

YOU MAKE ME
CRAZY

HOST MANUAL

Getting Started

THE ABCs OF A GREAT START FOR YOUR LIFE GROUP

A. PREPARING FOR YOUR FIRST MEETING.

1. It is critical going into the first meeting to make a personal contact with each of your group members and to get a response. Determine which method is best for each person for your group (phone call, text, email). Please don't rely on leaving a voicemail.
2. When you contact them, your enthusiasm is very important. Get yourself ready.
3. Ask each person to bring something (sodas, chips, cookies, etc.). This cements their attendance. They're much more likely to show if you're depending on them. Mention your childcare plans for the first meeting if applicable.
4. Review the leader guide for your first study. This will help you feel more comfortable as you lead your group through this study.

B. FIRST MEETING

1. The first meeting of your study is designed to help people feel relaxed and comfortable with the other members of their new group and get to know each other a little better.
2. Send an address or make a map to your first meeting location if it's not at the church and send this out a week ahead of time. Include special instructions to help group members find you more easily.
3. Contact each person AGAIN a couple of days before the meeting to encourage them.
4. Use the nametags and markers that are provided in your leader kit. Relax and have fun getting to know each other.
5. Discuss the group agreement. This is an important step. Don't miss it. This helps clarify the group's expectations. (If anyone new joins the group later the agreement should be reviewed.)
6. Set a date and place for the next meeting before you dismiss and decide on your plans for refreshments.

C. MEETING FOLLOW-UP

1. Touch base with each person who attended the meeting to encourage them. This extra step helps them to continue to forge a relationship with you. Look for them at church. Any contact in between meetings will help cement them to their new group.
2. Send a meeting reminder a couple days before your next meeting. Don't assume that they'll remember. They need your encouragement.

During a Group Meeting

1. HANG OUT

(About 30 minutes)

Our lives move so fast these days. Take some time to talk about what's going on in the lives of those in your group. Asking about things like work, the health of their kids, and how their weeks are going goes a long way in building community. Use the icebreakers in your lesson guide or use "The Complete Book of Questions" by Garry Poole.

2. WATCH THE VIDEO

(About 24 minutes)

Watch the video if necessary.

3. DISCUSS

(About 30 minutes)

Based on the message, you'll have discussion questions to think through and talk about. It is okay not to get through all of the questions.

4. PRAY

(About 5 minutes)

Keep it simple and real. Some weeks will have scripted prayers to recite together, other weeks we will encourage you to pray for each other. You can always ask God to help you apply what you've learned during that session.

VIDEOS

You can find the video sessions that complement this study on our website: stlukecolumbus.com/ondemand

Videos can also be accessed from our YouTube or Roku channels by searching "St. Luke Lutheran Church" under streaming channels.

Roku

 **YouTube**

CHILDREN IN A LIFE GROUP

Caring for children is often a concern for life groups. Even though the group meeting and life group primarily benefits the adults, kids can also form community with the other children in the group. We believe there are tremendous benefits in including children in your life group, but there are numerous ways of doing this. Here are some of the main ones:

