

LIFE GROUPS  
COACH

***POCKET GUIDE***





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COACH

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Life Groups Coach Pocket Guide  
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Shepherd Church

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## JESUS' PURPOSES FOR OUR CHURCH, OUR LIFE GROUPS, AND US

In everything we do at Shepherd, we seek to lift up Jesus that the world might believe (John 3:14-15 and John 12:32). We want to come alongside you in your journey with God, so that as you are saved in Christ and become strong in Christ, you can serve Christ and share Him with others!

- 6 We believe that each and every person is valuable to God and loved by Him. While the world often tries to define how our value is measured, Jesus came to completely change the game. Through His sacrifice, He showed that we were worth His very life. Through Him, we are set free from our sins and given a new hope and a new purpose. And now, God has called each of us to tell others about the good news of Jesus Christ, and simply to share our own story of transformation.

As we love and serve others, we are better able to reach one person for Christ. Through one person, we can reach a family. By reaching a family, we can reach a city. And by reaching a city, we can reach our nation. By reaching our nation, we can then impact the world.

## LIFE GROUPS VISION

Life Groups are designed to help you experience the life God has for you by helping you **CONNECT** with other believers, helping you **GROW** to be more like Christ, and making an **IMPACT** with the gospel.

Every time a group meets, they spend time connecting through building relationships, growing through a discussion-led Bible study, and making an impact by supporting each other through prayer and service. As a result, group members experience growth, belonging, and care. A Life Group is your chance to pursue healthy relationships and spiritual growth. You can't grow spiritually without connecting relationally.

# WHAT IS MY ROLE AS A LIFE GROUPS COACH?

As a Life Groups Coach (LGC), you will pour into, encourage, and guide Life Group Leaders (LGL) as they lead their groups into the life Jesus intends them to live. You can share wisdom from your years of experience as a LGL, pray about the things God is teaching you, and take action to allow Jesus to work in you and through you as you interact with the LGLs under your care. Enjoy the encouragement and challenges that God desires as His grace abounds in your experience as a LGC.

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You will encourage and guide LGLs to lead their groups to reflect the **Life Groups Values**, which are: **Connect**, **Grow** and **Impact**.

## CONNECT

The foundation for spiritual growth is an intimate connection with God and His family (a few people who really know you and share their lives with you). Our hope and prayer for our Life Groups Coaches is that you will connect with your Life Group Leaders on a deep level. This will allow you to pour into them as an individual, and as a Leader of their Life Group as you guide them into a better connection with God.

Your experience as a Life Group Leader and your experiences with God will help you to guide your LGLs as you help them connect with God and others.

**CONNECT with God**  
**CONNECT with Life Group Leaders**

## GROW

Growth can sometimes be difficult to measure. Everyone is on a different timeline and path. But, we all can and need to be doing something that challenges us and puts us in a position for God to work in our hearts and minds. This will promote growth.

As a LGC, your experience in this area cannot be understated. The LGLs will look to you to help them take their next step of growth. As you get to know them, you may challenge them in their journey and connection with God. Some will need greater challenges and/or disciplines in their lives, while others will need just the basics of walking with Jesus at the center of their life. As you get to know them, these will become evident.

8

One simple direction to start is you may encourage your LGLs to use the Study Guide as a devotional during the week between Life Group meetings. Look up and read the Scripture references and answer the questions on your own. By answering just two questions a day for the week, you will get through the entire lesson before your next meeting. This will ensure that the LGL knows the lesson before the meeting time, and has a chance to shape the discussion to fit their group's maturity level. And, this is a simple but excellent way to get into the Bible daily!

### **GROW to be more like Christ**

## **IMPACT**

Impact is about putting what you learned into action. It is about walking the talk. As a LGC, you may encourage each of your LGLs to lead their group to make an Impact in their community.

We ask that all groups do some sort of community project together, some time during each series. Most groups have found that they have made significant contributions to society through this, and have made a lasting impact on people's lives for Jesus.

For many ideas, direct your LGL to [lifegroups.org/impact](http://lifegroups.org/impact). We have a list and contact information for several local organizations to partner with and make an impact in our community. Or you may encourage your LGL to think outside the box and do something on their own to make a difference in their community.

We have a big job to share the love of Jesus in many different ways all over our communities. Our service in our communities displays the love of Jesus far greater than words often do. Take action now!

### **Make an IMPACT with the gospel**

## WHAT'S INSIDE

Everyone is different, causing communication and encouragement to be challenging at times. It's tough to be able to determine how to speak truth into your Life Group Leaders. Not because you don't know the right answers, but because a relationship with a leader isn't a static one. It's ever-changing, and you want to be able to help your leaders develop and grow no matter what stage they're at.

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This resource is designed for you, the **Life Group Coach (LGC)**.

- To help engage others.
- To help you build healthy Life Groups.
- To quickly access as a handy reference.
- To be able to quickly diagnose the development that's needed in a leader.
- To breathe new life into leaders.

Part of your LGC role is also to be a "Weekend Connector" (see page 45), so we included some questions you can ask to engage people during the weekend services.

We're in this with you!

