

LIFE GROUP LEADER GUIDE

For the week of September 20, 2020

This guide is designed to give helpful hints in preparing & leading your group in discussion.

WELCOME TO THE FALL QUARTER OF LIFE GROUPS!

This week we kick off our Fall Life Group Quarter. Your first meeting is designed to give you time to get acquainted, connect with each other, as well as time to discuss how to make your Life Group meetings great! The study questions have been shortened this week to allow ample time to accomplish all of this.

To prepare for your first meeting, take some time to focus on the questions below and be prepared to share your answers with the group. Have a great meeting as you come together to connect, encourage one another to grow and see how God might work!

Online Groups - If your group is meeting online, your leaders will be sending you the link for your group. Use this link for help on meeting with your group online - <https://lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/pro-tips/>

GUIDELINES FOR LIFE GROUP MEETINGS DURING COVID

As we launch our Fall Quarter, our current recommendation is to **keep groups online capable** so we can keep connection no matter what is ahead of us. We know many groups are going to continue to meet online through the fall. However, we realize there is an **option, at this point, to meet in person when using the social distancing guidelines** provided by our health officials (<https://www.cdc.gov> and <https://files.covid19.ca.gov> and <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov>). The three meeting types for this fall are Online Only, In-Person and Hybrid (a combination of both in-person and online).

**Please prepare to be flexible as the state/county guidelines may change over the quarter.*

GROUPS MEETING “IN-PERSON”: *We recommend all Life Groups meet outside, following the current CDC guidelines and keeping these safety guidelines in mind:*

1. **Screening** – Each person should check themselves for symptoms (i.e. cough, temperature, loss of taste) prior to each group meeting. If someone has symptoms or has been exposed to someone with COVID-19, they should not attend the group in person.
2. **Sanitization & Hygiene** – Each person should wash their hands and sanitize any personal items shared. Food should not be shared, and pre-packed food is a good option.
3. **Physical Distancing** – Each person should stay outdoors when possible and at-least six feet from people who are not in their personal household.
4. **Face Coverings** – Each person should wear a face covering when in close proximity with someone not in their household. When at a safe distance (six feet or more and outdoors), each person may choose to unmask.

GETTING READY FOR YOUR FIRST MEETING

Each week in this section you'll find the most important information for your group. Check out the **Leaders Notes** at the end of this guide for more information.

⇒ GOALS OF THE FIRST MEETING

- Re-connect with existing members and meet new members
- **Clarify your group's direction / expectations / commitments using the Life Group Commitment Form (formerly called the Covenant)**
- Briefly discuss the sermon topic (if there is time)
- Pray for the building of relationships and spiritual growth of the group



Items Needed for the First Meeting

- Decide if you're doing virtual dinner for online groups. There is no expectation for your group to do dinner due to COVID regulations. If you do, pre-packaged food is a good option. Potlucks and sharing food is not recommended.
- **Life Group Commitment Form (formerly known as the Life Group Covenant)** – Review this with your group. This was mailed to you last week in your leader packet, and can also be found online here: <https://lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/life-group-covenants/>
- Nametags for in-person groups (Print or write them out ahead of time.)

Contact Your Group in Advance

- Contact all members one week before the first meeting to welcome them to the group. You can check your roster online to see all the members of your group and their contact information. You can find instructions on how to check your roster here: <https://lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/how-to-view-your-roster/>
- **IN-PERSON GROUPS** - Inform members of the location and time of your group and how you're handling food based on COVID & the CDC guidelines.
- **ONLINE GROUPS** – Make sure you send the link to your meeting well in advance and preferably again on the day you meet. It is recommended to review [Pro-Tips & Facilitation Tips to maximize your Online Experience](#).

AGENDA FOR FIRST MEETING

Looking for more guidance on your first meeting? You can find the “First Night Agenda” on how to make your first night great on the Leader Tools page of our website. (<https://lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/make-your-first-night-great/>) You can also listen to [the audio version of the leader guide here](#).

HOW WE MEASURE OUR SUCCESS WEEK TO WEEK: Hearing from everyone at every meeting and keeping God's Word at the center.

Make sure you leave plenty of time to answer the questions in the “Looking Ahead” section and spend time going over the Life Group Commitment Form with your group.

- **Welcome and Eat** – In regards to a meal at your first meeting, CDC guidelines recommend no sharing of food. Pre-packed food is a good option. Online groups could eat virtually.
- **Group Sharing** – Discussion Note: You can transition from the “Getting to Know You” section to the “Looking Ahead” section.
- **Study Questions Discussion** (optional)
- **Go over the Life Group Commitment Form** – Use the last question in the Leader Guide to Study Questions below and transition into reviewing the Commitment Form.
- **Try to allow 45 minutes for the “Looking Ahead” section** so you have plenty of time to have everyone answer and go over the Life Group Commitment Form.
- Close in prayer.
- Mingle afterward.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Discussion Note: Add these questions if you have new people in your group or a completely new group. If it hasn't happened before the meeting officially starts, have everyone in the group share how long they have been attending North Coast, if they have been in a Life Group before and their favorite hobby.

