

L I F E

G R O U P

LEADER HANDBOOK

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF EUGENE



LIFE GROUP HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

You were made for more.

While we are children of God, we are not intended to remain as children. Instead, we are made to grow up and mature. Spiritually speaking, we are created to move from drinking spiritual milk to feasting on spiritually solid food (1 Corinthians 3:2). The only way we grow is by going deeper, and that's why you're here.

You're here because you're ready to be challenged and take the next step in your relationship with God. You recognize that seeking after God not only means believing but also obeying. One of the biggest commandments God calls us to obey is the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20.

"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

As followers of Christ, we are called to be disciples who make disciples. Partnered with Matthew 22:37-39, we believe disciples actively love God, love people, and lead others to do the same.

The world is hungry for that love and that's exactly what Christ offers.

The Good News of Christ is only the beginning of discipleship. When we look at the life of Jesus, we see that He not only preached the Kingdom but also invested in lives. He intentionally built relationships by teaching, modeling by example, and living life with others. That is what discipleship looks like at its core.

At First Baptist Church of Eugene, we believe that discipleship is best fostered through Life Groups. It is within these relational huddles that people can grow and become more like Christ. As a leader, you will learn how to lead these groups and become a stronger disciple-maker.

May this guide be a blessing and lead you in impacting the world around you.

MISSION

First Baptist exists to Love God and Love People

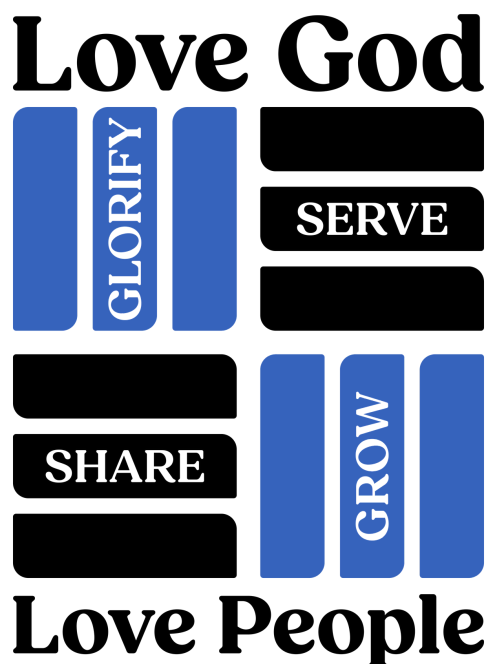
Matthew 22:37-39

We Love God by...

- **Glorifying** God with a lifestyle of worship (Romans 12:1)
- **Growing** in our relationship with Him (Ephesians 4:13-16)

We Love People by...

- **Serving** others with the love of Christ (1 Peter 4:10)
- **Sharing** God's story with everyone (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts. 1:8)



LIFE GROUPS



DEFINITION:

a highly relational community that cultivates disciples of Christ who passionately **love God, love people, and lead others to do the same.**

(Matthew 22:37-39; 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:2)

OUR STRATEGY: Life Groups raise up disciples by planting, growing, and branching.

PLANT: help people root themselves in a life-giving community where everyone is connected and confident that they matter to God and to others.

(Acts 4:42-47; Hebrews 10:25)

GROW: lead people into a life-transforming relationship with God's Word that equips them as fruitful disciples of Christ as you do life together (Ps. 1:1-3; Matt. 5:16; Jas. 1:22)

BRANCH: fulfill our life mission by discipling up new leaders who will bring the blessing of Christ, His Word, and community to others. (Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:2)

FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION



While all Life Groups share the same purpose, not all Life Groups look the same. Another way to say this is that Life Groups come in different forms, but all have the same function.

Some Life Groups meet weekly and some meet every other week.

Some Life Groups study a book of the Bible and others are topical.

Some Life Groups focus on pre-believers and others focus on believers at all stages of spiritual maturity.

Some Life Groups meet in homes and others meet in public spaces.

Some Life Groups form around common interests and others around common life stages.

Some Life Groups will branch in 1 year and others will branch in 7-8 years.

No matter what form the Life Group takes, we all have the same purpose.

Our Life Groups intentionally cultivate disciples of Christ who passionately love God, love people, and lead others to do the same. We help people accomplish this by planting, growing, and branching in Life Groups.

Because we share this united purpose, there is freedom and creativity in how this looks within Biblical, God-honoring means for our Life Groups.

While the contents of this Handbook have proven successful among fruitful Life Groups, we also believe this isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. We are always improving and learning how to better love God and people.



THE LIFE GROUP LEADER



LEADER DESCRIPTION

Purpose/ Position Overview:

Life Group Leaders are shepherds. They are volunteer leaders who actively disciple and lead group members by loving God, loving people, and helping others to do the same.

Directly Reports to: Life Group Coach & Spiritual Formation Pastor

Qualifications and Character / Spiritual Requirements:

- Committed to Christ for at least a year
- Has actively participated in a Life Group for at least 6 months
- Is an affirmed member of First Baptist who willingly commits to the Membership Covenant and all other commitments as taught in the Membership Class.
- Committed to the mission and strategy of Life Groups
- Committed to living and leading like Jesus with integrity and character.
 - Able to shepherd (lead, feed, and protect) the flock (Acts 20:28-31; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).
 - Is a Gospel-centered and relationally invested leader.
 - Demonstrates godly character according to God's Word to the best of their abilities (Tim. 3:2-3, 8; Titus 1:6-8). Lives above reproach (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7)
 - Knows how to lead and how to follow (Titus 1:6)
 - Ministers to his or her family (1 Tim. 3:4; Titus 1:6)
 - Able to communicate the Word of God to others and give instruction in sound doctrine (Titus 1:9; Heb. 13:7)
 - Proactive in resolving personal conflicts through grace (Matt. 18), personal reflection (1 Cor. 11:28), active listening (James 1), honest apology when in the wrong, and honest forgiveness when wronged.
 - Good reputation with outsiders/non-believers (1 Tim. 3:7)
 - Full of the Spirit and wisdom (Acts 6:3)
 - Will actively pray for the impact of Life Groups and for our community's transformation through the Gospel.

