

Y H W H

ALL KNOWING . ALL POWERFUL . ALL PRESENT

A SEVEN-WEEK GROUP STUDY

SHEPHERD CHURCH



YHWH

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Life Group members,

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, by helping you GROW to be more like Christ, and helping you make an IMPACT with the gospel.

Every time a group meets, they spend time connecting by building relationships, growing through a discussion led Bible study, and making an impact by supporting each other through prayer and service. And 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.

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HOW WILL THIS SERIES HELP ME?

YHWH is all knowing, all powerful, and everywhere in the universe. Yet this mighty God is personal in His loving kindness toward each and every one of us. The God of the universe is right with us, knows us, and has the power to change our very hearts and minds. Our reaction to God comes in various forms through our hearts, our hands, our stuff, and by the way we live our lives.

In this Life Group series, we will discuss the different aspects of God to understand just how much He loves us. We will also discuss how we react to God's love in our worship, service, and giving. Finally, we will discuss that as we live like Jesus lived, we share the promises that Jesus has for everyone. Our hope through this series is that your understanding of YHWH's greatness will result in changes to your lives and your reaction to His love for you. Ultimately these changes will result in sharing the love of Christ with others, by the way we live our lives.

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.

The Life Groups Team

USING THIS WORKBOOK

(Stuff to Help You Have a Great Life Group Experience!)

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1 Notice in the Table of Contents there are three sections: (1) Sessions; (2) Life Group Toolbox; and (3) Life Group Leaders. Familiarize yourself with the Appendix parts. Some of them will be used in the sessions themselves.

2 If you are leading or co-leading a Life Group, the section for Life Group Leaders will give you some hard-learned experiences of others that will encourage you and help you avoid many common obstacles to effective small group leadership.

3 Use this workbook as a guide, not a straightjacket. If the group responds to the lesson in an unexpected but honest way, go with that. If you think of a better question than the next one in the lesson, ask it. Take to heart the insights included in the Frequently Asked Questions pages and the Life Group Leaders section.

4 Enjoy your Life Group experience.

5 Now read the “Outline for Each Session” on the next page so that you understand how the sessions will flow.

OUTLINE OF EACH SESSION

Most people want to live a life that is orderly, meaningful and satisfying, but few achieve this by themselves. Most small groups struggle to balance all of God’s purposes in their meetings. Groups tend to overemphasize one of the various reasons for meeting.

Every Life Group session is structured to reflect the values of Life Groups, which are: **Connect**, **Grow** and **Impact**. Therefore, the

sessions are designed to help each group member participate and gain deeper insight into each topic by connecting with others, growing to be more like Christ and impacting the community with the gospel.

A typical Life Group session will include the following:



CONNECT

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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). 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.

As your group begins, use the Life Group Agreement, Life Group Calendar and Life Group Community Project Worksheet 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.



DVD SESSION

Serving as a companion to the “YHWH” Study Guide is the “YHWH” 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 this seven-week series.



GROW

Here is where you will process the teaching you heard and saw as a group. The focus won't be on accumulating information, but on how we should live in light of the Word of God. We want to help you apply the insights from Scripture practically, creatively, and from your heart as well as your head. At the end of the day, allowing the timeless truths from God's Word to transform our lives in Christ is our greatest aim.

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IMPACT

Impact is about putting what you just learned into action. It is about walking the talk. This section is to help apply the insights and principles learned in the lesson. It is by this application that the lesson will have an impact in you as well as through you. 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.

This is a good place to have different group members close in prayer, even when the instructions don't specify. You can also provide some time, if the schedule allows, for people to reflect on the Prayer and Praise Report at the end of each session or take a little time to meet with a Spiritual Growth Partner.



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SESSION ONE OMNISCIENT

He knows everything you're going through

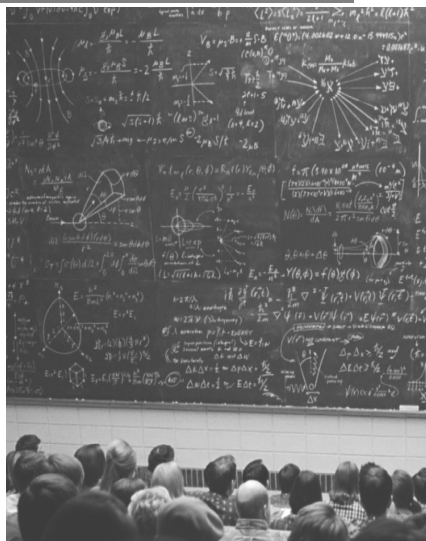


CONNECT

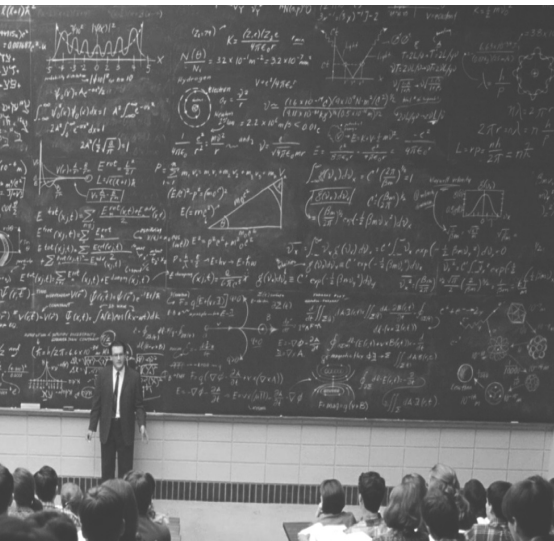
During each session, we will begin with a few questions to help you connect with one another and grow in your intimacy. Since this is your first time together (at least for this new series), take a few minutes to make sure everyone knows each other's names.

