

LEAPING IN EXPECTATION

A SEVEN-WEEK GROUP STUDY ON HOPE AND PURPOSE

life  groups
connect | grow | impact

“Leaping in Expectation”
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INTRODUCTION

Dear Life Group Member,

Why should I be in this group?

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.

How will this series help me?

In this 7-week Life Group series, we will explore how we can find hope in God and how we can take a leap forward into the exciting future to which He has called us. We will lead an expedition through the Scriptures to discover how the heroes of faith placed their hope in God during difficult seasons and how they continued to move forward despite not knowing where they would land.

Through this study and discussion, we will learn the tools for determining our purpose in the kingdom of God, and then, we will take the first scary step toward accomplishing it. We will share spiritual truths and personal stories to help us maintain and sustain the hope we need throughout the Christian life. And we will work together to realize how we can leave our comfort behind and find the courage to leap forward into a life of following Christ.

What is my role in this group?

As you attend a weekend service and participate in this Life Group series, you will be equipped to live the life that God desires for you. Of course, the bottom line is, it comes down to you. Only you can share in your group, pray about the things God is teaching you, and take action to allow Jesus to work in you and through you. Enjoy the encouragement and challenges that God desires as His grace abounds in your Life Group.

Sincerely,
Life Groups Team

MEET THE SPEAKERS



Victor Peña

Victor is California born and bred, spending most of his life in the San Fernando Valley. At a Revival in 2007, Victor gave his life to Christ and afterward felt a call to vocational ministry. That call was fanned into flame after a short missions trip to Haiti. After five years at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Victor joined Shepherd Church staff as a Life Groups Pastor.

Lucille Williams



Lucille is the author of two books: *From Me to We* and *The Intimacy You Crave*. As a national speaker, pastor's wife, mom, and grandma with over 25 years of ministry experience, she has dedicated her life to helping couples thrive in their marriages. Lucille has been featured on Focus on the Family, and speaks at conferences and women's events, helping to empower women to soar.

Brianne Bookout



Brianne serves as the Youth Director of the Shepherd Youth program at Shepherd Church. She also regularly serves as a Worship Leader during weekend services at Shepherd Church and has made music her ministry since she was 2 years old. Together with her husband, Louie, she sings and writes as part of the music group The Bookouts, where she tours the nation and leads men, women, and youth in worship.

Cindy Marston



Cindy is a proud wife and a mom to three teenagers. She is a credentialed high school biology teacher with a career in both the local public school and a public charter homeschool program. She has volunteered in the Women's Encounter ministry since 2006, leading weekend retreats three times per year as well as teaching within the School of Discipleship on a weekly basis. She loves bird watching, going on morning walks, and eating chocolate.

Brian Marston



Brian was raised in the San Gabriel Valley where he met his wife Cindy. He competed as a pole vaulter at Cal. State University, Northridge, where he earned a Master of Science in Kinesiology. Brian found true transformation after attending the School of Discipleship (an extension of the Encounter Ministry). Brian currently serves at Shepherd Church as a Life Groups Pastor, where he teaches and leads men through their own transformation.

Brian Waller



Brian is a native Californian and serves in community care and marriage ministry in southern California. Brian has worked in film and television and has several live worship recordings. He attended Faith Bible College in San Jose, California, where he earned a degree in biblical studies. Brian and his wife, Pat, have been married for 34 years and they have two children.

Tim Winters



Tim is the Executive Pastor of Shepherd Church, serving alongside our Senior Pastor Dudley Rutherford since 1992. In his role, he oversees the staff, ministries, and day-to-day operations of our growing church. Tim also serves on several boards including Hope of the Valley and Central India Christian Mission. He and his wife Carla have been married 28 years and have two daughters, McKenna and Chloe.

— OUTLINE FOR EACH SESSION —

Every session is structured to reflect the values of the Life Groups Ministry: Connect, Grow, and Impact. Therefore, the sessions are designed to help each group member connect with others, grow to be more like Christ, and impact the community with the gospel.

CONNECT

The foundation for spiritual growth is an intimate connection with God and His family. This section of each session 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.

To begin the session, play the Session Video.

GROW

Together, you will process the video teaching you watched as a group. The focus is not gaining information, but on how we should live according to the Word of God. Each question is designed to apply insights from Scripture both practically and creatively, using your heart as well as your head. At the end of the day, our greatest aim is allowing the timeless truth from God's Word to transform us.

