

Grow Together

LIFE GROUP LEADER
TRAINING GUIDE



NEW LIFE
CHURCH

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First Printing, July 2023

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LIFE GROUP LEADER
TRAINING GUIDE

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Why Life Groups

We believe God created us to live in community with others, and only then can we experience the full life He intends for us.

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

—JAMES 5:16

We receive forgiveness when we confess our sins to God, and yet this verse reminds us that we receive healing when we confess our sins to one another in the Body of Christ. People help us find freedom! This is God's beautiful design of His Body working together, growing together, and healing together!

Powerful, lasting life change happens within the context of relationships. Meaningful relationships can be hard to find, and Life Groups exist to make life-changing relationships relevant and accessible to you.

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

—ECCLESIASTES 4:9-12

New Life Church Life Groups Model

At New Life Church, we believe we are to empower and equip people to FOLLOW JESUS, GROW TOGETHER, SERVE ONE ANOTHER, and to LIVE ON MISSION for God. Life Groups are one of the most effective ways for us to GROW TOGETHER towards God and each other.

We believe our church must grow larger and smaller at the same time. We grow larger to reach as many people as pos-

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sible with the life-giving message of Jesus. We grow smaller by gathering in Life Groups to build close-knit community and care deeply for people.

New Life Church is a church of Life Groups, not a church with Life Groups. A Life Group is where the mutual ministry of the Body of Christ can be expressed and developed.

We base our Life Group model on the early church as described in the Bible in the Book of Acts. There, you can read about the tremendous growth of the first church in Jerusalem, where Life Group meetings in homes helped lay the foundation of living in biblical community.

Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

—ACTS 5:42

What we see in this verse is that believers met in the Temple Courts and in people's homes proclaiming the Good News. A biblical model for us to follow is Large Group worship, Small Group fellowship.

See, God is building a family, not just a bunch of rogue individuals. To do that, we connect in relationship with others to build a family of believers. We see in scripture and in life that an isolated Christian is a Christian without a family of believers, and is vulnerable to the enemy's attacks.

In Scripture we see that:

- God sets the lonely in families (Psalm 68:6),
- He builds his church (Matthew 16:18),
- He arranges each member in the Body as HE wants them (1 Corinthians 12:18),
- He connects each of us as Living Stones together to build a Spiritual House (1 Peter 2:5)

There is this powerful verse in Hebrews 10 that tells us so clearly why GROWING TOGETHER in relationship matters.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

—HEBREWS 10:24-25 NIV

Our Life Group motto is this: Connect, Care, Grow. What we mean by this is, Life Groups offer people:

1. A Place to Connect

Yes, whatever a person is like, I try to find common ground with him so that he will let me tell him about Christ and let Christ save him.

—1 CORINTHIANS 9:22 TLB

We were not made to do life alone. God created us for community, and Life Groups provide a place to connect with others, share life, and grow in faith together.

2. A Place to Care

We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters.

—1 JOHN 3:16 NLT

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

—GALATIANS 6:2 NIV

As we journey through life together in community with others, God uses those relationships to bring support and encouragement in areas where we need it the most. In doing so, we begin to gain a different perspective on the challeng-

What a Life Group Looks Like

Group Structure

Groups may meet weekly or biweekly during the semester in various places like homes, parks, restaurants, coffee shops and office buildings. No matter what your group meets about, each meeting typically includes the following four elements:

Casual Fellowship

A laid-back time for group members to talk and get to know each other.

Activity or Discussion

This will vary based on what kind of group you're leading. It could be an activity like Frisbee golf, an outreach, or a discussion about a book or Sunday message.

Prayer

Ask for prayer requests from group members and pray at the beginning and/or the end of each group meeting.

Spiritual Component

This is what differentiates your Life Group from your neighborhood supper club. Whether it's through activities or discussion, always find a way to include God's Word. This can be as simple as sharing something God is teaching you with the group or talking about a verse you read that week.

Life Groups are not a place for:

- Business
- Offerings
- Unapproved materials or speakers
- Controversial topics

Your Role as a Life Group Leader

God has designed a place for each of us in the Body of Christ, and Life Group leaders partner with the pastors and staff of New Life Church to help care for people.

Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

—EPHESIANS 4:11-13 NLT

The primary role of a Life Group Leader is to help group members take steps in their walk with God. Remember: Connect, Care, Grow!

Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds.

—PROVERBS 27:23

People in your group will be at different places in their spiritual journeys, so each of them will likely have different next steps to take. Here is a guide of some next steps you can help people take:

- Start attending Sunday services
- Start reading the Bible regularly
- Start praying regularly
- Be water baptized
- Complete the Connect Classes
- Complete the Foundations and/or Real Change curricula (offered in Life Group settings)
- Join a Serve Team

- Start tithing
- Attend an NLC Conference
- Invite a friend or neighbor to church or a Life Group
- Attend a Life Group Leader Training to become a Life Group Leader
- Attend an NLC College Preview Day or enroll in NLC College

How to be a successful Life Group Leader

- Pray daily for the members of your group.
- Partner with a co-leader to help share the responsibility of caring for and leading your group.
- Connect with group members between meetings through phone, email, text, social media, or face-to-face. Encourage members to connect with each other throughout the week too!
- Have fun! Use ice-breakers as a fun way to connect.
- Respect others' time by beginning and ending your group on time.
- Invite group members to attend church services and events with you like Worship nights, conferences, or Serve Saturday.
- Rally the group around a member going through a crisis. Use wisdom and be sensitive.

The Importance of Prayer

Prayer is a foundation of our church, and it is important for your Life Group.

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

—2 CHRONICLES 7:14

How to pray for your group

- Pray for any requests group members share.
- Invite the presence of the Holy Spirit into your group.
- Pray that God will open people's hearts to hear His truth.
- Pray for authentic community to develop.
- Pray for wisdom and strength to lead your group well.

When you feel uncertain about leading a group, use Scripture to overcome the lies of the enemy:

1. When you feel like you don't have enough time, remember God has created you for this, and His timing is perfect.

If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done.

—ECCLESIASTES 11:4 TLB

2. When you feel unqualified, remember God has equipped you.

It is not that we think we are qualified to do anything on our own. Our qualification comes from God. He has enabled us to be ministers of His new covenant.

—2 CORINTHIANS 3:5-6 NLT

3. When you feel like your past disqualifies you, remember God uses imperfect people.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

—2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

4. When you feel like you don't know how to help someone in your group, remember ESPN:

- E: Encourage
- S: Share Scripture
- P: Pray
- N: Next Steps

Leadership Support

As a Life Group Leader, you are never alone in creating community. We have pastors, staff, and coaches who are all working alongside you to invest in great Life Groups at New Life Church.

How to Create Healthy Group Dynamics

Set Expectations

A key to helping people feel comfortable in your group is to let them know what to expect. Take time to share how the group will flow from week to week. This can include things like explaining the times you will begin and end the group, how discussion or group activities will happen, and how group members can share prayer requests or best engage in the group.

Start and end on time

We demonstrate respect for others' time and boundaries when we start and end our groups on time.

Follow the 70-30 rule

Give your group members room to speak up, rather than doing all the talking yourself. About 70% of the discussion should come from members and 30% from the leader.

Keep the discussions positive

If a conversation takes a negative or destructive turn, guide it back to a healthy place. If someone needs to talk about a sensitive or complex issue, you can follow up with them after the group or call your Coach to help you respond well.

Keep the conversation relevant to everyone

Remember that people in your group will be at different places in their spiritual journey. Be thoughtful when you talk about spiritual concepts or church terms that might be unfamiliar to new Christians or new church-goers.

Respect boundaries.

Because we want to maintain integrity and purity in our Life Groups, men should disciple men and women should disciple women. A couple may disciple a single person. These boundaries will help protect the leaders and group members from entering into uncomfortable or inappropriate situations.

How to Start Your Life Group

1. Ask God for direction about what group to lead and who to invite.
2. Go through our New Life Group Leader On-boarding training online.
3. Meet with a Life Group Pastor, or Coach.
4. Once you decide on a topic or activity for your group, choose a place and time to meet.