10

- As you begin, turn to the “Life Group Roster” on page 73. Take time to pass around your study guides and have everyone write down their contact information.
- Whether your group is new or ongoing, it’s always important to reflect on and review your values together. On page 74, there is a Life Group Agreement with the values we’ve found most useful in sustaining healthy, balanced groups. Take a few minutes to go over the agreement together.
- One of the markers of a healthy and happy group is when everyone takes ownership of the group. A great way to help everyone be involved is to share in weekly responsibilities, whether it’s taking turns praying for the group, providing snacks or providing drinks. You can turn to page 75 where you will find the Life Group Calendar and blank group tasks.
- In this series, we will have discussions about God’s greatness and power, and how He truly does love each of us. We will also discuss the various ways that we react to His love for us with our hearts, hands, stuff, and lives. To start our series and help break the ice, go around and answer one of the following questions:



- What did your high school transcript look like? Solid lettering or a trip down the alphabet?



- What was your favorite subject in school?

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DVD SESSION

This study is designed to be used with an accompanying video teaching. Please play DVD Session One. Use the space below for notes, questions or comments you want to bring up in the discussion later.



GROW

In the following section, you will explore Bible passages and take part in discussions to help expand your knowledge on the topic of this session. If time is a concern, please choose just a few of the questions to answer and discuss in your group.

12

In the video, the panel discussed God's omniscience. Go around and share what stood out to you from the video.

Read Psalm 147:5, Isaiah 55:9, and Hebrews 4:13

1 Describe God's omniscience in your own words?

2 What do you think God's omniscience means for us?

3 With God's total omniscience of the history and future of the universe, we still understand that He knows us. Read Psalm 139:13, Isaiah 41:10, and Luke 12:7. Based on these passages, describe how well God knows you. How do these verses make you feel?

4 What changes in your heart, thought processes, and actions, with this understanding that God knows you with such intimacy?

5 How would you explain to someone in your own words, God's intimate knowledge of them? Explain how you think this would affect them.

13

Read Psalm 139

6 Why do you think God chooses to know us this way? What purpose do you think it serves?

*Don't equate the
presence of God
with a good mood or
a pleasant temperament.
God is near whether you are
happy or not.*

-Max Lucado

7 As a believer, how does understanding that God knows everything that you're going through, bring you hope and comfort? Describe how this might cause you to want to be a more dedicated and disciplined follower of Christ.

8 What action steps can you take to show your true belief in God's sovereign omniscience?

14 Deeper Study

Read 1 Corinthians 2:10-16

9 What role does the Holy Spirit play in our understanding the mind of God? Why do unbelievers not understand the mind or things of God?

Read Deuteronomy 31:6, 8

Whatever we have done in the past, be it good or evil, great or small, is irrelevant to our stance before God today. It is only now that we are in the presence of God.

-Brennan Manning

10 How do these verses encourage you in your actions? In what ways do your actions show your true faith in God's omniscience for your life?

Read Genesis 2:15-17 and Genesis 3:1-13

11 What was God trying to protect Adam and Eve from by forbidding the eating of the fruit? How does this show God's omniscience?

15

Read John 10:14, 1 Corinthians 8:3, and Galatians 4:8-9

12 What do these verses say about God's knowledge of His children?

13 Explain how God's omniscience could lead you to be a deeper, more committed disciple of Christ.



IMPACT

16

One of the core principles in Life Groups is to have an impact on the community around us. In the following section, we have given you some ideas of how you can have an impact in the community both as a group and individually. Please go through and discuss how you can impact the community around you with the gospel.

● We all have friends, family, and co-workers who need to understand that God knows them, and He knows what they're going through. One way to help them come to a knowing relationship with Him is to pray for them with your Life Group, that they would find a loving relationship with Jesus. We would like for you and your Life Group to visit the Blessing List on page 81. Spend some time in your Life Group sharing names of men and women to encounter Jesus. Pray for them to submit their lives to the love of Jesus. After all, the greatest blessing anyone can receive is to be in relationship with the living God.



- As we learned in this session, God knows the very core of who we are. However, we can effectively keep Him from loving us by putting up a front or mask that only shows what we want people to see. This is not the real us, and it keeps God at an arm's length, reducing His transformational power in our lives. God knows this fact and wants us to experience victory as we willingly give up certain things or step into a more disciplined way of living so that we might encounter God more throughout our days.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Romans 8:38-39

Take time this week to sit down, pray, and write out some of the things that keep you from realizing the loving knowledge of God. These may actually be good things in your life, but write them down anyway. Talk with a godly person in your life that you trust to be honest with you on these things. Take time to pray over the next week or two about your schedule and busy-ness that keeps you from experiencing God's grace the way He wants you to.

Ultimately, this time spent with God helps you in putting Him at the center of your life, and letting go of the things that hinder the power of the Holy Spirit and His influence on your whole life. Let Him in and experience life in a new and exciting way!

Please take some time to end your group in prayer. You may use the Prayer and Praise Report on the following page as you pray and close your session for this week.



PRAYER AND PRAISE REPORT

This is a place where you can write each other's requests for prayer. You can also make a note when God answers a prayer. Pray for each other's requests. If you're new to group prayer, it's okay to pray silently.

Prayer Requests:

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Praise Reports:

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SESSION TWO OMNIPRESENT

He is with you all of the time



CONNECT

During each session, we will begin with a few questions to help you connect with one another and grow in your intimacy. Please take a few minutes and answer at least one of the following questions:

20

- If you could go anywhere, where would it be?
- Describe the place where you best encounter God.



DVD SESSION

This study is designed to be used with an accompanying video teaching. Please play DVD Session Two. Use the space below for notes, questions or comments you want to bring up in the discussion later.