IMPACT

This section is about putting what you learned into action and applying the insights and principles in the lesson. We ask that all groups perform a community project together at some point during each series. Many groups have found that they were able to make significant contributions to the community as well as a lasting impact on people's lives for Christ. This is also a good time to make an impact in each other's lives through prayer. We encourage you to provide time, if the schedule allows, for people to share their prayer requests and praise reports at the end of each session.

LIFE GROUP AGREEMENT

Every group should put into words their shared values, expectations, and commitments. Such guidelines will help you avoid unspoken agendas and unmet expectations. We recommend that you discuss your guidelines in order to lay the foundation for a healthy group experience. Feel free to modify anything that does not work for your group.

We agree to the following values:

Clear Purpose To encourage and challenge each other to live the life that God has called us to live (John 10:10 and Matthew 28:18-20).

Group Attendance To give priority to the group meeting (call if I am going to be absent or late).

Safe Environment To help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved (no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes).

Confidentiality To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group.

Spiritual Health To give group members permission to help me live a healthy, balanced spiritual life that is pleasing to God.

Welcome Newcomers To invite our friends who might benefit from this study and warmly welcome newcomers.

Building Relationships To get to know the other members of the group and pray for them regularly.

SESSION ONE

Our Hope is in God Alone

Each session will begin with a few questions to help you connect with and get to know one another. Since this may be your first time together (or since you may have new members), take a few minutes to make sure everyone knows each other.

Would you consider yourself an optimistic person or a pessimistic person? Do you look at the glass as half full or half empty? Why?

What surprising invention do you expect almost everyone will own ten years from now?

Play the "Session One: Our Hope is in God Alone" video.

What stood out to you in the video?

"Hope is knowing that everything is going to be okay and also knowing that it might be a very long time before everything is okay."

— Victor Peña

In the following section, you will explore Bible passages and take part in discussion to apply insights from this session. If time is a concern, please choose just a few questions to discuss in your group.

Read Psalm 39:1-7 & Psalm 130:1-8

1. Where might people place their hope instead of placing it in the Lord? After reading these verses, where are some places in which David was placing his hope rather than with God?

2. David spends a good amount of time in these verses reflecting on the shortness of his life in comparison to God's eternity. Why do you think he does this? Why should we place our hope in an eternal God?

3. As we learned in this session, the word for "hope" can also mean "confident expectation of good in the future." How much confidence do you have that good things will arrive in the future? Why should Christians be confident that God will work all things together for good?

4. As we also learned in this session, the word for "look" can also mean "to wait or to look for with eager expectation." What are you currently awaiting with eager expectation? How can the process of waiting form us into stronger believers in the Lord?

Read Psalm 71:1-24

5. In verse 9, the author writes about his fear of being cast aside due to his older age. What fears do you hold about your future? How might the Lord meet and dispel those fears?

6. How can we find a deeper hope in the Lord by praising Him? How can we find a deeper hope in the Lord by telling others about the incredible things He has done?

7. Why is it beneficial to place our hope in the Lord when we are young? What advantage do we have when we have trusted in the Lord for a long time?

8. Describe a time in your life when it was difficult to have hope in the Lord. What ended up happening? How did you feel when you finally received what you were anticipating?

DEEPER STUDY QUESTIONS

Read Jeremiah 29:1-14

9. The nation of Babylon was responsible for carrying away the Israelites into exile, away from their homeland. Why would the Lord ask the Israelites to seek the welfare of their enemies and pray for the very people who kidnapped them?

10. The Lord teaches the Israelites in these verses to be careful of the prophecies they hear while they are in Babylon. Why is it essential to test the voices to whom we are listening while we are waiting on the Lord to deliver us? What consequences do we face if we listen to the wrong voices?

“Hope means hoping when things are hopeless, or it is no virtue at all.... As long as matters are really hopeful, hope is mere flattery or platitude; it is only when everything is hopeless that hope begins to be a strength.”

— G.K. Chesterton

COMMUNITY IMPACT GROUP PROJECT

Over the course of this series, we pray that you will encourage one another in your Life Group to find hope in God and to look toward the future with excitement, knowing that God will accomplish great things before our eyes. We also pray you will encourage one another to discover the future to which He has specifically called each of us.

We know that God has created us to lead meaningful lives and that He has called us to impact the world for the gospel. Within each of us, He has instilled a passion—a call we were meant to fulfill. However, identifying the nature of this purpose can be difficult. We can become confused by the noise of the world and by the chatter within our own minds.

