

Life Groups 2023



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Growing Disciples Who Grow Disciples
Faith Lutheran Church of McLean County

Guidelines

A Life Group needs to be a place where people feel comfortable opening up and sharing with one another. Guidelines give boundaries for people to operate within, help with the flow and pace of the discussions, help us to value one another, and help people to be more comfortable sharing deep and meaningful things.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Keeping things that are shared in the group confidential builds trust and shows value to the person. What is said in the group stays in the group.

LISTEN: Let's value one another during the discussions by really listening to what is being shared. Try to avoid thinking about how you are going to respond or what you are going to say next.

PAUSE: Allow a pause in conversation after someone shares. Give the person sharing the chance to finish and the group the opportunity to consider what was just shared before responding. Silence in the group provides an opportunity for someone to share and for members in the group to process the topic or question being considered.

AVOID "CROSS TALK": Be considerate of others as they are sharing – no side conversations.

AVOID RESCUING: When people are sharing something deeply personal, there can be a tendency to try to make them feel better about their situation by providing immediate condolences. This will often cause them to stop sharing. Resist the temptation to rescue people.

AVOID FIXING: Try to hear what people are sharing without trying to fix them. If they want your advice, they will ask for it. You may want to take time later to ask if you may share some advice.

SHARING: Be sensitive about the amount of time you share.

BE SELF-AWARE: Be self-aware of how you are personally affecting the environment through your words, actions, and non-verbal communication.

“I” STATEMENTS: During the discussion, we want to hear your personal thoughts and perspectives. Using “I” statements to answer discussion questions allows you to speak for yourself rather than generalizing by using such terms as “you”, “they”, “them”, “the church”, “us”, or “we”.

FIGHT FOR RELATIONSHIP: Relationships reach a whole new level when conflict is resolved in a healthy manner. When conflict or sin issues arise between group members, commit to fight for the relationship and discuss the struggle with the person you are in conflict with or seek wise advice.

DISCUSS THE EMPTY CHAIR: While one purpose of the group is to grow in our relationship with God through relationship with one another, the other purpose is to invite new people into relational discipleship. Remind one another of the importance of inviting new people into the group with the goal of “branching” into two groups. Biblical discipleship has both an inward and an outward focus. Like the first century church, a healthy group is constantly inviting new people to “come and see”.

Meeting Outline – 1 hour 30 minutes

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (10 minutes) - At your first meeting, allow enough time for everyone to introduce themselves. (This makes everyone feel valued and welcomed. A warm welcome establishes a foundation for relationships, makes everyone aware of what is going on, and brings focus to the group.)

OPENING PRAYER (3 minutes) - Invite God’s Holy Spirit into your presence. (This prepares your hearts for what God has for you and shifts your attention from individual fellowship to the group.)

PURPOSE (1 minute) – Review the purpose for our gathering – “to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ as we grow in deeper relationships with one another”. (This helps prepare your hearts and minds for the discussion.)

GUIDELINES (2-5 minutes) – At the first meeting, read through the Life Group Guidelines line by line. At future meetings, briefly review the guidelines. (This provides Biblical guidance for healthy conflict resolution while establishing a safe environment where everyone can share openly and honestly.)

WARM-UP (10 minutes) – Read a brief section from the book and ask a related, “soft” question to the group so that personal experiences can be shared. (This activity sets the stage for transparency and trust and helps create a safe environment.)

TELL THE STORY (10 minutes) – Have your designated storyteller paraphrase the Scripture reading as best they can. Remember to start with, “Here’s the story from God’s Word.” Try to refrain from teaching; just tell the story. The objective is not to memorize the story, but to learn it and be able to just share it. Remember to end with, “And that’s the story from God’s Word.”

READ THE SCRIPTURE (5 minutes) – Have someone else in the group read the Scripture passage from the Bible.

GROUP DISCUSSION (20 minutes) – Ask a few questions in order to facilitate group discussion. (You will not be able to discuss every question; allow the quality and length of the discussion dictate how many questions get covered.)

FAITH IN ACTION (10 minutes) – Choose a few “faith in action” questions to discuss as a group. (These questions help lock the Scripture in group member’s minds and hearts. They are designed to bring a clearer belief about who God really is, who they really are as His people, how they should see the world, and ultimately what we should change in our lives as a result. You can also paraphrase what happened in your group’s discussion and you may even choose to issue a challenge for your group.)

ASSIGN NEXT STORYTELLER (2 minutes) – Determine who will be responsible for telling the story at your next group meeting.

CLOSING PRAYER (10 minutes) - Refocus your attention on God and His provision. (This is the time for personal prayer requests, group needs, and to praise God.)

2023 Calendar

Date	Theme/Focus	Sunday Text	Life Group Study
Jan 29	Abraham - Is a Gift	Gen. 11:27-12:3	
Feb 05	Mary Magdalene – Is a Gift	Luke 8:1-2	Discover Your Gifts, Chapter 1
Feb 12	Elijah - Has Gifts	1 Kings 17:1-24	
Feb 19	Aquila / Priscilla – Has Gifts	Acts 18:18-26	Discover Your Gifts, Chapter 2
Feb 26	Jonah - Is Called	Jonah 1:1-17	
Mar 05	Timothy - Is Called	Acts 16:1-5	Discover Your Gifts, Chapter 3
Mar 12	Elisha - Can Grow	1 Kings 19:19-21	
Mar 19	Zacchaeus - Can Grow	Luke 19:1-10	Discover Your Gifts, Chapter 4
Mar 26	Daniel - Can Equip	Daniel 3:1-30	
Apr 02	Palm Sunday	Luke 19:28-44	Discover Your Gifts, Chapter 5
Apr 09	Easter Sunday	Luke 24:1-32	
Apr 16	Bezalel - Technical	Exodus 31:1-11	Discover Workbook, Session 1
Apr 23	Andrew - Technical	Mark 1:16-20	
Apr 30	Naomi - Interpersonal	Ruth 3:1-11	Discover Workbook, Session 2
May 07	Mary - Interpersonal	Luke 10:38-42	
May 14	Tabitha - Entrepreneurial	Acts 9:36-43	Discover Workbook, Session 3
May 21	Moses - Entrepreneurial	Exodus 3:1-12	
May 28	Miriam - Management	Exodus 15:19-21	Discover Workbook, Session 4

