

group

**leader
training
manual**

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What To Expect

Leading a LifeGroup isn't about being perfect; it's about serving others by giving them a place to connect. We believe people's lives are changed through the power of the Holy Spirit as we simply give people the opportunity to grow together.

What Does A LifeGroup Gathering Look Like?

Here is a sample itinerary of a LifeGroup Gathering:

Start Time—6:30pm

End Time—8:00pm

6:30-6:45pm Allow people to arrive, talk, and snack. (15 min.)

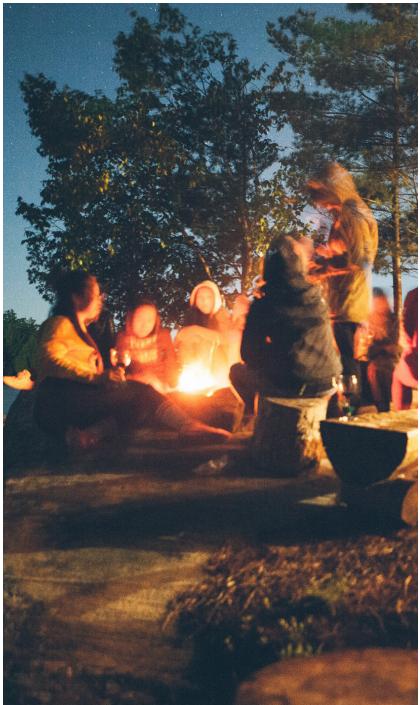
6:45-7:00pm Have everyone introduce themselves and discuss the Ice Breaker question! (15 min.)

7:00-7:02pm Have someone pray and invite the Holy Spirit to lead the discussion time. (2-5 min.)

7:02-7:10pm Watch weekly video. (8 min.)

7:10-7:45pm Facilitate discussion and study using the "Talk it Over" questions. Be sure to allow space for others to talk. Being a host means learning to let others talk and be expressive and being able to draw others out in conversation. (15 min.)

7:45-8:00pm Break into groups of 3 and take prayer requests and pray together. Conclude by thanking God for the night! (10 min.)



LifeGroup Ground Rules

- **Confidentiality (Safe Place):** What's said in group stays in group. No one wants to find out he or she has been the subject of gossip. This is probably the most important ground rule of all.
- **Start On Time—And End On Time:** It will be up to the Host to guide the group in sticking with this ground rule. It's especially helpful to those who have children at home with babysitters and those with work schedules that are affected by late nights or meetings that run over.
- **Dialogue Involves Everyone:** To make this work, everyone needs to participate as a listener and as a speaker. If one person is monopolizing the dialogue, the host may say, "Let's hear from someone else now." Then, when another person has listened for a long time without speaking, the host might ask, "Barbara, do you have any input you'd like to share?"
- **Remember Your Manners:** Avoid dismissing their thoughts, don't laugh at others when they've shared (unless they've just told a joke), and no putdowns of any kind. These are the actions that make others "shut down" and feel uneasy about sharing. Opening up can be hard enough for some people as it is. The group is to be a welcoming place for all.
- **It's OK To Disagree:** It's just a fact of life that everyone has different opinions. If the group has differing thoughts on an issue, there's no requirement that everyone needs to agree. After a reasonable time of talking, the host or another group member could state that it's time to leave this point unresolved and move on to another question or activity. Let's guard against others having his or her feelings hurt if others don't share all the same opinions.
- **Just A Suggestion:** Turn off cell phones before group begins! It makes it easier to engage with the group when you have less distractions!

How To Be A Good Facilitator

When we're facilitating in our LifeGroup, our goal is to create dialogue between participants and make room for the Holy Spirit to bring wisdom and revelation to people. That means the pressure is off!

- **We don't have to** have all the right answers.
- **We don't have to** lead the perfect dialogue every time.
- **We don't have to** get through all the material in each meeting!

We want to:

- **Challenge people to think** about the topic at hand.
- **Create a safe environment** for people to share their thoughts.
- **Help everyone feel valued** about the input they've offered.
- **Help people see situations** through God's point of view.

