



LIFE GROUPS

**LEADER HANDBOOK**







Welcome to the wonderful world of Life Group leadership! Our Life Group Team and Coaches are thrilled that you have stepped into one of the most important leadership roles here at Fellowship. As a Life Group Leader, you will be serving at the center of the discipleship hub of our church, our Life Groups! As you intentionally pastor and care for your people, expect God to use you, stretch you, and grow you in powerful ways!

Life Group leadership is a high calling! But, let me assure you that you are not alone in this. Not only is the Holy Spirit leading and guiding you in the process, you also have an entire team of Life Group Staff and Coaches who are dedicated to walking alongside you. Our goal is to be a challenging but helpful resource as you lead. We are excited for you!

We are so excited, in fact, that we've developed this one-of-a-kind, wonderful, super informative resource just for you. In the Life Group Leader Handbook, you will find a several very important things you will need to digest and put into practice as you serve in your Life Group Leader role. From the purpose of Life Groups here at Fellowship, to the nuts and bolts of leading, with some theology to chew on along the way, this resources will help get you started in the right direction and spur you onwards as you lead. So grab a cup of coffee, find a comfy chair, sit back, and spend some time dedicated to reading through this entire handbook. After that, keep it close as a handy resource for when things come up.

Remember! It's our hope that this handbook will be a great resource for you as you spiritually lead and grow your Life Group. But, it is only the beginning of the vast amount of experience and knowledge our Life Group Team and Coaches can provide! Be sure to make it a priority to meet with your Coaches and soak up what they have to offer!

Our Coaches are definitely awesome, our handbook is extremely helpful, but, do you want to know the real secret of leading a Life Group? It's prayer! Praying for the people who attend your group (as well as the people who might someday get involved), and listening to what the Spirit of God is putting on your heart as you shepherd and care for them is the absolute key to leading a Life Group. Our groups have to be about growing in relationship with each other and with the triune God. The same God that gives meaning and purpose to our lives. It is essential that you spend time in prayer for your people asking God to guide you along the way as you lead! Please let us know if there's anything specific that comes up so we can join you in these prayers.

Know that our Life Group Team and coaches are praying for you! We are praying that God will lead and guide you, challenge and stretch you, and cause your group to thrive spiritually.

God bless you as you lead!

Josh



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## LIFE GROUPS AT FELLOWSHIP

So you may be asking, “What are Life Groups here at Fellowship and how do they fit within the church as a whole?” – Great question!

### **Fellowship’s Vision Statement**

First, let’s look at the bigger picture of Fellowship’s Vision and Mission within the Dallas Metroplex. Let’s be honest, there are plenty (and I mean plenty!) of healthy and vibrant churches in the DFW area. Through lots of prayer, discussion, and consultation, Fellowship’s Elders and Leadership Team determined that our church is uniquely situated to help people discover and live out their God-given purpose. This unique calling is summed up in Fellowship’s Vision Statement:

*By 2026, we will become a training and launching ground for more than 10,000 men and women who will discover and live out their unique God-given, Kingdom purpose in Christ.*

However, let’s not be daunted by the 10,000 number! This Vision isn’t about expanding our Sunday services to seat more people. It is about using the local and global connections God brings us to train and launch equipped followers of Jesus who desire to live out their God-given purpose wherever God has placed them. Our hope is that these people multiply themselves, pouring into others and causing a deliberate movement, locally and globally, where people are discovering and living out exactly what God has designed them for.

### **Fellowship’s Mission Statement**

Next is Fellowship’s Mission Statement, where we get a bit more specific concerning our individual responsibility as we pursue our Vision.

*Calling each other to live out our God-given Purpose in Christ, every day.*

If you’ve spent any amount of time at Fellowship on Sunday mornings or throughout the week, you’ve probably heard this phrase. It’s something that focuses us and keeps us on track, permeating all of our ministries, church activities, and (if we are intentional) impacting our daily life. It also gives voice to the desire for our people to discover more about who they have been created to be, especially as we live in a committed relationship with Jesus Christ and in spiritual fellowship with each other.

## Fellowship's Four Key Strategy Areas

As we pursue the Vision and Mission of our church, we have developed four key strategy areas within which we create space to grow as followers of Jesus: Worship Gatherings, Service-Teams, Training Experiences, and Life Groups.

As one of the main strategies of Fellowship, Life Groups are intentional spiritual formation communities that are anchored in biblical authenticity and specifically designed to serve as the discipleship hub of our church. They are where people engage in community that pushes them towards a deeper relationship with each other and Jesus.

## Life Group's Mission Statement

Our Life Group strategy also has its own Mission Statement that unpacks Fellowship's Mission in a specific way.

*Life Groups are where we live on purpose with God and each other.*

Living “on purpose” happens throughout the week as we are involved in each other's lives through prayer, support, encouragement, and care for each other. It's also our hope that these things are especially powerful when we get together for our weekly meetings.

## More Than a Weekly Meeting!

Wait a second! I want to make sure we all catch the nuanced difference here. Life Groups aren't just about our weekly meeting. They are about living life together throughout the week. As a Life Group leader, this is a monumentally important mindset. For some of us, it's going to be a shift from our preconceived notions, or even how we have approached our leadership of groups in the past here at Fellowship. But, in order to shepherd our groups well (more about that later), we HAVE to be involved in the lives of our people, an involvement that extends past our weekly meeting. Bottom line: Life Group is so much more than our weekly meeting! It's about doing life together throughout the week!