GROW

In the following section, you will explore Bible passages and take part in discussions to help expand your knowledge on the topic of this session. If time is a concern, please choose just a few of the questions to answer and discuss in your group.

Today we are going to talk about God's omnipresence. Take a minute and discuss what you learned from the video.

Read Psalm 46:1, Proverbs 15:3, Jeremiah 23:24, Matthew 18:20, and John 4:24

1 What do these verses tell you about God's omnipresence? Describe omnipresence in your own words.



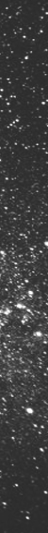
2 How does God's omnipresence change the way you approach your daily activities?

Read John 14:15-17 and 1 John 4:12-13

3 What similarities do you see in these verses?

4 According to these verses, what are some ways we experience God's omnipresence? If the world cannot see God, how do those who don't believe, experience His omnipresence? As believers, what do these verses tell that our role is for the world to experience God?

5 Share a time when you have experienced God's presence in love.



6 Share with your group, any other ways you have experienced God's omnipresence.

7 Describe the comfort, courage, fear, peace, etc. you feel knowing that God is with you at all times and will never leave you. How does God's love play a role in your description?

23

8 What do you think our love, as a reaction to God's love in action, does for unbelievers who have not experienced the hope in Christ?

9 What can you do this week to experience God's loving omnipresence and share that experience with others in a more tangible and palpable way?

Deeper Study

Read 1 Kings 8:27 and Psalm 139:7-10

10 How do these verses describe the greatness of God? How does this connect with His omnipresence?



Read Isaiah 57:15

11 What does it mean to be contrite and lowly in spirit? Why does this make a difference in how we experience God's omnipresence?

12 What does this verse tell you about what God will do for those who trust in Him?

Read Job 36:26, Matthew 28:20, 2 Peter 3:8, and Revelation 1:8

13 What part of God's omnipresence do these verses focus on? How does the eternity of God help you understand His omnipresence?





IMPACT

One of the core principles in Life Groups is to have an impact on the community around us. In the following section, we have given you some ideas of how you can have an impact in the community both as a group and individually. Please go through and discuss how you can impact the community around you with the gospel.

25

- One of the greatest tools we have in spending time with God is to pray over other followers of Jesus. God has given us a community in the Church to support, love each other, and experience His presence in our small communities. This communal bond is extremely beneficial to strengthen others through prayer.

Fill out the circles with names of people who could experience support and love in the manner God intended us to experience it. You've experienced this love and support; now pray for someone to experience that same support and love, and to come to your Life Group to get plugged in.

Family
(immediate or extended)

Familiar
(neighbors, kids, sports teams, school, and so forth)

Friends

Fun
(gym, hobbies, hangouts)

Firm
(work)

● This week, set some time aside for you to experience the presence of God. There are different ways for you to do this. Some of them are:

Day of Solitude
Time in Prayer
Meditation of Scripture
Time of Worship
Time in Silence

26

There is power and peace in the presence of God. His power is so amazing that doesn't fade away. You can tap into that power, experience the presence of God, and learn to listen for His voice. You will experience the love and wisdom that comes from Him, by scheduling time set aside for God. By setting this meeting time, you can hold yourself accountable to keep that meeting. You may also want to talk with your spiritual growth partner about this meeting so that he/she will pray for you, and also help keep you accountable to your meetings with God. Meeting with God is a powerful practice with many benefits. Do not miss out by delaying your time with Him any longer! presence!

Please take some time to end your group in prayer. You may use the Prayer and Praise Report on the following page as you pray and close your session for this week.



PRAYER AND PRAISE REPORT

This is a place where you can write each other's requests for prayer. You can also make a note when God answers a prayer. Pray for each other's requests. If you're new to group prayer, it's okay to pray silently.

Prayer Requests:

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Praise Reports:



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SESSION THREE OMNIPOTENT

He has the power to change your life



CONNECT

During each session, we will begin with a few questions to help you connect with one another and grow in your intimacy. Please take a few minutes and answer at least one of the following questions:

- What is the most impressive modern medical procedure you've ever witnessed or heard of?
- Describe the greatest physical power you've ever witnessed (ie: NASA rocket, strong man competition, etc.).



DVD SESSION

This study is designed to be used with an accompanying video teaching. Please play DVD Session Three. Use the space below for notes, questions or comments you want to bring up in the discussion later.



GROW

In the following section, you will explore Bible passages and take part in discussions to help expand your knowledge on the topic of this session. If time is a concern, please choose just a few of the questions to answer and discuss in your group.

Go around the group and allow everyone to share what they they found interesting from the video lesson.

Read Job 42:2, Jeremiah 32:17, and Matthew 19:26

1 What do these verses tell us about God's omnipotence? Describe omnipotence in your own words.

2 Based on your understanding, how has God's omnipotence effected your journey with Him?

Read Matt 8:1-4, Mark 5:25-34, and Luke 9:4-7

3 What are the similarities between these passages? Describe the differences in how each person encountered Jesus.

31

4 What kind of healing did the three people in these stories receive? How do you think the healings changed their lives?

*He is wise in heart
and mighty in strength,
who has defied Him without
harm? It is God who removes
the mountains, they know not how,
when He overturns them in His
anger; who shakes the earth
out of its place, and its pillars
tremble; who commands the
sun not to shine, and sets
a seal upon the stars;
who alone stretches
out the heavens and
tramples down the
waves of the sea*

Read Acts 3:1-10

5 Peter and John are described as being "unschooled, ordinary men" by the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:13. How were Peter and John able to heal this lame man in Acts 3?

-Job 9:4-8

6 Why do you think God would use "unschooled, ordinary" people to show His love and power? In what ways are you an "unschooled, ordinary" person?