Discussion Tips: These are effective for both in-person and online groups. Remember to set time limits to ensure everyone has an opportunity to answer the questions. Possibly use the “Tag— You're It” method to ensure everyone can share. Once one person is finished sharing, they select the next person to share.

1. The summer of 2020 will most likely be one we will not forget. The good news is God is still working. Chances are you've also found some new ways of doing things or you've had new experiences as a result of the COVID craziness. Take a minute and answer the questions below. Be ready to share with your group:

Discussion options for this question – There are three questions to answer in this question. You can have each person answer all three at once or, to add variety in interaction, you can have everyone answer the first question and then go back and have everyone answer the last two.

- What is your favorite thing/most creative idea you experience or do now as a result of COVID restrictions? (Curbside pickup, eating in the parking lot, going to bed earlier, going to bed later, new skill or hobby, going on more walks, etc.) *Have fun with this first question. Have everyone answer.*
- What are one or two things you enjoyed most this summer? *Note – We all know it wasn't a normal summer, but we also don't want to just focus on what didn't go well. Some of their answers may be the same as the previous question. Have everyone answer. A good option would be to include the next question.*
- Besides going to church on the weekends, what social experience have you missed the most because of some of the quarantine restrictions? *Good question to have everyone answer. You may want to transition from this question or the next to the “Looking Ahead” section to ensure you have time to hear what each person is hoping to get out of your group time and to go over the “Life Group Commitment Form.”*

Here's another fun question if you want to add it to your discussion:

- *Would you rather go to a movie or to dinner alone?*
- *Would you rather have an unlimited gift certificate to a restaurant or a clothing store?*
- *Would you rather watch the big game at home or live at the stadium?*
- *Would you rather hear the good news or the bad news first?*

2. When life gets difficult, we often try to understand what God's will is. We may wonder what God is up to, especially during the past six months with all that is going on with COVID. Looking back at Larry's message on "Experiencing God's Will," what one or two statements or points are most important for you to remember and why? *Good question to have everyone answer. You will most likely need to transition from this question to the "Looking Ahead" section to ensure you have time to hear what each person is hoping to get out of your group time and to go over the "Life Group Commitment Form."*

3. Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time, that caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

DIGGING DEEPER

Discussion Note: Because of the extra time spent re-connecting, make sure you have enough time to spend on the "Looking Ahead" section. You may not have time to cover the "Digging Deeper" section this week.

1. This week we heard that living by the Spirit and God's will has as much to do with who we are as where we are. In Philippians 4:4-14, Paul gives us a game plan for God's will no matter where we are in life. Read the passage and jot down three or four things that catch your attention that we can do to be in God's will regardless of our circumstances. *Another good question to have everyone answer if you have time.*

Philippians 4:4-14 New International Version (NIV)

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

¹⁰ I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

¹⁴ Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.

2. Trusting that God's will is working for the good in our lives (and the world) can be challenging in light of all that has happened in the past six months. How might Psalm 33:6-11 build your confidence in following God's game plan for your life?

Psalm 33:6-11 New International Version (NIV)

⁶ By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
their starry host by the breath of his mouth.

⁷ He gathers the waters of the sea into jars;
he puts the deep into storehouses.

⁸ Let all the earth fear the LORD;
let all the people of the world revere him.

⁹ For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood firm.

¹⁰ The LORD foils the plans of the nations;
he thwarts the purposes of the peoples.

¹¹ But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever,
the purposes of his heart through all generations.

LOOKING AHEAD

Whether your group is meeting online or in person, it will be interesting to see how God works as you connect, care for one another and encourage each other to follow God and live out His Word. What are you looking forward to in your Life Group this quarter? *Important question to have everyone answer. You can transition from here into going over the Life Group Commitment Form or include the next sub question.*

These are unusual times on so many levels in our culture today. Is there anything specific you need prayer for, or is there a focus you would like to have in order to grow this next quarter?

Everyone may not have an answer here. You may want to give some options like: more regularly reading their Bible, praying specifically for family and friends, better witness at work or with friends, etc. You could also use their answer from the second question in "Getting to Know You" section or "Digging Deeper" #1.