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5. With your Life Group Coach, create your group in Planning Center Groups/ChurchCenter App.

By doing this it will show up in our online Life Groups Directory at newlifechurch.tv so people can find your group and contact you to attend.

6. Invite people you know or meet to come check out your Life Group.

7. Pray for God to do great things through your Life Group.

Preparing for your group meetings

Send a message to group members a few days prior to the first meeting to remind them about the first meeting.

Arrive early to set up a welcoming environment.

Consider having name tags available to help everyone learn names for the first few weeks.

Conversation

Here are a few conversation starters to help get people talking as your group gets to know each other:

- How did you learn about our group?
- What are your hobbies?
- What are you looking forward to this year?
- What brought you here?
- What are you hoping to get out of this Life Group?

Thank you for being an important part of Life Groups at New Life Church!

Frequently Asked Questions

How can I recruit people to come to my group?

- Start with people who are already in your sphere of influence (co-workers, friends, and neighbors).
- Find people around you who are new to the church, are new believers, or have shown interest in getting involved.
- Look for people you think you can help to realize their potential.
- Ask God to send the right people to your group.

Where can I hold my Life Group?

- We encourage Life Groups to meet outside the church building in places where you naturally enjoy spending time. Some of the most common meeting places are homes, restaurants, parks, coffee shops, and office buildings.

Where can I find Life Group Resources?

- We have a variety of curriculum suggestions available to you at <https://newlifechurch.tv/life-group-resources/>

Does my group have to meet every week?

- Though your group does not have to meet weekly, we do encourage consistency (whether weekly or biweekly) each semester in order to build genuine relationships.

How can I tell if group members are taking next steps?

- Ask! Make it part of your discussion whether in a group setting or individually. Here are some great questions to guide your conversation:

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- ◁ How did you get connected to this Life Group?
- ◁ What are you most looking forward to in the group?
- ◁ Do you attend New Life Church?
- ◁ What brought you to New Life Church?
- ◁ Which campus do you attend?
- ◁ Have you ever been part of a Life Group before?
- ◁ What do you feel like God has been doing in your life lately?
- ◁ Have you ever been to a New Life Church conference?
- ◁ In what areas of your faith are you hoping to grow in the coming months?
- ◁ What are you focused on in your life right now?
- ◁ Have you been through the NLC Connect Class? Do you remember what your personality type is or what your spiritual gifts are?
- ◁ Do you understand how to use the spiritual gifts God has given you?
- ◁ What do you feel God is calling you to do, but you are afraid to pursue it?
- ◁ Have you ever served on an NLC Serve Team?
- ◁ How can I pray for you?
- Everyone in your group will be at different places spiritually. Helping them take the next step is not to get them to do everything at once but to help identify where they currently are spiritually and offer a practical next step to help them grow.
- Here are some examples of next steps you can share, depending on where a group member may be on their spiritual journey:
 - ◁ Invite them to attend a Sunday service with you.

- ◁ Share your personal story and what God has been teaching you lately.
- ◁ Share how Connect Class can help them discover their purpose, and invite them to attend.
- ◁ Invite them to consider being water baptized. Invite your Life Group to be there to celebrate those getting baptized.
- ◁ Share how you find time regularly to pray, worship, and read God's Word, and encourage them to make their own plan for time with God.
- ◁ Tell them about the New Life Church app, how to download it, and what it offers.
- ◁ Help them download the ChurchCenter App so that they can stay connected to your group, chat with the group, and to receive any resources you will be sending to the group.
- ◁ Explain that New Life Church has a YouTube channel that posts a video devo every morning. Accessing the devo simply requires allowing push notifications from NLC's YouTube channel!
- ◁ If they are ready to receive Christ, offer to pray with them.
- ◁ Encourage them to learn more about areas like tithing, the Holy Spirit, prayer, and spiritual warfare through past messages at newlifechurch.tv.