Core Competencies

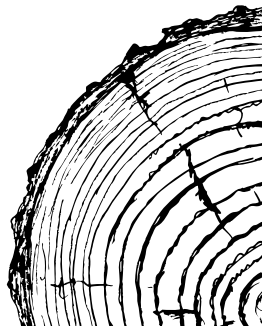
1. Understand, affirm, and effectively communicate the mission and strategy of Life Groups.
2. Can disciple others who will disciple others, including a Life Group apprentice
3. Lead a Life Group that will plant, grow, and branch.
4. Facilitate healthy group discussion and foster discipleship.
5. Care for group members, including relational crisis situations

Life Group Leader

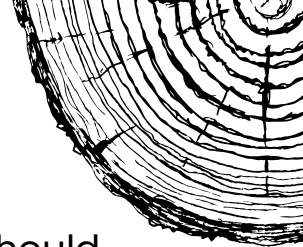
Date

Spiritual Formation Pastor

Date



10 Leader Rhythms



To love God, love people, and lead others to do the same, leaders should...

- **Daily:** Pray for each Life Group member (1 Tim. 2:1; Jas. 5:16)
- **Weekly:** Connect face to face (2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Hebrews 10:25)
- **Bi-Annually:** Serve the community as a Life Group (Matt. 5:16)
- **Sharpen** your leadership by meeting with your coach, regularly attending trainings, and the annual Life Group Leader Summit. (Proverbs 27:17)
- **Model the Way** (1 Corinthians 1:11; James 1:22)
Lead like Jesus by modeling the disciple's life as one who glorifies, grows, serves, and shares. Lead them through God's Word and live it out. To disciple people well, we must live the life we call them to live.
- **Notice and Invite** (Romans 15:7; 1 Peter 4:8-9)
Personally invite others to your group and keep a seat open so others can join. We want community, not cliques. Regularly engage with people outside your group and encourage your Life Group to do the same.
- **Celebrate Often** (Philippians 4:4; Romans 12:15)
Celebrate graduations, promotions, baptisms, answers to prayer, and more. Do so with joy and creativity (i.e., cards, cakes, and confetti)
- **Share Meals Together Often** (Acts 2:46)
Community blossoms and thrives around food. Sharing meals can be weekly or quarterly. Whatever you choose, you and your group will be blessed.
- **Share Stories with the Church** (1 Chronicles 16:8; Psalm 66:16)
Stories testify to what God is doing in and through us. They are also a way of celebrating what we want to cultivate in our groups.
- **Develop New Life Group Leaders** (2 Timothy 2:2)
Train and equip someone to cultivate communities that love God and love people well by planting, growing, and branching.

DEVELOPING AN APPRENTICE



"It is the duty and privilege of all small group leaders to train up a new generation of leaders and to pass the baton effectively.

The future hangs in the balance."

-Bill Donahue, *Leading Life-Changing Small Groups*

Who should I disciple to be a Life Group Leader?

Rarely will someone join your group and look, sound, and act like a Life Group leader. It is our chance to disciple toward that goal.

- Pray regularly for new apprentices
- Look for group members who take the group seriously and actively participate in the group and other church activities
- Look for members with a teachable spirit
- Look for people who embrace the mission, vision, and strategy
- Look for those gifted in leadership or who have a desire to lead
- Give them ministry opportunities to see if they are a potential leader (i.e., have them facilitate the warm-up time, prayer, and eventually the discussion with coaching from you)
- Is it evident God is working in their life? Are they consistently nurturing their own spiritual growth through time in the Word and in prayer?
- Are they open and honest with the group? Are they emotionally stable? How do they respond to opportunities for character growth?
- Look for people who listen to others in a caring way

DEVELOPING AN APPRENTICE (cont.)



What does an apprentice need from you?

- To set a good example in fulfilling the mission, strategies, and responsibilities of a Life Group Leader.
- A plan for branching the group
- Coaching and encouragement
- Opportunities to lead
- Prayer. Pray with them. Pray for them.

How do I train my apprentice?

EXPLAIN: Tell them about the 5 Steps to Leading a Fruitful Discussion and what it involves to lead the group well. (See *Leading the Discussion*)

DEMONSTRATE: Show them how to lead the group by having them observe during your next Life Group.

GUIDE: Start by having them try 1-2 aspects of leading the discussion. Let them know you're there to assist and may help if needed. Debrief after the group and determine growth steps.

ENABLE: Once they seem to have it down, allow them to fully lead that aspect and eventually an entire Life Group gathering without your assistance. You will be tempted to help or "save" them, but allow them space to learn and grow. Assure them that they can always come to you later to debrief or ask questions.

By training your apprentice using EDGE, they will be equipped to lead their group and train up others to do the same.

BRANCHING



At the root of our Life Groups is the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). We long to cultivate disciples who passionately love God, love people, and lead others to do the same. Such a goal truly has the power to change our city, our state, and the world.

However, we face a major problem. How do we produce such healthy, disciple-making Life Groups?

We could simply add new ones or divide existing ones to create more space; however, studies show that these methods usually shorten the small group's lifespan. It also doesn't reflect good discipleship. One approach does prove more impactful and long-lasting: multiplication, or what we call branching.

Branching happens when a group has done one or more of the following:

- Grown to capacity
- Has a fruitful Life Group and is ready to share the blessing with others
- An apprentice is ready to lead their own Life Group.

Just like a tree, some Life Groups may branch after 1 year and others will branch after 7-8 years. The timing differs among groups, but every healthy group branches.

When an apprentice for a new Life Group steps up, they will complete the Life Group Leader's Training before branching. They may choose to venture off on their own or invite a couple of people to go with them. They won't take half the group, because this is division and will likely result in one of the group's decline.

The branching transition may be difficult for the group as they've built a community with one another. However, when done right, this can be your group's biggest celebration.

