**Session 1 – What are Life Group’s**

**Session Objectives:**

- To thank leaders for attending these training sessions
- Announce basic principle for establishing Small Group Ministry
- Introduce “Connect, Grow, Worship, and Serve” idea.

**Focus of Life Groups**

*Please write your own notes as we go through this booklet.*

Our four purposes are based on passages of scripture. How does each passage relate to our focuses?

Connect: ______________________________________________________________________

Grow: ________________________________________________________________________

Worship: _____________________________________________________________________

Serve: ________________________________________________________________________
Session 1 – The Biblical Example

Session Objectives:

- Look-up and study Biblical Examples of Small Groups
- Apply Bible verses to our small group ministry in areas of growth, fellowship, service, and encouragement.

A Biblical Example

Look up the following verses and write down how each applies to our Life Groups Ministry.

Romans 12:2

Genesis 2:18

Acts 2:41-42, 46-47a

2 Timothy 3:15b-17

Galatians 6:2

Hebrews 10:24-25a

James 5:16

Ephesians 4:11-12

James 1:22
Session 2 – Life Change

Session Objectives:
- Go in-depth to what our small group ministry is about
- Inform leaders about how to keep the vision in focus
- Keeping the focus will enable people to have life changing experiences

6 Chief Parts of Small Group Ministry at Our Shepherd

1. Must meet at least 2 times a month
2. Pray together as a group, and individually
3. Dedicate time in each meeting for fellowshipping together
4. Spend an significant amount of time plunging into the scriptures
5. Take another amount of time discussing how the topic and Bible study apply to you and your groups individual lives
6. The group should be involved in some kind of servant leadership or service for those around them

Creating the Environment

This is why the experience of authentic community is so life giving. We are taking our place in fellowship with Life himself. When I am in isolation, I am lonely. When I am in community, I experience what might be called “fullness of heart.” The human heart is forever empty if it is closed in upon itself. In community—the divine community especially—a heart comes alive. –John Ortberg (author of The Life You’ve Always Wanted)

Keep the Vision in Focus

- Promotes spiritual growth
- Promotes authentic community
- Expresses selfless actions
- Expresses servant hood
- Expresses support of one another

Life Change

Goals for each meeting to create a life-changing environment:
- Dive into God’s Word in some form
- Pray each time you meet
- Set up situations for relational building
- Model and direct intentional service
All of these help create a place where God is active in the lives of its members.

A note on spiritual disciplines: We don’t do these activities for the sake of doing the activities, but to provide opportunities for the Holy Spirit to produce change in our hearts. List some possible spiritual disciplines your group can do:
Session 3 – What happens in a Good Group

The beneficial connections created through small group experiences produce other fundamental benefits that have to do with what the Bible calls sanctification, being set apart and cleansed for God’s service” – Dr. Henry Cloud & Dr. John Townsend, Making Small Groups Work

Groups create three important connections

1. Connections within the group: occur as the group takes on the “family” role.
2. Connections outside the group: grow as connectedness becomes a way of life. Experiencing relationship in a group gives members a model to relate to their spouses, dates, families, kids, friends, and co-workers.
3. Closer connection with God: develop as people connect in the group

Honesty

Shared Purpose

Group Materials

Discipline

Accountability

Confidentiality
Session 4 – Starting a Group

Session Objectives:
- Discuss with group facilitators the important of setting the who, what, when, where.
- Go over what a “trail period” means
- Discuss how to do some recruiting

As the Group Facilitator, Decide the Following:

- Where to meet
- What day and what time
- How often to meet (2 times a month minimum)
  - Benefits of meeting weekly:
    - Never forget what day you meet
    - Relationships foster quickly
- What type of group to have
- How many people should you have in your group?

Interest Group – This group focuses on gathering together people of like interests. The focus of the group, however, should not be the interest. The purpose of every small group is to be actively involved in the study of God’s Word and prayer. Keep Christ, not the interest, the central focus.

Bible Study Group – This group gathers people together to study the Word of God. This can be done either through devotions, reading the Bible, structured Bible studies such as the study offered by Our Shepherd, or the study of a book or series.

Service Group – This group focuses on a specific activity. While similar to an interest group, this group forms around a service project, or task that needs to be accomplished as a team. For example, a group may form around those people serving during our food pantry days, or around the people who take care of the church grounds.

Support for You

You are not expected to figure out all the tricks to the trade yourself. Each of you will have help to guide you through the day-to-day operations of a small group. You also are invited to attend our periodic leader meetings for support, encouragement, and accountability. Every person at these meetings is leading or has led a small group. We gather to help each other and build up one another in ministry. An equiper team, (the people training you) is also here to support you in whatever you may need while facilitating your small group.

As our Life Groups Ministry grows, we will begin to establish “coaches” who will be responsible for groups of leaders to continue the support and encourage that is needed.

As you begin to care for your group, in some instances issues will arise that you do not feel comfortable dealing with, or you are not qualified to deal with. When this occurs please contact DCE Dan at dhampton@ourshepherd.org, or our Pastor at the church office 271-9103.