We are so excited for this next step you are taking to lead the leaders of Shepherd Church! You are a blessing to us, to this church, and to God's Kingdom! You will be blessed beyond belief as God uses you to love His children! Thank you for all you are doing! Grace and Peace to you

The Life Groups Team

# DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

Phase 1  
pgs 9-15

**New  
Life Group  
Leader**

**Life Group  
New  
Leader  
Training**

**Life Groups  
Coach**  
*assigned to New  
Life Group Leader  
and build relationship*

**Be a F.R.I.E.N.D.**

Phase 2  
pgs 16-22

**Life Groups Coach**  
*encourage the Life Group  
Leader to grow*

**Be a L.E.A.D.E.R.**

**Be a C.O.A.C.H.**

Phase 3  
pgs 23-29

**Attend an  
Encounter  
Weekend**

**School of Discipleship (SOD)**  
*Attend and graduate from  
each of the three levels of  
discipleship training here  
at Shepherd Church.*

**SOD Level 1**  
Learning

**SOD Level 2**  
Transforming

**SOD Level 3**  
Serving

Leader  
Care  
pgs 30-37

**Life Groups Gatherings**

# PHASE 1

## BE A F.R.I.E.N.D.

As you begin to build a relationship with a Life Group Leader, you don't have to jump straight to the deep end of your relationship with them. Just as most relationships start light, ease your way into their lives. In our Life Groups here at Shepherd Church, we use this illustration:

## TRUTH = TRUST/TIME

We want to speak truth into others' lives, and that only comes after we've built trust. And trust is only built over a period of time.

## START OUT BY BEING A F.R.I.E.N.D.

**F**ind Common Ground

**R**eplenish Their Soul

**I**nterests They Have

**E**ngage and Encourage Their Calling

**N**otes Between Meetings

**D**evelop Relationship

## FIND COMMON GROUND

Start by simply finding common ground you share with the Life Group Leaders (LGL). This is one of the places where trust begins to form. Here are some questions to help you begin:

12

- Ask them about their faith story, the story of how they came to Shepherd Church, or what they love about our church.
- Are they married or single?
- Do they have kids?
- How long have they been part of Life Groups at Shepherd Church? How did they become involved with their Life Group?
- Why do they love their Life Group so much?
- Who brought them to Shepherd Church?
- Somehow, some way, find common ground that you can share with them.

## REPLENISH THEIR SOUL

LGLs are stronger if their souls stay replenished. Here are some questions you can ask to discover how they are doing in this area:

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- Do they have consistent devotionals and prayer time?
- What resources can help them?
- Do they take margin (time for themselves)?
- Are they taking consistent time for Sabbath?
- Do they enjoy nature walks or a nature outing?
- Is there a retreat they can attend?
- Do they have personal times of worship?
- Do they have a mentor?
- Have they developed close friendships?
- How do they best connect with God?

## INTERESTS THEY HAVE

Ask questions about the LGLs interests to help create common ground and build the friendship side of the relationship you have with each LGL:

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- What do they like to do in their free time? Do they have any hobbies?
- Are they a sports fan? Who's their favorite team?
- What show(s) do they watch on television?
- Where do they like to vacation? If they could vacation anywhere in the world, where would they like to go?
- What is their favorite food and/or dessert?
- Ask them to share about one person they'd like to meet and why.

## ENGAGE AND ENCOURAGE THEIR CALLING

Every LGL has a calling because leading a Life Group is a calling from God. Each LGL has a reason why they began leading and why they're continuing to lead. To speak relevant truth to LGLs, you must understand their calling. Here are some questions to start with:

15

- What is their spiritual story?
- What trials or hurts are they experiencing right now? What have they experienced in the past that has shaped the calling God has placed on their life as a Life Group Leader?
- Have they gone on a Men's or Women's Encounter and/or graduated from the School of Discipleship (SOD)?
- Have they taken a Spiritual Gifts test? We have one available at: [shepherdchurch.com/spiritualgiftsinventory](http://shepherdchurch.com/spiritualgiftsinventory)
- How has God **S.H.A.P.E.**d them uniquely for their role?

- S** What are their **Spiritual Gifts**?
- H** What is their **Heart** passionate toward?
- A** What **Abilities** do they have?
- P** What is their **Personality**?
- E** What good and bad **Experiences** do they have?

## NOTE BETWEEN MEETINGS

LGLs are often nervous before their group meetings, or afterwards for that matter. They often wonder how things went. A word of encouragement goes a long way when it comes from you. Here are some suggestions:

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- Send them a quick text message on the day their group meets, letting them know you're praying for them and their group. Send them a text message the day after their group meets, to check in and see how things went.
- Call them on the phone and pray with them, or leave the prayer on their voicemail.
- Send them a handwritten card. Since handwritten notes are so rare these days, they can be a nice personal touch.
- Follow them on social media and encourage them on the platform(s) they use regularly.
- Text them when it's their birthday and anniversary (and their kids and spouse, if applicable), and send them a card on their big day.
- Find out which service they attend on the weekend and see if you can meet up with them for coffee before or after the service.

## DEVELOP RELATIONSHIP

Moving beyond words of encouragement takes intentionality. It will help Life Group Leaders feel like you truly care for them, because you're dedicating time to develop the relationships. Try incorporating the following acts:

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- Invite them out to a cup of coffee or even share a meal together.
- If appropriate, connect with them at their place of business.
- Have them over for an event you're hosting at your house. Consider having more than one LGL over at a time to help build a network of LGLs rather than just developing the relationship you have with them.
- Intentionally help connect them with others at Shepherd Church through one of our weekend services or through an event we have.
- Visit each of the LGLs' Life Groups and give them positive feedback and encouragement.

