



THE NEXT STEPS

A GUIDE TO LEADING YOUR FIRST LIFE GROUP MEETING



Getting your group off the ground might seem overwhelming. Don't worry, we're here to help! Whether you are starting a brand new group or stepping into leadership for the first time, this guide will make the process of launching your group a little easier!

PRIOR TO FIRST MEETING

Pray.

Ask for the direction and leading of God before, during, and after you begin your Life Group.

Recruit/Meet with Core Members.

You need to have at least 2 other couples who are committed before you begin the group.

If you are starting a new group you'll need to recruit others to your group. If you are multiplying you should meet with the other couples to figure out logistics and details.

Create a Hit List.

With your core members create a list of others you want to invite to the group. It may include people from your neighborhood, friends at church, from work, or whoever God brings to mind.

Host Home.

Figure out when, where, and how often you and your group will be meeting. It's usually better for the leader not to host the group. It can happen, but it requires a lot of work.

Plan Start Date.

Be sure you clearly communicate this date to the rest of your group.

Let the Church Know.

When everything is ready to go, let the Life Group administrator know the details and they will input your group's information into the system.

1

CREATE ATMOSPHERE

Here are some minor details that are often overlooked which will help create that welcoming atmosphere that you'll want to have during your first meeting.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS MATTER

Make sure the first impression doesn't turn people away from your group. Work with the host home to make sure they/you clean up a little bit. Don't spend hours cleaning your house every week, but make sure your guests aren't tripping over your child's toys as they walk in the house.

ENVIROMENT MATTERS

Temperature, lighting, and scent matter a lot more than you think. Proper lighting, a comfortable room, and a pleasant scent, such as coffee brewing in the kitchen, will allow your group to focus and settle in for a more engaging discussion.

NO DISTRACTIONS MATTER

Comfortable chairs, seating arrangements, and refreshments may not seem like a big deal to you. But by preparing for these things, you create a distraction-free environment that will allow people to focus solely on what God wants to speak to them. Put yourself in their shoes. If you want to attain any sort of depth or transparency in your discussion, you will need to do whatever it takes to eliminate any distractions that could potentially hinder one of your Life Group members. Ask yourself, "What would it take for me to feel completely comfortable in someone else's home?"

It can be very intimidating for a person to walk into a new group for the first time. Before you can dive into meaningful discussion, you'll need to break the ice and help your people begin to interact with each other. Below are some sample ice-breakers which might help ease the tension and help make introductions easier. Feel free to use whichever examples would be the most appropriate for your group.

HAVE SOME FUN

- What's the strangest food you've ever eaten?
- What is your favorite band of all time? Book? Author? Song?
- What did you want to be when you were growing up?
- Two truths and a lie: Each person has to tell two truths and one lie about him or herself. Then the group has to guess which statement was a lie.
- Pass a bag of M&Ms around and ask your group members to take some. Don't tell them how many or why. Simply ask them to take as many as they want and that everyone should take at least one. When everyone has chosen their M&Ms, have them share as many facts about themselves as they have M&Ms. They can eat the M&Ms, too!

TAKE IT A STEP FURTHER

- If you had to name one person who has influenced you the most, who would it be?
- If you had your dream job 10 years from now, what would it be?
- What do you do for fun?
- What would be your ideal vacation?
- What is the most memorable activity you did with your family as a child?
- What quality do you appreciate most in a friend?

3

MAKE INTRODUCTIONS

This step is critical to developing relationships in your group. Make sure to take your time, and allow each person 5-10 minutes to share about themselves. As they talk make sure to ask questions that will help the rest of the group to know them better. Don't interrogate but rather take a genuine interest. Things you could ask them to share might include:

PERSONAL LIFE

- Name and age.
- Where they work.
- What they do for fun.

FAMILY LIFE

- How they met their spouse.
- Names/ages of their children.
- How long they have lived in the Seattle-area.

SPIRITUAL LIFE

- Their testimony (in 2 min. or less)
- What brought them out to the church?
- Why did they want to join a Life Group?
- What do they hope to experience in this group?

As the leader, this is your time to shine. Everyone has a different reason as to why they wanted to be a part of your Life Group. Now it's time for you to share your heart and what the purpose of the group is. Be honest, be real, and let them see your care and commitment to them as you share.

As you share, remember that you are not just sharing your vision for the group, but God's vision of making more and better disciples of Christ. Your group is the natural place to cultivate God-honoring relationships that are filled with authenticity and transparency. This is accomplished in the following ways:

Learn

Each time you gather your group is committing to learning more about God through the study of His Word.

Love

Your group is a place to be loved by others who genuinely care for one another. But our love for each other should not pamper, but rather perfect. Love is a willingness to say even the hard things, knowing that "faithful are the wounds of a friend."

Serve

Serving each other is much more than taking a meal to someone when they are sick. True service in your Life Group occurs on a regular basis through times of what we call Mutual Ministry. These are the times of accountability and prayer for each other and with each other. Remember men with men and women with women is key to allowing true accountability to flourish.