Recruiting

Throw the net wide open. It is not up to you to decide who will and who will not attend your group. If you never ask a person if they would like to join how can you know that they will or will not enjoy it?
Who you will invite will also depend upon what kind of group you plan to have. If this is going to be an age or gender specific group obviously you want to only invite these people. Consider diversity and homogeneity in the group. It helps if the group has people from differing backgrounds. Use the chart in the appendix to help you think of people who might be willing to join your group.

**INVITE PEOPLE YOU HAVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH.**

- 6 to 8 encourages the group members to reach out to others
- Have a sign up sheet on Sunday Morning and pass out your special “Group Invitation”
- Talk to new people during Fellowship time
- (Remember that as numbers go up, care goes down. Honor the 1 to 10, 1 facilitator to no more than 10 participants)

When you ask people to join the group, expect them to be responsive and as excited about it as you are. If you begin the conversation with something like, “Sorry to bother you but...” or “You probably won’t be interested but...” Consider the words you use carefully as different people associate different things with specific words and phrases.

**MAX PEOPLE IN THE GROUP**

According to group research the optimal number to have in a group is 5-7. This allows for each member to contribute and feel included in every aspect of the group. However, we distinguish between the theoretical world and the real world. In real life individuals are not always able to attend meetings, and we as people are attracted to groups which means, more than often once the group has started members will want to invited other friends or family. For these reasons we ask for you as facilitators to keep the group to 12-15 members including yourself. This should allow for there to be a good amount of people who are always able to meet, as well as allowing for other friends and family to attend. Groups that reach over the max may result in social loafing.

**THE OPEN CHAIR**

In the context of small groups there is a term that you need to be aware of. This is the “open chair” This term refers to the concept of always leaving room for a visitor, who will be welcomed and encouraged with the rest of the group. While this may sometimes make the group go over the maximum limit, the outcome of telling a person they cannot be included would be detrimental to the overall focus of what our small groups are about. If you and your group continue to have many people join during your time it is recommended that you re-evaluate your covenant and split the group to keep everyone involved.

**THE TRIAL PERIOD**

Offer the first 6 to 8 weeks or 4 to 5 sessions, whichever comes first to be a “try the group out” time. This gives participants freedom to see if it will be a fit for them.

Each year the congregation at Our Shepherd Lutheran Church has committed to conducting a Spiritual Growth Campaign. Previous topics included: 40 Days of Purpose, 40 Days of Community, Year through the Scriptures, The Life You’ve Always Wanted, If you want to walk on water you have to get out of the boat, and The Externally Focused Life. Each of these experiences is intended to be a trial period for members to experience the power of small group ministry.
**Signing A Covenant**

During your first meeting as a group it is very important to form a group commitment or covenant. Once you have decided what kind of group you will facilitate encourage the group members to provide input into the purpose of the group. If the people place their own input into the focus of the group then each person has ownership in the group.

While it may seem difficult or even silly to start a group out talking about a set of rules, people are much more likely to be involved if there exists a common record of accountability. See our sample covenant in the back of this packet, make any additions that you need to for your specific group. If you want any item left out, please clear that with the equipper team.

**Confidentiality**

As we have discussed, trust is important as we form relationships with people around us. Especially during a time of open sharing we need to feel that we are in a safe environment before really opening up to the group. To help accomplish this each group meeting needs to be confidential. This assumes that anything shared in the group will not be shared with anyone outside of this group. This concept is displayed in Galatians 6:2 as Christians are called to “carry one another’s burdens.”

**When to Keep Your Group Closed to New Members**

To protect the life change goals and cultivating of relationships, after the covenant the group will close itself off from new members for a season once it reaches a certain size.

**EXAMPLE:** Say you have had a 6 to 8 week trial period where people can try your group out. After that time, you have 11 people in your group. You sign a covenant and close it from others joining for a set period of time, anywhere from 6 to 18 months. The length of closing must be in your signed covenant. This is called “closing for a season.”

**The reasoning behind “closing:”**

Every time a new member joins the group, the dynamics of building relationships goes back to square 1. You have to start over. Keeping it closed protects the deep relationship building and deeper spiritual growth formation.

**The reasoning behind “for a season:”**

It is important to do this only for a time, however. A permanently closed group is not healthy because it can become inwardly focused and stop concentrating on the ultimate goal of connecting people to Jesus. At the end of the closed season, to bring fresh vitality to the group, new relationships, and the opportunity for others to be part of a small group experience, the group multiplies.

**The person you always have room for:**

We have already discussed about your group size and the open chair. Remember you always have room for anyone who does not have a relationship with Jesus. Always make room for them. During your “closed” season you will not be advertised by the church, but always leave an empty seat to spread the Gospel. Remember the goal of your small group, to grow close AND reach out.
CELL GROUPS

Sometime because of life situations a group cannot commit, or does not want to close itself off from other people joining. If your group chooses this method we call it a cell group.

REASON FOR NOT CLOSING:

Some people do not want to commit to a group time. Others have a focus that they want to constantly be bringing more people into small groups, while others want to encourage new Christians to join. Not closing for a season allows a group the freedom to remain together, or break into smaller group faster.