1. **Hire a sitter to oversee the children.** Often this can be a teenager. It's important to explain expectations to them and make clear any house rules. EVERYONE should help finance this – even those without kids. Pass a jar each week and pay the sitter a pre-determined amount. If there isn't enough cash coming in, then bring it up and challenge the group (not just those with children) to do more. If you have more than enough, just keep the extra in the jar for future weeks.
2. **Ask a responsible older brother or sister from the group.** Everything from option #1 usually applies, though you might pay them less. This can lead to tension if there are problems with their performance but deal with it directly.
3. **Take turns caring for the children.** It is important that this be the agreed responsibility of EVERYONE in the group, not just the women or just the ones with children. If someone is not especially good with kids be sure to team them up with someone who's experienced, but everyone needs to shoulder the responsibility.
4. **Don't do any childcare.** Some groups don't do childcare because everyone in the group has children that are older or perhaps the group is made up of single adults without children or young married couples with no children yet. But once children are involved it is important that you make a plan that makes it possible for these people to be involved with your life group.
5. **Take an offering.** If just one or two families in your life group have children you can decide to pass an offering plate each week to help them care for the expense of hiring a sitter at their home. It's unrealistic for most families to absorb the full expense on their own, but in some cases this is a good option as long as you are dealing with just one or two families.
6. **Include the children.** Involve the children for part of your group time. Let them answer an icebreaker or two, be apart of the snack time or prayer. Have a plan for the remainder of your group time, perhaps utilizing one of the other options mentioned, though its for a shorter period of time.
7. **Have childcare in a different home nearby.** This can often be a good option if you can arrange it for children that have trouble leaving their parents alone or if you have a LOT of kids. Give the sitters everyone's cell numbers or the number for the host home and if there's a problem Mom or Dad are just a call away! This can really work well with 2 groups that might share a babysitting home.
8. **If kids are old enough to monitor themselves, have them play in a separate room.**

Some helpful tips:

1. Your group needs to agree on your childcare approach.
2. The childcare arrangements you make today may need to be revised over time.
3. Select a willing childcare coordinator. Usually this is a Mom who's really organized! It's not her (or his) job to do all the childcare, just to keep it organized and communicated. **The goal is always for the entire group to be sharing the load of caring well for the children.**
4. Make HOUSE RULES wherever you meet. Talk with the host regularly about this. If you rotate homes then each new home has new house rules. Some people don't want children in the bedrooms, while others don't care. Communicate clearly the expectations to all the children and parents as well as whoever is caring for the kids.

5. **Having children in your life group will bring tension!** That's okay! The goal of a group is not to avoid conflict but to work through conflict! This brings about community!! So, expect problems and expect to work through them. This will bring you closer together as a life group.

HANDLING DIFFICULT PEOPLE

1. **How to re-direct talkative members:**

When one or two group members seem to be monopolizing the discussion, calling for contributions from others often helps: "What do the rest of you think?" or "Jenny, what ideas do you have about this?"

In some situations you may have to take control of the discussion more strongly, and you may have to talk privately with the "talker," explaining the necessity of group participation. You may be able to enlist him to help you draw others in. This will help him become more sensitive to the contributions of other people.

2. **How to get back on track:**

A verbal recognition of the fact that the discussion has gotten off on a tangent can usually help you get back to more relevant topics. You could say, "This is interesting. However, we've left our topic. Perhaps we could discuss this further after the group, but for now..." Or you may present a thought-provoking question to draw the discussion back to the initial topic. Having an attitude of acceptance toward the tangent is important. Maintain the respect for each member's opinions.

3. **How to handle "wrong" answers:**

If someone says something that you are quite sure is inaccurate or unbiblical, you may want to solicit a view point from someone else: "Okay, what do others think?" or "Does anyone know other Scripture passages that may help us here?" You may want to restate the issue, or ask another question that would help clarify or stimulate further thought. Always try to keep the person from losing "face" or becoming embarrassed if possible.

4. **How to handle silence:**

Don't be afraid of pauses, or try to fill silent moments. If you give everyone time to think, they will bring up good points and ask good questions as the discussion progresses. By being patient, you may be surprised with the number of excellent thoughts the group comes up with. These silent times may seem uncomfortable, but don't be embarrassed or feel as if you must say something.

5. **How to handle difficult questions:**

Don't be afraid of saying, "I don't know" when a difficult question is asked. If you don't know the answer, don't pretend to. You can always look for the answer later, or ask someone else in the group to research it. There is no merit in being thought of as a supposed "know it all", only to find out you don't.