That's why an excellent way to begin this journey is by getting out of our heads and simply taking action, by getting our hands dirty and by serving others. A simple act of service is an effective method to determine what we're passionate about and what we hope to change in this world for the gospel.

Over these next weeks, we are asking you to consider starting a Community Impact Group Project. At this moment, you do not have to decide what the nature of the project will be. In fact, over these next weeks we will lead you in a series of group discussions to help you imagine what that Group Project could look like. (If you would like some ideas to start brainstorming, check out lifegroups.org/impact to begin.)

Right now, here is your exercise as a group: Talk about and pray about whether you would like to participate in a Community Impact Group Project or not. There's no pressure. All you need to decide over this week is if you're in or if you're out. If you're in, sign your name and the date below.

Name: _____ Date: _____

JOURNAL

For this series, we have provided a collection of exercises you can complete on your own in order to strengthen your hope in God and to seek the call and the future that the Lord has written specifically for you. Many of these exercises will involve journaling, prayer, and reflection. Through them, we hope you might be able to better hear the call of God on your life.

For this week, all you need to do is decide: Do I want to find the purpose to which God has called me or not? The following prompts below will help you determine the answer.

Use the space below to list out all the reasons why you shouldn't go on an adventure with God to discover the purpose of your life.

Use the space below to list out all the reasons why you should go on an adventure with God to discover the purpose of your life.

With these reasons listed out, what would you like to do? Do you want to go on an adventure with God to discover your purpose? Or not? Why?

SESSION TWO

Advancing to Our Promised Land

Each session will begin with a few questions to help you connect with and get to know one another.

Would you consider yourself a person who likes to go on adventures or a person who likes to stay home? Why?

What is one place where you haven't been, but would love to go?

Play the "Session Two: Advancing to Our Promised Land" video.

What stood out to you in the video?

"God is not looking for perfect people. He's looking for people of faith—faith big enough to take that leap and dive all in."

— Lucille Williams

In the following section, you will explore Bible passages and take part in discussion to apply insights from this session. If time is a concern, please choose just a few questions to discuss in your group.

Read Joshua 1:1-18

1. Describe a time when you had to step into a new situation, like a new job or a new school or a new city. What was it like the night before you made the move? Why do new experiences cause us to feel this way?

2. On a piece of paper, list all of the reasons why the Israelites shouldn't take possession of the Promised Land. Then, list all of the reasons why they should. What can the two lists teach us?

3. Imagine you are Joshua, about to lead the armies of Israel into battle. How would you instill courage into your soldiers and ask them to place their hope in the Lord?

4. In these verses, what does the Lord command the Israelites concerning His word? Why is it essential for believers to read and meditate on Scripture during seasons that require courage?

5. A wise person once said: "You can either have courage or comfort. You cannot have both." How can we step out of our comfort zones to courageously move forward into what God has promised?

6. Share a time when God provided courage for your life. What obstacles has He helped you tackle in the past?

Read Exodus 17:1-7 & Numbers 20:1-13

7. In the second story, the Lord told Moses that striking the rock was a sign of disrespect to Him. In what ways do we try to take matters into our own hands and end up dishonoring the Lord as a result?

8. Why is it so important to the Lord that we trust Him?

DEEPER STUDY QUESTIONS

Read Genesis 12:1-9 & Genesis 15:1-21 & Galatians 3:26-29

9. According to these stories, how can we become children of Abraham, even if we're not related to him by blood? How can we become heirs to the promise that God made to him?

10. How did Jesus ultimately fulfill the promise that the Lord made to Abraham in these verses?

“Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.”

— Corrie ten Boom

COMMUNITY IMPACT GROUP PROJECT

For this week, discuss as a group what you might consider your potential Promised Land—the purpose to which God has called you as a Life Group to impact your community and your city. As you brainstorm and converse, avoid spending time talking about why you cannot do something for your community. Instead, spend time discussing your burden and passion for your neighbors and for what you hope to see in the world. (If you would like some ideas to start brainstorming, check out lifegroups.org/impact.)

Use the following prompts to discuss and pray about the impact your group can make in your community:

- 1** What makes you frustrated about your community? What is something you see in your city that makes you angry, something you hope to change? Spend some time discussing or praying about this in your group.
- 2** What do you love about your community? What is something you see in your city that you enjoy, something you hope to encourage and inspire to grow? Spend some time discussing or praying about this in your group.
- 3** What do you fear about your community and your world? What is something you see in your city that makes you anxious or afraid? Our fear can be a valuable compass pointing us to what we are meant to confront in the world. Spend some time discussing or praying about this in your group.
- 4** After spending some time in discussion and prayer, where does the group feel a pull? Where did your discussion and prayer naturally drift? What excites you about what your group could accomplish?

