

# LIFE GROUP LEADER GUIDE

For the week of January 17, 2021

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

## WELCOME TO THE WINTER QUARTER OF LIFE GROUPS!

*This week we kick off our Winter Life Group Quarter. Your first meeting is designed to give you time to get acquainted and 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 - [lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/pro-tips/](https://lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/pro-tips/)

### **GUIDELINES FOR LIFE GROUP MEETINGS DURING COVID**

As we launch our Winter 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 quarter. However, we realize there is an **option, at this point, to meet in person outside 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 quarter 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
- **Cast Vision for the Quarter with Your Group**
- **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: [lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/life-group-covenants/](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: [lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/how-to-view-your-roster/](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.

**PRO-TIPS TO MAXIMIZE THE ONLINE GROUPS EXPERIENCE**

- 1) **Shorten meetings to 75 minutes or less.**
- 2) **Use break-out rooms to personalize conversation.** (If possible, try to do this at least 5-10 minutes every meeting.)
- 3) **Coach people on how to engage and speak up online.** (Practicing this can really help.)

\* More how-to's at this link: [Pro-Tips & Facilitation Tips to maximize your Online Experience.](#)

## **AGENDA FOR YOUR 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. ([lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/make-your-first-night-great/](http://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 Dinner Option** – In regard 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 to transition into reviewing the Commitment Form.
- **Try to allow 45 minutes for the "Looking Ahead" section** so you have plenty of time for everyone to answer and go over the Life Group Commitment Form.
- Close in prayer.
- Mingle afterward.

### **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 of all political perspectives.

### **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 come up in conversation 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.

⇒ Tell us a little bit about yourself... *Have fun with these questions. They are good questions to have everyone answer. Have each person respond to all three, then go to the next person. Then go to the next question to see what they're look forward to in 2021.*

- What's the first career you dreamed of having as a kid?
- If you could take a week off from your regular life to immerse yourself in learning something new, what would it be?

- If you had to change your first name, what would you change it to?

- ⇒ No matter what we face, God is alive and well, wanting us to experience His love, grace and purpose. What are one or two things you're looking forward to in 2021? *This is an important question to have everyone answer. You may 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."*
- ⇒ Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or something that caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

### DIGGING DEEPER / FINDING YOUR AIM

**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. If you do have time, both questions could help set up the final section.*

**Discussion Tip for In-Person and Online** – *If time is tight, you can break into small groups or breakout rooms online to answer these, and then come back together for the "Looking Ahead" section.*

1. The enemy wants to do all he can to distort how we live out who we are and how we define success. He wants to keep us "off aim" so we miss how God wants to work in us and through us in whatever circumstances we find ourselves. As we heard this weekend, the Apostle Paul helped the Philippians "keep their aim" in the midst of life's challenges. As you read Philippians 4:4-8, circle three things that catch your attention and will help you "find your aim" in 2021.

#### **Philippians 4:4-8 New International Version (NIV)**

*<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> 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.*

2. As followers of Jesus, the Holy Spirit is changing us from the inside out. Galatians 5:22-23 reveals to us the fruit of the Spirit. As you read over the list, are there any you have seen God grow in your life? Is there one you find more challenging than others?

#### **Galatians 5:22-23 New International Version (NIV)**

*<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

### LOOKING AHEAD

Whether your group is meeting online or in person, God is at work as you connect, care for one another and encourage each other to follow Him 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 subquestion.*

Looking back at the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23, which one or two would you like to see God sustain and/or grow in you this next quarter? *Take notes on what each person says. Some options could be to make it a weekly prayer request or suggest the group makes it their prayer plan for how they can pray for each individual in the group at home. Then you can check in mid-quarter to see how everyone is doing.*

Is there anything specific you need prayer for, or is there any other focus you would like to have in order to grow this next quarter?

**Transition Statement to Life Group Commitment:** *“It’s great to hear what each of you has 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](#)

Go over the Life Group Commitment Form with your group. See below, or you can download the [Leader Guide to the Life Group Commitment](#).

**Use this as a guide to keep your group healthy in communicating and caring for one another each week.** (The leader audio will give you more details on how to do this effectively.)

**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:

### 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.



**Financial Peace**  
**UNIVERSITY**

### [FINANCIAL PEACE UNIVERSITY FLEX VIRTUAL CLASS](#)

*Mondays beginning January 25 (8 weeks), 7-8:30pm*

New year, new goals! Join us for North Coast Church’s virtual Financial Peace University (FPU) Flex class! FPU presents practical steps to help you get rid of debt, manage your money, spend and save wisely and much more!



## LEADERS GUIDE - LIFE GROUP COMMITMENT

- **DOWNLOAD** this and other Commitments: [lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/life-group-covenants](http://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**

## How To Live Out Why We Are Really Here

### Was Paul just another hypocritical Christian?

Acts 21:15-26, 1 Corinthians 9:20, Romans 9:1-3, 14:4-6

Paul's decision making:

If we can see life through the lens of the **GOSPEL** and **ETERNITY**, everything else will fall into place.

Gospel: Jesus is either Lord **OF ALL** or not Lord **AT ALL**.

Eternity: We were created to **LIVE FOREVER**, and what we do with the **GOSPEL** in this life determines where we spend our eternity.

### Finding our aim?

Acts 20:24, Galatians 5:22-23, Philippians 4:1-8

My decision making... for what it's worth:

I know I've crossed the line when I put:

- **MAKING MY** point ahead of **LOVING** people.
- winning the **ARGUMENT** ahead of winning **PEOPLE**.
- my **SOCIAL MEDIA** ahead of their **SALVATION**.
- my **POLITICS** ahead of my **TESTIMONY**.

I know the enemy is winning when my **FRUSTRATIONS WITH SOCIETY** rob me of my **FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT**.

How many Christians right now are walking in **LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS, SELF-CONTROL?**

Philippians 4: Finally, my brothers and sisters...