# PHASE 2

## BE A L.E.A.D.E.R.

This is one step further to go with a LGL, taking the relationship slightly deeper with more intentionality. This is when we really begin speaking truth to a LGL that helps them as they grow and develop as the Leader of their group. As you progress through this phase of development, the LGL will sharpen their skills considerably as you take on more and more of a leadership role in the Leader's life.

## BE A L.E.A.D.E.R.

**L**istening skills - everyone talks

**E**ngage the leadership development pathway

**A**ctive personal evangelism

**D**evelop subgrouping by gender

**E**ncourage role development

**R**emember and celebrate their wins

## LISTENING SKILLS - EVERYONE TALKS

When it comes to helping the LGL develop listening skills, offer the following quick and easy tips that can help right away:

19

- First, remind them that the goal of the curriculum is **not about** getting through all of the questions in the study, but facilitating the discussion. Completing the lesson beforehand really helps this concept be actualized.
- Communicate to them that God gave you two ears and one mouth. Use them in that proportion.
- As people are sharing answers in Life Group, work to identify feelings. Look for the emotion behind what's being said, not simply focusing on the words themselves.
- Ask them to look for and be aware of body language.
- Demonstrate how to ask "why" and "how" questions that spur dialog.
- Give examples on how to affirm group members when answering questions.
- Help them to be comfortable with silence. Don't be the first person to answer the questions! Awkward silence helps push people to share more automatically. Remember the 8-second rule.

## ENGAGE THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

We have a development pathway in place, but that doesn't ensure everyone is on the pathway. Part of being an LGC in a LGL's life is helping make sure they're progressing through the following modules we have created:

20

- Show them the Life Group Leader **Development Pathway** (see pg 10).
- Show them how to log on to the website [lifegroups.org](https://lifegroups.org). Walk them through the **Leader's Toolbox** and how to access their group, make changes such as adding/deleting members, pending registrations, take attendance, etc.
- Email LGLs the dates of upcoming Men's or Women's Encounters. Encourage them to attend for the first time or serve if they have already attended. Make sure to know the Server Meeting dates prior of the Encounter! Details and registration are found: [shepherdchurch.com/encounters](https://shepherdchurch.com/encounters)
- Be familiar with the next time each Level (1, 2, and 3) for School of Discipleship classes begin. Email inquiries to [encounters@shepherdchurch.com](mailto:encounters@shepherdchurch.com)

## ACTIVE PERSONAL EVANGELISM

LGLs are stronger if their souls stay replenished. Here are some questions you can ask to discover how they are doing in this area:

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- Start out by reminding the LGL of their five circles of influence: friends, family, factory, firm, frequent contacts.
- **Crawl Step:** Help the LGL identify the name of one person they can pray for. As their LGC, you can offer to pray for that person as well (thus building accountability). This is an activity the LGL can do with their Life Group as well.
- **Walk Step:** Pray for the person (first name only) out loud. Again, this is a great activity for the LGL to do with their group!
- **Run Step:** Get to know the story of the person you're praying for.
- Share any victories with the Life Groups Team. We love to hear testimonies of how God is working in and through our Life Groups!

**Ideas:** Invite a new person to one of the weekend services, your Life Group, or a Shepherd Church event. Pass out Shepherd Church event promo cards to family members, neighbors, co-workers, businesses, and restaurants. Share your testimony, share the gospel, give out a Christian book or Bible. Share a web link to a weekend service. There are many alternatives to share!

## DEVELOP SUBGROUPING BY GENDER

Instead of staying together in one mixed gender group each and every week, a healthy group splits up by gender. Here are a few ways you can help a LGL implement this area:

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- For fellowship time, have a “guys night out” one week, then a “girls night out” the following week.
- During the discussion time (or prayer time), send the men to a different spot in or around the home than the women. You’ll often find a different level of sharing when this happens.
- Each group should also identify a men’s “champion” and a women’s “champion.” Remind the group that splitting up by gender promotes overall group health and creates more opportunities to go deeper as a group. The champion can then facilitate discussion or prayer time within the subgroup.

## ENCOURAGE ROLE DEVELOPMENT

There are many different aspects to a healthy Life Group. If the LGL chooses to take care of all group tasks, everything may get done, but group development and ownership won't happen. Below are some tips for LGLs to help them share their responsibilities along the way:

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- Start by ensuring each LGL has filled out their group roster on [lifegroups.org/leaderstoolbox](https://lifegroups.org/leaderstoolbox)
- Encourage the LGL to empower members to take ownership of the following group tasks:
  - Opening discussion
  - Closing prayer
  - Meeting location (if location varies)
  - Managing group roster
  - Coordinating snacks for the group meeting
  - Coordinating socials aside from group meeting
  - Keeping the group aware of **Impact** opportunities
  - Plan and implement **Impact** projects
  - Choosing a worship song

Remember, this is truly a group effort. Do your best to include as many Life Group Members as possible.