JOURNAL

One of the most difficult and frustrating aspects of the Christian life is finding your purpose. In this world today, with conflicting messages and competing values, we can be easily pulled away from the future that God has designed for us.

Discovering your purpose in God is a lifelong journey and no simple exercise can uncover it for you. However, the following prompts may help you begin your journey toward discovering what God has called you to do. (Use an additional sheet of paper if needed.)

What makes you frustrated? What do you believe needs to be changed in this world?

What inspires you? What brings out your creativity?

What makes you anxious? What is a project you would be terrified to tackle?

Where do you feel the pull of God? Where do you believe He is aiming and directing your life?

SESSION THREE

Building Something Great for God

Each session will begin with a few questions to help you connect with and get to know one another.

What types of things did you enjoy building or making when you were a child?
What kinds of things do you like to build or make today?

What is the most impressive building you've seen in person?

Play the "Session Three: Building Something Great for God" video.

What stood out to you in the video?

"God doesn't need you to build anything great for Him. He wants to build something great in, through, and with you."

— Brianne Bookout

In the following section, you will explore Bible passages and take part in discussion to apply insights from this session. If time is a concern, please choose just a few questions to discuss in your group.

Read 2 Samuel 7:1-29

1. Share a time when you watched someone else receive an opportunity that you hoped to receive. What was that experience like? How did that make you feel?

2. In this story, King David asks to build a house for the Lord. However, the story ends with the Lord promising to build a “house” for David—meaning a dynasty of kings. Why does the Lord turn the tables on David in this way? What was He teaching David?

3. When David learns that he will not build the temple instead of being disappointed, he responds with joy. Why do you think David responds this way? How can we carry this same attitude in our lives?

4. If the Lord had no desire to live in a temple, then why did He agree to dwell in the temple that David’s son would build? How does the Lord use our imperfect ideas in order to reveal His perfect plan?

Read 1 Chronicles 28:1-12, 19-21

5. Imagine you are Solomon, receiving the plans that your father David had drawn for the construction of the temple, instructions which he received from the Lord. How would you feel as you received them?

6. Why does David speak about how the Lord knows the motives of the heart in these verses? What do you think David is trying to say? What healthy and unhealthy motivations do people carry when they attempt to build great things for God?

7. Why does David tell Solomon that he must have wholehearted devotion and a willing mind? Why do we need to possess these qualities in order to accomplish God's work?

8. Describe someone you admire who built something great with God. How did the process transform them?

DEEPER STUDY QUESTIONS

Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-17

9. Why does accomplishing great things with God require working together with other believers? What advantage do we find in teamwork rather than working alone?

10. How does the “fire” test the quality of our work? How can difficult seasons reveal the quality of what we’ve built? How do we know if we’re building with materials of excellent quality or poor quality?

“We know only too well that what we are doing is nothing more than a drop in the ocean. But if the drop were not there, the ocean would be missing something.”

— Mother Teresa

COMMUNITY IMPACT GROUP PROJECT

Use this week as an opportunity to begin identifying the gifts and resources at your disposal in order to accomplish the Community Impact Group Project. One reason we may become paralyzed or discouraged from moving forward is because we do not believe we have what it takes. This is far from the truth! God has gifted us with far more than we believe we possess. The challenge is identifying what He has given us.

Use the following prompts to discuss and pray about the impact you as a group can make in your community:

- 1** What spiritual gifts do you possess in the group? If you do not know your spiritual gifts, you can read the following verses: Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:9-11. (Take our assessment at shepherdchurch.com/spiritualgifts in order to identify what your spiritual gifts might be.)
- 2** What resources are available to you that would help your project? What financial resources or possessions would be useful? How much time and work could you contribute? What family members or friends would step alongside you?
- 3** What expertise and specialized knowledge do you possess that could contribute to this project? What education or training can you bring to the table?
- 4** After spending some time in discussion and prayer, what is the first right step that you all can take toward making this Community Impact Group Project a reality?

JOURNAL

Many believers become discouraged on the path toward discovering their purpose, because they believe they do not have the resources or giftedness to bring change for the gospel. Nothing could be further from the truth! God has equipped us to accomplish great things, so that He can do an incredible work in us, through us, and with us.