Which is why you want to talk about branching your group as soon as you can, even from day 1.

BRANCHING (cont.)



When discussing the purpose of Life Groups, you will want to emphasize that branching is a goal your group aims to achieve. Your group may have been possible only because it branched from someone else's. You want to keep that blessing of community and discipleship going.

When the group is consistently reminded that branching is an outcome of a healthy Life Group, then this event won't come as a surprise. Instead, you all will get to celebrate this monumental event together.

As you prepare your apprentice (see Developing an Apprentice), you'll want to connect them with your coach or pastor to help them determine key details and logistics before branching (where, when, study, etc.). You'll want to create a timeline with your apprentice to ensure a smooth transition. This timeline should also include when to announce to your current group that this will take place. This way, you can all celebrate and pray over the new leader and those who will follow them.

Before branching, it is helpful to remind the group that this isn't goodbye. You're not branching to create rival groups that can never be seen together. You're branching to grow your Life Group tree, disciple others, and extend the blessing of community in Christ.

After branching, you and the new leader could create opportunities for your groups to intentionally get together. This may be a quarterly meal, worship night, or a serve day. There are many ways to continue fostering fellowship after branching, while still allowing others to have their own experiences in their new Life Group.

Branching has the potential to be one of the biggest blessings to the church. It will raise leaders who will disciple others to love God and love people, and soon, more leaders will emerge to continue branching your family tree.

Branching is discipleship in motion.

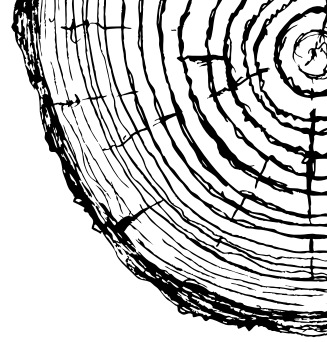
Have fun!



DISCIPLESHIP



The Heart of Discipleship



Every believer knows the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20), but not every believer practices it.

This passivity has caused a dangerous chasm in the Church. Recent studies by Lifeway and the Barna Group have shown that people know about God, but they don't know Him. They have a few favorite Bible verses, but people are widely biblically illiterate.

Why does this matter?--Because **beliefs determine behavior**.

Surface beliefs produce surface behaviors. Skewed beliefs produce skewed behavior. Since few are taking up the Great Commission to disciple believers to love God and love people, it's no wonder so many claim the name Christian but don't act like Christ. We grieve that many have fallen away because they haven't had a solid faith to stand on.

But there is also hope.

In the last few years, we have witnessed a renewed thirst for Jesus across the world. Many are realizing that the answers they sought aren't found in wealth, social media, power, status, or many other places. So they're looking at Jesus. As a result, church attendance has risen and Bible sales are booming.

But it can't stop there. We cannot allow ourselves to revert to passivity when a whole new generation is longing to know Christ. We must be the disciplemakers Jesus has called us to be.

Because of Christ's sacrificial love for us, we want nothing less than to share that love with others. The best way to do that is to follow the Commission Christ gave us; to make disciples who love God, love people, and will lead others to do the same.

We believe that Life Groups offer the ideal environment for discipleship. It is here that we can spur one another, encourage one another, cry with one another, and learn to live like Jesus with one another.

May we see many generations of resilient and faithful disciples raised up who will expand the Kingdom of God like nothing we've seen before.

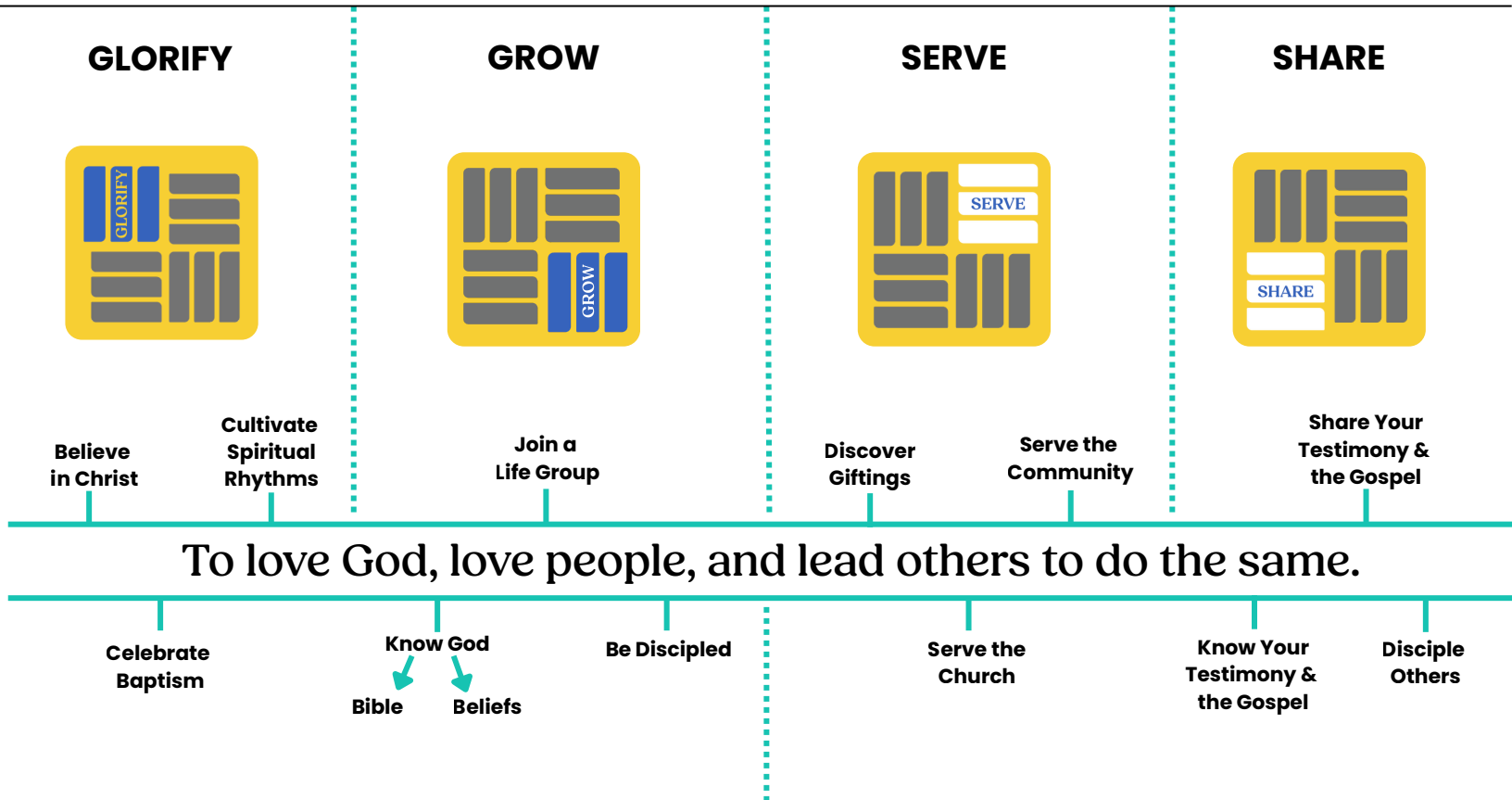
WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?



