepherding a Child's Heart Tedd Tripp DVD study
- Boundaries with Kids. Henry Cloud and John Townsend DVD study
- Guarding Your Child's Heart Dr. Gary Smalley
- How We Love Our Kids Milan and Kay Yerkovich

LET'S MAKE ROOM!

Multiplying Your Life Group

As you look around Creekside on a Sunday morning, you'll see lots of people you don't know. The reality is we have many who attend our church casually, but have no Christian friends or family to impact their lives. Whether you realize it or not, if you are a follower of Jesus, a critical way you learn how to follow Jesus is simply by being with others who are on the same journey. None of us is perfect, but when we gather in LifeGroups we create a context where we can bring the truths of the Bible, the truths we hear taught on Sunday morning, and translate them into our life. This is why we must **make room** for new people. We all need community!

Reasons to Multiply

- God's heart is always open to people. Ours should be as well. Our vision should be to invite others to enjoy the community we've experienced in LifeGroup.
- It helps us to live out our mission to love people.
- It gives a chance for new leaders to develop and use their gifts
- It keeps a fresh flow of people and ideas alive in LifeGroup

Steps to Successfully Multiplying Your LifeGroup

- **Create a multiplication culture in your group.** Multiply yourself into your group members by sharing the roles and responsibilities in the group. .
- **Make multiplication a regular item of prayer in LifeGroup.** Keep the focus on multiplying through praying about it in group. Focus on people, not process. In other words, rather than praying, "God, please give us the strength to multiply" pray, "God, make us a place where new people can come and experience Jesus."
- **Set a timeline for when your group will multiply.** Most groups will target 12 to 24 months as a reasonable timeline. That said, some groups will be ready far sooner if leaders are in the group already. Others will need a longer period to develop intimacy and grow to appropriate maturity to be ready to multiply. A campaign or a new ministry season can be an ideal time to multiply your group.
- **Invite potential leaders to a leadership training event at Creekside.** Potential leaders are always welcome at our leader gatherings. These events are a great place for potential leaders to hear about our vision for LifeGroups at Creekside and to get a feel for what's happening in LifeGroups beyond your group.

Multiplying Your Life Group

Methods of Multiplication

There are a number of different ways to multiply your LifeGroup effectively. Take a look at some of the options below to determine which might be right for your group.

50/50 Model

This is the simplest and most obvious approach. One large LifeGroup becomes two smaller LifeGroups of roughly equal size. The advantage of this approach is that both groups start with a good core group and can build from there. The disadvantage is that it can be a significant strain on group life, and much of the energy and excitement of having a larger group can be lost.

“Planting” Model

In this model, you recruit a team of 2-4 people to head out and plant a new group while the main LifeGroup remains mostly intact. The new group gets the advantage of a fresh start and a core group of motivated leaders who can gather others around them. The main group can carry on without feeling like there has been a huge interruption in group life. Also, it is often easier to find 2-4 people who are willing to plant a new group than to convince the whole LifeGroup that it's time to multiply.

“Hybrid” Model

Sometimes a group gets large enough to multiply before there are enough leaders in the group to move to two LifeGroups. In this case you might want to consider pulling together a leadership team from two existing LifeGroups and launch a third LifeGroup together. This is similar to the planting model, but draws from two LifeGroups instead of one.

Short Term LifeGroups

Two times a year Creekside offers a “Short-Term LifeGroup Experience” such as “40 Days in the Word”. These times are a great opportunity to encourage 2 or 3 of your group members to take a break from your group and lead a group for the campaign. Our experience has been that many of the campaign groups go on to become a LifeGroup. Ultimately the group gets to decide and the leader always has the option to return to their original group.

LET'S MAKE ROOM!

Creating a Leadership Factory in Your Group

As LifeGroup leader, you can have an exciting impact in the spiritual growth of your group members. A key way you can do this is by inviting your group members to step up to leading parts of your group meeting. An ideal LifeGroup is one where everyone has a role, where each member has a ministry in your group. Rick Warren says that small groups are a “leadership factory”, an ideal setting to give group members a chance to practice and grow in their ability to lead others. Here are some tips for identifying and developing leaders in your group.