To start, take our assessment at shepherdchurch.com/spiritualgifts to identify what may be your spiritual giftedness. Then, use the following prompts below to reflect and pray:

After reading your report, what do you think about your Dominant Gifts and your Supportive Gifts? What did this assessment teach you about yourself that you didn't already know?

What resources do you have at your disposal (finances, possessions, time, expertise, knowledge, relationships)? How could these resources be put to use in order to pursue your purpose in this world?

If you started following your purpose tomorrow, what would be the first step you would take? What seems like the first right step?

PRAYER AND PRAISE

This is a place where you can write each other's prayer requests and make notes when God answers prayer. Pray for each other's requests out loud together as a group. If you're new to group prayer, you may pray silently.

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports

SESSION FOUR

Finishing God's Assignment

Each session will begin with a few questions to help you connect with and get to know one another.

If you had to run a race right now, how far do you think you would make it?

Do you consider yourself a “get it done” type of person or a “wait until the last minute” type of person? Why?

Play the “Session Four: Finishing God’s Assignment” video.

What stood out to you in the video?

“Finishing God’s assignment is one step at a time. It is done by trusting God in the small assignments, so that we have faith and a God-given confidence in the larger assignments.”

— Cindy Marston

In the following section, you will explore Bible passages and take part in discussion to apply insights from this session. If time is a concern, please choose just a few questions to discuss in your group.

Read Acts 20:17-24

1. Share a time from your life when you finished a major project. How did it feel to complete it? How many times did you almost quit?

2. In this verse, we see that Paul had a very specific focus for his ministry—testifying to the gospel of God’s grace. How can finding a very specific focus for our lives help us to move forward? What is the value of having a clear and precise task?

3. For Paul to finish his ministry, he had to face obstacles that might cause others to quit early. What are some reasons why people quit the Christian life too early? Why do they give up before reaping the blessings of following Christ?

4. What are some ways by which we can keep ourselves from quitting? What are some habits we can adopt, so that when we want to quit, we choose to keep pressing forward instead?

Read Philippians 3:7-4:1

5. What is something you once valued that you had to leave behind in order to follow Christ? How have you benefitted from leaving that behind? Why is it essential we toss away the rubbish of life in order to finish well?

6. What do you think is the nature of the prize that the Apostle Paul writes about in these verses? For what was Paul running his race?

Read 2 Timothy 4:1-8

7. Imagine you are the Apostle Paul, writing these verses at the end of your ministry. How would you feel, knowing that you fought all the way to the finish line and held nothing back?

8. Describe a believer or an honorable person you admire who finished their life or ministry well. How did they live to ensure they finished with excellence?

DEEPER STUDY QUESTIONS

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

9. Why does the Apostle Paul write that he must discipline and even enslave his body in order to win the prize of the race? What lessons can we learn from Paul in these verses about the kind of daily discipline necessary to finish our ministry well?

10. Why might Paul fear being disqualified from the prize, when he had committed his life to preaching the Gospel?

“Beginning well is a momentary thing; finishing well is a lifelong thing.”

— Ravi Zacharias

COMMUNITY IMPACT GROUP PROJECT

One of the major stumbling blocks that can discourage us from impacting our community with the Gospel is a lack of deadlines and reasonable goals. If we don't know where we're heading and if we don't know when we're going to get there, our projects cannot become concrete and real.

For this week, discuss and pray about the practicalities of making your project a reality. Use the following prompts to identify the impact you as a group can make in your community:

- 1** What is the end goal of your Community Impact Group Project? When will you be able to say: "Mission Accomplished?" What must be in place to know that the project is complete? (Be practical here and ensure that you don't set a goal that is unattainable.)
- 2** What is the start date of your Community Impact Group Project? (If it is necessary, pull out your calendars and select dates that work for everyone involved.) What practical steps need to be completed to start your project on the date you've selected? When will those practical steps be completed?
- 3** One place where community service projects can fall apart is with ownership. Each person involved in the project should be clear what their role is and what will happen if they cannot fulfill their role. Spend some time discussing who owns each part of the project.
- 4** How will you hand off this project? Will anyone continue what you have started or is this project carried out once and then completed? How might this project begin a platform for greater change in your community?

JOURNAL

When it comes to discovering our purpose in the kingdom of God, we must ensure that we are not dreaming too small and limiting our potential impact in the world. If the Christian life is a race, we want to finish well, and we want to run having expended every ounce of effort at the finish line.

The following prompts are intended to help us fan our passion into flame and then determine the practical steps we need to take in order to make that passion a reality:

If you had unlimited resources at your disposal, what real-world impact would you hope to make over the course of your life?