Reach

Your group is not a holy huddle that no one else is allowed to join. The goal is to make "more and better" disciples of Christ. Your group is making a commitment to reach outside of itself to share the gospel and invite others to join you.

5

SET EXPECTATIONS

Setting expectations upfront will help alleviate any mis-communications as to what the group will be about. Together it will be important to come up with a Life Group covenant. These are the things that you together mutually agree on and commit to. We suggest that once you complete this document, have everyone in the group sign it and then display it in a prominent location near your meeting area.

Suggested Life Group Covenant

- I will make my Life Group meetings a priority, and if I am unable to attend or running late, I will call ahead.
- I will come to my Life Group meeting prepared and ready to participate.
- I will maintain confidentiality of the personal information that is shared within my group.
- I will help create a safe place for each member to share with no judgments attached.
- I will be accountable to the group concerning my personal and spiritual goals.
- I will commit to a Life Group which is open to new members, and as it grows, we will multiply to further God's work.
- I will take ownership of my responsibility of being faithful, accountable, and teachable in my Life Group.
- I will pray for my Life Group leader, apprentice(s), and members of my small group.
- I will encourage other members to cultivate daily quiet times with God.
- I will pray for the pastors and elders of Canyon Hills Community Church to continue to seek God's direction for the Life Group ministry.

Before your group ends make sure to share some of the important details and logistics that your people will need to know about moving forward. Things to share might include:

WHAT TO SHARE

- Where to park.
- Childcare details and cost (if applicable).
- A calendar of how often the group will meet.
- Schedule of a typical Life Group meeting.
- What you'll be studying. (The Approved Study List is available on our website.)

WHAT TO GATHER

- Contact information and e-mail it out to the rest of the group.
- Birthdays.
- Set up snack rotation.



TIPS FOR ADDING NEW PEOPLE TO YOUR GROUP

As the weeks go by, you will get used to seeing the familiar faces of your Life Group members. But as you strive to make “more and better” discipleship of Christ, you should always be prepared to invite and welcome anyone who wants to join your group. A few things you’ll need to know:

1 PEOPLE WILL LEAVE YOUR GROUP

No matter how strong you are as a leader, attrition is inevitable. Go ahead and take a deep breath and tell yourself, “it’s ok”. It’s not always going to be a reflection of your leadership. Things happen; work schedules change, children have ballgames on Wednesdays, among other things. Your responsibility is to remain faithful to the people that God has entrusted to your care. Lead your group with the same passion and energy, whether you have two members or twelve.

2 ALWAYS BE WELCOMING

It can be very intimidating for a new person to walk into an established Life Group. You want to go out of your way to make their first experience with your group a positive one. Make every effort to bridge the gap and make them feel comfortable in their new surroundings. Engage the new members in the discussion. If there’s something that they need to be caught up on, do so quickly and politely. Don’t leave them feeling awkward... the less time the group is staring silently at them, the better.

3 GIVE THEM A REASON TO RETURN

If this is someone’s first experience with a group, your goal should be to see them next week for their second experience. Don’t just invite them back. Assign someone in your group to specifically follow up with them over the course of the week. Intentional, genuine connections will go a long way towards keeping new Life Group members.

WELCOME TO IN-FELLOWSHIP

In order to effectively manage and systematize our groups, we use an online platform called InFellowship. We build your Life Group and designate you as the leader. It's then your job to manage your roster and communicate with your Life Group members. In-fellowship allows you to do the following:

MANAGE YOUR ROSTER

In order to help you shepherd your group, we need you to keep your roster up-to-date. You'll be able to invite new people to join as well as delete people who are no longer attending.

COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR LIFE GROUP

At its core, InFellowship is designed to be a communication tool for you to connect with your group members. You will be able to quickly and easily send e-mails to your entire group, or to individual members. Any replies will return to your personal e-mail account.

INITIAL SET-UP

- 1 Create an account by going to the CHCC website to Infellowship.
 - On the home page you will see and can update Your **Profile, Privacy Setting, Your Groups**, and Your Giving. You are the only one that has access to your personal profile and giving records.
 - Your life group will be under the Your Groups icon
- 2 Click on the group you lead. On this page there are 3 tabs: Dashboard, Roster, and Attendance
 - **Dashboard Tab:** here you will find your schedule, location of your group and a little information about your group. On the right of the page, under ACTIONS, you can view your roster, view settings, add or invite someone to join, and send an email to your life group. Please note, you can't add anyone if they are not in our database. Please have them create an account in Infellowship first, and then you can add them to your roster.
 - **Roster Tab:** Use this tab to see the contact information of your group members.
 - **Attendance Tab:** This tab you will use after each meeting. On the right side of your attendance page, click: + Enter attendance. Use the drop down menu to choose your scheduled date or add a new date if you meet on a day not scheduled. Click the box next to each member who attended. When you're finished, click on: save attendance. If you did not meet on your scheduled date, you will still need to submit attendance, check "no we did not meet", and leave a short explanation for canceling.

**CANYON HILLS EXISTS TO
MAKE MORE AND BETTER
DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST.**



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