## REMEMBER AND CELEBRATE THEIR WINS

LGLs easily forget their wins as they focus on areas where they need to develop. Here are some ways you can help remind them of what God has done through them:

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- Help LGLs to define their wins. Are they pursuing health as a Life Group? If they don't know the target, they won't know if they're hitting it or not.
- Help LGLs to track or measure their wins by writing out these "wins" on a sheet of paper. Make sure to ask them about their wins and celebrate them together!
- Direct them to take one of our **Individual or Group Assessments** (pg 28) to track how well they are balancing the **Life Groups Values - CONNECT, GROW, IMPACT**.  
[lifegroups.org/leaderstoolbox](http://lifegroups.org/leaderstoolbox)
- Week after week, stories of life change are happening. It could be a dream someone finally realized, an obstacle that has been overcome, or a miracle that God performed. Help LGLs and their Life Groups capture these stories!
- Encourage them to share these stories of life change with the Life Groups Team. We love to hear testimonies of how God is working in and through our Life Groups! You may email your stories to [lifegroups@shepherdchurch.com](mailto:lifegroups@shepherdchurch.com)

# PHASE 3

## BE A C.O.A.C.H.

As a Life Groups Coach (LGC), you have become the expert on Life Groups in the lives of your LGL. You've built trust over the course of time, and you've earned the right to speak truth to them. But the relationship is far from over! Now you're positioned to help LGLs and their Life Groups thrive for the long haul.

## BE A C.O.A.C.H.

**C**lass progress

**O**pen up their next steps in leadership

**A**ffirm their personal and group growth

**C**urriculum strategy

**H**ost a Life Group Gathering

## CLASS PROGRESS

26

Part of spiritual development at Shepherd Church is cognitive, and one of the ways we accomplish that is through our **Encounter** weekend and subsequent **School of Discipleship (SOD)**. Over time, we teach that a follower of Jesus learns, transforms, and serves all in community of the church. Our intention is to help people **CONNECT** with God and others, **GROW** to be more like Christ, and make an **IMPACT** in our community as they live out a life that lifts up Jesus so the world might believe. A healthy LGL is growing through these classes:

- Attend an ENCOUNTER
- SOD - Level 1
- SOD - Level 2
- SOD - Level 3
- Serve at an ENCOUNTER

Be familiar with the next time each of these classes is offered on our campus. Check out the details at [ShepherdChurch.com/encounters](https://ShepherdChurch.com/encounters).

Periodically check in with the LGL to encourage their progress through the CLASS system.

## OPEN UP THEIR NEXT STEPS IN LEADERSHIP

Every LGL has a next step. Encourage hosts to take the next steps in leadership. The best kind of encouragement is one that's informed by potential steps and the S.H.A.P.E. of the LGL. Consider these next steps with your LGL:

27

- **Raise up Co-Leaders, purpose champions, and gender champions:** This is a step that they can take within their group, but it takes great leadership. Guide your LGLs to embrace this concept (which includes group ownership), and indicate their decisions in the [lifegroups.org/leaderstoolbox](https://lifegroups.org/leaderstoolbox)
- **Life Groups Coach:** Can you see a particular LGL helping to get groups healthy? Can you see this LGL speaking hope and life into other LGLs and connecting people during weekend services? Consider asking him/her to join our Life Group Coaching Team!
- **Ministry Leader:** Has the LGL been to the Encounter and/or completed School of Discipleship? What did their S.H.A.P.E. (spiritual gifts test - pg 15) guide suggest they do in ministry and are they serving?
- **Vocational ministry calling:** Does this person have a calling to be on church staff?

## AFFIRM PERSONAL AND GROUP GROWTH

Has the LGL taken the Personal Health Assessment? Has the group taken the Group Health Assessment? This is a great coaching moment you can have with them. Here are some tools you can use:

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- Find all assessments at [lifegroups.org/leaderstoolbox](https://lifegroups.org/leaderstoolbox).
- The Personal Health Assessment has an accountability component, where the person taking the assessment needs to name a person that they will talk with about their results. This person will also help the LGL stay on track for their personal spiritual health. Has the LGL touched base with their spiritual growth partner? Do they have one? How is that relationship going?
- The Group Health Assessment is designed to be a shared assessment of how the group is doing seeking the **Life Groups Values** together. Has the group taken it? In what areas are they weak?

Be prepared to offer practical suggestions on ways they can improve in each of the **Life Groups Values**: to **CONNECT** with God and others, to **GROW** to be more like Christ, to make an **IMPACT** with the gospel, and to life up Jesus so that the world might believe.

## CURRICULUM STRATEGY

A healthy group is one that has a strategy in place for how they're going to progress through curriculum. Here are a few diagnostic questions you can ask to find where a group needs to go:

29

- We encourage all of our Life Groups to use whatever the current Life Group series based on the sermons Pastor Dudley is leading the whole congregation through. There is a powerful spiritual connection when all Life Groups are on the same page by studying the same material at the same time.
- The foundation for spiritual growth is an intimate connection with God and His family (a few people who really know you and share their lives with you). The **CONNECT** section of the Life Group Study Guide is designed to allow group members to get to know each other. You can do this by using the icebreaker questions provided, or by asking light, easy-to-answer questions of your own that invite involvement from everyone.

As your group begins, use the Life Group Agreement, to help your group see how everyone has a part in making a Life Group come to life. As the group develops intimacy, use the Prayer and Praise Report to keep the group connected.

- Serving as a companion to the Study Guide is the video teaching. This DVD is designed to combine teaching segments from pastors and teachers along with leadership insights and personal stories of life change. Using the teaching video will add value to each series.