What practical steps would you need to take today to make this real-world impact an actual reality?

What life changes would you need to make over the next few years to make this real-world impact a reality? What education or skills would you need to acquire? What team would you need to build?

SESSION FIVE

Believing in Eternal Life

Each session will begin with a few questions to help you connect with and get to know one another.

What is one thing you miss from your youth?

If you could ask God one question about eternity, what would it be?

Play the “Session Five: Believing in Eternal Life” video.

What stood out to you in the video?

“We have the opportunity to leap into the eternal embrace of our loving God—right here and right now. As we do, we are able to help others experience the hope of eternal life.”

— Brian Marston

In the following section, you will explore Bible passages and take part in discussion to apply insights from this session. If time is a concern, please choose just a few questions to discuss in your group.

Read Titus 1:1-3 & John 17:1-3

1. Describe a time when you felt your age catching up with you. How did that make you feel?

2. If eternal life didn't exist, then what else could bear the weight of our hope? How does the hope of eternal life inspire us and drive our work for the kingdom of God?

3. How does the knowledge of eternal life lead us to godliness? What changed in your life when you realized that you were able to spend eternity with God through salvation in Jesus Christ?

4. What is something you know about God today that you didn't know a year ago? How has that enriched your relationship with Him? What is something God has wanted you to understand and know about Him that you've had difficulty accepting?

Read Revelation 21:1-22:5

5. Imagine you are standing in paradise with God. Where do you go first? Who would you hope to see? What do you want to experience?

6. What is something you are glad won't be in eternity?

7. Imagine you got to spend one minute in this paradise that John describes. How would you explain what you saw to a person who has no clue about anything in the Bible? How would you get them excited about eternity?

8. What do you want to ask God when you see Him face to face? What is keeping you from asking Him that question right now?

DEEPER STUDY QUESTIONS

Read John 6:25-59

9. Why does Jesus use such confusing symbols like manna falling from heaven and eating flesh or drinking blood in order to describe what it means to believe in him?

10. According to these verses, how does the Father draw people to eternal life?

“God so loved the world that he gave his son to that world, that those who put their confidence in him would not lead a miserable, failing existence, but have eternal life, which is the kind of life God has.”

— Dallas Willard

COMMUNITY IMPACT GROUP PROJECT

Before launching into a new endeavor or a new project or a new ministry, we ought to ensure that we are acting in harmony with the life to which God calls us. Often, we can get caught in the details and the goals and practicalities of our work and forget God Himself who calls us. If eternal life is knowing God, as Jesus prays in John 17:3, then we would do well to seek the Lord and know His will as we seek to impact our communities.

For this week, forget about the details and the need-to-do lists. Set them aside and seek the Lord. Use the following prompts to discuss and pray:

- 1** What new things have you learned about yourself and your relationship with the Lord through the process of this project? How have you grown in your faith?
- 2** If the project were completed, then how would we have grown closer to the Lord by the end of it? How might this project strengthen our relationship with the Lord?
- 3** When the project is completed, who will receive the glory? How might this project point to Jesus and make Him famous? How might the group project tell the story of the gospel?
- 4** Close this time in prayer by offering the Lord gratitude and thankfulness for what He has given to you and provided over the past few weeks. Thank the Lord for how He has formed you and shaped you and how He has challenged you and inspired you.

JOURNAL

In the process of building great things for God, we can forget that we are supposed to be growing with God. For this week, put away the goals and the timelines and practicalities and obstacles and the anxieties—and simply focus on how God is forming you and how you are growing in your relationship with Him.

Use the following prompts to reflect and assess how you are developing your relationship with God and seeking Him through your purpose and passion:

In the process of discovering your purpose and passion, how has your relationship with God deepened and developed?

In the process of discovering your purpose and passion, how have you grown more into the likeness of Christ? How has your faith matured?

In the process of discovering your purpose and passion, what has the Lord provided for you? How are you thankful for what the Lord is doing in your life?

PRAYER AND PRAISE

This is a place where you can write each other's prayer requests and make notes when God answers prayer. Pray for each other's requests out loud together as a group. If you're new to group prayer, you may pray silently.

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports

SESSION SIX

Expecting Christ's Return

Each session will begin with a few questions to help you connect with and get to know one another.

How do you typically pass the time when you are waiting in line at the grocery store?

What is a movie or a book or something that you're eagerly expecting to see or experience?

Play the "Session Six: Expecting Christ's Return" video.