## Leading the Way for a Weekly Spiritual Rhythm

I just wanted to take a moment and thank you, our Life Group Leaders! Your commitment to a spiritual rhythm of weekly meetings expresses your commitment to your people. Opening up your lives, homes, and schedule on a weekly basis speaks volumes for how you care for and shepherd your people. Your intentional and careful preparation for your group's weekly meeting will cause a ripple effect through your members' lives. Leading the way in this spiritual rhythm is a vital aspect of your pastoral/spiritual leadership and helps the people you shepherd to

spiritually grow!

It's our hope that people who attend a Life Group at Fellowship are challenged, encouraged, and become connected with each other. These connections are then carried throughout the week as our people live out the gospel of Jesus Christ in a powerful way!

### ***Diving Deeper: Meeting Weekly is a Spiritual Rhythm***

Let's be honest, our lives are packed full of busyness with different things competing for our time, attention, commitment, and focus. A weekly meeting is a big commitment, and leading a weekly meeting is an even bigger commitment! So why do we insist on Life Groups meeting weekly? Again, good question!

#### **A Spiritual Rhythm of Presence**

The answer can be summed by 6 simple words: creating a spiritual rhythm of presence. Remember, Life Groups are about "living life together on purpose with God and each other." A weekly meeting (where we are present with each other, sharing our hearts in a vulnerable and authentic manner, and exploring God's word together) serves to create a spiritual rhythm in our lives. Spiritual rhythms are one of the most powerful catalysts that God uses to propel us towards spiritual growth. When we commit to a spiritual rhythm, the Holy Spirit does something supernaturally powerful in our lives. This is especially tangible when we meet up in groups! So much so, that the Apostle Paul used one of the most powerful images for God's manifest presence in all of scripture, the Jerusalem Temple, when he talked about the supernatural awesomeness that takes place when followers of Jesus gather together.

"Don't *you all* know that *you all* are God's Temple, and the Spirit of God dwells among *you all*?" (1 Corinthians 3:16, Josh's translation)

Notice the plural "*you all*" here. Although it isn't always obvious in our English translations, Paul is addressing the believers of the church in Corinth as a group. He is talking about what happens when followers of Jesus gather together in each other's presence. The Holy Spirit shows up! Sometimes this happens in a distinctly tangible manner. Sometimes it takes place in a powerfully subtle movement. And quite often, He shows up in the words and actions of the people in our Life Groups.

#### **A Spiritual Rhythm with Supernatural Significance**

So, when we gather together in our Life Groups, we engage in a spiritual discipline with

supernatural significance. On a weekly basis, we prioritize a spiritual rhythm in our lives that catalyzes our spiritual growth in the context of a caring community. In our core Life Group verses, the author of Hebrews makes a very similar point when he describes the awesome work that Jesus did for us, so that we can find belonging in a Christ centered community. (In fact, he even uses Temple imagery in the verses right before this quote (19-22) to introduce and express the importance of his point.)

*“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:23-25, ESV)*

Setting aside one afternoon or evening a week is difficult. Like we said before, we have a lot demanding our time, pulling us in different directions. But, just think what our church would look like if each of us was so committed to each other that we thoughtfully designed our lives and committed to this spiritual rhythm. We would be intentionally exposing ourselves to God’s desire that we spiritually grow in community!

### **Practical Steps for Leaders: Staying Connected with Social Media**

Thanks to the era of technology we live in, it’s pretty easy to stay connected throughout the week. We can call, text, Facetime, Instagram, group message, and even [insert cool new relevant aspect of social media here] each other whenever we want! Social media is a beautiful thing! It can’t replace being physically present with each other at our weekly meetings, but, it can carry to the spirit of these meetings throughout the week. A great philosophy for social media is using it as a tool to supplement your group time. It is not a substitute for physical presence, instead it is a reminder of how we have previously been present with each other. When used properly, social media should create a longing for this same presence to take place in the very near future.

#### **Some Ideas for Staying Connected with Social Media:**

- Start a Facebook Message Group (GroupMe, SnapChat, Slack, etc.) where you can share prayer requests, life celebration events, or other special things with your group.
- Make sure you as a leader post regularly. Or, even better, delegate this responsibility to someone well versed in these type of things!
- Sign-off your texts, emails, conversations, etc. with “can’t wait to see you this Wednesday!” (or day of your Life Group meeting)



### ***Diving Deeper: Life Groups as Gospel Empowered Communities***

Before we move on, let's briefly look at the theological grounding of our Life Groups here at Fellowship. Do Not Fear! Theology isn't just for nerdy academics that enjoy using big words like "propitiation" and "dispensationalism." Simply put, it is the study of what God is up to in the world as he reveals Himself to us, his people. Theology is important because it gives us a healthy perspective and reminds us that we are not alone as we lead. It is the "with God" part in our Life Group Mission: "Life Groups are where we live on purpose *with God* and each other."

In his book, *Center Church*, pastor Tim Keller had this to say about the impact that our smaller communities (Life Groups) can have on the world.

*"We often think of community as simply one more thing we have to follow in the rules of behavior. "Ok, I have to read my Bible, pray, stay sexually pure - and I need to go to fellowship." But community is best understood as the way we are to do all that Christ told us to in the world. Community is more than just the result of the preaching of the gospel; it is itself a declaration and expression of the gospel. It is the demonstration of the good news of freedom in Christ through the evident display of our transformed character and our life together. It is itself part of the good news, for the good news is this: this is what Christ has won for you on the cross - a new life together with the people of God. Once you were alienated from others, but now you have been brought near."*

Wow! The way we live in and engage with our community demonstrates the gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news about God's love for his people. That's powerful stuff!