Leadership Commitment

The same goes for those who want to be servants in the church: serious, not deceitful, not too free with the bottle, not in it for what they can get out of it. They must be reverent before the mystery of the faith, not using their position to try to run things. Let them prove themselves first. If they show they can do it, take them on. No exceptions are to be made for women—same qualifications: serious, dependable, not sharp-tongued, not overfond of wine. Servants in the church are to be committed to their spouses, attentive to their own children, and diligent in looking after their own affairs. Those who do this servant work will come to be highly respected, a real credit to this Jesus-faith.

—1 TIMOTHY 3:8-10 MSG

Qualifications

- Has trusted and surrendered to Jesus as your Lord and Savior.
- Has been baptized in water as a demonstration of obedience to Christ.
- Is a disciple, demonstrated by a commitment to personal growth in understanding God's Word, walking with Him daily, and actively applying His Word, truth, and insight in their/your personal life.
- Sincere, worthy of respect, and of a good reputation.
- Tithe regularly to New Life Church.
- Have a genuine desire to serve and disciple others.
- Able to Connect, to Care for people, and help people Grow.
- Able to lead, to encourage people to take next steps, and to facilitate a great discussion.
- Able to create positive group dynamics and deal with conflict resolution within the group.

- Has completed our “New” Life Group Leader Onboarding online training.
- Has signed the Membership Covenant, affirming page 22 of Connect, affirming:
 - ◁ The New Life Church Statement of Fundamental Truths (located in Connect 2023 page 36). Reference: <https://drive.google.com/drive/search?q=-Connect%20Two%20Session>
 - ◁ The New Life Church Statement of Faith (located on our website at <https://newlifechurch.tv/faith-resources/>)
 - ◁ The New Life Church Statement of Marriage and Human Sexuality Policy (located in Connect 2023 page 37ff). Reference: <https://drive.google.com/drive/search?q=Connect%20Two%20Session>
- Has completed Connect Class.
- Has been a Life Group Life Member for at least one semester or done so in a previous context.
- We recommend that you go through our Foundations and Real Change life group curricula.

Helpful Scripture References

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

—HEBREWS 4:12

At New Life Church we believe that discipling through the Word of God is the most powerful way to care for people. Therefore, we encourage you to find and memorize at least three Scriptures this semester. As God’s Word takes root in your heart, it will strengthen you in your spiritual journey, and it will equip you with wisdom to walk your life group members through whatever they may be facing. And as you pray over your Life Group members each day, try inserting that member’s name in the Scripture to make it more personalized.

Here is a list of powerful Scriptures that you can apply to any situation:

“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

—MARK 12:30-31 NKJV

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

—PHILIPPIANS 4:13 NKJV

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.

—PROVERBS 3:5-6

“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.”

—ISAIAH 55:8-9 NLT

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him.

—1 JOHN 5:14-15

“No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me,” says the Lord.

—ISAIAH 54:17 NKJV

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.

—EPHESIANS 6:10-28

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And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.

—ROMANS 8:28 ESV

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.

—EPHESIANS 2:10 NLT

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

—JEREMIAH 29:11

You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

—MATTHEW 5:14-16

No power in the sky above or in the earth below—in-deed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

—ROMANS 8:39 NLT

Stay away from the love of money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, “I will never, never fail you nor forsake you. “That is why we can say without any doubt or fear, “The Lord is my Helper, and I am not afraid of anything that mere man can do to me.”

—HEBREWS 13:5-6 TLB

“Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.”

—ISAIAH 41:10 NLT

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

—PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

—JAMES 1:2-4

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

—1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

—ROMANS 10:17 ESV

One day the apostles said to the Lord, “We need more faith; tell us how to get it.” “If your faith were only the size of a mustard seed,” Jesus answered, “it would be large enough to uproot that mulberry tree over there and send it hurtling into the sea! Your command would bring immediate results!”

—LUKE 17:5-6 TLB

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

—HEBREWS 11:1

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If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

—JAMES 1:5

Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.

—PROVERBS 11:14 ESV

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to Him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.

—ROMANS 8:1-2 NLT

“Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”

—ISAIAH 1:18

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

—1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-14