What stood out to you in the video?

"Invite the Holy Spirit into your fear, your insecurity, your anger, your depression.... From the midst of those feelings, He will guide you to truth. He will restore your place with Him and give you peace."

— Brian Waller

In the following section, you will explore Bible passages and take part in discussion to apply insights from this session. If time is a concern, please choose just a few questions to discuss in your group.

Read John 14:1-14

1. Describe a time when someone promised to show up to an occasion and cancelled. What did that feel like, to have someone not follow through on their promise?

2. Imagine you are one of the disciples hearing Jesus say these words. Where would you think Jesus was intending to go? And how would you feel when you realized the Lord was leaving you behind?

3. When you hear that Jesus is the way and the truth and the life, what does that stir within you? How does that statement strike you?

4. In these verses, Jesus teaches that anyone who believes in him will accomplish even greater things than himself. How is this possible? What encouragement or motivation do you find in this teaching?

Read Genesis 2:15-17 & Genesis 3:1-11

5. According to this story, why did Adam and Eve try to hide from the Lord? For what reasons do we hide from the Lord today?

6. When you came to faith and salvation in God, how did it feel to have your shame removed so you could enjoy a restored relationship with the Lord?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

7. What did you learn from these verses about the second coming of the Lord that you didn't previously know? How does the hope of the Lord's coming encourage you and give you hope?

8. Since the second coming of Jesus will be so sudden, we cannot know the exact moment it will occur. How can we have hope when we don't know exactly when Jesus will reappear? How do you personally find hope in the midst of waiting?

DEEPER STUDY QUESTIONS

Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-58

9. How do you imagine Jesus will destroy all dominion, authority and power when he returns a second time? How might Jesus break our expectations regarding His return?

10. According to these verses, how will we be changed when the Lord appears a second time? How do these changes bring you comfort?

“The second coming of Christ will be so revolutionary that it will change every aspect of life on this planet. Christ will reign in righteousness. Disease will be arrested. Death will be modified. War will be abolished. Nature will be changed. Man will live as it was originally intended he should live.”

— Billy Graham

COMMUNITY IMPACT GROUP PROJECT

As any community project approaches becoming reality, a resistance within us will certainly appear. Every obstacle and every setback takes on new power as our sinful nature rebels and attempts to sidetrack us from what God has called us to do. As we answer questions about how a project can become reality, we also create reasons why a project should cease and why we should quit.

For this week, use the following prompts to discuss and pray about any issues or misgivings the group might be feeling:

- 1** Does anyone feel incapable or unqualified to serve on this project? Does anyone feel as if they are in over their head? Spend some time encouraging that person and helping them work through the shortcomings they see in themselves.
- 2** Is there any aspect of this project that seems undeveloped or unclear? Is there any part of the project that is causing people anxiety or misgivings? Spend some time talking about how you can bring clarity to any ambiguity.
- 3** Is there anyone who feels like this project may fail? Is there anyone who fears this project will simply be a waste of time? Spend some time discussing those thoughts and testing their validity.
- 4** Close this time in prayer by thanking the Lord for leading us through our fears and anxieties, and shepherding us when we feel incapable and powerless to make change in this world.

JOURNAL

One major reason why we may not look forward to the future with excitement is because we tend to fixate on our shortcomings and inabilities. We tend to think about why we cannot accomplish great things rather than why we can. This is the story our sinful nature tells us, to turn us away from the path of following Jesus.

The following prompts may help us acknowledge our negative thoughts, address them, and then tell ourselves a new story:

Why do you believe that you are not equipped to accomplish the passion and purpose that God has given you?

Imagine you are consoling a friend who is saying these negative things. How would you encourage that person and build them up?

How would the Lord speak love and truth into your life to combat these negative thoughts? How does the Lord see you?

SESSION SEVEN

Pay It Forward

Each session will begin with a few questions to help you connect with and get to know one another.

Have you ever been a part of a “Pay It Forward” line at a drive-thru? What was that experience like?

If you could create any kind of plant, what kind of fruit would it bear?

Play the “Session Seven: Pay It Forward” video.

What stood out to you in the video?

“You likely can’t change what you are experiencing today, but you can change what you are going to experience tomorrow. You can’t change this year’s harvest, but the best news of all is you can change next year’s.”

— Tim Winters

In the following section, you will explore Bible passages and take part in discussion to apply insights from this session. If time is a concern, please choose just a few questions to discuss in your group.