Pray for each of your group members, that God would grow their ministry to others, particularity in your LifeGroup. Ask God to give you wisdom about when and how to invite your group members to take on roles in the group.

Plan for your group members to take on roles. Give your members opportunity to lead parts of the study as they are ready. One great way to do this is to choose a video study where someone does the teaching by video, then your group members can take turns simply asking the questions that follow up the video.

Provide encouragement and feedback to your group members. When we try something the first time, we always wonder, “How’d I do?” Take a few moments to connect with whoever facilitates the study to encourage them.

As you do these things, you will create a leadership factory, a group that is equipped with members who are ready and able to lead others. Then, as a new LifeGroup season begins, or as we offer a special series or a campaign at the church, your group will be full of members who are available to lead new groups and make room for new people.

APPENDIX A

“Worship Ideas”

“The corporate assembly is where love and mutual indwelling congregate; it is where believers have each other within eye- and earshot, within kindly embrace. If there were no such things as church buildings and regularly scheduled services, Christians would, out of necessity, seek each other out for the sheer pleasure of finding Christ in each other, hearing different stories about his work in them, enjoying the ordinary and the exceptional, and perhaps only then gathering around what we call a liturgy. In such a gathering there would be little need at some point to say, “Now let us worship,” because no one would be able to locate the dividing line between “now” and “always”.”

Harold Best, Unceasing Worship, pg. 62 Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

Here are some ideas for your group to try:

➤ Lead members in a time of testimony. Have them share one of the following:

Their answered prayers during the week

- One or two special things God did for them this week
- The thing about Christ that make them follow him
- One attribute of God that was demonstrated to them this week

Then have a time of praise with song and prayer reflecting the testimonies shared.

➤ Have a time of positive biblical confession: Confess your faith in God. Confess Jesus Christ as your Lord. Confess your willingness to serve Him. Confess your love for God.

➤ Use a hymn or worship song. Read it and discuss how it relates to each member’s life. Pray it to God. Then sing it together.

➤ Have small group members take turns reading several Psalms out loud. Then pray in response or have individuals write their own Psalms or letters to God. Some good Psalms for this are 23, 27, 40, 103 and many more.

➤ Discuss these questions:

- Describe a time in which you really sensed God’s presence in a close way.
- What are things you do to draw close to God?
- Choose a few ideas and practice them together as a group.

➤ Have times in worship where your small group members, one by one, speak out:

- The names of God www.toolsformentoring.com/small-group/names-print.html
- Attributes of God
- Or finish the sentence: “Lord I thank you for...”

APPENDIX B

Accountability Questions

Here are some questions designed to help you encourage one another in growth and integrity. The relational foundation for asking these questions is love. We communicate our love through asking tough questions of one another, but doing it in a way that is warm, genuine and empathetic. If your group has developed relationships based on trust and love, and if you're ready to go the next step, you're ready to begin using accountability questions.

(These questions have been copied from www.characterthatcounts.gospelcom.net)

Questions for Men or Women

1. Have you spent regular time in prayer? When?
2. Have your thoughts been pure? Have you resisted lustful, envious thoughts or exposed yourself to explicit materials?
3. How do you feel about how you've handled personal, family and/or business finances?
4. What three relationships have you nurtured most?
5. What has made it difficult to do your 100% best in the different roles in your life?
6. Have your words built up or tore down others or self?
Have you exposed yourself or contributed to gossip?
Have you been committed to your words?
Have you put yourself in a better light to those around you?
7. Do you feel you missed any opportunities to talk to people about the Lord?
8. Have you taken care of your body through daily physical exercise and proper eating/sleeping habits?
9. Which fruit of the Spirit have you had the hardest time living? Why?
10. Have you left anything hidden in answering these questions?