Transition Statement to Life Group Commitment: *"It's great to hear what each of you have said about what you want to get out of your time in our group. One of the great benefits of being in a Life Group is the opportunity to have help from others as we seek to be strategic and intentional about our spiritual growth. The Life Group Commitment is designed to serve as intentional guidelines to help us make the most of our time together."*

Link to the form for people in your group - <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/storage.mygrowthgroup.org/LeaderDocs/Life+Group+Commitment+2020.pdf>

Go over the Life Group Commitment Form with your group. See below, or you can download the [Leader Guide to the Life Group Commitment](#), by going to northcoastchurch.com/groups and clicking on "Leader Tools." There is also an audio guide that will help you know how to take your group through this.

Close in prayer: *If you have anyone new in your group and you don't know them, it is recommended to close with your host or one person praying. Next week, the Study Questions will include an introduction to praying in a group, so if you have a new group or a lot of new members, it's suggested that you wait until week two to do any group prayer.*

Mingle with everyone after the meeting. *Even if you're online, stay on an extra 10 minutes to see if anyone wants to connect and hang out just like you would at an in-person meeting.*

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE GROUPS

Life Groups exist to promote spiritual maturity and personal growth through meaningful Christian relationships and the study of God's Word. (Romans 8:29 & Hebrews 10:24-25). Here's how it will happen:

Refer to Leader Guide Audio and/or the written Leader Guide below on how to guide your group through this Life Group Commitment.

SHARE

Each week we'll take time to share what is happening in our lives. At first this sharing will include planned sharing questions, called "Getting To Know You." But after the first few weeks, it will become more informal and personal as we feel more comfortable and will be called "My Story".

STUDY

Each week we'll study a section from God's Word that relates to the previous weekend's sermon or an appropriate personal growth topic. Our goal is to learn how to live out our Christianity in everyday life.

SUPPORT

Each week we'll learn how to take care of one another as Christ commanded (John 15:9-13). This care can take many forms, such as prayer, encouragement, listening, challenging one another and meeting real needs.

SERVE

Spiritual growth is fostered not only by what we gain through the support and input of others, but also through service to others. The role each of us fills is important to the health of the church and for us to be the hands and feet of Jesus to the community in which we live (Ephesians 4:11-16). Throughout the quarter, it is our hope that you can find and/or be affirmed in the ways God has designed you to serve and make a difference in God's Kingdom.

ABOUT POLITICS IN LIFE GROUP

We do believe it is important for Jesus followers to think through and process how they are going to vote and engage in politics. But due to the polarizing nature of our current political climate, we want to keep our Life Group meetings free of politics and focused on relationships with each other and Jesus/God's Word.

Presenting the Good News of Jesus' saving grace to all, and the unity we have as believers is vitally important to us. In light of this, remember to keep politics completely out of your Life Group discussions. We exist to minister to everyone who wants to know Jesus. Every election cycle we have Christians who become divided over issues and can be deeply offended by comments, jokes, and even prayer requests. We do not want to send the message that people who vote a certain way or have differing political views are not welcome.

If someone in your group starts to take things in a political direction (be it with humor, a rant, or even a "prayer request" for a specific outcome), gently remind them that the body of Christ (and North Coast Church) is made up of followers of Jesus – some of whom are Republican, Independents, Democrats, etc.



LEADERS GUIDE - LIFE GROUP COMMITMENT

- **DOWNLOAD** this and other Commitments: lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/life-group-covenants
- *When discussing – use the proactive leadership style – clear direction, yet flexible*

Leaders _____ Ph.# _____
Hosts _____ Ph.# _____
Station in Life _____ Campus _____

Small groups thrive on participation! The purpose of this Commitment is to help you to discuss and clarify your group's goals, expectations, and commitments.

LIFE GROUPS: THEIR PURPOSE

Life Groups exist to promote spiritual maturity and personal growth through meaningful Christian relationships and study of God's Word (Romans 8:29 & Hebrews 10:24, 25). We'll do this by focusing on four primary activities:

SHARE

Each week we'll take time to share what is happening in our lives. At first this sharing will include planned "sharing questions". But after the first few weeks, it will become more informal and personal as we feel more comfortable.

STUDY

Each week we'll study a section from God's Word that relates to the previous weekend's sermon or an appropriate personal growth topic. Our goal is to learn how to live out our Christianity in everyday life.

Our goal is to interact interpersonally on the topic and how we can practically follow Christ, not to answer all the questions.

SUPPORT

Each week we'll learn how to take care of one another as Christ commanded (John 15:9-13). This care can take many forms such as *prayer, encouragement, listening, challenging one another, and meeting real needs.*

SERVE

Spiritual Growth is fostered not only by what we gain through the support and input of others, but also through service to others. The role each of us fills is important to the health of the church and for us to be the hands and feet of Jesus to our community (Ephesians 4:11-16). Throughout the quarter, it is our hope that you can find and/or be affirmed in the ways God has designed you to serve, and make a difference in God's Kingdom.