IT’S ALL ABOUT THE NUMBERS

In a cell group it is all about the numbers. Remember that you should always have 1 facilitator for every 10 people. However when you go through the covenant process you need to encourage everyone to agree to a maximum amount of people that will be in the group. When the group reaches this average number of people it will split into 2 groups.

WHY DO WE STILL NEED TO SPLIT?

Groups that get to big are difficult to manage and control. People will get lost. Remember the reason we are in Life Group Ministry, it is to foster authentic relationships with people around us. While you may split faster or slower in this group eventually a split will happen. 1 group may be able to spawn as many as 6 new groups within a year. Imagine that exponential growth opportunity.

SUB-GROUPING

Always honor the 1 facilitator for every 10 people. Sub-grouping means to break the large group into smaller groups to ensure sharing and growth in prayer. You can always subgroup, even if you have 6 in your group. Therefore to sub-group you will need to have already been equipping another leader in your group.
SESSION 5 – SKILLS FOR THE FACILITATOR

SESSION OBJECTIVES

- Help Learners identify stages of group
- Enable leaders to identify his/her leadership style
- Discuss administration responsibilities
- Identify Key phrases and can help or harm the group
- Evaluate communication techniques
- Discuss role of facilitator, not leader

COMMUNICATION

PRACTICAL TIPS

1. Express your own ideas clearly and logically, but avoid arguing blindly for them. Consider other viewpoints.
2. Change your mind based on the...logical points of others. Do not change your mind only to avoid conflict.
3. Seek a consensus decision. Avoid a majority voting.
4. Foster opposing views, and encourage people to become involved and speak their minds.
5. Discuss anything underlying assumptions and ideas.
6. Strive for a win-win solution that incorporates the best of all ideas.
7. Reconsider an earlier decision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voice</th>
<th>Eyes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hands and body</td>
<td>Smile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I’m so Nervous
**PRACTICAL TIPS**

1. Pay attention and show positive nonverbal behavior
2. Listen for content. Describe what you hear, then attempt to state what it means to the person and to you.
3. Try not to interrupt
4. Try not to argue mentally.
5. Ask for clarification rather than assuming you know what is meant.
6. Avoid side conversations.
7. Maintain eye contact and other non-verbal or visual cues.

**PRACTICAL TIPS – Idea Killer Phrases**

- “That’s ridiculous.”
- “We tried that before.”
- “That will never work.”
- “That’s crazy.”
- “It’s too radical a change.”
- “We’re too small for it.”
- “You can’t teach a dog new tricks.”
- “It’s not practical.”
- “Let’s get back to reality.”
- “We’ll be the laughingstock.”
- “It’s impossible.”
- “There’s no way it can be done.”
- “Why would you think that?”
- “No one likes you anyway.”

*Find a partner. Take turns telling each other a story about a significant experience in your life. After the listener has heard the whole story, try and retell the story back.*

**ASKING GREAT QUESTIONS**

What is the difference between an open or closed question?

**DON’T BE AFRAID OF SILENCE**

**INGREDIENTS FOR AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE**

**COMMUNICATOR’S NO-NO**

**THE LORD WILL HELP**

Look up:
- Exodus 4:12
- Jeremiah 1:4 – 10
- Ezekiel 33:22
- Matthew 10:19-20
Session 6 – Group Development

The WINDOW

### Types of Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autocratic</th>
<th>Authoritative</th>
<th>Democratic</th>
<th>Laissez-faire</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>(Domineering, dictatorial)</em></td>
<td><em>(Definite yet responsive)</em></td>
<td><em>(Group-centered)</em></td>
<td><em>(Permissive, passive)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Total control, with members as listeners and followers.
   - Strong control, with members actively involved in the discussions.
   - Shared control, with leader and members sharing functions.
   - Minimal control, with members directing.

2. Determines goals and policies.
   - Has a definite purpose and plan but is open to modification.
   - Share leadership responsibility.
   - Doesn’t prepare and let things drift.

3. More interested in subject matter (content) than people (process).
   - Active and energetic and seeks the activity of others.
   - Believes in other people.
   - Doesn’t seem to care.

4. Makes decisions regardless of other views.
   - Prepared to give direction and support as needed.
   - Creates a sense of security and belonging.
   - Causes the group to accomplish very little.

5. Talks too much.
   - Uses communication skills to involve others.
   - Ensures that others have chance to lead.
   - Encourages fragmentation through indiscipline.

6. Focuses attention on himself or herself.
   - Takes responsibility until others can assume it.
   - If leader withdraws, group will not fall apart.
   - Makes not attempt to appraise or regulate events.

7. Group members are almost puppets.
   - Uses personal power to empower others.
   - Sees that group discusses all policies.
   - Lacks courage in making decisive plans.

8. Asks and answers all questions.
   - Prepares and asks questions; members respond
   - May ask others to lead discussion, using guide.
   - Asks one vague or general question, and then is silent.
Stage of a Group

Stage 1: The Pre-Show
During this stage the leader is identified and begins to ask the question, “who will be in the group?” and “what will our groups purpose be?” Initial contact is made with possible groups members and other invitations are made. It is important that the facilitator have an idea of what the purpose of the group is before making this initial contact. Groups that are left up to themselves to discuss these topics, more often than not will spend more time trying to figure out a purpose than actually living it out.