Read Ephesians 3:14-21

7 According to this passage, what is God's power within us? How does God's power manifest in our lives?

32

8 How do you see yourself changing as you tap into God's power and live in His transforming love?

9 What is the next step that you need to take in order to experience God's omnipotence?



Deeper Study

Read Jonah 1:17, Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 4:35-41, and Luke 24:1-8

10 How do these passages show God's omnipotence and dominion over absolutely everything? Compare and contrast these miraculous acts to the healings discussed above.

33

Read Acts 22:2-13

11 What changed for Saul? How would you describe this as another manifestation of God's omnipotent love?

12 Describe how God has changed your heart, similar to the way He changed Saul's heart.

Read Ezekiel 11:19 and 36:26, Jeremiah 24:7, and Hebrews 8:10

13 According to these verses, how does God change you?



IMPACT

One of the core principles in Life Groups is to have an impact on the community around us. In the following section, we have given you some ideas of how you can have an impact in the community both as a group and individually. Please go through and discuss how you can impact the community around you with the gospel.

34

- This week, we would love for you to experience the power of God together as a group. Prayer is a very simple activity that can bring the power of God to individuals or groups of people who need healing, comfort, strength, or any number of other things that God can provide. Discuss some of the prayer requests and praises that your group members have and then pray over one another individually. You may consider putting a chair in the middle of the room and have everyone lay hands on the one you are praying for. This can be an incredibly powerful activity for the entire group as you experience God together in a powerful way!

- As You learned in your discussion time and video lesson this week, that you have a power indwelling you, that will help you to accomplish amazing and astonishing feats. Your job is to connect with the Holy Spirit in order to realize these incredible powers.

Take some time during the next few days to pray and then write out the kind of person that you want to be. Pray that God will reveal some characteristics that He wants to enhance in you, or that He would like to trim down or cut out. Really spend some time with God in everything that you do, whether it be work or play. Invite God to be near you during any activity or rest. If you are watching television

or reading a book, invite God to join you. If you are cleaning your garage or washing the dishes, realize that He is there with you. If you are catching up on some work at night, acknowledge His presence and power during that time.

This can be a very powerful exercise for you as you recognize His power in your daily activities. Even in the smallest of activities or most mundane of tasks, His power is evident if you allow Him to be with you during those times. Allow God's power to permeate every area of your life and see what He can do to change your heart and mind.

35

Please take some time to end your group in prayer. You may use the Prayer and Praise Report on the following page as you pray and close your session for this week.



PRAYER AND PRAISE REPORT

This is a place where you can write each other's requests for prayer. You can also make a note when God answers a prayer. Pray for each other's requests. If you're new to group prayer, it's okay to pray silently.

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Prayer Requests:

Praise Reports:

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S E S S I O N F O U R W O R S H I P

your reaction to God with your heart



CONNECT

During each session, we will begin with a few questions to help you connect with one another and grow in your intimacy. Please take a few minutes and answer at least one of the following questions:

38



- What is your favorite worship song?



- Share about the most incredible worship time you have ever experienced.



DVD SESSION

This study is designed to be used with an accompanying video teaching. Please play DVD Session Four. Use the space below for notes, questions or comments you want to bring up in the discussion later.



GROW

In the following section, you will explore Bible passages and take part in discussions to help expand your knowledge on the topic of this session. If time is a concern, please choose just a few of the questions to answer and discuss in your group.

Go around and share what stood out to you from the video discussion with the pastors and leaders about worship.

*Our hearts they
cry, be glorified.
Be lifted high above
all names.
For you our King,
with everything, we will
shout forth your praise.*

-Hillsong United

Read John 3:16 and Romans 5:8

- 1** According to these verses, what has God done and why did he do it? What makes these verses so significant?

- 2 Why do you think God's love for us brings such hope? How does His love change us? What is your reaction to God's love for you, even in your sin?

Read Luke 17:11-19

To worship God from the depths of the human soul is to discover worship in its purest form, unaffected by the world around; and it is deeper than any mere human emotion.

-A. W. Tozer

- 3 What is the response of the lepers after they are healed? Explain how you relate to the nine who kept going or the one who returned.

Read 2 Samuel 6:13-15

- 4 Why is David celebrating? Describe a time when you celebrated like this because of what God had done in your life.

- 5 Share why you find it easy or difficult to worship God.

- 6 How are the responses by the one leper (in Luke) and David in (2 Samuel) each a form of worship?



Read John 4:23 and Romans 12:1

7 What do you think it means to worship in spirit and in truth? Describe your style of worship.

8 How is the worship mentioned in John 4 and Romans 12 not just a physical act, but a holistic experience that involves our heart, mind, body, and soul?

41

9 Describe some different ways to respond to and worship God's power and love. Share how you have experienced and responded to God's power and love.

10 In what ways could you be more holistic in your worship of God this week?

Deeper Study

Read Read Psalm 51

11 What appears to be going on with David as he wrote this psalm? What is David realizing about himself? What is David asking of God?



12 In this state of anxiety and despair, how can David's response to God be considered a form of worship?

Read Acts 5:40-41 and Acts 16:22-25

42 **13** Using your own words, describe the situations and the response of the men involved. What state of mind and spirit must these men have been in to be able to worship in such a situation?



14 How do you relate to these men and their situations? How have you cried out and worshiped God in your times of anxiety, despair, pain, and suffering?

15 Take some time to write out a prayer that might help your heart and mind be able to worship God in all circumstances.



IMPACT

One of the core principles in Life Groups is to have an impact on the community around us. In the following section, we have given you some ideas of how you can have an impact in the community both as a group and individually. Please go through and discuss how you can impact the community around you with the gospel.