Questions For Couples

1. Have we prayed together this week? as a couple? as a family?
2. Has there been romance in our relationship this week?
3. Has our snacking and soda intake been reasonable this week?
4. Have we spent daily individual time with the Lord? in the Word? in prayer?
5. Have we encouraged our children and each other this week? compliments?
6. Did we leave work on time today?
7. Did we spend time at home wisely?
8. Did we brighten someone's day?
9. Did we exercise three times this week?
10. Did we spend time with God this week, not counting Sunday?
11. What are you reading? What is your Secondary readings? (Read to kids; Psalms / Proverbs over breakfast; Book at night; When is our family reading night?)
12. Have you made a positive emotional deposit with our kids and to each other?
 - *Did you get your 5 second kiss/hug today?
 - *Did you give the kids a 5 second hug?
13. Have you eaten properly today and drank enough water?
14. Have we had ample "couch time" this week? (couch time is time set aside just to be together and talk ... without the kids!)
15. Have we made our schedule for this month's social events?
16. Have we made an effort to schedule an evening or time with friends (at least twice a month), especially with friends we've lost touch with or don't frequently see?
17. Have you scheduled one social event with a friend away from family this month?
18. Have you spent quality alone time socially with our children?
19. Have you "lost it" with your family this week?
20. Have you spent beyond your budget?
21. Have you attempted to feed your family in a nutritious manner on a daily basis (sit down meal with whole family)?
22. Has anything upset you in the last week that I should know about?
23. What are your expectations for this week?
24. Have we chosen to speak "wholesome words" and be a role model for our family, church and community?

25. What kind of "quality and quantity" time have we had together as a couple and with our children?
26. What is our top "issue or problem" for this month?
27. Are we purposefully filling our mind with the knowledge of God's word-knowledge we can give away to others?
28. What has God been saying to you this week?
29. Does your body belong to God, to be groomed, cared for disciplined for maximum usefulness and His glory (including water intake, sleep, exercise, nutrition, sex, manicure, facial, pedicure, floss, potassium)?
30. Are we nurturing love to others-thinking, speaking and acting toward them as Christ would? (spouse, children, friends, family).
31. Who are we going to have over this week? Write a note to? Make a phone call to?
32. Are we spending and accounting for the money God has given us as good stewards? Are we giving cheerfully to God's work?
33. Are we anxious about anything? How can I help you? Share a success or something that added to your joy this week.
34. Have you removed something from your procrastination list? What?
35. Did you do something this week that you wanted which was fun and made you laugh?
36. What do you have planned for the coming week?
37. When is our next date night?
38. What did you wish for that came true this week?
39. What surprised you this week?

APPENDIX C

Scripture Memory Verses

1. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* John 3:16
2. *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Romans 3:23
3. *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* Romans 3:23
4. *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast."* Ephesians 2:8-9
5. *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."* John 5:24
6. *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight."* Proverbs 3:5-6
7. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* 1 John 1:9
8. *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."* 2 Timothy 3:16
9. *"For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, or love and of self discipline."* 2 Timothy 1:7
10. *"Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."* Philippians 1:6
11. *"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."* 1 Corinthians 10:13
12. *"The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."* Zephaniah 3:17

APPENDIX D

Ice Breaker Tools

Opener/Ice Breaker Questions

Warm-Up questions

1. If you didn't have to worry about making a living, what would you most like to do for the rest of your life?
2. What (or who) most encourages the little child in you to come out and play? When was the last time this happened?
3. What was the one thing you never did in high school that you wish you would have done?
4. What motivates you most to go to work each day: money or personal satisfaction? If money were not an issue, would you still keep your job?
5. How would you describe yourself (without mentioning anything about what you do for a living)?
6. If your life were to become a major motion picture, who would you like to play you? Why? (the person who plays you doesn't have to be a movie star.)
7. What is your most important goal in life right now? Will your life change in some way if that goal is reached? If so, how?
8. Someone has just offered you \$50,000 to free-fall to the ground from a helicopter 300 feet in the air. All the details of this fall have been carefully worked out by the experts. On the ground will be a huge airbag used by professional stuntmen to break their fall. Providing that you jump right and hit the bag, you will be safe. Will you do this jump? Would you do it for \$1,000,000?
9. What social situations tend to make you most flustered and nervous? Why?
10. What is usually the first thing that comes to your mind when you think about God?