Asking Good Questions:

One of the most important skills in life-group facilitation is not having all the right answers, but asking the right questions. Our Talk It Over questions makes it easy to ask the right questions! Here are a few secrets to good question-asking:

- **Ask open-ended questions.** Avoid the yes/no, true/false, multiple-choice questions.
- **Ask questions that require people to share** some actual thoughts and feelings.
- **Ask follow-up questions.** Many people default to staying pretty surface-level with their answers to the questions, so get in the habit of not letting them off the hook.
- **Ask more questions that follow-up on their response.**

Asking Good Questions

(continued):

Some examples of good follow-up questions for the short/simple answers that people often give:

- **What makes you say that?**
- **How do you feel about that?**
- **How do you think that would've affected you if you had been living in the time of Jesus?**
- **How would you explain your answer to a non-Christian friend or neighbor?**

The idea is to get at the core of what people are really trying to say.

- **Start an argument (not really)—but stimulate thought**
Everyone is not always going to agree. Encourage people to express their unique perspectives even if it goes against everyone else.

Here are some examples of questions that can help create dialogue:

- **Do you really agree with what the message is saying? Why or why not?**
- **Why did God design it to work that way? Why not just do (whatever else) instead?**
- **What would you say to someone who disagrees with that?**
- **Why do we really have to do it like that? Why can't we just go (some other route) instead?**





Creating A Safe Environment:

Trust is perhaps the most vital key to really making your LifeGroup a place where genuine community can be formed. Group members need to be able to trust each other that the group is a safe place—a place where they can get real and know that they will not be judged, gossiped about, and so on.

So how do you create this safe environment? There are some important steps you can take.

- **First, make sure to cover the privacy and safety issue in your LifeGroup Ground Rules.**
- **Put it on paper that “what is said here and happens here, stays here.”**
- **Feel free to review these same Ground Rules every single time a new person shows up to group.**
- **When someone shares in the group—no matter how much you may disagree, or how theologically incorrect they may be—make sure they feel affirmed about their answer in the moment.** Later, you can (and often will) talk to them about their comments outside of group, but it should be done one on-one.
- **Avoid giving unrequested advice within the group—“Well if I were you, I’d just do this. . . ”** That is one of the quickest ways to shut someone down from sharing. When you hear other group members start to do this, gently remind them that “this is a safe group, and we’re here to listen, not to give advice.”
- **As the host, be sure to model this safety and confidentiality yourself!**

Handling The Challenging People:

LifeGroups involve people and dealing with people can sometimes be messy. Here are some of the common personalities that you may encounter, and some tips on approaching them with grace:

- **The Over-Talker.** This person always has plenty to say, and loves to be the first person to say it. Remind everyone in the group that this is an equal participation group. If the problem continues, talk to the person outside of group. Affirm them in what they do contribute, and tell them you need their help in getting some of the other people in the group to open up and share.
- **The Non-Talker.** This is the quiet person in the group who never wants to share. If you think that doing so won't scare them off even more—that they just need a little prompting—try calling on them periodically to share an answer. If that doesn't work, talk to the person outside of group. Remind them how valuable all the different perspectives are to the entire group.
- **The Tangent-Starter.** This person loves to get the group way off track by starting random tangents and rabbit trails. When the time comes, firmly bring the group back on track. If the problem becomes excessive, again, talk to the person outside of group. Affirm them in what they do contribute, and let them know about the challenge you have in trying to stay on track, and how the tangents make your job harder. Ask them how they can help you.
- **The Insensitive Person.** This individual gives advice, makes fun of answers and people, cuts people off, or does a variety of other things to offend members within the group. This person is dangerous to the health of your group! They can keep it from being a safe group more quickly than anything else. Definitely have the one-on-one conversation outside of group to let the person know how important a safe group is, and what they can do to help make that happen.

Remember—the end goal of a group dialogue is life change, not getting through all the material. God is the one who does the work in people's hearts. We are not responsible for it! We are simply creating an environment for community and life change to happen!

questions?

want to learn more?

Contact:

Clay Orander, *Spiritual Growth Pastor*:
corander@vccindy.org

vccindy.org/next-steps/lifegroups