Stage 2: Meet and Greet
It is at this stage the group comes together for the first time. Most people will feel very uncomfortable, and unsure. This is not a reflection on you as facilitator, but is a normal stage for every new group. It is important to discuss at this first meeting a group covenant so everyone may be equipped to have a clear understanding of the group’s purpose and mission. Make sure to make people feel as comfortable as possible during this time. Members will be evaluating the group and whether or not it will be a productive use of their time.

Stage 3: Trust
After several group meetings people will begin to feel comfortable with each other. Once this process begins, members will be open to share questions and thoughts with the group.

Stage 4: Re-evaluation
Over time people will change. Some may like the current direction of the group, while others may want a deeper level of learning. Once again this is not a reflection on you, it is a natural stage of a group.

Stage 5: Closing
At this stage the group may decide to end the group as it has currently been functioning. Some group members may choose to continue meeting together and birth a new group. Others will have gained what they wanted from the experience. It is important to remember at this stage to break the group as gently as possible. Relationships have been formed that will continue to develop. If there was conflict in the end, do not burn any bridges, but maintain a Christ-like attitude to your fellow brother/sister in Christ.

### PRACTICAL TIPS – Stages of the group

#### Stage One: Dependency and Inclusion
- members are concerned with acceptance and inclusion
- members fear group rejection
- members communicate in a tentative and very polite manner
- leader is rarely challenged
- overt conflict is minimal
- subgroups and coalitions are rare

#### Stage Two: Counter dependency and Fight
- conflicts about values surface
- members challenge leader
- subgroups and coalitions form
- role clarification begins

#### Stage Three: Trust and Structure
- leader’s role becomes less directive and more consultative
- communication structure appears to be more flexible
- member satisfaction increases
- cooperation is more evident
- conflict management strategies are more effective

#### Stage Four: Work
- members are clear about their roles and status
- group expects to be successful
- group is highly cohesive
- periods of conflict are frequent but brief
- group has effective conflict-management strategies
- leadership styles matches the group’s developmental level

#### Stage Five: Termination
- group members know that the group will be ending soon
- group’s ability to manage conflict may begin to degenerate
- members may discuss ways to continue the group beyond its designated ending point
- stress and anxiety among members is evident
- some members may become apathetic
Session 7 – Worship, Discipleship, Fellowship

Session Objectives:
- Help group facilitator learn the importance of prayer in their groups
- Enable leaders to practice praying for a group
- Discuss different ways the group can pray together.
- Equip leaders to prepare Biblically based lessons
- Identify resources groups may use

Praying for your members, your group, and for yourself
- Pray for your group members individually and often
- Pray for your group as a whole
- Pray for wisdom and peace as a leader

Leading the Time of Prayer

Prayer will be part of every activity you do as a group. Let’s look at some verses to get the background on prayer.

I Peter 2:9

I John 5:14-15

Romans 8:26-27

We don’t want our prayers to turn into just wish lists, so you can follow the ACTS model in your prayer. A great resource on this model is Bill Hybels book, Too Busy Not to Pray. Try to cover most of the ACTS model for your prayers.

- Adoration—Entering His Holy Space. Listing the attributes of God, especially the ones that are needed for your group’s specific situation. Praising God’s mercy when you need it, His knowledge or power when you are in a confusing or overwhelming situation, His guidance when facing major decisions are all examples.
- Confession—Naming Our Faults. Be specific, not just “Lord forgive my sins.” But “Lord forgive me for adding that item to my taxes, for watching that movie I shouldn’t have, for purposely running over my neighbors bushes with my car.”
- **Thanksgiving**—Expressing Gratitude. Thank God in any or all of the following areas: answered prayer, spiritual blessings, relational blessings, and material blessings.
- **Supplication**—Asking for help. Again, asking that God’s will be done and for our needs. Be sure to ask for prayer requests before you pray each session.

Here is an example of praying the ACTS model:

- **A**: Read a Psalm; maybe 8, 19, 23, 46, 95, 100, or 148 then pray: Lord God, you are awesome! You are our strength in tough times. You are so good to us in our lives.
- **C**: Lord Jesus, we are so sorry for our sins, for the horrible things we have said to our family and friends this week, for not always putting you first in our lives. Let’s silently confess our sins to God over the next minute...
- **T**: Thank you for forgiving our sins, thank you for healing Bob’s knee after his fall, thank you for giving success to Mary’s business deal, thank you for our friendships with each other.
- **S**: Holy Spirit, we ask for help this day. We ask that you could help Jim and his daughter rekindle their relationship. We ask for healing for Fred’s asthma, it is so hard for him to be active these days God. We ask that you draw us closer as a group and closer to you.
- Everything we ask, we ask it in your name. Amen.

**Prayer as Needed**

Pray for problems as they arise. “Thanks for sharing that with us. Let’s pray about it right now.”

**Helping Guide the Group in Prayer:**

It is important that everyone in your group learns about and practices prayer. Here are some ideas to help get people comfortable in prayer.