43

- Discuss with your group, and pick a worship service to attend together. Sit together and sing praises to God with each other! Enjoy the sermon together and learn with one another. Afterwards, you may even consider going to dinner as a Life Group and continue to enjoy everyone's company by sharing a meal together. By doing this, you are living out how the early church lived in Acts 2, with their worship and learning together.

- Worship is any time you respond to what God has done in your life. It is you offering an action as a response to God's love and grace. Individual worship of God is time alone with God. Take some time this week, maybe 20-30 minutes, to actively engage God in worship. During that time, maybe you're at home and you light some candles or otherwise have a dimly lit room. Or maybe you're on a walk with head phones on in the middle of a forest, taking in all the sights and smells of the environment with some worship music in your ears that brings you to God. There are many different environments that you can choose from that you connect with God more easily, so choose one of those environments that suit you best.

In these moments of worship, let your emotions run free with the music as you elevate God in your perspective to him. Give God a proper perspective with him and you, humbling yourself and raising Him up. As you lessen your ego and put God first in your life, He in turn, makes everything okay and will give you a peace that passes all understanding.

Please take some time to end your group in prayer. You may use the Prayer and Praise Report on the following page as you pray and close your session for this week.

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Prayer Requests:

Praise Reports:

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45

S E S S I O N F I V E
S E R V I C E

your reaction to God with your hands



CONNECT

During each session, we will begin with a few questions to help you connect with one another and grow in your intimacy. Please take a few minutes and answer at least one of the following questions:

46

- What is your favorite act of service for someone?
- Share a time when someone served you and it really impacted your heart.



DVD SESSION

This study is designed to be used with an accompanying video teaching. Please play DVD Session Five. Use the space below for notes, questions or comments you want to bring up in the discussion later.



GROW

In the following section, you will explore Bible passages and take part in discussions to help expand your knowledge on the topic of this session. If time is a concern, please choose just a few of the questions to answer and discuss in your group.

Go around and share one thing that stood out to you from the video lesson.

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, Psalm 133:1, and 2 Corinthians 13:11

1 What do you see as the common theme of these verses?

2 As we learned in the last couple of weeks, God is doing amazing work in each of our lives. How is living in community and serving one another a true reflection of what God has done in our lives?

Read John 13:34-35 and Galatians 6:2

3 Describe how these verses go together? Why do you think loving one another was so important to Jesus?

48 4 What is the relationship between loving one another and serving one another?

5 In what ways have you seen your Life Group resemble and reflect the community of humble service that Jesus and Paul describe? How are you personally building into the relationships within your group?



6 How is your Life Group taking care of one another, serving one another, and carrying each other's burdens?

7 Share about a time when you saw the concepts in these verses lived out.

8 Make a list of different areas of service that would be useful in the church and community. How are you serving in one of these areas?

9 How does serving your community show a good and true response to God's love in your life?



10 What kind of service can you do on your own, or with your Life Group, that would show the kind of reaction that God deserves for what He has done for you?

Deeper Study

Read Ephesians 2:10

11 In what ways does this verse connect to serving? What do our gifts, talents, and passions have to do with serving in the church?

*Life's most persistent
and urgent question is,
'What are you doing for
others?'*

-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

12 Why do you think God gave you a particular skill set specifically created to serve in the church? How do you think this strengthens the community of the church?

Read Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

13 How do these gifts aid in your service in the church? Why do you think God would give us different gifts to help us serve in our churches and communities?

14 How would knowing more about your gifts and passions change your perspective on how and why we are to serve?





IMPACT

One of the core principles in Life Groups is to have an impact on the community around us. In the following section, we have given you some ideas of how you can have an impact in the community both as a group and individually. Please go through and discuss how you can impact the community around you with the gospel.

51

- It is our desire to see our Life Groups serve in their communities. One way of doing that is through the Community Impact Project. The Community Impact Project serves as a way for you and your Life Group to be a light in your neighborhood. It is often noted, “Preach always, and if necessary, use words.” The point is that we are walking witnesses of our relationship with Jesus as we become His hands and feet to the world.

Another benefit of doing a Community Impact Project is the bond that is formed in your group by serving together. Over the course of a seven-week series, your Life Group will bond over discussion, but during a few hours of serving others, your Life Group can deepen that bond.

On our website, www.lifegroups.org/impact, there are the names, contact information, and descriptions of organizations you can partner with. These outreach ideas range from inviting someone to Life Group to serving in different areas of the city. Feel free to be creative. If your Life Group comes up with an idea not listed, please contact us so we can share ideas and help you bring your Community Impact Project to life.

You may also turn to page 76 where you will find the Community Impact Project worksheet. This worksheet will help you organize your project and ensure it gets done.

● This week, we learned what it means to share our faith with others by the way we live our lives. Nothing preaches a louder message than a transformed life of love and service toward others. For this week's IMPACT activity, we want to encourage you to do something nice for one of your neighbors.

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One great idea to serve your neighbors in a sweet way is to bake or buy some delicious goodies, write a nice note, and hand deliver them to one of your neighbors. There is no hidden agenda or ulterior motive. We want to encourage you to simply share the love that God shares with us, by doing something nice, loving, and sweet for one of your neighbors.

Enjoy the whole process as you pray about the relationship with your neighbors when you bake or shop. Spend a few minutes catching up with your neighbors as you drop off the goodies. And, continue to pray for them in the next few weeks as you think of them. Prayer for you and your relationships with your neighbors will go a long way, and your kind acts will show them that you love them without you even saying a word. Enjoy being a good neighbor this week!

Please take some time to end your group in prayer. You may use the Prayer and Praise Report on the following page as you pray and close your session for this week.



PRAYER AND PRAISE REPORT

This is a place where you can write each other's requests for prayer. You can also make a note when God answers a prayer. Pray for each other's requests. If you're new to group prayer, it's okay to pray silently.