FIVE MARKS OF A HEALTHY GROUP

For our group to be healthy, we need to...

- 1. Make spiritual growth our number one priority (Romans 8:29).**
⇒ *Tangents – they are okay sometimes, but sometimes we need to be refocused. We'll need to keep spiritual growth our focus and stay on topic.*
- 2. Accept one another (Romans 15:7).**
⇒ *We will have different preferences.*
- 3. Take care of one another (John 13:34).**
⇒ *When crisis happens we're there to help with support, prayer, encouragement, listening, meals etc.*
- 4. Treat each other with respect (Ephesians 4:25-5:2).**
⇒ *Listening to one another, if one's talking let's all listen, nothing worse than two conversations going on at once.*
⇒ *Our goal is to listen, not give advice. (Advice is given when asked for) We are not here to judge or fix – unless someone asks. An example of giving advice is by saying, "Well this is what I think you should do." On the other hand, that doesn't mean we can't question what is said or what someone is doing.*
⇒ *Some of us have the gift of gab, also known as a dominator – be careful, I as a leader might have to help you.*
⇒ *Be careful of gossip prayers. For example, "we need to pray for (person's name) because they are doing this ..."*
⇒ *No put-downs.*
⇒ *What is said here, stays here – of course we never promise confidentiality if something shared would be harmful to yourself or someone else and/or if I, as the leader, need to seek counsel on how to respond to an issue in the group.*
- 5. Keep our commitments to the group (Psalm 15:1-2, 4b).**
⇒ *Please give us a call if you can't make it to Life Group so we know what's going on and how to pray for you.*

GUIDELINES & COMMITMENT

1. **Dates** We'll meet on _____ nights for _____ weeks. Our final meeting of this quarter will be on _____. *Fill in blanks*
2. **Time** We'll arrive between _____ & _____ and begin the meeting at _____. We'll spend approximately _____ minutes in singing (optional), _____ minutes in study/discussion, and _____ minutes in prayer/sharing. *Fill in blanks*
3. **Children** Group members are responsible to arrange child care for their children. Nursing newborns are welcome provided they are not a distraction to the group!
4. **Study** Our studies will focus on the same topic covered in the previous Sunday's sermon or an appropriate personal growth topic. Our goal is to learn how to live out our Christianity in everyday life. *Not to answer every question.*
5. **Prayer** Praying for one another. *You'll go over tips on topical prayer the second week of group. Remember - being forced to pray in group or just the idea of it can cause people to not want to come to your group. If you have new people in your group, you might want to say something like this: "It's exciting to see how God works in our lives through prayer. We also realize prayer in groups is something many have never done. Know that you will never be forced to pray." Let them know you'll talk more in the weeks to come on how we do group prayer and that we break a lot of the stereotypes of what it means to pray.*
6. **Homework & Attendance** Joining a Life Group requires a commitment to *attend each week and do the homework ahead of time*. Obviously, allowances are made for sickness, vacation, work conflicts, and other special events—but not much more!
This commitment is the key to a healthy group.

If we cannot come to a meeting, we will call _____.
⇒ *Emphasize the importance of the commitment to attendance and preparation. (A good group starts with good preparation)*
⇒ *Make sure that everyone is with you. (Do we agree? Is this what we want? Make eye contact, etc.)*
⇒ *Most weeks require 20-30 minutes of homework to prepare for the group study and discussion.*
7. **Desserts** *Based on CDC guidelines, for this quarter, we recommend no sharing of food. Pre-packed dessert is a good option.*
8. **Social & Service Project(s)** *Emphasize the importance of a quarterly social and service project. As a leader and host, have 2 or 3 suggestions ready and 2 or 3 potential dates. Choose a date or ask the group to bring their calendars next week. New groups are preferred to have their social by mid-quarter.*
9. **Other**

Are You Deep Sea Elk Hunting?

Two Roadblocks And A Weird Dream:

Acts 16:6-10

Experiencing God's Will:

Six Things We Will Need To Know And Do

(1) God's will is usually found on a road called **OBEDIENCE**.

Romans 1:18-31/Proverbs 4:18-19/ Proverbs 3:5-6

(2) Expect a **GAME PLAN**, not a **BLUEPRINT**.

(3) A detailed and crystal-clear calling is the **EXCEPTION**, not the **NORM**.

Acts 15:37-41/ Acts 16:6-10

(4) Plan in **PENCIL**. No one gets it right all the time.

Romans 7:14-25/ 1 Corinthians 4:4

(5) A **VALLEY** doesn't mean a **WRONG TURN**.

1 Corinthians 16:8-9/ Psalm 23/ 1 Peter 4:19

(6) If we mess up **PLAN A**, there is always **PLAN B, C, and Z**.

Jeremiah 18:1-11