- Ask different members to lead the opening/closing prayer
- Have the group write out their prayer during one of your sessions
- Have the group pray in pairs, triads, or quads. Give them a topic to pray about in their smaller groups. “Everyone pray for something you are worried about right now.”
- Spend some time in silent prayer listening for God’s direction
- Popcorn prayer
- Journaling prayer request so you can track answered prayer
- Other ideas?
God’s Word

Session Objectives:

Every small group at every session will involve God’s Word in some form. Always provide time for discussion after being in God’s Word. Here are some examples:

Devotion: Read a page from Portals of Prayer, read the Scripture verse given, come up with two thinking questions to ask afterward (How does this affect your day to day life? Have you ever had a situation like that happen to you? How do you think God wants us to respond?), close in prayer.

Using a Study Bible: Read a section of Scripture and use the study notes for more information. Come up with a couple questions. Using the Life Application Bible, use the notes and any provided questions for more information and a discussion. For the Serendipity Bible, follow the different type of questions through from the Lite Study sections or the advanced questions.

Prewritten Bible Study: Take your group through a prepared Bible study, where you read the Scriptures and have a discussion that is laid out. If this is the case, be sure to go through the material beforehand so you can prepare some stories from your life, remove any discussion questions that don’t fit your group, and add any that would be helpful. We will be building a small group library that you can pull from. Any questions about the doctrine of a resource can be brought to Dan Hampton (317) 271-9103.

Using a Section of the Bible: Take a section or passage from Scripture and study it to gain life application. Read the portion of Scripture and answer the following 7 questions for comprehension and life transformation:

Role as Host in Bible Study

Remember, you are a FACILITATOR, not a TEACHER. Your mission is to create and maintain good discussion so that the members of the group are all involved and thinking through the Scriptures on their own. Your mission is NOT to provide all the answers and feed them while they sit and listen.

- It is more about spiritual growth and relationship building than sticking exactly to the material.
- This whole process of small groups is about their growth as disciples of Jesus Christ and their growth to each other.
- Always provide time for discussion after being in God’s Word
- Sometimes teaching materials that are used do not adhere to our beliefs according to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Use these times as an opportunity to examine what we believe and why, not a bash the author meeting.
- Spend time researching the Scripture beforehand and pray for any insights to emerge
- Don’t be argumentative
- LISTEN to each person as they share, and respond to what they are saying in love
- A special pamphlet is available to your groups to enable them to spend time over a particular Bible passage in the next week.
INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

Observation – What’s going on in the passages?

Step 1 – read with an open mind
Step 2 – Record the facts (who, what, when, where, why, so what)

Interpretation – What does it mean?

Step 1 – What does it say about God?
Step 2 – What does it say about me?
Step 3 – Look up unfamiliar words in dictionary or Bible dictionary.
Step 4 – Identify Law and Gospel components.

Application – What should I do?

Step 1 – Ask and answer these questions:
  ❖ Is there a challenge to accept?
  ❖ Is there an attitude to change?
  ❖ Is there a command to obey?
  ❖ Is there a sin to avoid?
  ❖ Is there a promise to claim?
  ❖ Is there an example to follow?
  ❖ How can I apply this to my life?
Step 2 – Describe it
  ❖ How can I make this passage personal?
  ❖ How can I make it practical?
Step 3 – Memorize it
  ❖ Each week choose a verse or passage that impacts you personally and memorize it. One or two verses weeks is a steady pace – but if you’re motivated to do more, go for it! The important thing is to spend time each day reviewing the verses you’ve already memorized as you add new ones to memory.
Step 4 – Identify a key verse from the passage?
Step 5 – Mediate on it.
  ❖ Review God’s Word to you throughout the day
Session 8 – Cultivate Relationships

Session Objectives

- Equip leaders to promote participation of all group members.
- Equip leaders to respond to tough situations and conflict
- Focus on the vision of meeting people where they are at

Meeting People Where They Are At

Parable of the Sower from Matthew 13:1-23—people in your group will be at every different level of the four soils from Jesus’ parable. Each group member is on a spiritual journey like you as a leader are on one. We must let God guide their journey; we simply meet them where they are.
WORKING WITH PROBLEMS IN THE GROUP

Neediness

Noncompliance

Passivity

Shut Up

Aggression

Narcissism

Spiritualization
Session 9 – Beyond the Group

Items covered:
Multiplying Influence, replace yourself.

Multiplying Influence

Multiplying happens after the “season” for being closed. The group then multiplies its influence by becoming two or more groups. Although multiplying is probably the most difficult thing for your group to do, it is also the most rewarding. It also ensures the possibility of involving as many people as possible in small group life.

Here is a chart that describes what can happen in ten years when multiplying occurs every 18 months:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th># OF PEOPLE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Today</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>96</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>7.5</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>1536</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 10 years time, your small group will have started 127 additional groups and will have over 1500 people in small groups.

So, decide after the trial period how long to be closed, then multiply at the end. Be prepared. Many will be resistant, especially if the group is going well. Talk about it at the covenant signing occasionally during your time together. Multiplying the Group is most effective when you the leader talk about it often.

Helps to make it a smooth transition:

You can have both groups meet at the same time in different locations, or on different nights. You can decide the two groups based on location of where people live. Some groups will be ready to multiply into three or more groups. Meet a couple times in the first 6 months for fellowship bringing the multiplied groups back together.