DEFINITION: A disciple is one who loves God, loves people, and leads others to do the same. (Matthew 22:37-39; 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:2)

When we study Scripture, we learn that the word "disciple" refers to a lifelong apprentice of Jesus. An apprentice doesn't just listen; they commit their lives to learning to **be like** the one they follow. As disciples of Jesus, we live in such a radical relationship with Christ that as we grow and mature, we will live like Him by loving God, loving people, and leading others to do the same. And when we do, we proclaim His love to the world that so desperately needs Him.

At the same time, we also recognize that loving God and loving people can be defined in many different ways. Thankfully, when we look at Jesus' life and ministry, we discover a lifelong map for every disciple to follow. Some parts happen once while most are ongoing, but they all help us mature in Christ as we learn to love Him, love people, and lead others to do the same. Below you will find our **Discipleship Journey**.



HOW DO I DISCIPLE IN MY LIFE GROUP?



The idea of discipleship in your Life Group may sound intimidating or overwhelming. Your time together is already limited, so adding one more thing can sound like a lot.

Here's the good news: you're most likely already discipling your Life Group. You just might need some intentional direction.

The Discipleship Journey on the previous page is your guide toward intentionally discipling your Life Group. Each member can use it to determine where they are and where they want to grow in their relationship with Christ. An individual may identify that they haven't been baptized yet or may not know how to share their testimony. This is an opportunity for you to walk with them into a greater relationship with Christ. You can help them both understand why each act is Biblical by studying it and by modeling it for them so you can live it out together.

In many cases, you can use **E.D.G.E. (Explain, Demonstrate, Guide, & Enable)**, as explained in 'The Life Group Leader' section, to disciple someone and move them from knowledge to practice as they live it out.

The group may also identify an area that they all want to grow in such as Spiritual Habits or Spiritual Giftings. This may give you the opportunity to take the whole group through a suggested study and then help them put it into practice. Maybe you all commit to practicing Sabbath rest. In light of the gifts revealed, you help people commit to regularly serving in the church or the community.

Or you may simply refer to the marks of a disciple through your regular studies to show how the topic or group activities are helping everyone grow as disciples.

It will look different for each person and each Life Group, but the same Discipleship Journey can act as your guide as you help your people intentionally grow in loving God, loving people, and leading others to do the same.

The more you intentionally lead your people through the Discipleship Journey, the more your people will begin to look like Christ. The more we all look and act like Christ, the more our world will know of His unsurpassed love. What a world that will be.



LEADING THE DISCUSSION



DISCUSSION PREPARATION



As a Life Group Leader, you will want to take some time prior to each gathering to prepare for the discussion. You don't have to do extensive studying, but the time you give will benefit you and your group. Here are a few suggestions on how to prepare:

Pray for your group members and for everyone's time in God's Word. Pray that hearts would be open, seats would be filled, and that everyone would grow in loving God and loving people well.

Read over the passage you're discussing in your group as well as the surrounding passages for context.

Research the passage. Take some time to look up reputable commentaries on the passage. If there are any confusing words, phrases, or ideas that could come up, focus on preparing an answer on those specific points.

Write down any notes you may need as well as additional questions that will lead people toward greater understanding of the passage. These can be in addition to the questions provided in a study.

Contact people to invite to your group or to remind them of the time and place. If others are bringing food or leading different aspects of the discussion, contact them so everyone is prepared and supported.

Resources for Research: (ask your pastor or coach for more)

www.biblehub.com

NIV Application Commentaries

www.bibleproject.com

SETTING EXPECTATIONS



From your very first gathering, set expectations for your group. Setting expectations will ensure the group is on the same page regarding conduct and the goals of the group, creating clarity and unity. You may also find a need to reiterate these expectations when new members join or when people need a reminder. Here are a few suggested expectations:

- **Mission:** Ensure the group understands the goal of Life Groups and how the group will help them grow in loving God and loving people well.
- **Attendance:** Let the group know that you hope everyone can attend regularly for their benefit and the group's. Recognize that life happens and situations come up, so if they have to miss a gathering, invite them to let you know, because you want to make sure they're okay.
- **Participation:** Since we're pursuing God together, encourage everyone to participate. You might have questions and insights that we need to hear in order to grow.
- **Conduct:** Remind the members they're in a Life Group, not a Gossip Group, Critics Crew, or Argument Association. While we will have our differences, we will treat one another with respect and love. It is also pivotal to remind members that what's said in the group, stays in the group. Build trust and keep confidentiality. (Eph. 5:4; Col. 1:10; Phil. 4:8; Titus 3:2)
- **Serving:** Since part of our mission is to love people well, let the group know that you hope to serve as a group. Let them know how often, whether that's quarterly or otherwise.
- **Meals:** If you regularly share meals or snacks, discuss expectations for bringing food and sharing responsibilities.