Did you know you can download and play the Life Group video lessons online at [lifegroups.org/watch](http://lifegroups.org/watch) or stream online via Apple TV,

## PHASE 3 - B E A C.O.A.C.H.

Roku, or Amazon Fire Stick? Use these devices to download the Shepherd Church App and stream all the current Life Group video lessons from just about anywhere! This ability makes it possible to hold your Life Group at a park or local restaurant or wherever you have wifi or other internet connection.

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- If the LGL and their group decide to have group meetings in between current Life Group series, encourage the LGLs to go through a past Life Group series. The Life Groups Team has been writing curriculum for many years and has material in storage to be used by groups who desire to continue meeting. For past Life Group series inquiries, email [lifegroups@shepherdchurch.com](mailto:lifegroups@shepherdchurch.com)

- As a LGL and member of Shepherd Church, you have access to [RightNowMedia.org](https://www.RightNowMedia.org) which showcases hundreds of small group video lessons, sermons, and Bible studies for you and your Life Group to use. For a link and login instructions, email [lifegroups@shepherdchurch.com](mailto:lifegroups@shepherdchurch.com)

## HOST A LIFE GROUPS GATHERING

Organize a gathering of Life Group Leaders (and their groups)! This is a great way to help LGLs and groups network together for growth, problem-solving, and fellowship. You can do this anywhere! This will further solidify the group of LGLs and group members that God has entrusted to your care. Here are a couple of ways you can gather the LGLs together:

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- Invite the LGLs that you have built a relationship with for a BBQ and game night. There does not have to be an agenda other than hanging out and talking. Building relationships is integral to leading healthy Life Groups. Give your LGLs an opportunity to meet and talk with some other LGLs. The more familiar the LGLs become with one another, the stronger bond the church begins to form.
- Invite the LGLs and their group members for a BBQ and game night! This is the same idea as above but with more people. ;) Plan some fun things for the kids and adults as you just enjoy each other with fun.
- Have a group meeting with all of your LGLs where you have a small time of teaching, sharing, and prayer time together. Use this time to listen to each of the LGLs as they share, confess, and love on one another through prayer and encouragement.
- Corporate Gatherings: Life Groups Launch, Life Groups BBQ, Life Groups Celebration, Encounter Worship Night (see pages 36-37).

# CARING FOR LEADERS

Caring for Life Group Leaders is a vital part of the LGC's role. You can connect with a LGL using their preferred method of communication, but it's also important to vary your communication with LGLs. Using different methods is a great way to engage them, instead of simply relying on one form:

TEXT MESSAGES

EMAILS

PHONE CALLS

SOCIAL MEDIA

FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

GATHERINGS

Part of caring is finding out which method each of our LGLs communicates most effectively and efficiently. When you find this out, the truths you're working to communicate have a better chance of reaching the LGLs you're trying to lead!

## TEXT MESSAGES

Many people prefer the speed and efficiency of text messaging, especially when it comes to Life Groups interaction.

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Try sending a few of these encouraging texts:

- Praying for you and your group today! (A great text to send on the day their group meets)
- I know your group met yesterday and wanted you to know I've been praying for you. Hope it went well!
- I was just reading this verse and was super encouraged, so thought I'd pass it along! Thanks for all you are doing for your Life Group! Include a SHORT verse.
- Thanks for caring for your group! We're here to support you so don't hesitate to contact me if you need anything!
- I'll be praying for you and your group this week! Let me know if there's anything specific I can be praying for!
- Let them know that: a new SOD - Level 1 or an Encounter weekend is coming up this month. I encourage you and your group members to attend.

## EMAILS

There are plenty of times when we have information to share with Life Group Leaders: dates, details, etc. Further the relationship by sending some of these encouraging emails:

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### **SUBJECT: TWO QUICK QUESTIONS FOR YOU!**

- HEY (LGL Name), It's your Life Groups Coach with the Life Groups Team, and wanted to say THANK YOU for all you're doing for your Life Group, and check in with two quick questions. 1) What's been a highlight for your group in the last month? 2) How can I be praying for you? Hope everything is well!

### **SUBJECT: SHEPHERD CHURCH LIFE GROUPS**

- Hey (LGL Name), It's your Life Groups Coach with the Life Groups Team, and wanted to say THANK YOU for all you're doing for your Life Group! We're committed to praying monthly for all of our Life Group Leaders, so please know that you've got a great support team in place that wants to help you and your group be healthy! Let us know if we can ever do anything to better support you.

## PHONE CALLS

A phone call and/or voicemail often lends a personal touch with your Life Group Leaders.

Here are some questions you can ask:

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- Hey, this is (your name), your Life Groups Coach with the Life Groups Team at Shepherd Church. Just wanted to see if you had any questions, or if there is anything I could do to help you with your Life Group. Call (or text) me back if I can help with anything, and thanks for caring for your Life Group.

- If they pick up, take the time to connect relationally and then ask the following:

- What has been a highlight for your group in the last month?
- What has been a struggle for your group in the last month?
- Is there anything you need from me at this time?
- How can I be praying for you and your Life Group?

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Remember, your relationship with your Life Group Leader is beyond a simple transactional “How’s your Life Group...” conversation. Social media is another great medium to help build a trusting relationship. Here are some starting points:

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- Follow and “friend” your LGLs on any of the social media that you use.
- “Like” their posts.
- Comment on their posts.
- Take a picture with one of your LGLs and post it on social media (making sure you have their permission first).
- Try Facebook Messenger or direct message on Instagram and Twitter as other means to communicate in addition to email.

## FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

Set aside time to connect with your Life Group Leaders in person. Here are some questions to open for discussion:

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- What has been a highlight of your Life Group in the past few weeks? What's something you're looking forward to in your Life Group in the next few weeks?
- How can I be praying for you and your Life Group? (If it's appropriate, take a minute to pray with them before you end the conversation!)
- Is there anything you need from me or the Life Groups Team right now?
- Is your Life Group going to meet in between Life Group series? What curriculum is your Life Group going to use after the Life Group series is over?
- How is God growing you as a Life Group Leader?
- Have you considered scheduling a face-to-face meeting at one of the Life Groups Gatherings or after one of the weekend services?
- For any LGCs who are coaching an LGL of the opposite sex, please have your meetings at Shepherd Church Pillars Cafe during regular hours. **We want all LGCs and LGLs to be above reproach.**

## GATHERINGS

Set aside time to Gather in a corporate setting with other Life Group Coaches, Leaders, and Members. Here are the Life Group Gatherings we have scheduled:

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- **Life Groups Launch.** Before every series, the Life Groups Team hosts a Life Groups Launch at the Shepherd Church Porter Ranch campus to bring all LGLs together for worship, fellowship, encouragement, new series information, and materials for the new series. These Gatherings are usually an hour in length and are held on a Saturday afternoon before the 6 PM service and on Sunday afternoon after the 11 AM service concludes.
- **Life Groups BBQ.** This Gathering is in appreciation of all our Life Groups Leaders and is usually held on a Saturday in June from 11 AM - 3 PM. The Life Groups Team hosts this Gathering at a local park and serves lots of food and fun for all Life Group Leaders and their Life Group Members and families. This is a Gathering for the whole family! Food has always brought people together for conversations and fun. This Gathering is no different as we enjoy a warm summer Southern California day tossing water balloons, binging on watermelons, bouncing in a giant inflatable bounce house, getting our faces painted, eating hamburgers and hot dogs with all the fixings, and having fun with our Shepherd Church Life Groups families.
- **Life Groups Celebration.** This Gathering is for all LGLs and their group members. It is held before the Fall series and involves live worship, encouragement from pastors, testimonies from LGLs and their group members, a recap of all that Life Groups did for the previous year, fun, excitement, and some cool gifts for those in attendance. We also kick off the Fall series with information and teaser

## CARING FOR LEADERS - GATHERINGS

videos for the upcoming series and hand out the new Life Group series curriculum to LGLs for their group members. This is a Celebration of all things Life Groups and is a Gathering you do not want to miss!

- **Encounter Worship Night.** This night of live worship, usually held near the later part of the year, was dreamt up by those who attended a Men's or Women's Encounter and experienced God's forgiveness and freedom in their lives. This Gathering has since been opened up to ANYONE who would like to spend a couple of hours worshipping, praying, and connecting with the Holy Spirit in a high energy, deeply thoughtful worship music event. Life Group Leaders, Life Group Members, and their families and friends are encouraged to join us at this Gathering as we worship our almighty and personal God together.

- The dates and times for all of the Gatherings will be on the **Life Groups Calendar** distributed at the beginning of every year. Announcements for all of these Gatherings are made by email, text, and save the date post cards. LGCs are encouraged to keep their LGLs up to date with these Gatherings.

# HELPFUL COACHING TIPS FOR NEW LEADERS

- **When talking with new LGLs, make sure to encourage them a lot!** Congratulations! You have responded to the call to help shepherd Jesus' flock. There are few other tasks in the family of God that surpass the contribution you will be making. As you prepare to lead, whether it is one session or the entire series, here are a few thoughts to keep in mind. We encourage you to read these and review them with each new discussion leader before he or she leads.
- **Sweaty palms are a healthy sign.** The Bible says God is gracious to the humble. Remember who is in control; the time to worry is when you're not worried. Those who are soft in heart (and sweaty palmed) are those whom God is sure to speak through.
- **Seek support.** Ask your leader, co-leader, or a close friend to pray for you and prepare with you before the session. Walking through the study will help you anticipate potentially difficult questions and discussion topics.

## HELPFUL COACHING TIPS FOR NEW LEADERS

- **Bring your uniqueness to the study.** Lean into who you are and how God wants you to uniquely lead the study.
- **Prepare. Prepare. Prepare.** Go through the session several times. If you are using the DVD, listen to the teaching segment and take notes for yourself. Go to [lifegroups.com/leadernotes](http://lifegroups.com/leadernotes) to download the Leader's Notes. As you review the session and the Leader's Notes, write down your responses to each question. Pay special attention to exercises that ask Life Group Members to do something other than engage in discussion. Consider writing in a journal or fasting for a day to prepare yourself for what God wants to do.
- **Don't wait until the last minute to prepare!**
- **Ask for feedback so you can grow.** Perhaps in an e-mail or on cards handed out at the study, have everyone write down three things you did well and one thing you could improve. Don't get defensive, but show an openness to learn and grow.
- **Prayerfully consider launching a new group.** This doesn't need to happen overnight, but God's heart is for this to happen over time.
- **Not all Christians are called to be leaders or teachers,** but we are all called to be "shepherds" of a few.
- **Share with your group what God is doing in your heart.** Be authentic and vulnerable. God is searching for those whose hearts are fully His. Share your trials and victories. We promise that people will relate.