Thank you all for being with us through this training process. I do hope that it has equipped you for service in your group. Remember you are not alone. You have and equipper team who is ready to help you if you have questions. You also have the power of God on your side. With the help of the Holy Spirit I am sure that all of your work will not fall on deaf ears but be used to strengthen and support the Saints as we fulfill our vocations and calls that God has given.
Fill out and answer the following questions as best as you can, as we discuss each of them.

1. Why are people today so lonely?

2. Do you think people really want community? Why?

3. What do you think people are looking for?

4. Can someone live a joy-filled life in isolation from others?

5. Describe a time when you were not living in meaningful relationship. What were some of the consequences?

6. Do you agree with the statement that there is a need inside of us that not even God Himself will fill?

7. How does living in community reflect the image of God?

8. Do you agree that one of God’s dreams for his people is community? Why is this important?
9. What role has community played in your faith journey?

10. What are the characteristics of community that make it attractive to those outside the faith?

11. Some theologians have called community a “final argument,” for Christianity. What do you think this phrase means?

12. Why should the church intentionally foster community? Why can’t we just rely on the casual connections we make at church?

13. Why is it important to have a clearly defined purpose statement?

14. How would you describe a growing relationship with Christ?

15. Do you agree that it’s important to understand spiritual growth as a process rather than as a point in time? Why?

16. What are some barriers for people getting into a small group?

17. What tools do you as a facilitator anticipate needing to make your group successful?
Resources and quotations used in the making of this manual include:


Hestenes, Roberta, Using the Bible in Groups, Bible Society, Swindon, Wilts, © 1983.


Our Life Group Commitments

Leader:  
Apprentice(s):  

1. The purpose(s) of our group is to...
   - Grow spiritually, and to form lasting relationships with group members through listening, expressing feelings and love each other unconditionally, and reach out with Christ’s love to visitors and people outside the group.

2. Our goals
   - We will connect with Christ and each other by...
   - Meeting regularly.
   - We will worship...
   - By starting each meeting with prayer and a devotional thought.
   - We will grow by...
   - Selecting a topical Bible study together.
   - We will serve the church and world by...
   - Greeting people during the Our Shepherd Food Pantry.

3. We will meet for ________ months/years, after which we will review the group.

4. We will gather on _____ 2nd and 4th Thursdays at _______ 7:00pm (time)

5. We will meet at members homes. We will rotate between homes. (place)

6. We will agree to the following primary values for our group:
   - Participation: Everyone is given the right to their own opinion, and all questions are encouraged and respected. We will also make attendance to group meetings a priority. We also agree to begin and end our meetings on time.
   - Confidentiality: Anything of a personal nature that is said in the meeting is never repeated outside the meeting, unless permission is given from the person who is sharing.
   - Open Chair: The group stays open to new people as long as they commit to the covenant. The process for filling the open chair in our group will be...
   - Group Birthing: At the appointed time, we will begin the birthing process by...
     - Dividing the group into two new groups based upon geography.
   - Permission: We will allow group members the authority to speak into our lives to help us maintain our spiritual development and growth.
   - Other:

7. We will organize food by...
   - Signing up each meeting for the next gathering

8. We will provide childcare by...
   - Jointly paying for a babysitter.

Group Leader Signature  
Staff Signature

If you agree with the above statements please sign below.
Our Life Group Commitments

Leader: ________________________  Apprentice(s): ________________________

1. The purpose(s) of our group is to...

2. Our goals
   We will connect with Christ and each other by...
   We will worship...
   We will grow by...
   We will serve the church and world by...

3. We will meet for ______ months/years, after which we will review the group.

4. We will gather on ________________ at ________________ (time)

5. We will meet ________________ (place)

6. We will agree to the following primary values for our group:
   Participation: Everyone is given the right to their own opinion, and all questions are
   encouraged and respected. We will also make attendance to group meetings a priority. We
   also agree to begin and end our meetings on time.
   Confidentiality: Anything of a personal nature that is said in the meeting is never repeated
   outside the meeting, unless permission is given from the person who is sharing.
   Open Chair: The group stays open to new people as long as they commit to the covenant.
   The process for filling the open chair in our group will be...
   Group Birthing: At the appointed time, we will begin the birthing process by...

   Permission: We will allow group members the authority to speak into our lives to help us
   maintain our spiritual development and growth.

   Other: ________________________

7. We will organize food by...

8. We will provide childcare by...

_________________________________________________________  
Group Leader Signature  
_________________________________________________________  
Staff Signature

If you agree with the above statements please sign below.
Our Small Group Covenant

1. The purpose of our Small Group is to grow healthy spiritual lives by building a healthy small group community.

2. Our Goals will be...
   a. to meet weekly for fellowship, worship, service, and study of God’s Word
   b. Care for each other in all of our needs

3. We will continue to meet together until our group reaches an average of 16 people. At which time we will split into 2 new groups.

   or

1. We will meet for 1 year, after which time we will decide either to continue as a group or grow our group into 2 new small groups to further the spreading of the Gospel.