A little over 2000 years before Pastor Keller's articulate summary, the author of Hebrews (with some serious inspiration from the Holy Spirit) wrote to a church struggling to maintain its identity in a very hostile environment about the importance of setting a spiritual rhythm that involved being in each other's presence. Live we've said in a previous section, it's no coincidence that these verses provide the foundation of our understanding that Life Groups serve as the discipleship hub here at Fellowship.

*"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:23–25, ESV)*

If you look closely at these verses, you can see the importance of meeting together as we expectantly follow Jesus, in community. Yet, even more important is what the author of Hebrews calls "the



confession of our hope.” As followers of Jesus, we find our hope in Him! In fact, the confession of our hope is the gospel message, a message of good news that tells what Jesus has done on our behalf to save us from our sins restoring us into relationship with God.

When we “live life on purpose, with God and each other” (the mission of Fellowship Life Groups) we live a quality of life that is supernaturally empowered to give us meaning and purpose together in community. Here at Fellowship, we call these communities Life Groups, and it is extremely important that we (as Life Group Leaders) understand that God is at work empowering our groups to impact, not only the people who we would consider members, but the world around us! As Gospel Empowered Life Groups, we engage in community and desire that the Holy Spirit do something beyond the capabilities of any other social group, sports team, or club. We continue to trust that he will use the people around us as catalysts for our spiritual growth. And, it’s our hope that, as we grow, our lives declare this same gospel to a broken world.

(We will discuss more about the Holy Spirit’s role in the second *You are Not Alone* section below. Yeah! More Theology!)



## LIFE GROUP REQUIREMENTS

*There are a few simple things we require our leaders be onboard with in order to be considered a Fellowship Life Group:*

### **Leadership and Coaching Accountability**

As a Life Group Leader we want you to understand and represent the Mission and Vision of Fellowship. It is important that you not only understand the Values that we hold (see Values section of this handbook) but also own them and intentionally practice them within your Life Group as you lead. Our Staff and Coaches will also be intentional as we walk with you, affirming and encouraging you along the way. As a Life Group Leader you are accountable to the Staff and Coaches. We will also challenge you in your own personal walk with Jesus and, if the situation arises, confront any areas in your own life and/or leadership that are not in line with Fellowship's Mission, Vision, Values, or Statement of Faith.

### **A Regular Spiritual Rhythm of Weekly Meetings**

Creating a regular weekly spiritual rhythm of meetings is very important! So important, in fact, that there is a whole section in the handbook dedicated to it! (See *Diving Deeper: Meeting Weekly is a Spiritual Rhythm* section). We ask that each leader agree to this rhythm. If your group is currently not meeting (all together) on a weekly basis, please start working towards this. A great time to shift your perspective is during Sermon Aligned Season.

### **Alignment with the Life Group Curriculum Seasons (including Breaks)**

There are three different seasons in our Life Group Curriculum rhythm: Sermon Aligned, Group Choice, and Breaks. Each season represents the Life Group Team's intentional shepherding of our Life Groups and Life Group Leaders. (You can read more about these seasons in the *Curriculum & Rhythm* section in the *Nuts and Bolts of Fellowship Life Groups* chapter.)

It is very important that you, as a Life Group Leader, lead your group through the practice of our seasonal rhythm. Our Life Groups all need intentionally designed time where we are: aligned to the mission and vision of the church (Sermon Aligned Season), able to answer the felt needs specific to our group members (Group Choice Season), and time to rest and engage in fellowship (Life Groups Breaks).

### The High Calling of Leading a Life Group: A Pastoral Responsibility

Let's get one thing straight from the very beginning: Leading a Life Group is a high calling, especially here at Fellowship! Life Groups aren't unique to Fellowship. Many churches have thriving smaller communities within their church. Leadership of these communities ranges from simply hosting a group in someone's home, to accepting pastoral responsibility for the people that regularly attend. At Fellowship, we consider our Life Group Leaders to be on the front line of caring for our people and helping them engage in the discipleship process. Life Group Leadership is, in fact, a pastoral responsibility.

#### Important Things to Remember

This may sound like a daunting task, but our Life Group Team wants to ensure you of a few important things:

- **You are not alone!** We have a whole system of support ready to help you along in the process of leading. The Staff Life Group Team and our amazing volunteer Life Group Coaches are dedicated to walk alongside of you and help you as you pastor your group. In addition to our Coaches, our church has set up a fantastic system to resource our people when they need help. As a Life Group Leader, through your coach, you have access to some awesome people, ministries, and resources!
- **You are called!** Remember, God calls people to lead in places that will stretch and grown them. As long as you are committed and working towards growth in your leadership skills, you will be equipped with what you need to lead and connect to the people (like your Life Group Coaches) who will help you if something comes up that you haven't encountered before.
- **You are not alone! (Again)** Yes! It's so important that we had to put it twice. Like we discussed previously, God is with you. More theology coming your way!

#### Diving Deeper: The Holy Spirit's Guidance & Presence as you Lead Your Group

Remember the Great Commission?

*"Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 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."'" (Matthew 28:16–20, ESV)*

Jesus told his disciples to continue on his gospel work and promised that he would be with them all along the way! This same promise applies to us as we lead our groups! And, as if that wasn't enough, he also promised us that the Holy Spirit would be actively leading and guiding us also!

*“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” (John 16:7–15, ESV)*

What an awesome privilege to have the Spirit of God living inside of us, guiding us, and empowering us as we lead! I can't tell you how many times I stumbled through ministry, doing my best to prepare and plan for things like programs or personal conversations. Yet, many times, things didn't go as expected: the sound system failed, the lighting went out, one time I even lost my teaching notes right before I went I walked up to the pulpit to preach! But the Holy Spirit showed up, giving me the words to speak and causing a powerful moment where people's lives were eternally changed. (I still haven't found those notes, but I was told later about a “helpful” older lady in the congregation that was notorious for picking up after people and putting things, like a binder with teaching notes, in their “proper” places.)