Read Galatians 6:7-10 & Hosea 10:12-15

1. What are some good things in your life you have reaped because of good decisions you made in the past? What are some consequences you have reaped because of poor decisions you made in the past?

2. Describe a time someone showed an act of kindness to you. How did that act of kindness move you to pass it on to someone else?

3. From the video teaching, we saw that while Christ saves us from our sins, we will still experience consequences for our actions. Why do we experience consequences for our actions? Why doesn't God just make them supernaturally disappear?

4. In the verses from Hosea, the prophet urges us to break up ground that hadn't been planted. What is some ground in your life that hasn't been explored where you could plant some kindness and goodness?

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

5. Describe a time in your life where you wish you had invested more. Why did you hold back?

6. In these verses, the apostle Paul refused to compel or command the Corinthians to give their financial resources to the Lord. Why? How can shame and guilt be a poor motivator for people?

7. In these verses, Paul is asking the Corinthians to give from their resources to help the poor among the churches in Jerusalem. How could this act of giving enable the Corinthian Christians to reap a blessing later down the road?

8. The work God has called us to do will return blessings if we operate with diligence and joy. What blessings have you personally found on the path of the Christian life?

DEEPER STUDY QUESTIONS

Read Luke 16:19-31

9. According to this story, why does the Lord refuse to allow Lazarus to warn his brothers? What does this teach us about the decisions we make?

10. Imagine you were a person hearing Jesus tell this story. How would his words strike you? What kind of warning would you hear? What does this story teach us about the consequences of the life we lead?

“Good and evil both increase at compound interest. That is why the little decisions you and I make every day are of such infinite importance. The smallest good act today is the capture of a strategic point from which, a few months later, you may be able to go on to victories you never dreamed of. An apparently trivial indulgence in lust or anger today is the loss of a ridge or railway line or bridgehead from which the enemy may launch an attack otherwise impossible.”

— C.S. Lewis

COMMUNITY IMPACT GROUP PROJECT

In the final session of this series, we must reflect on what is at stake if we do not carry out the call God has placed upon our hearts. It's one thing to dream and plan a project to impact the community and the city. But it's entirely another thing to carry it out and make it a reality. As we continue to combat the reasons why we shouldn't, we should focus on what is at stake if we do not take these plans and make them real.

For this final week, use the following prompts to discuss and pray about what might take place if we do not follow through on God's call for us:

- 1** If we follow through as a group and make this project a reality, what could be the result? How might God use this project to bring others to the knowledge of the truth?
- 2** If we do not follow through as a group to make this project a reality, what would be the consequences? What opportunities might we lose to share the gospel?
- 3** Use these final moments to thank the Lord for bringing the group on this journey and to propel you all forward with this project. Pray for direction and for wisdom. Pray for courage and strength to follow through. Pray for a hopeful heart to look forward to seeing what good things we might reap for sowing kindness and goodness into the world.

JOURNAL

As we come to the end of this journey discovering purpose in the Lord, we face a major temptation: We may be satisfied knowing our purpose and find no motivation to pursue our purpose. For this final week, we will focus on the future and identify what is at stake regarding whether or not we pursue the purpose to which God has called us.

Use these final prompts to bring the future into focus:

If you follow through and pursue your purpose for the kingdom of God, what could the result be? What change might you make in the world?

If you do not follow through to pursue your purpose for the kingdom of God, what could the consequences be? What opportunities might be lost as a result?

What change might the Lord continue to bring about in your life and in your heart if you continue to pursue your purpose in His kingdom? How might the Lord form you into the likeness of His Son?

BECOMING A LEADER

What does it take to be a leader?

Have a heart for people.
Open to hosting people in your home.
Serve some coffee or soft drinks.
Tell others about the group!

Basically, you need a desire to apply the Bible to your life, as well as a desire to share it with others. The group does not have to meet at your home, and you do not have to have a Bible college degree to lead. You only need some basic people skills and a drive to grow in the Lord.

How can you become a leader?

First, you must be a member of Shepherd Church. To become a member, you must complete the **101: Saved in Christ** class. These classes are usually about two hours long, and are offered every two months. You may call the church office at 818.831.9333 to find out when the next class will be held. You may also visit: shepherdchurch.com/member

Second, you need to sign-up for the New Life Group Leader Training. It is a two-hour training and orientation on Life Groups. Here you will learn the philosophy of Life Groups and how to effectively begin leading a group. Completing this course does not obligate you, but does allow you to become a new leader. To register online and find more information, please visit: lifegroups.org/leader