

Life Groups 2024



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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”.

God Sightings

We believe the Bible is God's Living Word, which means that God is still speaking to US through His Holy Scriptures; thus, this year will be a season of listening to His message and celebrating how the Holy Spirit continues to speak to us today. And we are sharing these God sightings with one another because the more we share, the more we will see. Put another way, these God sightings offer us a lens through which we will read Scripture and read the world around us so that in the midst of so much darkness, sin, and brokenness in the world (bad news), we will see the Light of Jesus Christ (good news) shining.

Each time your Life Group gathers, each person is invited to select ONE STATEMENT from below to share his/her God sighting:

In the World

- ✓ This is how I witnessed God moving in a situation (describe)... This impacted me because (describe)... Because of this God sighting, I wonder if I am called to respond by...
- ✓ This is how I witnessed God moving in someone else (describe)... This impacted me because (describe)... Because of this God sighting, I wonder if I am called to respond by...
- ✓ This is how I witnessed God moving in me (describe)... This impacts me because (describe)... Because of this God sighting, I wonder if I am called to respond by...

In the Word

- ✓ This is what I am learning about God in (chapter & verses)... and this matters in my life because...
- ✓ This is what I am learning about Jesus in (chapter & verses)... and this matters in my life because...
- ✓ This is what I am learning about the Holy Spirit in (chapter & verses)... and this matters in my life because...
- ✓ This is what I am learning about God's Word from the passage (chapter & verses)... and this matters in my life because...
- ✓ This is what I am learning about the world around me from the passage (chapter & verses)... and this matters in my life because...
- ✓ This is what I am learning about myself through God's Word (chapter & verses)... and this matters in my life because...
- ✓ This passage of Scripture (chapter & verses)... really challenged me because... and this matters in my life because...
- ✓ This passage of Scripture (chapter & verses)... really encouraged me because... and this matters in my life because...
- ✓ Because of this God sighting in His Word, I wonder if God is calling me to... and I'd like to respond by...

Prayer

- ✓ This is how the group can pray for this God sighting...

Meeting Outline – 1 hour 30 minutes

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (10 minutes) - As your group gathers, allow time for everyone to introduce themselves/share recent life news. (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.)

GOD SIGHTINGS (60 minutes) – Each time your Life Group gathers, each person is invited to select ONE STATEMENT to share his/her God sighting. (We share these God sightings with one another because the more we share, the more we will see.)

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

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

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

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.

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