Prayer Requests:

53

Praise Reports:

Y H W H

ALL KNOWING . ALL POWERFUL . ALL PRESENT

54

S E S S I O N S I X
H O N O R

your reaction to God with your stuff



CONNECT

During each session, we will begin with a few questions to help you connect with one another and grow in your intimacy. Please take a few minutes and answer at least one of the following questions:

- What was the greatest honor you ever received in the past?
- What would you like to be known for after you are gone?



DVD SESSION

This study is designed to be used with an accompanying video teaching. Please play DVD Session Six. Use the space below for notes, questions or comments you want to bring up in the discussion later.



GROW

In the following section, you will explore Bible passages and take part in discussions to help expand your knowledge on the topic of this session. If time is a concern, please choose just a few of the questions to answer and discuss in your group.

Today we are going to talk about honoring God with “your stuff”. Take a couple of minutes to discuss what everyone thought about the video.

1 How do you generally view your possessions and finances?

Read Luke 16:1-2

2 In this context, what is a manager? What is the main responsibility of a manager? Who does the manager work for?

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 and Ephesians 1:13-14

3 According to these verses, who owns the believer?

Read John 1:12 and Galatians 3:26

4 In the eyes of God, what is the believer? How do you identify with being owned by God and being a child of God? How do you feel, knowing that God views you as His child?

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5 If we are God's possessions, what else does He own? In what ways does this redefine what you "own"?

6 What is a more accurate term for the relationship between us and "our stuff"? If God owns you and all of "your stuff," what is your responsibility?

7 Share how you feel that you do a good job at honoring God with your finances and "stuff." If Jesus were in actual possession of "your stuff," how different would He handle it?

Read Luke 12:42, Luke 16:10-12, 1 Corinthians 4:2, and 1 Timothy 6:18

8 How does this idea of ownership change your view of how everything is to be handled/managed/cared for/given? How does your giving and stewardship match up with the God-given concepts in these verses?

When we have nothing to cling to as our own and cease thinking of ourselves as people who must defend privileges, we can open ourselves freely to others with the faithful expectation that our strength will manifest itself in our shared weakness.

—Henri Nouwen

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9 Describe how this lesson has changed your view about your possessions and finances. What would you have to do to match what Jesus would do with “your stuff”?

Read Matthew 6:31-34 and Matthew 25:23

10 How do these verses give you hope to live as Jesus lived? How do these verses describe a steward who has a grateful and joyous reaction to what God has done in his/her life?



Deeper Study

Read Romans 15:25-27

11 What is the offering that Paul is carrying? Who is he carrying it for and who is it going to? Why did the Gentile givers feel it was their responsibility to give to the Jerusalem church? What was the attitude of the givers?

59

Read 2 Corinthians 8:2-42

12 How does this verse jive with the concept of tithing? What is the difference? How are the two concepts so completely different? What are we, as managers, to do with the other 90%?

13 The offering that is mentioned in 2 Corinthians is the same as the Romans offering. 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 mentions the very same offering to be taken up very soon for those in need. Seeing that Paul has mentioned this offering in several of his letters, why do you think he felt this was such an important concept for his readers to understand, that he would continue to mention it? How does the concept of this kind of giving go against the grain of our western church culture?

14 What would need to change in your ideology of giving in order to be more in line with these biblical concepts of giving and finances?

Read Luke 16:10-15

15 How does this verse fit into the above concept of giving and stewardship? What is your take away from this lesson? How does this lesson prompt you to respond to God with your possessions and finances?

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IMPACT

One of the core principles in Life Groups is to have an impact on the community around us. In the following section, we have given you some ideas of how you can have an impact in the community both as a group and individually. Please go through and discuss how you can impact the community around you with the gospel.



- This week we have learned what it means to honor God with our possessions. The activity we are asking you to do this week may take some planning. First off, think of a homeless shelter or school or other organization that could use some help from your little community. Next, we want to encourage you to have a Life Group yard sale. We all have extra stuff that we have not used in a very long time or “outgrew” a decade ago. Purging ourselves of this stuff can be incredibly therapeutic for our minds and healthy for our souls. Pool

together all of your stuff and work together as a Life Group to sell it. Then, take the proceeds from the yard sale and give it to the organization that your group decided on as a blessing from your group to them. We honor God when we care for others. Let God's love show through your help and care of the people who help shape our communities.

- We learned in this session, our reaction to God is to honor Him with what He has given to us is to be good stewards. God has made us stewards of many things which include the blessings we have already received from God, or what God plans to give to us if we remain faithful and obedient to His plan of life for us.



God has made us stewards of a great many things. It is our job to realize, and be good stewards of those blessings, whatever they are. Take the time this week to walk around your home or work place and stop to thank God for what He has put under your care. It could be a loving spouse and healthy children. It could be the blessing of living by yourself and the time that you are afforded to spend with God. It could be a simple roof over your head and food to eat. It could be a reliable vehicle. It could be your health. It could be the opportunity to go to school. Whatever those blessings are, take the time to thank God and pray about how God would have you manage these many blessings under your care.

Please take some time to end your group in prayer. You may use the Prayer and Praise Report on the following page as you pray and close your session for this week.

PRAYER AND PRAISE REPORT

This is a place where you can write each other's requests for prayer. You can also make a note when God answers a prayer. Pray for each other's requests. If you're new to group prayer, it's okay to pray silently.

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Prayer Requests:

Praise Reports:

A life is either all spiritual or not spiritual at all. No man can serve two masters. Your life is shaped by the end you live for. You are made in the image of what you desire.

-Thomas Merton

Y H W H

ALL KNOWING . ALL POWERFUL . ALL PRESENT

63

S E S S I O N S E V E N S H A R E

your reaction to God with your life



CONNECT

During each session, we will begin with a few questions to help you connect with one another and grow in your intimacy. Please take a few minutes and answer at least one of the following questions:

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- Explain why it is easy or difficult for you to share your stuff.
- Are you comfortable talking with people or are you so nervous that you have difficulty forming words?