The 5 Steps

to leading a fruitful discussion



1) Catch up/Warm Up

Take some casual time to catch up with one another. Or ask an icebreaker question if people need help getting comfortable with talking and with one another. Then pray over your time.

Ice Breaker Example: *What did you want to be when you grew up? If you could name a star, what would you name it and why?*

2) Context

Summarize the setting of the passage you're discussing. This may include recapping what your group read during the last gathering. You may also consider including notes on the Biblical, historical, and literary context to enhance understanding of the passage.

(See *How Do I Interpret Scripture Correctly?*)

3) Discovery Questions

Follow the provided questions, or use your own, to help the group think more deeply and spur discussion. (See *Tips for Discussion*)

4) Shema/Application Questions

The word *shema* in Hebrew means to hear and obey. We can't do one without the other. Application questions challenge us to *shema*; to practically apply what we've learned from Scripture to our own lives.

5) Prayer

Spend time listening to requests and praises from the group. Follow up on past prayer requests. Whether one person prays or the group takes turns, the means are up to you.

TIPS FOR DISCUSSION



- ✓ Ask open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions may help get people thinking, but can restrict members' participation with limited answers (i.e., just yes or no questions).
- ✓ You are not confined to the questions given. Ask follow-up questions or different questions to help members think more deeply and make the lessons more personal.
- ✓ Feel free to rephrase a question, but keep it simple (1 question in 1 sentence).
- ✓ You may only get through one question and if that discussion helps people in their relationship with Christ, then you've done a great job! You don't have to get through all the questions.
- ✓ It's okay to say "I don't know."
- ✓ It's okay to allow for pauses.
- ✓ Keep your involvement to a minimum for optimal learning. You are the discussion facilitator, not the discussion dominator.
- ✓ Try to involve everyone in the discussion without pressuring them.
- ✓ Be sensitive to people's past. Don't isolate or call them out.
- ✓ Be sensitive to people's level of spiritual maturity. Some may feel lost if you go too deep without explanation or time for questions. Be patient and help guide them to a better understanding.

HOW DO I INTERPRET SCRIPTURE CORRECTLY?



Interpreting God's Word as it was intended is vitally important for every believer because our beliefs determine our behavior. Misinterpretation leads to wrong beliefs which lead to wrong behavior and ultimately a misrepresentation of Christ. Rather than leaving the meaning of Scripture up to our feelings and hot takes, we desire to be faithful to God and His Word. We strive to know God's Word to the best of our abilities. Here are some guidelines to follow when interpreting Scripture:

1. Interpret Scripture with Scripture.

If your interpretation contradicts another part of Scripture, you have likely misinterpreted either your current text or the piece of text you are comparing it to.

Example: Concluding that James teaches that we must be saved by works, even though Paul says we are saved by faith.

2. Interpret the passage within its historical context

Look at the passage as the original audience would. Does your interpretation consider the cultural, social, and geographical factors of the original audience? Are you speaking your culture or the original culture into your interpretation?

Example: Slavery has a different historical meaning in Scripture than it does for our Western U.S. culture. We must be careful not to interpret Scripture through the lens of our modern culture.

3. Interpret the passage within its literary context.

Look at the words, phrases, and genre of the book. Words have more than one meaning. Phrases can be descriptive or prescriptive, which means not everything is a command. And because of different genres, we don't read Matthew the same way we read Revelation.

Example: Concluding from Mark 16:18 that Christians must prove their belief in Jesus by picking up poisonous snakes ignores the literary context of the sentence.

4. Interpret the passage within its Biblical context.

Look at the whole story of Scripture. How does it point to Christ and the redemption story? The OT must be interpreted in light of the NT and vice versa.

Example: Concluding that we can't eat bacon because the OT expressly forbids eating pork with disregard to the New Testament and New Covenant.

HOW DO I INTERPRET SCRIPTURE CORRECTLY?



5. Interpret the passage with regard to major Christian scholars and thinkers.

It is possible that the Church could have missed something major, but it is more likely that if you interpret a passage in a way not held by any major Christian thinker ever (or until the 1800s), your interpretation is incorrect.

Example: The idea that unless someone speaks in tongues, they cannot be saved.

6. Check your interpretation with other Christians.

A good way to wander into error is to interpret a passage in opposition to all other commonly held interpretations. Be humble enough to know you may be wrong. Seek knowledgeable pastors, professors, and commentaries. Avoid hot takes and shallow research.

Example: God showed me what this passage means, even though nobody else agrees with me.

7. Don't change a passage's meaning to suit your own ideas.

This is a heart check. If you find yourself avoiding the straightforward interpretation of a passage, you may be trying to bend it to suit your own ends.

Example: I know the Bible says only certain situations are grounds for divorce, but I'm just not happy in this marriage. Jesus wants me to be happy.

8. Don't build major doctrines from obscure passages.

If 100 passages address the same topic and one seems to not fit, reinterpret the one passage in light of the other 99, not the other way around.

Example: Let's start baptizing people for the dead because there is an obscure reference to it in 1 Corinthians.

9. Don't bring your assumptions to the text. Listen to God first.

Let the Word tell you what it says, rather than letting our presuppositions interpret Scripture for us. We can never eliminate our presuppositions but we can minimize them.

Example: I've heard that the Bible is anti-woman so when I read it, that's what I see.

Resources:

- How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth by Gordon Fee
- How (Not) to Read the Bible by Dan Kimball
- The Case for Christ by Lee Strobel
- Confronting Christianity by Rebecca McLaughlin



LEADING THROUGH DISTRACTIONS



INCONSISTENT ATTENDANCE



It can be frustrating when members of your group do not show up. When this happens, begin by asking yourself if you, as the leader, set this expectation. It could be that someone is inconsistent because they don't know they should show up regularly.