There were also times when I met up with someone interested in giving their life to Jesus and, lo and behold, despite an extensive training course and several past evangelistic experiences, I stumbled and bumbled through the simple gospel message. The clarity of my presentation was so utterly lacking that I had to conclude, in my own head, that no one would ever be interested in giving their life to the Jesus I had just so grossly misrepresented. But, you know what?! I've been completely and utterly floored when the Holy Spirit has worked despite me. In my weakness, His power was evident and He stepped into the gap I'd left with my evangelistic floundering. He moved in a powerful way, drawing this individual to Himself as she surrendered her life and became a follower of Jesus.

Please don't ever forget that when you are leading and actively pursuing God's will for your life, He will show up in powerful ways. When you are weak, He is strong. If I could hazard a theological guess, I'd say that when He does things through us, things that beyond our capabilities— or even when He works despite our momentary mental lapses— He helps us remember that it is by His power any of these things are possible. So, when you are feeling inadequate, inept, or invertebrate (a state of spinelessness) just remember: you have the Spirit of God relationally draping His arms over your shoulders encouraging, strengthening, and working through you as you lead!

## A LEADERSHIP ACROSTIC

### A Leadership Acrostic

(Gently stolen and modified with permission from Steve Gladen's *Small Groups with a Purpose*)

From time to time, we all need a simple one page acrostic to help us remember aspects of leadership that can quickly fade to the background if we aren't intentionally pursuing growth. Here is an acrostic on leadership to help remind us what we are called to do as we lead.

#### **L- Listen to God Daily**

Model listening to God and meditating on his word. How can I instruct others to listen to God if I am not doing it myself?

#### **E- Empower Every Member to Share a Group Role or Responsibility**

Good leaders develop people within their influence. Leading involves actively empowering your group members to take ownership of your group as they become an essential and valuable part of the group.

#### **A- Authentically Shepherd Your Sheep**

Developing your heart as a shepherd and see everyone in their group as someone within your sphere of influence and care. (John 10:1-18)

#### **D- Develop a Healthy and Balanced Spiritual Life**

Know when to say "No!" and balance your time wisely, making sure your own physical and spiritual health are a priority.

#### **E- Engage in Ongoing Personal Care and Development**

Be a continual learner and provide your group members opportunities to learn. Engage in an ongoing leadership pathway.

#### **R- Release New Potential**

The best leaders take seriously the Great Commission to go and make disciples. They are always looking for ways to give the ministry away and are continually developing other current and potential leaders.

#### **S- Sacrificial Living**

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:1)

#### **H- Humbly Lead Your Group**

Jesus' washing of his disciple's feet is a great example of his willingness to do whatever it takes, even the lowest form of servitude [yes this is a real word!]. Once you are ready to do the most menial tasks for Jesus, you are ready to do anything!

#### **I- Invest Your Time in Others**

The only way to earn the relational capital necessary to lead and speak truth into people's lives is to invest in the group members under your pastoral care purposely spending time to develop relationships.

#### **P- Pray Consistently for Your Group**

A great leader knows his people and their struggles, even if they are not shared in public requests for prayer.

## THE LIFE GROUP VALUES

Here at Fellowship, our Values are a set of unique biblically saturated phrases that help define the culture of our church, as well as enable us to articulate our heart motivations. Life Groups are the context in which these Values are lived out in a real and tangible way. As Life Group Leaders, it's our responsibility to make sure these Values permeate our groups and guide us in living out the gospel empowerment promised to us by Jesus in the Great Commandments and Great Commission. As you read through these Life Group Values, spend some time praying through God's desire for your group. Prepare to walk through each Value with your Life Group Coach, discussing how your group can proactively engage with each Value and discover areas of strength and necessary growth.

### Get Together

We gather as diverse generations, ethnicities, and backgrounds to live in love and unity

- Committing to be physically present with each other (on a weekly basis) while at the same time recognizing and celebrating God's empowering presence among us
- Practicing Jesus' command to love each other while at the same time speaking truth into each other's lives (Eph. 4:14-16; 1 John 3:11; Rom. 13:8; 1 Peter 1:22)
- Valuing each other, like Jesus values us, seeing the potential in an individual for God to save, work, and transform as they engage with mature members of our Life Groups
- Actively looking for ways to care for the people in our group by recognizing and meeting their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs in ways that will empower them towards growth in all of these areas
- Being active in each other's lives outside of the weekly Life Group meetings by praying for each other, participating in social gatherings, and celebrating life events

### **Biblical Examples**

*"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor." (Galatians 6:1-4)*

*“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:42–47, ESV)*

### **Practical Examples and Challenges for Leaders to Step into and Engage their Group:**

#### Practical Examples:

- Providing meals during difficult times
- Visiting people in the hospital
- Figuring out childcare for parents that are struggling to find or afford a childcare during group time
- Stepping in during emergency financial situations
- Gathering for holiday celebrations
- Attending Fellowship events as a group
- Setting up a game night, dinner party, sporting event, etc.