2. We will meet on Friday from 6:30 – 8:30pm and we will strive to start on time and end on time.
   a. Refreshments will be taken care of by a volunteer providing them each week
   b. Childcare will be provided by a babysitter
   c. Bible Study material will be agreed upon by the entire group

3. We will meet at the Group Leaders home or we will rotate from house to house.

4. We agree to the following ground rules for our small group:
   a. **Priority**: While we are in this small group, we will give group meetings priority.
   b. **Participation**: Everyone is given the right to their own opinion and is respected. Dominating discussion is discouraged
   c. **Confidentiality**: Anything that is said in the meeting is never repeated outside the meeting
   d. **Empty Chair**: The group stays open to new people as long as group size and space requirements allow. or The group will stay closed during the period of the covenant to foster relationships between the members
   e. **Support**: Permission is given to call upon each other in time of need
   f. **Ministry Project**: We will try and choose, plan and complete a service opportunity in our church and community
   g. **Other**:
SMALL GROUP COVENANT

Purpose
To Grow healthy spiritual lives by building a healthy small group community

Group Attendance
Give Priority to the group meeting (call if I am absent or late)

Safe Environment
To 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

Conflict Resolution
To avoid gossip and to immediately resolve any concerns by following the principles of Matthew 18:15-17

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

Limit Our Freedom
To limit our freedom by not serving or consuming alcohol during small group meetings or events so as to avoid causing a weaker brother or sister to stumble (1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Romans 14:19-21)

Welcome Newcomers
To invite 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

Other

WE HAVE ALSO DISCUSSES THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

Childcare:
Starting Time:
Ending Time:

If you agree with these statements, please sign your name below
Together we agree to the following statements

1. **Affirmation**: There is nothing you have done or will do that will make me stop loving you. I may not agree with your actions, but I will love you as a child of God and do all I can to hold you up in God’s affirming love.

2. **Availability**: Anything I have – time, energy, insight, possessions – is here if you need it, to the limit of my resources. As part of this, I pledge my time on a regular basis, whether in prayer or in an agreed-on meeting time.

3. **Prayer**: I will pray for you in some fashion, believing that our caring Father wishes His children to pray for one another and ask Him for the blessings they need.

4. **Openness**: I promise to become more open, disclosing my feelings, my struggles, my joys, and my hurts to you as well as I am able.

5. **Honesty**: I will try to mirror back to you what I am hearing and you say and feel. If this means risking pain for either of us, I will trust our relationship enough to take that risk, realizing it is in “speaking the truth in the spirit of love” (Ephesians 4:15).

6. **Sensitivity**: Even as I desire to be known and understood by you, I will be sensitive to you and to your needs to the best of my ability. I will hear you, see you, and feel where you are and to draw you out of the pit of discouragement, grief, or withdrawal.

7. **Confidentiality**: I will promise to keep whatever is shared within the confines of the group, in order to provide the atmosphere of openness.

8. **Accountability**: I consider that the gifts God has given me for the common good should be liberated for your benefit. I am accountable to you to become what God has designed me to be in His loving creation.

We will meet (how often) ........................................
On (day of the week) ........................................
Starting at (time) ........................................
Ending by (time) ........................................
At (location) ........................................

Childcare: ........................................
Food: ........................................

We have promised together to meet for _____________, after which time we will review and grow another group.
## LIFE GROUP PROFILE FORM

Group Leader: ____________________ Phone: ____________ E-mail: ____________________

Apprentice: ____________________ Phone: ____________ E-mail: ____________________

What type of group: ☐ ChristCare ☐ Bible Study ☐ Interest Group of ____________________

### Group Members

<table>
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### Group History

Date Formed: ____________ Recovenant Date or maximum group size: ____________

Previous Lesson Topics: ____________________
Notes about Group Dynamics:

Meeting Data

Day: ___________ Time: ___________ Place: __________________________________________

☐ Currently Open
☐ Mixed Gender
☐ Intergenerational
☐ All occupations
☐ Mixed singles and married

☐ Currently Closed
☐ Only Women
☐ Similar age range: ________________________
☐ Only Men
☐ Only certain occupations: ________________________

☐ Currently Open
☐ Mixed Gender
☐ Intergenerational
☐ All occupations
☐ Mixed singles and married

☐ Currently Closed
☐ Only Women
☐ Similar age range: ________________________
☐ Only Men
☐ Only certain occupations: ________________________

Group’s Child Care
Plan: __________________________________________

Other
Characteristics: ______________________________________

Servant Leadership or Missional
Service: __________________________________________

Special Interests/concerns of the group

☐ Prayer
☐ Bible Study
☐ Spiritual Growth
☐ Relationships
☐ Witness / Evangelism
☐ Social Ministry
☐ Service
☐ Other: ___________________________
Meeting Preparation Worksheet

This worksheet may be used as a guide to help you plan your first few meetings.

### People

Who is coming? Why are they coming? What special needs does each person have? What are their prayer concerns? Have you prayed for your group?

### Arrangements

What needs to be done to prepare for the time together? What arrangements need to be made about the room, seating, Bibles, refreshments, childcare, materials, etc.? Who is in charge of these arrangements?