If the expectation has been set, then ask questions rather than assuming. Sometimes our hearts are quicker to assign motives than to seek truth.

Ask if they're doing okay and let them know that you and your group miss seeing them.

When the conversation begins, the following steps will help you shepherd inconsistent members:

- Everyone has a reason not to commit. It may not justify the inconsistency, but it should elicit compassionate and patient love in you (1 Cor. 8:4-8).
- Figure out why the individual has been inconsistent by asking what's been going on or if there's some way you can pray for them.
- Encourage the individual with truths from God's Word about the importance of community and commitment (Matt. 22:37-38; Heb. 3:12-13; 10:23-25).

- Encourage the individual by letting them know how much they're valued by the group.

Find a Solution, as needed

- Maybe they were unaware of the expectations and they need to be shared with the person.
- Maybe they need help finding childcare.
- Maybe the timing isn't the best and they need help finding another group
- Maybe something was said during group that hurt them and it needs to be addressed.

If the individual really can't make it, give them the freedom to step away if they feel they need to. Let them know they're loved and that they're welcome back when it works for their schedule. You may even offer to meet up with them until they find their next group.

IMPORTANT: As Life Group Leaders, we will never ask someone to leave because of inconsistent attendance. Our heart is to help people plant themselves in the right group for them. We will do what we can to encourage them so they may grow in loving God and loving people well.

TALKS TOO MUCH TALKS TOO LITTLE



Almost every group has someone who likes to talk. What they say is often good, but they don't leave room for others to join in. Here are some ways to help you shepherd this person and your group:

- Remember God's patience with you. He listens to every word you ever say to Him. He hears our long-winded prayers and answers with grace.
- Call on people by name during group and aim to include everyone. This can diffuse the chance of one person dominating the time.
- Encourage all of those who dominate discussion to measure their words. If someone continues to talk excessively, have a conversation with that person outside of group time.
- Encourage and bless this person. Thank them for their contributions to group time, encouraging their insights with specifics. Reinforce the blessing of allowing everyone to share.
- Watch them next few weeks. Be patient and make sure they are still contributing to the group. They may shutdown and stay silent. Encourage them to still share.

For every talkative group member, there is another who rarely talks. Maybe they're new and are watching how the group functions. Maybe they're still building trust with the group. Maybe it's just their personality. Whatever the reason, here are some ways to help your member participate more.

- Remember to be patient. God is patient with you when you don't always speak up or act when you have the opportunity.
- Get to know the person outside of the group. This helps build trust and shows them they are welcomed and valued by the leader.
- Let them know that you value their input and how the group will benefit from their insight. Encourage them to speak up at least once at the next gathering, and build from there.
- Diffuse possible assumptions within the group. Remind everyone that what is said here stays here. Remind them that you're all learning together. We don't have all the right answers, but we're speaking up to learn. This will help break down walls for quiet members.

POOR CONDUCT



Sometimes, a group member may act in a disruptive way during the gathering. This could be by gossip, heated arguments, accusations, slander, outbursts, and more.

This can create a hostile environment and make the group feel uncomfortable. As the leader, the group will look to you for how to respond. Here are some ways you can handle the situation.

- You may feel tempted not to respond and ignore what has happened. Depending on the situation, this may come across as condescending.
- Discern what is needed in the moment. Remember that God is in control and is with you. Say a prayer before responding. Pray for grace.
- Sometimes all you have to do is gently recognize the action for what it is, caution them, and people will apologize and you can move on. (This can be the case when gossip happens.)
- Respectfully let the person know that you hear how they're feeling. This can normalize the feeling without affirming their actions.
- Invite the person to talk with you outside the group time, so that you can hear more from them.
- When you meet with them, ask them how they're doing. Sometimes the issue on the surface is not the real issue, and something else is going on.
- After taking time to listen to them, acknowledge the person's actions and how it made others feel during the gathering.
- Remind the individual of the group's expectations regarding conduct and grace. Remember for yourself that no one is perfect and that we're all works in progress.
- If the person is apologetic and the case is severe enough, see if they're willing to apologize to the group. This can actually be a beautiful moment of unity when the group responds.
- If the person is unapologetic and the behavior seems likely to persist, you may need to have a conversation about future participation in the group.
- While this may be difficult, it can be for their benefit and the group's. This is a last resort and should only be done after getting support from your coach or pastor, if applicable.

Scripture: Ps. 133:1; Rom. 14:19; 1 Cor. 1:10; Col. 3:1-17; 1 Pet. 3:8

SAYS SOMETHING UNBIBLICAL



Because your group is full of human beings who are growing in knowing Christ, at some point you will likely have a group member say something that is either biblically inaccurate or perhaps heretical.

How should you respond to this? **With grace & curiosity**

Here are some practical steps to consider:

- Avoid immediate correction. Your group should be a safe place to share, and a quick reaction could inhibit full participation and a future willingness to speak up among members.
- Consider the person's background and spiritual maturity. This may be a great opportunity for learning and growth. Learning happens best by asking more questions.
- Ask the rest of the group if they have any thoughts on the topic. Usually, someone will offer insight in a gentle, natural way. The person who originally made the statement may learn and grow in their understanding.
- Be curious. Respectfully ask how they came to that conclusion. Ask questions like, "Could you expand on that?" or "Can you help me understand..." Use the dialogue as an opportunity to lovingly point them to biblical truth.
- If someone makes a statement that is not addressed in the discussion, address it with grace, gentleness, and clear biblical truth. You can respond with a statement that affirms biblical truth, such as, "Thank you for your thoughts. Let's explore the context of this passage together."
- You may want to reference the "How Do I Interpret Scripture Correctly?" section of this handbook and its resources.
- If the individual still doesn't understand why their statement is off, reassure them that it's okay and that many people have come to similar conclusions at first. Offer to meet with them outside of group time to study the subject together. They may also appreciate other insight from your pastor or coach.
- If they begin to firmly believe and/or teach an unbiblical position, kindly address your concern outside the group, graciously using Scripture and, if helpful, a pastor. If they are a Member of the church, you may want to reference the Statement of Faith.