#### Challenges for Leader and Group:

- Challenge your group to meet more consistently (weekly) if they are not already
- Plan, or designate someone to plan regular monthly social gatherings
- Challenge your group to focus on the family values of caring for each other
- Challenge your group to keep in touch during the week through social media, phone calls, and or texts (See *Practical Steps for Leaders: Staying Connected with Social Media* section under *Why Fellowship Life Groups Meet Weekly*)
- Build a calendar each season so your group members can prioritize group gatherings well in advance

#### **Fellowship Resources:**

- Young Adults: [FellowshipDallas.org/YoungAdults](http://FellowshipDallas.org/YoungAdults)
- Life Group Online Search: [FellowshipDallas.org/Groups](http://FellowshipDallas.org/Groups)



- Gather and Connect Events: [Connect@FellowshipDallas.org](mailto:Connect@FellowshipDallas.org)
- When Helping Hurts: [RightNowMedia.org/content/series/855](http://RightNowMedia.org/content/series/855)
- For financial assistance or other care related needs: [Care@FellowshipDallas.org](mailto:Care@FellowshipDallas.org)

## **Get Real**

We live in honest relationships as we are transformed through the unchanging truth and grace of Jesus Christ.

- Honest relationships Vertical then Horizontal
  - First with the triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)
  - Then in fellowship with the Body of Christ
- Biblically Centered: the Bible (the inspired Word of God) is always central to what we study and discuss
- Holy Spirit empowers and guides us to places of honest vulnerability and authentic openness in relationship with each other
- Real relationships created in the context of non-judgement that focus on living out the gospel so intently that it spills out into our everyday lives.

## **Biblical Examples**

*“And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”” (Luke 22:39–46, ESV)*

The concept of offering yourself as a living sacrifice and the implications of this worshipful act within the body of Christ found in Romans 12:1-21

**Practical Examples and Challenges for Leaders to Step into and Engage their Group:**

## Practical Examples:

- Sub-divide during your group discussion and prayer time so you can make sure everyone has a chance to share (even the more introverted people)
- During your group time, lead the way by being vulnerable and open about your own relationship with God and the spiritual struggles you face
- Address inter-group conflict in a timely manner!
- Start a separate bible Study with a few members of your Life Group outside of your normal weekly meeting
- Pair people together in mentoring/accountability relationships
- Contact your group on a regular basis through digital media and let them know you are praying for them

## Challenges for Leader and Group:

- Make sure your group time is structured well
- Ensure everyone has the opportunity to share (sub-divide, ask individuals, etc.)
- Structure your space to include everyone
- Make sure you spend time in prayer for each other!!!
- Challenge your group to go deeper in vulnerability, accountability, truth (God's Word), etc.
- Challenge your group to pray for our church leadership and staff
- Challenge your group to be involved in our upcoming STEPS Recovery ministry (Fall 2019)
- Encourage your group to attend a Training Experience or offered Bible Studies

**Fellowship Resources:**

- Care and Counseling: [FellowshipDallas.org/Care](http://FellowshipDallas.org/Care)
- Prayer Ministry: [Prayer@FellowshipDallas.org](mailto:Prayer@FellowshipDallas.org)
- Visitation, Meals, and Financial Counseling: [Care@FellowshipDallas.org](mailto:Care@FellowshipDallas.org)
- Marriage Mentoring: [RichardK@FellowshipDallas.org](mailto:RichardK@FellowshipDallas.org)
- STEPS Recovery Ministry: [Care@FellowshipDallas.org](mailto:Care@FellowshipDallas.org)
- Training Experiences: [FellowshipDallas.org/Training](http://FellowshipDallas.org/Training)

## **Get Moving**

As Life Groups we are the context within which we challenge each other to discover and act on God's next steps in our lives.

- Speaking into each other's lives in truth and love, encouraging each other to take courageous next steps in discovering and living out our God-given purpose.
- Celebrating these steps as a family and engaging in capturing and retelling the story of God's work in our lives (individually and as a Life Group)
- Empowering confidence in discovering, using, and honing spiritual giftings and skills as they live out the gospel
- Meeting each individual where they are at and challenging them to grow in their relationship with Christ and other members of the body of Christ:
- Actively taking part in the group responsibilities delegated by their Life Group Leader:

## **Biblical Examples**

*Jesus and Zacchaeus: "He entered Jericho and was passing through. And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:1–10, ESV)*

*“Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. Command and teach these things. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.” (1 Timothy 4:7–15, ESV)*

### **Practical Examples and Challenges for Leaders to Step into and Engage their Group:**

#### Practical Examples:

- Post pictures and stories of your group’s social gatherings and stories on the Fellowship Life Group Leader Facebook page
- As a group, attend the Repurposed Training Experience
- Share your Repurposed Two Words during your group time
- Encourage your group members to join a church Service Team and help out on Sunday mornings (i.e. Fellowship Kids, Student Ministry, Welcoming and Guest Experience, etc.)
- Encourage and Celebrate group member’s baptism
- Have your group members take a spiritual gifts inventory and share the results during your group time (see *Fellowship Resources* section below)
- Create a calendar that lists shared group responsibilities and commitments, add group members’ birthdays, anniversaries, or special occasions to make it more personal

#### Challenges for Leader and Group:

- Bring on new co-leaders
- Delegating responsibilities (i.e. welcoming new guests, maintaining a prayer list, posting on social media, food, etc.)
- Challenge your group to multiply or send members out for 6 weeks to launch a new group
- Challenge your group to explore a Training Experience together (i.e. Repurposed)
- Celebrate any type of service your members are engaged in, this includes service with other

organizations not specifically affiliated with Fellowship (i.e. Young Life, local community, sports coaching (especially soccer!))

