

LIFE GROUP LEADER GUIDE

For the week of April 4, 2021

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

HAS YOUR GROUP SIGNED UP FOR A PROJECT?



Our church-wide community service effort, Serve Your City, is right around the corner! There is a wide variety of ways to serve, whether you're looking for something hands-on, outdoors, in-person, at home or on campus, with just a few people or a large group! For help finding a way to serve, visit: northcoastcommunityservice.org/serve-your-city/.

We are now less than three weeks away from our "Serve" week for Serve Your City! To help with the planning of projects as soon as possible, please do all you can to sign your group up and / or help your group members to find a project.

WELCOME TO THE SPRING QUARTER OF LIFE GROUPS

This week we kick off our Spring 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!

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!

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/

LEADER NOTES

GETTING READY FOR YOUR FIRST MEETING

Each week in this section you'll find the most important information for your group.

⇒ GOALS OF THE FIRST MEETING

- Re-connect with existing members and meet new members
- **Sign up for a Serve Your City project**
- **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.
- **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/
- 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/
- **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/) 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 go over the Life Group Commitment Form with your group.

- **Group Sharing** – Discussion Note: You can transition from the “Getting to Know You” section to the “Taking it Home” 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.
- Close in prayer.
- Mingle afterward.

*See the bottom of this Leader Guide for more information on guidelines for groups meeting during COVID.

Find all of our leader resources online: lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/leader-tools

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.*

1. This past weekend we celebrated Easter. When you were growing up, did you have any Easter traditions? Has your viewpoint of Easter changed over time? If so, how?

Discussion Note: *Fun question to see how everybody experienced Easter and how it has changed based on importance of faith, life circumstances and/or family dynamics. Depending on your type of group, you could change the “over time” (i.e. when you had children at home, before you became an empty nester, when you lived at home with parents— insert your season of life here).*

2. As you think about the next eight weeks, what is one thing you hope to get out of your Life Group experience this quarter?

Discussion Note: *Great question to see what group members are looking for. You can ask this after you go through the [Life Group Commitment](#) if you are a newer group or have new members.*

3. 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?

Additional Question: *This weekend, Chris talked about the meaning of the Cross and the empty tomb to our faith. When you describe your faith, do you tend to talk more about the Cross, the empty tomb, neither or both equally?*

DIGGING DEEPER

This week is the first week of the Spring Quarter. You may choose to spend more time being more social going through the [Life Group Commitment](#) and the “Getting to Know You” section, or you may want to spend more time below. Feel free to choose the meeting method that best resonates with your group.

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 end.*

1. In the Easter message, we were challenged to live a risen life. As a follower of Jesus, it can be difficult to understand what a risen life looks like practically. Thankfully, the Apostle Paul gives us a tangible picture of living life through the Spirit. As you read Romans 8:1-11, take note of any differences between living in the [Spirit](#) and living in our [sinful nature](#).

Romans 8:1-11 New International Version (NIV)

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. ¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

Note: The Romans 8 passage will be set up from Chris' message from this past weekend. [Romans 7:7-25](#) is all about the law and our inability to follow it. Romans 8 talks about freedom from the law and calls us to follow the Spirit and not our flesh. It may be helpful to share part of Romans 7 or share the context prior to discussing Romans 8. Also keep in mind Romans 8:1-2, which sets the stage for the entire passage: "...there is **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus, **because** through Christ Jesus the law of the spirit who gives life has set you **free**..." This is a helpful reminder because as humans we will struggle with choosing our desires vs. the Spirit's. Commentary: enduringword.com/bible-commentary/romans-8/

Based on what you read, was there anything challenging or confusing for you? If so, explain.

What could be some possible reasons Paul started this passage talking about the controlling of our minds?

As you look back on your life with Christ, is there something that has helped you keep your mind focused on Jesus?

Discussion Note: This question can be used to share practical examples of how to keep focused on the Spirit. One option would be to make a list as a group. Sometimes hearing how others best connect to the Spirit could help give someone else in the group ideas for them to try. (Some examples may include: Bible reading, prayer, church attendance, worship music, life group, shared experience or conversation with spouse/friend/relative, fasting, journaling, etc.)

Can you think of a time when you chose to follow your own desires versus the Spirit? If you had to go back and do that situation over again, what would you do differently?