Digging Deeper Questions

1. Is it ever OK to waste time? What does this statement mean to you: "Activity that does not result in progress toward a goal is a waste of time"? Do you agree?
2. What is one of the books (other than the Bible) that has had the greatest influence on your life? Why?
3. If you had the power to recreate yourself, what are the things that you would *not* change about yourself?
4. What do you look forward to most about growing old? Least?
5. If you could relive any part of your life, what part would it be and why?
6. What is the most difficult choice you've had to make in your life to this point? Why was it difficult? What factors helped you make that choice?
7. Do you believe that God has only one perfect mate for everyone?
8. A football coach once said, "We learn almost nothing in victory, but we learn much in defeat." Do you agree with this? In your own life, have you learned more from your failures or from your successes? Explain.
9. If laughter were the fuel in the tank of life, would your gauge show your tank to be full, half full, or nearly empty? Why? When was the last time you laughed till you cried?
10. What are five things you are most thankful for in your life right now? What are some of the things you do to show this thankfulness?

Probe Questions

1. Do you sometimes say or do things to make yourself appear more important in the eyes of others? Do you ever exaggerate or lie in an attempt to make yourself look good? If yes, when are you most tempted to do this?
2. Your mother has a debilitating case of Parkinson's disease. The doctor has informed you that the only chance for a cure is to use a new medicine developed from aborted fetuses. The alternative for your mother is a long, agonizing deterioration. The choice is yours. Will you opt for the new medicine or will you decline it. Why?
3. What do you wish you would never have to worry about again? Why?
4. What would cause you to distrust your mate the most? What could your mate do to rebuild that trust again? Has someone ever mistrusted you unfairly? Why?
5. Has there ever been a time in the past year or two when God seemed especially real or close to you? If so, explain.
6. C.S. Lewis said, "God whispers in our pleasures but shouts in our pain." How is God whispering or shouting to you in your life?
7. What is the one memory or image in your mind that you most wish you could forget?
8. Would you say that you live your life primarily by legalism or by grace? What is the difference between the two? What are the signs that tell if a person is living by one or the other?
9. You are about to get married. How much of your past should you discuss together? Which areas of your past experience do you think are most important to think about?
10. Define deep personal faith. How would you describe your own experience of faith?
11. What are four people, circumstances or events that have left a lasting impression on you and helped shape the person you are today?

APPENDIX E

Prayer Ideas

1. Pray through a Psalm out loud together.
2. In a couples group, have spouses pray for each other.
3. Vary prayer time between the beginning, middle and end of meetings.
4. Pick a portion of Scripture to pray for one another during the week (Col. 1:9; Eph. 3:14-19, et cetera)
5. Pray for requests on Creekside's prayer wall www.creeksidechurch.ca/prayer
6. Opening - "Hear our prayer ..." (Neh. 1:11; Ps. 5:1-3)
7. Adoration - "Hallowed be your name ..." (Deut. 10:21; 1 Chron. 29:10-13; Ps. 34:8-9)
8. Affirmation - "Your will be done ..." (Ps. 27:1; Is. 26:3; Rom. 8:38-39)
9. Group Needs - "Give us this day ..." (Ps. 7:1; Neh. 1:11; Matt. 7:7-8)
10. Confession - "Forgive us our debts ..." (Ps. 51; Matt. 18:21-22; 1 John 1:9)
11. Renewal (protection) - "Lead us not into temptation ..." (Psalm 137:7; John 15:7-11)
12. Thanksgiving - "Give thanks to the Lord ..." (1 Chron. 16:34; Ps. 75:1; Rev. 11:17)
13. Blessing - "The Lord bless you and keep ..." (Num. 6:22-27; Ps. 1:1)
14. Commissioning - "Go therefore and make disciples ..." (Matt. 28:18-20)
15. Healing - "The prayer of faith will make well ..." (James 5:13-16; Ps. 6:2; 41:4)
16. Warfare - "Get thee behind me, Satan ..." (Matt. 4:10; 16:23)
17. Benediction/Closing - "May the grace of the Lord ..." (2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 3:20-21)

APPENDIX F

LIFEGROUP GUIDELINES

The following guidelines will help you lay the foundation for a healthy LifeGroup experience. Feel free to modify these guidelines to make them your own.