### Relationships

How will you help people to feel cared for? What will you do to help build positive relationships among the members of the group? (Icebreakers, introductions, checking-in, name tags, etc.)?

### Study/Task

What steps will you follow to accomplish the task or complete the study? List the questions you will use and estimate the time for each one.

### Prayer

What are your goals for prayer time? How much time? What kind of prayer? Who will pray and when?

### Time

What time is available and how will you divide it up? Do you have a meeting format? What is your “real” starting time? Your firm closing time? How will you move from each segment of your meeting? Are you attempting too much? Too little? Have you asked anyone to take responsibility for various portions of the meeting?
Sample Meeting Outline or Timeline

Before

Select Bible Passages and Lesson Topics

plan who is bringing food tonight

6:00 pm prepare the room for members to arrive

6:30 pm Welcome everyone as they come

Allow some time for fellowship as people trickle in

6:40 pm Opening Prayer

6:45 pm Ice-Breaker Question (Get to know each other activity)

6:55 pm Worship

7:05 pm Bible Study

8:00 pm Group Members share prayer requests

8:10 pm Closing Prayer

8:15 pm Fellowship time with food

8:30 pm Everyone heads home
Small Group Connections

Discover whom you can connect in community

Use this chart to help carry out one of the values in the Group Guidelines, to “Welcome Newcomers”

“Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” Matthew 4:19

FAMILY
(Immediate or extended)

FELLOWSHIP
(Church relationships)

FRIENDS
(Neighbors, kids, sports, school, etc.)

FUN
(gym, hobbies, hang-outs)

WORK
(Professional areas)

Follow this simple three-step process:

1. List 1 – 2 people in each circle
2. Playfully select one person or couple from your list and tell your group about them.
3. Give them a call and invite them to your next meeting. Over 50% of those invited to a small group say, “Yes!”

We will help let people know when, where, and what time your group is meeting by placing a sign up sheet in the church Narthex along with card displaying your picture and times, and place of your meetings for you to use to invited others into your group.
Mission Ideas for your Group

These are only some possible ideas for your group. This is not a definitive list, but only to be used as a catalyst for other possible mission projects.

- Serve at Wheeler Missions downtown
- Start and Manage a food drive
- Serve during Trunk or Treat
- Help staff the Community Health Fair
- Conduct Random acts of kindness for your neighbors and co-workers
- Sponsor a child thru Lutheran World Relief
- Rake a neighbor’s leaves
- First Step Saturdays
- On the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month, you can help with our food pantry in serving the food, or by providing a welcoming experience to those people who come into our church needing assistance. Contact Judy James or Trish Schmidt for more information.
Help, I’m a Small Group Leader!

First: Stop, take a breath and pray. Take comfort and now that God will be using you to speak the message he wants the group to hear.

Leading the Group

As a Facilitator, you are not teaching anything. Remember you do not have to lead discussion if you do not feel comfortable. If you would like to lead discussions think about these helpful hints

- Listen to the lecture on the DVD, circle or write down a few key points
- Read ahead! Look at what the discussion questions will be for the coming week and formulate answers before you start the meeting. Watch the video a head of time and find other possible answers. As the group begins discussions, pose to them some of your answers.
- Listen to how the group responds to the discussion questions and respond to their answers and opinions with your own ideas, and how the relate or conflict
- Personal stories are a great method for starting or wrapping up discussion. Prepare yourself with some life examples that you have seen or done that relate to questions.
- When the group has arrived at a general decision on a question, guide them to look at the next question.

Remember you are not teaching anything. If you lead discussion, you are a facilitator, which means you encourage each person to share his or her thoughts and feelings. You want to ensure that each person has shared his or her opinions and insights. You want the group to think about a possible answer, you are not to just answer the question.

With our Spiritual Growth Campaigns all you are required to do is to open your house and play the DVD. Perhaps there is someone in your group who is very good at leading discussions. If that is the case have no fear, and allow them to lead the discussions.
Community Building Ideas

Getting together with a new group of people can be hard. We all have been in those awkward silence situations. Here are some activities and questions that might help to bring the ice:

Would You Rather...

- be an artist or musician
- be highly educated or highly successful
- walk on the moon or be president for a week
- live with Bonaza or the Munsters
- put together a 200,000 piece jigsaw puzzle or read the dictionary from cover to cover
- be rich or famous
- be bit by a shark or a pit bull
- be a famous athlete or movie star
- eat pie or cake
- be hot or cold
- go a week without brushing your teeth or taking a shower
- meet George Washington or Abraham Lincoln
- swim like a fish or fly like a bird
- be 7’ 6” or 4’ 2”
- be lost in the jungle or the desert

Get to Know You Questions

- Where do you live?
- What is was your favorite childhood TV show?
- What would be your dream vacation?
- How many children do you have?
- Where do you work?
- What kind of hobbies or interests do you have?

What is your favorite?

- beverage
- day of the week
- color
- gift from God
- restaurant
- Bible Verse
- free time activity
- invention
- line from a movie
- movie
- TV show
- memory with your family
- memory with your friends
- musical instrument
- Olympic Sport
- place to see God
- practical joke
- smell
- room of your house
- song or musical group
- time of day
- person you wish to see in heaven