Discussion Note: You could follow up with the question, "Is there anything you could do to better set yourself up to follow the Spirit in the future?" This is a great opportunity to reflect and learn about personal experience. This question could get vulnerable.

Additional Questions:

- What are some practical examples of choosing to live according to our sinful nature? (move past murder, rape, pillaging, etc.)
 - Contrast that to living by the Spirit?
- As a group, make a list of some of the things that may help someone live by the Spirit vs. by their sinful nature.

2. Chris asked us this weekend if we would rather have Jesus present with us or the Spirit living in us. It may seem like a loaded question, but there are many benefits to having the Spirit living within us. Read the passages below and take note of any benefits of having the Spirit living within us.

Romans 8:12-17 New International Version (NIV)

¹² Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Galatians 5:16-26 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

John 14:25-27 New International Version (NIV)

²⁵ "All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Note: The Romans 8 passage will be set up from Chris' message from this past weekend. [Romans 7:7-25](#) is all about the law and our inability to follow it. Romans 8 talks about freedom from the law and calls us to follow the Spirit and not our flesh. It may be helpful to share part of Romans 7 or share the context prior to discussing Romans 8. Also keep in mind Romans 8:1-2, which sets the stage for the entire passage: "...there is **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus, **because** through Christ Jesus the law of the spirit who gives life has set you **free**..." This is a helpful reminder because as humans we will struggle with choosing our desires vs. the Spirit's. Commentary: enduringword.com/bible-commentary/romans-8/

Which of these benefits seem most meaningful for you?

If you were encouraging someone to tap into the Spirit living within them, what advice would you give them?

Discussion Note: This question can be used to share practical examples of how to keep focused on the Spirit. One option would be to make a list as a group. Sometimes hearing how others best connect to the Spirit could help give someone else in the group ideas for them to try. (Some examples may include: Bible reading, prayer, church attendance, worship music, life group, shared experience or conversation with spouse/friend/relative, fasting, journaling, etc.)

Additional Question: Whether it has been one week or 50 years, as you reflect back on your life with Christ, can you think of one of the characteristics of the Spirit coming out in you?

TAKING IT HOME

1. Which point from this weekend's message or Life Group study is most important for you to remember?
2. Can you think of one area you want to grow in when it comes to living in the Spirit? Ask your group to pray for you in that area this week.

Note: This could be a great challenge question, or it could be part of your prayer time. You could use a notecard or a Zoom chat box to share these requests. When someone shares an area they want prayer for, this is a great opportunity to follow up as a leader within the next week to see how it has been going and to let them know you have been praying.

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." 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.

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.

GUIDELINES FOR LIFE GROUP MEETINGS DURING COVID

As we move toward our Spring Life Group 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 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>). Here are the three meeting types for this quarter:

- **Online Only:** These groups will meet exclusively online.
- **In-Person:** These groups will meet in person, following the current CDC guidelines.
- **Hybrid:** These groups will meet in a combination of both in-person and online. This could look like alternating between online and in-person, or it could be some people meeting in person and others joining them via video.

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

GROUPS MEETING "IN-PERSON":

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.
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.



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**

Why Do We Need An Empty Tomb?

The table where it all happened:

John 13-17

Why do we need a cross?

Romans 3:16-17, 3:23, 5:8-10, 6:23

1. The **LOVE** of God needed to be shown.
2. The **JUSTICE** of God needed to be met.
3. Our **SIN** needed to be **DEALT** with.

Why do we need an empty tomb?

Romans 5:6-11, 8:5-9, Galatians 2:20, 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, Philippians 2:12-13,
Colossians 3:3-4, Ephesians 3:16-19

The Cross

Was a claim to **BE GOD**

Is about **REDEMPTION**

Is Jesus' **DEATH** for me

Changes my **TITLE**

Changes where **I'M GOING**

Forgave my **SINS**

Is a **ONE-TIME** decision

Gets me out of **HELL** and into **HEAVEN**

Allows me to become a **CHRISTIAN**

VS.

The Empty Tomb

Backed up **THE CLAIM**

Is about **REGENERATION**

Is Jesus' **LIFE** in me

Changes my **TESTIMONY**

Changes who **I AM**

Gives me **POWER OVER** sin

Is a **DAILY** decision

Gets God out of **HEAVEN** and into **ME**

Allows me to be the **CHRISTIAN** I've become

Jesus gave His life **FOR ME**, to take my life **FROM ME**, so He could live His life **THROUGH ME**.