SOMEONE IS DRAINING THE GROUP



Sometimes people may dominate the group's time. It will be clear if they're trying to get attention or are struggling with an issue and the group is a safe place they turn to for help. While you're willing to listen and help, this can be draining for the group over time, especially if its upstaged your time in God's Word for weeks. As a Life Group leader, you must protect your flock and still shepherd this person well.

After taking time to listen and care for the person during the group, it may become clear that this will continue to happen. Here's what to do:

- 1) Ask to meet with them outside of the Life Group time.
- 2) If there is a struggle they've brought up consistently, ask them about the progress they've made since last time.
- 3) Whether they're "fishing" for attention or are genuinely struggling with an issue, let them know that you care about them and that there may be a better opportunity to talk about these things outside the Life Group's time.

- 4) Without minimizing what they have shared, remind them of the study the group has come to discuss. Depending on the situation you may remind them that most in the group are not counselors or pastors equipped to help in some of the issues raised.

- 5) Offer to meet with them again for a set number of meet ups before determining if you need to refer them to a pastor or biblical counselor that can bring greater healing and care to their lives. Refer to the Caring for People section of this handbook for further help.

These individuals need to be taught what love is and what it looks like within a healthy, gospel-centered community. Christ has called us to love in just the way He did.

It can be easy to want to be a savior to the needy in your group. Remember, you are not and cannot be anyone's savior. Once you and your group realize this and rest in God's sovereign purpose, you will become less drained.

Some individuals need specialized care, so you may suggest a Renewal Group or biblical counseling in addition to your group.



APPENDIX



ICEBREAKERS



Thorns & Roses

Have each person share their best and worst moments from the previous week. This icebreaker is an easy one to use at first and gives you good feedback concerning their life at the moment.

Questions

- Your house is on fire, and everyone is safe. You have 30 seconds to run through the house and collect three or four articles you want to save. What would you grab? Why?
- You've been exiled to a deserted island for a year. You are told you may take three things you want, in addition to the essentials. What would you take and why?"
- What would your ideal vacation be?
- Name three people, past or present, whom they admire. Why?
- If you could interview anyone in history, who would that be and why? What question would you want to ask?
- If you had a million dollars, what would you spend it on?
- What is your favorite childhood memory or story?
- What was the best or worst thing that happened to you this weekend?
- What's the kindest act you have ever seen someone do?
- What are you most talented at doing?
- If you were given 24 hours to live, what would you do?
- Who was your favorite teacher and why?
- Who was your hero when you were a child, and what did you do to be like them?
- Name a turning point in your life that makes you smile/cry.

ICEBREAKERS



Skittles Game

Pass a bag of skittles around and tell everyone to take a few. Then, before they eat them ask them to share something unique about themselves for every skittle. For example, 10 skittles = 10 unique facts about herself.

Two Truths and a Lie

Have each person make three statements about themselves: two true statements and one lie.

10 Fingers

A version of 'Never have I Ever.' Everyone puts up all their fingers in the air. Participants go around in a circle saying something they have never done. Example: "Never have I surfed". Anyone who has done whatever the individual has not, lowers a finger. (If someone in the circle has surfed, they lower a finger) Once all fingers are down, that individual is out. Go around the circle until only one person is left, they win!

Telephone Pictionary

To play, give each person a sheet of paper for every person they have in a group (so if 8 people, each person gets 8 sheets of paper). Next, have them write down some type of phrase on the top sheet of paper and then pass their entire stack to the person on their left. That person will read the phrase, move that sheet to back of the stack, and draw a picture representing that phrase on the next sheet of paper. They'll then pass it to the person on their left, who will then look at the drawing, move that sheet to the back of the stack, and then write a sentence that describes that picture. This repeats until the stacks make it all the way around the circle.

Game of Things

One person is "it" and will say a things statement, such as "Things you shouldn't do while at work." Everyone then writes on a piece of paper something that shouldn't be done at work, such as sleep. The person who is "it" then collects all the answers and reads them out loud. Then, go around the room letting people guess who wrote each answer. If they are correct, that person gets a point, and the person whose answer was guessed is out. Continue going around the room until one person is left. That person gets three points.

SPIRITUAL RHYTHMS



This is a general list of spiritual habits/life rhythms. Some people include more and some less. All are for the purpose of glorifying God, drawing near to Him, and maturing.

Bible Reading: regularly engaging God through studying His Word. (Psalm 119:105; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 4:12)

Scripture Meditation: dwelling and hearing God's Word with the intention of actively responding. (Psalm 1; Colossians 3:16)

Memorization: committing to memory the Word of God for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. (Deuteronomy 11:18-19; 1 Peter 3:15)

Confession: admitting to God and others your sins or shortcomings, that you may find healing and freedom. (Rom. 13:12; Hebrews 12:1; James 5:16)

Prayer: an interactive conversation with God about what we're doing together. (Ephesians 6:18; James 5:16b; 1 John 5:14-16)

Worship: Bringing praise and glory to God through acts of admiration and service. (1 Chronicles 16:23-31; John 4:21-24; Philippians 4:4)

Evangelism: Proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ to those who need it. (Mark 16:15; Romans 1:16; 2 Corinthians 5:20)

Serving: sharing the love of God in tangible ways that reach beyond ourselves. (Romans 12:1; Philippians 2:3-10; James 1:27)

Stewardship: careful and responsible management of the tangible and intangible gifts God has given. (Matthew 25:14-30; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7; 1 Peter 4:10-11)

Fasting: abstaining from food or drink to focus time and energy on God (Psalm 35:13-14; Acts 14:23; 1 Corinthians 7:5)

Silence and Solitude: a relational space to meet with God and be freed from competing loyalties. (Lamentations 3:28; Habakkuk 2:20; Mark 1:35)

WAYS TO SHARE THE GOSPEL



However you share the Gospel remember...