### Fellowship Resources:

- Life Group Leader Facebook Page: [www.facebook.com/groups/FDLifeGroupLeaders/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/FDLifeGroupLeaders/)
- Repurposed and other Training Experiences: [FellowshipDallas.org/Training](http://FellowshipDallas.org/Training)
- Marriage Ministry: [FellowshipDallas.org/Marriage](http://FellowshipDallas.org/Marriage)
- Baptism: [Baptisms@FellowshipDallas.org](mailto:Baptisms@FellowshipDallas.org)
- Recommended Spiritual Gifts Inventories:
  - FiveFold Ministries Inventory: [www.fivefoldsurvey.com](http://www.fivefoldsurvey.com)
  - Lifeway Spiritual Gifts Inventory: <https://tinyurl.com/y3n352rq>

## Get Out

As a Life Group, we go beyond these walls to transform our homes, communities, and the world

- Encouraging others to engage in service opportunities
  - Locally, where our members live, work, and play
  - Within the church in various areas of ministry (i.e. Children’s ministry, coffee ministry, greeting, etc.)
- Partnering with our global mission partners
- Committing to being Open groups with an invitational focus
- Understanding that group multiplication is a vital aspect of living out the gospel and engaging in Christian discipleship
- Celebrating groups member’s individual areas of service (even areas not specifically in partnership with Fellowship Dallas)
- Encouraging your group to serve together at least once a quarter in areas of greater need within the local community and the church.

### Biblical Examples

*“Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (1 Peter 4:8–11, ESV)*

*“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 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.”” (Matthew 28:16–20, ESV)*

*“So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”” (Acts 1:6–8, ESV)*

### **Practical Examples and Challenges for Leaders to Step into and Engage their Group:**

#### Practical Examples:

- Engaging in global mission trips
- Adopting a global mission partner (through prayer and financial support)
- Organizing a prayer walk in one of your members community
- Responding to natural disasters by looking throughout your community and using the LAPS Paradigm (see LAPS section below)

#### Challenges for Leader and Group:

- As a Life Group Leader, designate an interested person to develop the Outreach aspect of your group and own the Get Out Value
- Challenge your group to pick a way to serve together, using the opportunities listed on our Fellowship Service Teams website (see Fellowship Resources)
- Challenge your group to be outward facing and inviting to new members

#### **Fellowship Resources:**

- Fellowship Service Teams: [FellowshipDallas.org/Service](http://FellowshipDallas.org/Service)
- Service Opportunities in Dallas/Fort Worth Area: [FellowshipDallas.org/ServeYourCity](http://FellowshipDallas.org/ServeYourCity)
- For a look at our local and international partners: [FellowshipDallas.org/Outreach](http://FellowshipDallas.org/Outreach)

## RESPONDING TO DISASTER WITH LAPS PARADIGM

### Responding to Disaster with LAPS Paradigm

Our Value—GET OUT: We go beyond these walls to transform our homes, communities, and world.

What can I do? GET OUT + TAKE SOME LAPS

#### Look

- Drive or walk around your neighborhood
- What's the immediate need?

#### Assess

- How am I equipped to help?
- What resources could I buy or borrow?

#### Partner

- Who do I know that can serve with me?
- How can I get my Life Group Involved?
- Contact the person you're wanting to serve

#### Serve

- Don't hesitate - lead the way
- Look for opportunities to intentionally share the Gospel



# THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF LIFE GROUP LEADERSHIP

## Life Group Leaders, Co-Leaders & Coaches

### **Life Group Leaders**

Life Group Leaders are selected through an application and pastoral interview process. For more information or to apply for group leadership, email [Groups@FellowshipDallas.org](mailto:Groups@FellowshipDallas.org).

### **Co-Leaders**

Each Life Group is encouraged to have a Co-Leader or Co-Leader couple. Co-Leaders share the pastoral responsibilities of Life Group Leadership such as care, hosting gatherings, and leading discussions.

In some groups, co-leaders share responsibilities equally and lead the group together. This usually looks like a two leaders (or two couples) combining their gifts and talents accomplish the administrative and pastoral aspects of leading.

Other groups have co-leader that serve as “leaders in training.” They are usually newer to the group leadership aspect and enter into a mentoring relationship with the main leaders of the group. These types of co-leaders have usually been identified by the group leaders based on their potential. Our hope is that these types of co-leaders will mentored by the primary leader(s) to take on a bigger leadership role within the group or be a champion for multiplying the group in the future.

### **Life Group Coaches**

In order for each Life Group Leader (and co-Leader) to have access to excellent support and pastoral care, each Life Group will be mentored and guided by a designated Life Group Coach.

Coaches have committed to be available to Life Group Leaders when different needs arise. In addition, they will be intentional about meeting individually with their assigned Life Group Leaders twice a year and making visits to group meetings twice a year.

Remember! Coaches are available to encourage you and to help guide you through group needs and difficult situations.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to your Coach, or directly to Life Groups Pastor Josh Carroll, if you ever need any advice or support.



## Curriculum & Rhythm

Life Groups follow a church-wide seasonal curriculum rhythm alternating between:

**Sermon-Aligned Season** (discussion guides based on the past Sunday's sermon): At the discretion of the Lead Pastor, Life Groups sync up with particular sermon series that the church leadership feel help cast vision and present vital biblical concepts to our church health. During this part of the Rhythm, the Life Group Team develops weekly Discussion Guides designed to help groups discuss aspects of the sermon series across a wide spectrum of Life Groups within the church. Leaders are encouraged to review and prepare for the group discussion in advance, and print a copy for each group attendee. (Midsize Group leaders will find printed copies in their supply boxes each week. Midsize boxes are located on shelves in the Volunteer Room next to Adult Education Room 202.)