In their book, *Growing Young*, Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin give us some great language to use when handling difficult questions. "Here are four words we recommend (you use when faced with a difficult question): **"I don't know, but..."**

"We can complete that sentence with any number of helpful phrases to communicate that questions are not only allowed but even welcomed. *I don't know, but . . .*

...that's an important question.
...let's find out together.
...I wonder that too.
...I bet you're not the first person to ask that.
...who do you think we could ask about that?
...I wonder what stirred up that question just now?
...God is big enough to take that question.
...here's what I have experienced about God.
...thanks for sharing this with us.

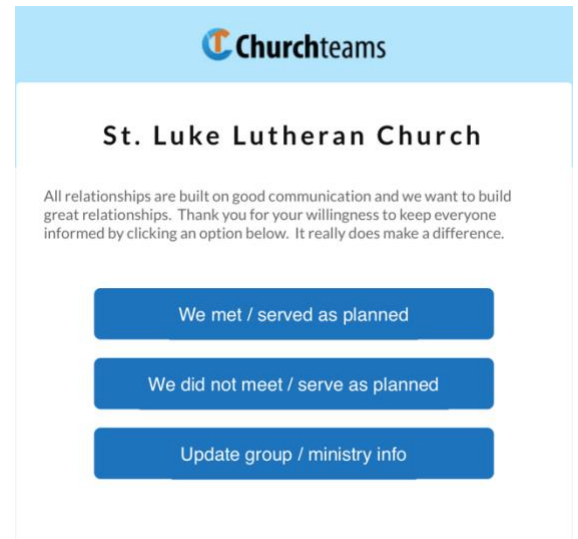
You might, of course, have an answer to their question. Even if you do, though, it might be wise to step back and probe a bit before unleashing your “right” answer. Being heard can at times be as—or even more—important than the answer itself.”

Tracking Participation

CHURCHTEAMS

During this study, we would like you to help us track participation using an email based system called ChurchTeams. This program will send you an email on the day of your meeting that will give you three options to respond, 1) We met this week, 2) We did not meet this week, 3) Update group information.

When you click the “We met this week” option you will be taken to a form to track your attendance. Simply check off who attended your meeting, update the next meeting date if applicable, unselect “copy email to entire group,” and press “send.” You do not need to report prayer requests, but you can send us notes if you wish like adding/removing group members, or letting us know how your meeting went.



Meeting report - Sample group

Meeting Date: 01/26/2018 ... Next meeting date: 01/28/2018 ... Topic: Location: Did not meet

Attendance

All None * indicates *Leader*

- * McCullough, Aaron Family x
- Brown, Pr. Steve Family x
- Kristler, Jenny Family x
- Osborne, Greg Family x
- Zielke, Colleen Family x

+ Add new member

of Visitors/Guests: Member Attendance Count: 5 Total attendance (with visitors/guests): 5

When is your next Service Project + Add New

Notes: Prayer Requests:

Enter your email address: mccullat@gmail.com Copy email to entire group

Send / Save Report Cancel

Please contact Aaron McCullough (mccullat@gmail.com) if you have questions about this process or are having problems sending a report.

Helps for HOSTS

NINE BONUS IDEAS FOR NEW HOSTS

CONGRATULATIONS! As the host of your life group, you have responded to the call to help shepherd Jesus' flock. Few other tasks in the family of God surpass the contribution you will be making. As you prepare to facilitate your group, whether it is one session or the entire series, here are a few thoughts to keep in mind.

Remember you are not alone. God knows everything about you, and he knew you would be asked to facilitate your group. Even though you may not feel ready, this is common for all good hosts. God promises, *"I will never leave you; I will never abandon you"* (Hebrews 13:5 TEV). Whether you are facilitating for one evening, several weeks, or a lifetime, you will be blessed as you serve.