- Be yourself, Be relational
- It's not all on you. God's working on their heart. It's up to them how they'll respond. You just need to share God's love.
- You're not giving a presentation; you're sharing a story of how God has changed your life and how He can change theirs.
- It's a proclamation of who God is and what He has done for us. The focus is to glorify God, not make it about us. Share what life was like before Christ and the difference it has made now that you follow Him.

God's
Only
Son
Provided
Eternal
Life

The Romans Road

Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Romans 5:8, Romans 10:9-10, Romans 10:13

Wordless Book

GOLD - God wants us to be in heaven with Him.

BLACK - Our sin separates us from God.

RED - Christ died on the cross as the only payment for our sin.

WHITE - Accept God's forgiveness and the free gift of eternal life.

GREEN - Grow closer to God every day.

The Four Spiritual Laws.

Law One: God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.

Law Two: Man is sinful and separated from God. As a result, we cannot know God's wonderful plan for our lives.

Law Three: Jesus Christ is God's only provision for our sin. Through Jesus Christ, we can have our sins forgiven and be restored to a right relationship with God.

Law Four: We must place our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior in order to receive the gift of salvation and know God's wonderful plan for our lives.

SERVING OTHERS

EVERY CHILD (FOSTER CARE)

- Your group could create Welcome Boxes or Launch Boxes for kids experiencing foster care. Help with ODHS staff appreciation. Volunteer at a Foster Parents Night Out (FPNO) event. Volunteer at the Brighter Side Giving Store, which allows kids in crisis to “shop” in a safe space for brand-new clothes.
- **Foster Family Christmas Party.** Bless a child’s Christmas as they celebrate with their biological family. You can be a part of this unique and memorable experience in their lives. Date: Thursday, December 11. Contact Pastor Phil for further information. phill@fbceugene.com
- Visit everychildoregon.org/lane/get-involved/volunteer/
- Call Every Child at 541-321-5731 or Email info@everychildlane.org

THE EUGENE MISSION

- Call 541-344-3251 x 111 or go to www.eugenemission.org/volunteer
- Contact Pastor Anna to learn how you can support unhoused moms. alancaster@fbceugene.com
- Contact Pastor Phil to learn about men’s mentorship and more at the Mission.

AGAPE FAMILIES

- Bringing hope and stability to families impacted by incarceration.
- **Christmas Party:** Tuesday, Dec. 8th at First B
- **Breakaway Camp,** at Camp Harlow, end of May. Cabin leaders, food servers, and other volunteers needed to serve 13-17 y.o. youth.
- **Camp Agape** at Camp Harlow at the end of August.
- www.agapefamiliesoregon.org Contact Pastor Phil to sign up

YOUTH FOR CHRIST / PARENT LIFE

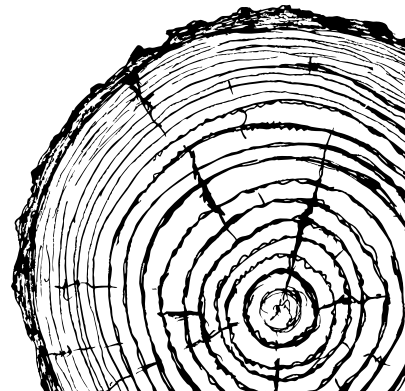
- Youth for Christ builds relationships with young people to introduce them to Christ. We seek to cultivate great moments of connection and community by building personal relationships with them in and around their schools.
- Parent Life connects with expectant and parenting teens and their children through intentional relationships with caring adults and community partnerships.
- www.lcyfc.org/volunteer or call (541) 686-9225 or Contact Pastor Phil

HOSEA YOUTH SERVICES

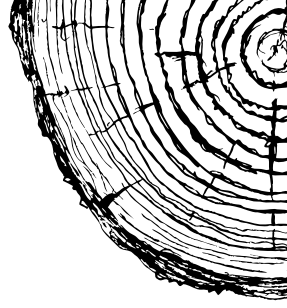
- Hosea Youth helps at-risk and homeless youth in Lane County, ages 16-24, to build lives of hope and purpose.
- Provide a monthly lunch at Hosea
- Go to www.hoseayouth.org/ or contact Pastor Phil

NIGHT TO SHINE

- Every February at Camp Harlow
- <https://campharlow.com/night-to-shine-event/>



RENEWAL MINISTRY



Email: renewal@fbceugene.com or 541-349-5830

DIVORCE CARE

A group that offers support, answers, and practical tools to help you heal from separation or divorce. Please inquire about current dates/times or go to divorcecare.com

GRIEF SHARE

A group to offer help and encouragement after the death of a spouse, child, family member or friend. Please inquire for current dates/times or go to griefshare.com

FOR MEN ONLY (PURE DESIRE)

This group is devoted to helping men heal from sexual addictions that cause harm to their social, familial, and spiritual well-being. Please inquire for current dates/times

ABORTION RECOVERY

Find safety and healing in a post-abortion support group with a Bible-based study that allows women to experience forgiveness and healing. Please inquire for current dates/times

JOURNEY OF HOPE

Support group for caregivers, family, and friends of those experiencing memory loss and Alzheimer's disease. Meets 2nd & 4th Thursday of the month, 9AM at FBC

FOSTER FAMILY/ADOPT SUPPORT

A welcoming safe place to find community, encouragement, and care as we walk through the unique joys and challenges of fostering and adoption. Please inquire for current dates/times

WOMEN'S CANCER SUPPORT

For women who are currently on this journey or have walked it before. Join us for fellowship, encouragement, comfort, and prayer. Meets 1st & 3rd Friday of the month, 9AM FBC

PEOPLE TO BE LOVED

Support group for families and friends of loved ones in the LGBTQ+ community. Please inquire for current dates/times

REBOOT RECOVERY

Helps veterans, active-duty military, law enforcement, fire, EMS or anyone overcome trauma with faith-based healing courses, training, and community. Visit rebootrecovery.com for more info or to register