DVD SESSION

This study is designed to be used with an accompanying video teaching. Please play DVD Session Seven. Use the space below for notes, questions or comments you want to bring up in the discussion later.





GROW

In the following section, you will explore Bible passages and take part in discussions to help expand your knowledge on the topic of this session. If time is a concern, please choose just a few of the questions to answer and discuss in your group.



Start this session by sharing one thing that caught your attention from the DVD teaching.

- 1 What are some things that hold you back from sharing more about God? Why do you think you have this difficulty?

Read Genesis 28:15, Exodus 33:12-17, 1 Chronicles 29:11, and Psalm 33:12-15; 93, and 139:1-3

To be a biblical Christian is not to have high views about the Bible. It is to seek and know and live the life that is depicted in the Bible.

-Dallas Willard

2 Share how you have experienced God's power in your life.

3 Describe how you have experienced God's presence with you.

4 Share how you have experienced God's knowledge of you.

5 In what ways have these experiences changed you? How do you know that you have been changed?

6 What about these experiences would make it easier for you to share about God with people?

"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you"

-Genesis 28:15

Read John 4:29 and 2
Corinthians 5:16-21

7 How is this kind of sharing more of a reaction to what God has done in your life rather than an argumentative debate?



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8 Discuss some different steps that you could take to prepare yourself to share your God experiences with others

9 Share how you have grown closer to God as you have shared about Him with others?

10 How has this discussion encouraged you to share your faith more?

11 Share what you think is the next step for you to share more about Christ.

Deeper Study

Read Romans 10:5-17

12 Regarding sharing your faith, what are some things that stand out to you in this passage?

68

13 How do these verses help you better understand your responsibility in sharing the faith you have with those whom you have been entrusted?

Read Philemon 6

14 How have you prayed and/or asked others to pray for you about sharing your faith?

15 How can prayer bring about encouragement to share Christ with others?



16 Why do you think sharing your faith brings about “a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ”?

17 Share some ways that you have experienced the “good things we have in Christ.”

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IMPACT

One of the core principles in Life Groups is to have an impact on the community around us. In the following section, we have given you some ideas of how you can have an impact in the community both as a group and individually. Please go through and discuss how you can impact the community around you with the gospel.



- For many Life Groups who are going on a break after the series for the summer, this is your last official meeting until the next series. An

important aspect of your Life Group is celebrating together. We want to encourage you to plan a fun night of BBQ/potluck, movies and games with your group in celebration of all that God is doing. Don't worry about an agenda or study for this time. Relax and simply enjoy each other and fellowship with one another.

- Take some time this week to really pray about what sharing more about God with others could be like for you. Also, take out a pen and paper to write some of the experiences you have had with God and how that effected your life. You may start with a simple paragraph with a few sentences about each experience you have had; don't worry about too much detail. As you write, ask God to reveal some things that you may not have thought about before.

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Remember, this is your story, but there is no need to embellish to make it sound "better". Some people do not view their story as worthy to share because it is not exciting enough and too PG rated. But everyone's story has difficulty and victory that makes it unique and amazing. You do not need to be someone else's story. You have your own story and that is what you can share, because you lived it and you know how difficult things were. Once you have a few experiences written down, think and pray about how these experiences have changed you and made you more like Jesus.

After you have written your experiences and put them into a story of sorts, practice sharing your story with a friend and other members in your Life Group. It will not take long to get comfortable with it because you lived the story you are sharing. Pray for an opportunity to share this with someone that you have formed a relationship with at work or school or even a member of your family who does not know Christ. Allow God to work in and through you as you prepare and share. Enjoy your time with God as you go through this process with Him.

Please take some time to end your group in prayer. You may use the Prayer and Praise Report on the following page as you pray and close your session for this week.

PRAYER AND PRAISE REPORT

This is a place where you can write each other's requests for prayer. You can also make a note when God answers a prayer. Pray for each other's requests. If you're new to group prayer, it's okay to pray silently.

Prayer Requests:

Praise Reports:



LIFE GROUP TOOLBOX

LIFE GROUP ROSTER

Name	Phone	Email
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
13.		
14.		

LIFE GROUP AGREEMENT

It's a good idea for every group to put words to their shared values, expectations and commitments. Such guidelines will help you avoid unspoken agendas and unmet expectations. We recommend 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. If the idea of a written agreement is unfamiliar to your group, we encourage you to give it a try.

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WE AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING VALUES:

Clear Purpose	To encourage and challenge each other to live the LIFE God has called us to live (John 10:10, Matthew 28:18-20).
Group Attendance	To give priority to the group meeting (call if I am 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).
Be Confidential	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.

WE HAVE ALSO DISCUSSED AND AGREE ON THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

Childcare _____

Starting Time _____

Ending Time _____

LIFE GROUP CALENDAR

Healthy groups share responsibilities and group ownership. It might take some time for this to develop. Shared ownership ensures no one person has responsibility for the group. Use the calendar to keep track of social events, mission projects, birthdays, or days off. Complete this calendar at your first or second meeting. Planning ahead will increase attendance and shared ownership.

Date	LESSON	LOCATION	LEADER	SNACK/MEAL
<i>Monday, February 7</i>	<i>Week 2</i>	<i>Steve & Laura's</i>	<i>Bill Jones</i>	<i>John & Alice</i>

LIFE GROUP COMMUNITY IMPACT PROJECT WORKSHEET

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Where?	
When?	
Task Assignments	
<u>Name</u>	<u>Task</u>

Please go to our website www.lifegroups.org/impact for Outreach Opportunities and contact information to local organizations you and your group may partner with to serve.