**Group Choice Season:** (the Life Group Leaders, with input from group members, select from a list of suggested curriculums or studies that are relevant to a felt needs of their group. We encourage groups to select a topic that is relevant to their demographic and make-up – i.e. marriage, parenting, etc.) From time to time, the Life Group Team will determine that a certain pre-produced curriculum that will benefit our Life Groups will replace or supplement the normal Group Choice Season. During this time, all groups align and engage with a Churchwide Curriculum.

**Life Group Breaks:** In order to properly care for our leaders and groups members, certain chunks of the calendar are set aside as Life Group Breaks. This is to allow a break from the normal routine and to give our leaders a rest from planning and leading. We encourage you to take place in other meaningful interactions with your group during these off seasons! We also encourage you to take advantage of these breaks to avoid burnout!

### **The Life Group Guide/Curriculum**

Each week (especially during sermon aligned seasons) a few members of the Life Group Team meet up with the pastor who is scheduled to preach. We spend a lot of time thinking through each passage and thoughtfully creating questions for our Life Groups to discuss. Here is a few quick bullet points that will give you perspective on how to use the Life Group Guide.

The Life Group Guide Seeks too provide a tool that will help Life Group Leaders:

- Engage the Word of God in a thoughtful manner
- Pull out theological concepts to encounter the question “What is God revealing about himself in these passages?”

- Initiate group discussion around concepts relating to spiritual formation and prompt us to understand who we are as a Life Group.
- Challenge the group in areas of vulnerability and being known in community
- Keep the group discussion on track
- Help maintain boundaries and recover intentionality during group discussion

#### **Things the Life Group Guide is NOT:**

- An in-depth Bible Study
- An invitation to group counseling
- A rigid guide that limits our freedom of discussion
- The only way to ask a question regarding the scripture passage or topic being discussed

### **Attendance & Group Management System**

#### **Taking Weekly Attendance**

At Fellowship, we have an entire ministry set up to support the leaders of our church called Strategic Systems. Our Life Group Leaders have access to their group rosters and a weekly reminder for attendance.

You will receive an attendance email right before your meeting is scheduled to start, but please wait until after group time has started to open it. This unlocks the full functionality of the software (example, you cannot manage your membership until the group meeting time has started).

If you forget to take attendance, we will send out a reminder 3 – 4 days after your group meeting time. Even on weeks when your group does not meet, please open the weekly attendance reporting e-mail, click or tap “Report attendance now”, and click or tap “We did not meet”. *This helps us understand which groups are taking a week off and which are not using the attendance system.*

#### **How the System Categorizes the People who Come to Your Group**

In order to keep good records of what is happening in our Life Groups, the attendance and roster system we use categorizes people with three different statuses: Leader, Member, or Visitor.

These are purely internal categories within our system and how you tag someone shouldn't impact their potential connection to the group or your ability to pastorally care for them. We use our system simply as a way to know who is connected to our Life Groups, what level of involvement our leaders believe these people to have in our groups, and how we might pastor every single person who is connected to a group (no matter what their current status) better.



- **Leaders:** These are the people that are designated to lead the Life Group. Please do not edit this status. If you need to add or remove a Leader, email [Groups@FellowshipDallas.org](mailto:Groups@FellowshipDallas.org).
- **Visitors:** Anytime someone starts attending your group, they should be added as a visitor until they have shown a measure of commitment. All visitors can be promoted to membership during attendance once they have begun attending regularly.
- **Members:** These are the people that make up the core of your group, who consistently attend weekly meetings and are actively engaged in other aspects of your group such as service, social, care, etc.

### **Auditing Your Group's Roster**

Once a year, we will ask Life Group Leaders to audit their roster. We do this to make sure that the people on a group's roster are still involved with the group and attend consistently.

Removing people from membership or visitor status of your group does NOT remove them from the church database, but does allow various ministries to know who needs support in connecting and reconnecting. This helps us know which groups have space to grow or may need to discuss multiplication.

### **Group Member Inquiries & Group Finder**

All of our "open" groups are listed on our website. Should you ever have changes to your group meeting time, location, or description, please email [Groups@FellowshipDallas.org](mailto:Groups@FellowshipDallas.org) so that we can keep our website up to date.

### **Group Interest Inquiries**

If someone is interested in your group, you will receive an email notification.

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**Fellowship Bible Church Dallas**

**New member request for Sample Life Group**

Hi Kory, There is a new Member request to join your group,

When an individual sends your Life Group a message through the online group finder, each leader will receive an e-mail from "Fellowship Bible Church Dallas" (see above image).

To ensure that you are receiving inquiry messages (and attendance e-mails), please add "@mg.churchcenter.com" to your safe senders list\*.

Upon opening the e-mail and clicking “View group requests”, you will be taken to the inquiry system.

The screenshot shows the 'Membership Request Response' interface. It features an orange header bar with the title 'Membership Request Response'. Below the header, there are four numbered callouts: 1. A blue oval highlights the 'Action' dropdown menu set to 'Don't Add to Group' and the 'Reply' section with a checked checkbox for 'Send an email to Fake'. 2. A blue oval highlights the 'From' field containing 'Kory Ahern <korya@fellowshipdallas.org>'. 3. A blue rectangle highlights the email body text: 'Thanks for your interest!', 'Mr. McTest,', 'Thank you for your interest in the Sample Life Group. My name is Kory Ahern and I'm one of the leaders of the group. Please let me know of questions I can answer that would help you decide if you'd like to visit us!', and 'Hope to hear from you soon!'. 4. A blue rectangle highlights the green button at the bottom right labeled 'Send Message & Don't Add to Group'.