## HELPFUL COACHING TIPS FOR NEW LEADERS

- **Prayerfully consider whom you would like to pass the baton to next week.** God is ready for the next member of your group to go on the faith journey you just traveled. Make it fun, and expect God to do the rest.
- 42 ● **Remember that you are not alone.** God knows everything about you, and He knew you would be asked to lead your group. Remember it is common for all good leaders to feel they are not ready to lead. Moses, Solomon, Jeremiah, and Timothy - they all were reluctant to lead. God promises, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). Whether you are leading for one evening, for several weeks, or for a lifetime, you will be blessed as you serve.
- **Don't try to do it alone.** Pray right now for God to help you build a healthy leadership team. If you can enlist a co-leader to help you lead the group, you will find your experience to be much richer. This is your chance to involve as many people as you can in building a healthy group. All you have to do is call and ask people to help. You'll be surprised at the response.
- **Just be yourself.** If you won't be you, who will? God wants you to use your unique gifts and temperament. Don't try to do things exactly like another leader; do them in a way that fits you! Just admit it when you don't have an answer, and apologize when you make a mistake. Your group will love you for it, and you'll sleep better at night!
- **Pray for your group members by name.** Before you begin your session, go around the room in your mind and pray for each member by name. You may want to review the prayer list at least once a week. Ask God to use your time together to uniquely touch the heart of every person. Expect God to lead you to whomever He wants you to encourage or challenge in a special way. If you listen, God will surely lead!

## HELPFUL COACHING TIPS FOR NEW LEADERS

- **When you ask a question, be patient.** Someone will eventually respond. Sometimes people need a moment or two of silence to think about the question, and if silence doesn't bother you, it won't bother anyone else. After someone responds, affirm the response with a simple "thanks" or "good job." Then ask, "How about somebody else?" or "Would someone who hasn't shared like to add anything?" Be sensitive to new people or reluctant members who aren't ready to say, pray or do anything. If you give them a safe setting, they will blossom over time.

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- **Provide transitions between questions.** When guiding the discussion, always read aloud the transitional paragraphs and the questions. Ask the group if anyone would like to read the paragraph or Bible passage. Don't call on anyone, but ask for a volunteer, and then be patient until someone begins. Be sure to thank the person who reads aloud.

- **Break-up into sub-groups each week, or they won't stay.** If your group has more than seven people, ***we strongly encourage you to have the group occasionally gather in discussion circles of three or four people during the Grow and Impact sections of the study.*** With a greater opportunity to talk in a small circle, people will connect more with the study, apply more quickly what they're learning and ultimately get more out of it. A small circle also encourages a quiet person to participate, and tends to minimize the affects of a more vocal or dominant member. It can also help people feel more loved in your group. When you gather again at the end of the section, you can have one person summarize the highlights from each circle. Small circles are also helpful during prayer time. People who are unaccustomed to praying aloud will feel more comfortable trying it with just two or three others. Also, prayer requests won't take as much time, so circles will have more time to actually pray. When you gather back with the whole group, you can have one person from each circle briefly update everyone on the prayer requests. People are more willing to pray in small circles if they know that the whole group will hear all the prayer requests.

## HELPFUL COACHING TIPS FOR NEW LEADERS

- **Rotate facilitators weekly.** At the end of each meeting, ask the group who would be a good candidate to lead the following week. Let the group help select your weekly facilitator. You may be perfectly capable of leading each time, but you will help others grow in their faith and gifts if you give them opportunities to lead. You can use the **Life Group Calendar** to fill in the names of all meeting leaders at once if you prefer.

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- **One final challenge (for new or first time leaders):**

Before your first opportunity to lead, look up each of the five passages listed below. Read each one as a devotional exercise to help equip yourself with a shepherd's heart. Trust us on this one. If you do this, you will be more than ready for your first meeting.

**Matthew 9:36**

**1 Peter 5:2-4**

**Psalm 23**

**Ezekiel 34:11-16**

**1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, 11-12**

# WEEKEND CONNECTOR

Part of the role of LGCs is being a “Weekend Connector.” The Weekend Connections will happen during the sign up weekends prior to a series kick off. Being a Weekend Connector is vitally important because you are the face of Life Groups at Shepherd Church during the weekend services. You’re the “expert” on finding, joining, and building healthy Life Groups. The Life Groups Team serve in this capacity as well, but together we all help extend the mission and vision of Life Groups as we relationally connect with people:

- Help people join a Life Group.
- Help people to start a Life Group.
- Arrive 20 minutes before services to pray with people and prepare for service.
- Stay 20 minutes after services to pray with people and connect them to healthy Life Groups.
- Engage with people and help them take their next spiritual step.

## WEEKEND CONNECTOR

**As you're serving, here are a few questions you can keep handy to engage others:**

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- How long have you been coming to Shepherd Church? Who invited you?
- How did you first hear about Shepherd Church?
- Are you feeling connected here?
- What did God challenge you with today?
- Do you live close by? (This is a great chance to talk about local Life Groups that we have or to inform them about other satellite campuses we have that may be more convenient.)
- Have you been in a Life Group here at Shepherd Church or a small group at another church before?