- 1. Don't try to do it alone.** Pray right now for God to help you build a healthy team. If you can enlist a co-host to help you shepherd the group, you will find your experience much richer. This is your chance to involve as many people as you can in building a healthy group. All you have to do is ask people to help. You'll be surprised at the response.
- 2. Be friendly and be yourself.** God wants to use your unique gifts and temperament. Be sure to greet people at the door with a big smile...this can set the mood for the whole gathering. Remember, they are taking a big step to show up as you are to host a life group! Don't try to do things exactly like another host; do them in a way that fits you. Admit when you don't have an answer and apologize when you make a mistake. Your group will love you for it and you'll sleep better at night.
- 3. Prepare for your meeting ahead of time.** Preview the session and write down your responses to each question.
- 4. Pray for your group members by name.** Before your group arrives, take a few minutes to pray for each member by name. Ask God to use your time together to touch the heart of each person in your group. Expect God to lead you to whomever he wants you to encourage or challenge in a special way. If you listen, God will surely lead.
- 5. Provide transitions between questions.** Ask if anyone would like to read the next session or question. Don't call on anyone, but ask for a volunteer, and then be patient until someone begins. Be sure to thank the person who reads aloud.

6. **Break into smaller groups occasionally.** With a greater opportunity to talk in a small circle, people will connect more with the study, apply more quickly what they're learning, and ultimately get more out of their life group experience. A small circle also encourages a quiet person to participate and tends to minimize the effects of a more vocal or dominant member.
7. **Small circles are also helpful during prayer time.** People who are unaccustomed to praying aloud will feel more comfortable trying it with just two or three others. Also, prayer requests won't take as much time, so circles will have more time to actually pray. When you gather back with the whole group, you can have one person from each circle briefly update everyone on prayer requests from their subgroups. The other great aspect of subgrouping is that it fosters leadership development. As you ask people in the group to facilitate discussion or to lead a prayer circle, it gives them a small leadership step that can build their confidence.
8. **Rotate facilitators occasionally.** You may be perfectly capable of hosting each time, but you will help others grow in their faith and gifts if you give them opportunities to host the group.
9. **One final challenge (for new or first-time hosts).** Before your first opportunity to lead, read each of the following six passages listed on the next page. Read each one as a devotional exercise to help prepare you with a shepherd's heart. Trust us on this one. If you do this, you will be more than ready for your first meeting.

Matthew 9:36-38

³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

John 10:14-15

¹⁴ “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.

1 Peter 5:2-4

² Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

Philippians 2:1-5

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Hebrews 10:23-25

²³ Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ 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.

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, 11-12

⁷ Instead, we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, ⁸ so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.

¹¹ For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, ¹² encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

Life Group Agreement

Ground Rules for a Healthy Life Group

As a group member, I agree to the following ground rules:

Priority

Group members choose to be available to attend group activities. Group time is a priority.

Participation

While prayer and discussion of curriculum are key elements, the driving force behind the group is the building of relationships. Everyone participates in group discussions, but no one is permitted to dominate. Everyone has the right to pass on any question if they aren't ready to answer.

Confidentiality

For authenticity to occur, members must be able to trust that issues discussed within the group will not be shared outside the group.

Respect

Group members should never say anything that will embarrass their spouses or other members of the group. Everyone is given the right to their own opinion; there are no "dumb" questions.

Openness

The group is always open to new members. The goal is to grow and ultimately multiply into two healthy life groups – so that we are constantly making room for more people to experience the joy of being in a life group.

Support

We are committed to be in each other's lives! This means being in contact with each other between meetings and having the right to call on one another in times of need.

We, the undersigned, understand and agree with the purpose and ground rules of this group. This group is a test-drive. It will not continue past the first study unless group members agree to continue.

Group Member Signatures:

Life Group Calendar

Healthy groups share responsibilities and group ownership. It might take some time for this to develop. Shared ownership ensures that responsibility for the group doesn't fall to one person. Use the calendar to keep track

of social events, mission projects, birthdays, or days off. Complete this calendar at your first or second meeting. Planning ahead will increase attendance and shared ownership.

DATE	LESSON	LOCATION	REFRESHMENTS
	Session 1		
	Session 2		
	Session 3		
	Session 4		
	Session 5		
	Session 6		