FAQS

What do we do on the first night of our group?

Like all fun things in life—have a party! A “get to know you” coffee, dinner, or dessert is a great way to launch a new series. You may want to review the Life Group Agreement (page 75) and share the names of a few friends you can invite to join you. But most importantly, have fun before your study time begins.

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Where do we find new members for our group?

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, 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!

How long will this group meet?

It’s totally up to the group once you come to the end of this 7-week study. Most groups meet weekly for at least their first seven weeks, but every other week can work as well. We strongly recommend that the group meet for the first six months on a weekly basis if at all possible. This allows for continuity, and if people miss a meeting, they aren’t gone for a whole month.

At the end of this series, each group member may decide if he or she wants to continue on for another study. Some groups launch

relationships for years to come, and others are stepping stones into another group experience. Either way, enjoy the journey.

What if this group is not working for us?

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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 this 7-week series, decide whether to continue with this group or 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 seven weeks are up—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!

Who is the leader?

Most groups have an official leader. But ideally, the group will mature and members will rotate the leadership of meetings. We have discovered that healthy groups rotate leaders on a regular basis. This model ensures that all members grow, give their unique contribution and develop their gifts. This Study Guide and the Holy Spirit can keep things on track even when you rotate leaders. Christ has promised to be in your midst as you gather. Ultimately, God is your leader each step of the way.

How do we handle the child care needs in our group?

We suggest that you empower the group to openly brainstorm solutions. You may try one option that works for a while and then adjust over time. Our favorite approach is for adults to meet in the living room or dining room, and to share the cost of a baby sitter (or two) who can be with the kids in a different part of the house. In this way, parents don't have to be away from their children all evening when their children are too young to be left at home. A second option is to use one home for the kids and a second home (close by or a phone call away) for the adults. A third idea is to rotate the responsibility of providing a lesson or care for the children either in the same home or in another home nearby. This can be an incredible blessing for kids. Finally, the most common idea is to decide that you need to have a night to invest in your spiritual lives individually or as a couple, and to make your own arrangements for child care.

ENCOUNTERS AND SCHOOL OF DISCIPLESHIP

Jesus has left each one of us with a task...to Make Disciples! We believe that Life Groups are essential in this task. Life Groups are a place where people can come together to study the Bible and grow to become more like Christ. Life Groups are a great place to make disciples.

79

Since Life Groups are such a good opportunity and environment to make disciples we want to help equip our leaders to be the best disciple-makers they can be. Therefore, we strongly encourage all of our Life Group leaders and members to go to an Encounter and the subsequent School of Discipleship.

The Encounter is a weekend which will help you connect with God in a way you have never experienced before, and will help you realize what the cross means to us today. The School of Discipleship immediately follows the Encounter and teaches how to become the disciple that Jesus invites all of us to be. The School of Discipleship has three tracks: Doctrine, Transformation, and Serving. Whether you are a current leader, a prospective leader, or you just want to take the next step in your faith, we believe the Encounter and School of Discipleship will change your life and help you become a more fruitful disciple-maker.

<i>Upcoming Encounters</i>	
<i>Men's Encounters</i>	<i>Women's Encounters</i>
<i>June 2-4, 2017</i>	<i>July 14-16, 2017</i>
<i>September 15-17, 2017</i>	<i>October 6-8, 2017</i>

Please check our website for future Encounter dates and more general information on Encounters:
www.lifegroups.org Click "Learn About Encounters"

BECOMING A LEADER

What does it take to be a leader?

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

80

Basically, you need to have a desire to apply the Bible to your life and want to share that 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 simply must have some basic people skills and a desire to grow in the Lord.

How can I become a leader?

First, you do have to be a member of Shepherd Church. To be a member, you must complete the “Membership Inquiry Class”. These classes are usually about two hours long and are offered every six weeks. You may call the church office at 818.831.9333 to find out when the next one will be held.

Second, you need to sign-up for the New 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.

BLESSING LIST

The Blessing List is an opportunity to intentionally pray for people who don't know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. After all, the greatest blessing anyone can receive is to be in relationship with the living God. Throughout the series, pray for God's Spirit to bless and reveal Jesus' love to each person listed.

[illegible]

LEADING FOR THE FIRST TIME

- 1 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.
- 82 2 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.
- 3 Bring your uniqueness to the study. Lean into who you are and how God wants you to uniquely lead the study.
- 4 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 www.lifegroups.com and download the Leader's Notes. Consider writing in a journal or fasting for a day to prepare yourself for what God wants to do.
- 5 Don't wait until the last minute to prepare.
- 6 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 on. Don't get defensive, but show an openness to learn and grow.
- 7 Prayerfully consider launching a new group. This doesn't need to happen overnight, but God's heart is for this to happen over time.
- 8 Not all Christians are called to be leaders or teachers, but we are all called to be "shepherds" of a few someday.

9 Share with your group what God is doing in your heart. God is searching for those whose hearts are fully His. Share your trials and victories. We promise that people will relate.

10 Prayerfully consider whom you would like to pass the baton to next week. It's only fair. 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.



LIFE GROUP LEADING 101

Top Ten Ideas For New Leaders

84

Congratulations! You have responded to the call to help shepherd Jesus' flock. There are a 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.

1 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 that 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.

2 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.

3 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!

4 Prepare for your meeting ahead of time. Review the session and the leader's notes, and write down your responses to each question.

Pay special attention to exercises that ask group members to do something other than engage in discussion.

5 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 touch the heart of every person uniquely. 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!

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6 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.

7 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.

8 Break-up into small 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 effects 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.

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9 Rotate facilitators weekly. At the end of each meeting, ask the group who should 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.

10 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

Psalms 23

Ezekiel 34:11-16

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, 11-12