# FAQs

As a Life Groups Coach, you may encounter some of the following FAQs from your Life Group Leaders or prospective Leaders:

## 1. Am I qualified to lead a Life Group?

We will give you everything you need to start a Life Group and walk alongside you as you do. If you have two friends that are willing to go on a spiritual journey with you to learn through our video curriculum, you can Lead a Life Group! Are you a H.O.S.T.?

Do you...

**H**ave a heart for others?

**O**pen up your place?

**S**erve snacks?

**T**ell others about the group?

If you answered yes to these, we'd love to help you start a group right now! Jesus called people in Matthew 4 by saying, "Follow me." If you're willing to follow our lead, as we follow Jesus, we'll help you on this journey!

## 2. How do I start a Life Group?

We would love for you to start a Life Group! You can start your group by filling out your information at [lifegroups.org/leader](http://lifegroups.org/leader) and you may also register for any upcoming Life Group New Leader Training we have before each Life Group series begins.

## 48 3. Do you have groups for middle school, high school, and/or college age students?

Yes, we absolutely do have Life Groups for our youth and young adults!

- For **middle school and high school students**, connect with **Shepherd Youth** staff at your campus or go to [Shepherdchurch.com/youth](http://Shepherdchurch.com/youth) for more information. To sign up for D-Groups (youth age Life Groups), visit their website: [ShepherdYouth.com/dgroups](http://ShepherdYouth.com/dgroups) or to get more information, email Brianne Bookout at [bbookout@shepherdchurch.com](mailto:bbookout@shepherdchurch.com)
- For **young adults age 18-25**, connect with **Shepherd Young Adults** staff. For more information, visit their website: [WeAreSYA.com](http://WeAreSYA.com). You may ask about Life Groups that feature Shepherd Church Young Adult Life Group Leaders and Members (ages 18-25). For more information, email Adrianna Cervantes at [acervantes@shepherdchurch.com](mailto:acervantes@shepherdchurch.com)

## 4. Where do I get a list of support groups or Christ Powered Recovery (CPR) groups? When and where do they meet?

- Christ Powered Recovery groups meet on Monday nights at 7:00 PM in the MC 130. Check the specifics at [shepherdchurch.com/supportgroups#CPR](http://shepherdchurch.com/supportgroups#CPR)
- For a complete listing of our support groups including Anchor Cancer Support Group, Centurion Military Ministry, Divorce Care, Grief Share, In Loving Arms Miscarriage Support, Throne of Grace Post Abortion Trauma Support, and many others, visit

Guest Services at the Information Counter on the weekends or visit: [shepherdchurch.com/supportgroups](http://shepherdchurch.com/supportgroups)

## 5. What curriculum should our Life Group study between the three regularly scheduled Life Groups series?

- The Life Groups Teams at Shepherd Church has been producing curriculum for close to 15 years. We have many past series Study Guides and DVD's available for your group to go through, whether you missed it the first time or would like to go through it again.

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Contact the Life Groups Team at [lifegroups@shepherdchurch.com](mailto:lifegroups@shepherdchurch.com) and let us know what you would like to go through. We'll do our very best to get what you are looking for.

- Did you know, as a LGL and member of Shepherd Church, you have access to [RightNowMedia.org](http://RightNowMedia.org) which showcases hundreds of small group video lessons, sermons, and Bible studies for you and your Life Group to use? For a link and login instructions, email [lifegroups@shepherdchurch.com](mailto:lifegroups@shepherdchurch.com)

Did you know that RightNow Media has past Shepherd Church Life Groups curriculum available to download? Got to [RightNowMedia.org](http://RightNowMedia.org) and search **Shepherd Church Life Groups**.

## 6. Where can I find someone to pray with me?

- YOU, the Life Groups Coach, are qualified!! Take a step of daring faith and let God use you in the moment He's designed.
- Shepherd Church has a prayer group open to anyone who would like to come in for prayer during the day on Monday mornings from 9 AM - Noon. Please check in at the front desk upon arrival. Another group also meets on Tuesday evenings from 6:45 PM to 8 PM in room MC114.
- Shepherd Church also has a pastor available every day, Monday

- Friday from 9 AM to 5 PM for prayer over the phone or in person.

### **7. Where do we find new members for our group?**

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This can be troubling, especially for new groups that have only a few people, or for existing groups that lose a few people along the way. We encourage you to pray with your group and then brainstorm a list of people from work, church, your neighborhood, your children's school, family, the gym, and so forth. Then have each group member invite several of the people on his or her list.

Before every series, the Life Groups Team will conduct Life Group sign-ups, which allow people to sign-up for "Open" Life Groups. However, studies show it is exponentially more effective when Life Group members personally invite others to their group.

No matter how you find members, it's vital that you stay on the lookout for new people to join your group. All groups tend to go through healthy attrition – the result of moves, releasing new leaders to start a new Life Group, ministry opportunities, etc. If you and your group stay open, you'll be amazed at the people God sends your way. The next person just might become a friend for life. You never know!

### **8. What if this group is not working for one of my Life Group Members?**

You're not alone! This could be the result of a personality conflict, life stage difference, geographical distance, level of spiritual maturity, or any number of things. Relax. Pray for God's direction, and at the end of the current series, decide whether this group is a good fit, or they need to find another. You don't buy the first car you look at or marry the first person you date, and the same goes with a group. Don't bail out before the series is done – God might have something to teach you. Also, don't run from conflict or prejudge people before you have given them a chance. God is still working in them too!





# life groups

connect | grow | impact



SHEPHERDCHURCH