1. Choose “Don’t Add to Group” from the action dropdown and make sure the checkbox for “reply” is green. This is critically important, as it will allow you to open correspondence with the individual without adding them to your membership roster (as a reminder: additions to membership should only be made during the attendance taking process).
2. Select which of your e-mail addresses you would like to utilize. Keep in mind that all remaining correspondence with the individual will go through this address.
3. Use this space and the editing tools to craft your e-mail response.
4. Ensure that the green button says “Send Message & Don’t Add to Group” and click to send when you are ready.

**In your message, be sure to include the following:**

- A friendly introduction of who you are
- A brief description of your group (i.e. age range, demographics, things your group values or enjoys doing together, etc.)
- Information about your next group meeting, including time, date, and address
- Your personal phone number, if you are comfortable.
- Some leaders opt to start with a phone call or coffee, or visit in the Hub on a Sunday, to get to know the individual before they extend an invitation to a group meeting. Some individuals may enjoy meeting the leader in advance before walking into a stranger's home.

We ask you to respond within a few days of receiving the request, and will send you a reminder if we see that you have not yet replied. It is important for anyone who expresses interest in our groups to receive a prompt follow up!

*(See Life Group Management System Section for more information)*

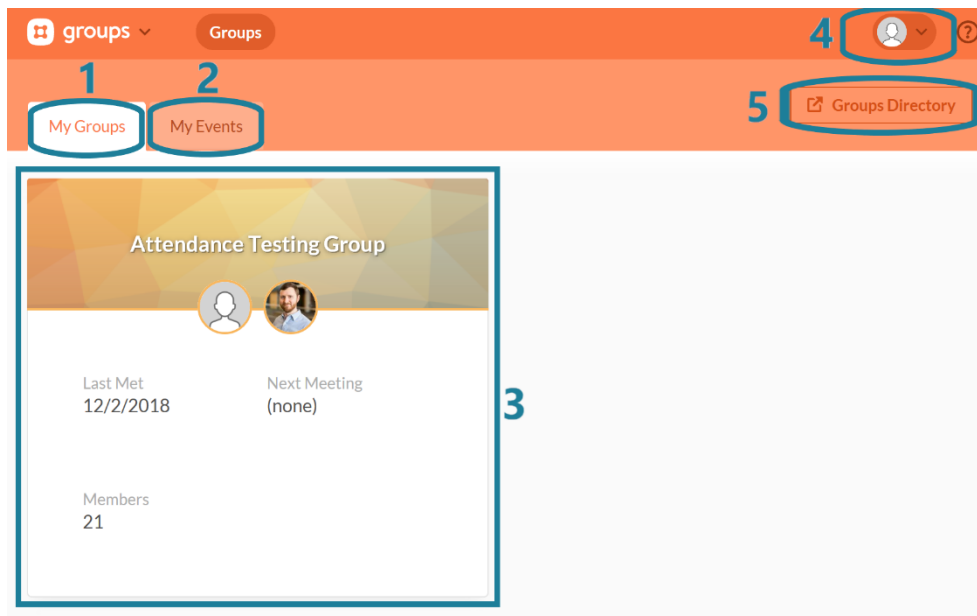
## THE LIFE GROUP MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Life Group Leaders have the option to create a login to access the full breadth of the Life Groups Management System. While this is not required, we recommend that at least one leader from every group activate this functionality and make themselves familiar with what it provides to groups.

To set-up:

1. Navigate to <https://groups.planningcenteronline.com>
2. Click “Need a password?”
3. Enter the e-mail address or phone number that Fellowship has on file for you.
4. Enter the provided code into the prompt and then create a secure password (a combination of upper/lower case letters, numbers, and symbols)

After setting up a login, you should be on a screen that lists your Life Groups and your Life Group events.



1. This tab provides access to all groups that you are a part of as either a leader or a member.
2. The events tab provides access to all upcoming and historical meeting records.
3. This space includes all groups you are a part of with basic details.
4. Access to your personal profile where you can see another group list and access your history of communications, including those that you have sent out to individuals inquiring about your group.
5. Access to the public Life Groups directory for Fellowship.

Once you have selected a group you lead, you will enter into that group's administrative page. On the left bar, you will find a variety of options. This list details the do's-and-don'ts of those features:

- **Members:** Edit membership including adding members, removing members (note: removing someone who has attended your group from membership will push them to "visitor" status), printing your membership roster, or e-mailing members of the group.\*
- **Events:** Reference your meetings, including the ability to take attendance on any past meetings. Please **do not** remove any meetings on the calendar as they have been scheduled by the Life Groups staff for the purposes of cueing your attendance taking.
- **Resources:** Fellowship does not currently utilize this functionality.
- **Settings:** View your group name, picture, location, and description (note that contact information is intentionally left blank so that prospective members send trackable inquiries through our group management system, allowing our staff to follow up on prospective members). *Do not* make any edits to this page. Please email [Groups@FellowshipDallas.org](mailto:Groups@FellowshipDallas.org) to update your group information. This ensures that our group pages are kept uniform and matching our branding standards, as well as informs our staff of any changes so that we always know your most up to date information.
- **Overview:** Provides you with detailed analytics on your group as a whole.
- **Attendance:** Provides access to a detailed attendance history of your Life Group.

*\*Reminder: These are purely internal categories within our system and how you tag someone shouldn't impact their potential connection to the group or your ability to pastorally care for them. We use our system simply as a way to know who is connected to our Life Groups, what level of involvement our leaders believe these people to have in our groups, and how we might pastor every single person who is connected to a group (no matter what their current status) better.*

**For Help & Support:** If you ever have any questions about working with the attendance system or overall group management system, please contact the Strategic Systems team via [Support@FellowshipDallas.org](mailto:Support@FellowshipDallas.org) or 972-852-4151.