AS A GROUP WE AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING VALUES:

- Clear Purpose:** To pursue healthy spiritual lives as we FOLLOW JESUS, LOVE GOD, LOVE PEOPLE.
- Group Attendance:** Give priority to the group meeting (call if I'm going to be absent or late)
- Safe Environment:** To create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved (no quick answers, snap judgments or simple fixes).
- Confidentiality:** To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group.
- Welcome Newcomers:** To invite friends who might benefit from this study and to warmly welcome newcomers.
- Building Relationships:** To get to know the other members of the group and pray for them regularly.
- Responsibility:** To take an active role in the responsibilities of this group.

WHAT WE WANT TO DO ABOUT:

Refreshments/Mealtimes:

Childcare:

When and where we will meet: (consider rotating homes and responsibilities)

We will do our best to attend the following service together:

APPENDIX G

Online Leader Training and Resources

www.lifetogether.com

At this site you can access some great ideas for curriculum as well as leader training videos, articles and more. This site is created by Brett Eastman, the guy who created a lot of the small group materials for Saddleback Church. Check it out!

www.navresources.ca

This is a great site to access new studies, classics and everything in between. Not sure what to choose? Click "Ask Me!" to submit a quick survey that Dennis Funk will use to recommend studies that will be a good fit for your group.

LIFEGROUP LEADERSHIP PROFILE



LIFEGROUP LEADERSHIP PROFILE

We're glad you're considering becoming LifeGroup Leader!

Please fill out the following information.

NOTE: All information in this profile will be kept confidential and disclosed only to those who need to know in order to fulfill the responsibilities of Creekside Church.

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____, Postal Code _____

Your home phone: _____ Work phone: _____

E-Mail : _____

Are You Ready to Become a LifeGroup Leader?

Caring for a small group of people is a significant ministry. The church needs your participation as a qualified, submitted leader. We also want the best for the people who are shepherded by our leaders. In a very real way, every leader is a pastor. In order to help you understand our expectations and to help us understand you better, we ask that you fill out this profile.

- YES To the best of my knowledge, I believe God wants me to be involved in LifeGroup ministry here at Creekside.
- YES I'm committed to ongoing progress rather than stagnation spiritually- I am a growing Christian.
- YES I will lead my group in submission to the authority of Creekside.
- YES I am not involved in any ongoing pattern of willful disobedience to God.
- YES I have become or am in process of becoming a member at Creekside.

Please respond to the specific statements below using the following scale:

- 1= I'm hesitant to comply**
- 2= I'm working on it**
- 3= I'm completely committed**

Please be prepared to discuss any of the statements you rate "1".

BUILD A LEADERSHIP TEAM

- I will share the responsibilities of the group by inviting group members to take on roles.
- I will encourage group members to share facilitating the study.
- I will attend LifeGroup Leader meetings if at all possible.
- I will encourage qualified group members to launch a new group for a campaign or as Creekside continues to have need for more LifeGroups.

CONDUCT THE MEETING

- I will convene the group at least three times per month.
- I will build time in our meetings for group members to CONNECT with God through worship and study, and CONNECT with God and others through prayer and fellowship.

SHEPHERD THE MEMBERS

- I commit to pray for group members.
- I will lead an exemplary Christian life-style. Group members watching me will see a sincere believer growing toward maturity.
- I will seek to create a safe place where true feelings can be shared, and I will exemplify the kind of transparency I desire from others through my own openness.
- I will encourage group members to discover and deploy their spiritual gifts in the ministry at Creekside and to be faithful stewards of the resources entrusted to them by God.
- I will encourage group members to participate in the Sunday services at the church.
- As a representative of Creekside, I will discourage any conversation that reflects a negative attitude toward any of the leaders, policies and practices of the church.
- I will notify church leadership of any conditions within my group that may require professional care or counseling.

EXPAND THE MINISTRY

- ___ As we begin, I will share the vision of "Let's Make Room!" with my group and continue to champion this goal as we meet throughout the year.
- ___ I will continue to grow the group numerically so a new group can be birthed, likely within 18 to 24 months.
- ___ I accept the responsibility, within my abilities and the Lord's enabling, to build relationships with unchurched people so that they can have an opportunity to come to Christ.

I, the undersigned, affirm that all of the information on this profile is correct to the best of my knowledge, and I give permission to Creekside or it's representatives to verify the information I have given.

SIGNED: _____ DATE:

**Please give this completed profile to Jeff Austen or one of the elders.
Thanks for your time!**