Date	Theme/Focus	Sunday Text	Life Group Study
Jun 04	Martha - Management	John 11:17-29	
Jun 11	Solomon - Financial	2 Chron. 9:13-28	Discover Workbook, Session 5
Jun 18	Matthew - Financial	Matthew 9:9-13	
Jun 25	Gideon - Critical Thinking	Judges 6:36-40	Discover Workbook, Session 6
Jul 02	Thomas - Critical Thinking	John 20:24-29	
Jul 09	David - Artistic	1 Samuel 16:14-23	Discover Workbook, Session 7
Jul 16	Lydia - Artistic	Acts 16:11-15	
Jul 23	Joseph - Civic	Genesis 45:3-11	Discover Workbook, Session 8
Jul 30	Simon - Civic	Mark 3:16-19	
Aug 06	Esther - Intercultural	Esther 7:1-10	Discover Workbook, Session 9
Aug 13	Paul - Intercultural	Acts 28:17-31	
Aug 20	Joshua - Communication	Joshua 24:1-15	Discover Workbook, Session 10
Aug 27	Peter - Communication	Acts 2:14-41	
Sep 03	Deborah - Leadership	Judges 4:1-14	Discover Workbook, Session 11
Sep 10	John - Leadership	1 John 1:5-10	
Sep 17	Nehemiah - Teamwork	Nehemiah 2:17-20	Discover Workbook, Session 12
Sep 24	James - Teamwork	James 5:13-20	

Faith in Action Questions

1. What did you learn about God in this story?
2. What did you learn about yourself in this story?
3. What new thing did you discover in this story?
4. What should you do differently because of this story?
5. Currently, in this season of your life, who do you relate to the most in this story, and why?
6. How do you use this story to help you become a more mature follower of Christ?
7. How can you apply this story in your own life?
8. How does this story speak to you about inviting new people to join our circle? Who could you invite?
9. What are your next steps? What is God asking you to do?
10. How will you respond to what the Holy Spirit is doing?

Serving Together

Joyfully serving in the church and the community, with the goal of making Christ known to others, is one tangible expression of our growth as disciples. These are some areas in which your group could serve together:

Sunday Morning at Union Park

Outdoor Clean Up at Union Park

Hope Packs at Midwest Food Bank

SOAR (Special Opportunities Available in Recreation)

Carriage Crossing Senior Living (1st Sunday and events)

Salt Church Meal

Cana Lutheran Church

Young Adult Care

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42-47

Storytelling

PREPARE TO TELL THE STORY

1. Pray that the Holy Spirit would illuminate His truth in your understanding of the Scriptural passage.
2. Read the story from Scripture.
3. Mirror Time: Tell the story aloud as if you were telling your small group.
4. Take notes of each main point you make.
5. Review your notes against the Scriptural story and make adjustments in your notes.
6. Be prepared to tell the story without looking at your Bible or notes. If possible, tell the story to others.
7. Avoid use of commentaries. Allow the Holy Spirit to reveal God's Truth before you look at other resources.

TELL THE STORY

1. Before you tell the story, hold the Bible open and say, “Here’s the story from God’s Word.” (As you are telling the story, try not to refer to it, but holding it open clearly conveys where the story originates.)
2. Trust God’s Word. Trust that the stories told in the Bible are best told as God wrote them.
3. If you see a specific emotion used in the story, try to tell it with the appropriate emotion. Conversely, if there is not an emotion connected to the story, do not add one. This will either help convey the story more accurately or detract from its meaning.
4. A great way to remember a story and tell it with more passion is to put yourself in the position of one of the characters. Go back in time and see yourself in the scene, and your memory will be aided come story time.
5. After you have told the story, end with these words, “And that’s the story from God’s Word.”

Faith Lutheran Church Life Groups

Life Groups are the primary method for us to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. When Jesus first launched His ministry, He didn't begin with a big crowd; He began His ministry with a handful of ordinary, often-faithless people. As they were going about their daily lives (fishing!), "*Jesus called out to them, 'Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!'*" – Matthew 4:19

Head (To Know)

"Come, follow me" – A disciple follows Jesus. To be His disciples, we must recognize and accept who Jesus is, and place our lives under His authority. Even as we have questions, He leads and we obediently follow His teachings. Therefore, we study and invite God's Word to penetrate deep into our thoughts.

Heart (To Grow)

"and I will show you" – A disciple is being changed by Jesus. God loves us just the way we are, but He loves us too much to leave us there. Jesus grew the disciples through His teachings (beliefs), yet the real work of life transformation happened through their change of hearts in authentic, transparent community. Therefore, we allow the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts through relationships rooted in Christian faith.

Hands (To Invite)

"how to fish for people" – A disciple is committed to the mission of Jesus. When we grow in Christ, we can't help but care about what Jesus cares about... people. While Jesus cares about you and the people in your group, He also cares about those who are far from Him. Jesus created the church – you and me – as the primary way to reach those people through relational connections. Therefore, we create space for new people to experience Jesus through our Life Group... and we invite them to sit in the empty chair.