

valued leader | biblical community | basic building blocks | minister to people | life change context of community | transformational community | a family of disciples on mission | safe fun | relational | life-giving | **NEW** | relational spiritual | **LIFE GROUP LEADERS** | missional growth | footsteps of Jesus | **GUIDE** | | multiplication movement | making disciples | developing leaders | planting churches | respond | relate reach | restore | replicate | relationship-centric curriculum-free | share our stories | authentic community | designed for relationships

Family of disciples on mission | accountability | encourage one another | love one another rooted | rhythm | goals | equal right of participation | fellowship | guided discipleship | spiritual growth | worship together | missional engagement | affirm authentic interaction | conflict is part of group life | speak the truth in love | promoting participation | | practicing healthy and sustainable rhythms | **FEARLESS** | leadership pray regularly | **FAMILY** | divine wisdom | offer a listening ear | **OF CHURCHES** | encouraging word | ongoing communication | depth of study | social gathering | | truth and revelation | practicing commu-



Dear Life Group Leader,

Welcome! You are here because you are a valued leader of one of the expressions of biblical community, Life Groups. This guide is to help you learn one of the basic building blocks of how we minister to people within the Fearless Family of Churches. We believe that life change happens best in the context of community. That transformational community is a Life Group. By leading one of these groups, you are partnering with the Fearless Network Churches to help people become Fearless Followers.

Our Life Groups are designed to be a place where we can grow as a family of disciples on mission. Life Group gatherings are intentionally designed to be safe, fun, relational, and life-giving environments where relational, spiritual and missional growth happens.

We are, therefore, deliberate in equipping you to lead, and helping you as you lead. We connect you with other Life Group leaders so you can learn from one another. We also bring a support system of Shepherding Elders who care for and pray with you along your journey.

So, enjoy reading, and enjoy the journey!

Life Groups Team
FEARLESS FAMILY OF CHURCHES

WHO WE ARE

Our Fearless Family of Churches is a network of support to each other. We journey together in the footsteps of Jesus to intentionally and compellingly make Him known to people who have yet to meet him.

MISSION

Following Jesus and Fearlessly making Him known

VISION

To catalyze a church multiplication movement that makes disciples, develops leaders` and plants churches.

THE 5 R's

We believe every Fearless Follower lives a life that healthfully expresses what we call the Five R's:

- **Respond** to who God is and what He is doing
- **Relate** to one another as family
- **Reach** others with the hope of Jesus
- **Restore** what is broken
- **Replicate** what Jesus is doing in us

LIFE GROUPS MISSION

Our Life Groups are places where people can become **a Family of Disciples on Mission**

A Family...

Every one of us longs to belong - to be known, accepted and cared for. As a family, we cultivate an environment where we care for one another. Family environments include kids and Guests. They're relationship-centric, and they're curriculum-free. They happen any place families like to meet (think backyards, beaches, living rooms and parks) and at times convenient for the Life Group.

...Of Disciples...

Jesus is our living leader, and he's called each of us to follow him with our lives, so our Life Groups work together to help each other follow Jesus more closely by reading and applying the Bible to our lives, having honest conversations about where we are spiritually and asking God to help us make Him known to the people in our lives who don't yet know Him.

...On Mission.

Jesus invites us to expand his family of followers by fearlessly demonstrating and declaring our faith. Our Life Groups are places that help us share our stories and how the Gospel has changed our stories. Life Groups help us discern how the Holy Spirit is calling us to participate in reaching others with the hope of Jesus and restoring what's broken in our world. This takes patience, commitment and hard work.

WHY LIFE GROUPS?

Life change happens in the context of authentic community.

We are designed for relationships. Relationships define us, grow us, challenge us, strengthen us, and bless us. Our culture devalues personal relationships, but Scripture requires relationships for spiritual growth.

*As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.
(Prov. 27:17)*

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

Discipleship happens best in the context of community.

Life groups provide a community of in-depth study, application and accountability for spiritual growth.

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Heb. 10:25)

Life Groups are the best vehicle for missional living.

Through life groups we show godly love to one another and demonstrate that we are disciples of Christ.

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. (John 13:34-35)

OUR LIFE GROUPS MODEL

- Life groups in the Fearless Family of Churches are normally formed out of Rooted groups, three semesters a year. We may also create Life Groups from the congregation.
- Life Groups may be single or mixed gender and are often medium to long-term in nature. Groups are also for all ages, interests, days, times, and locations.
- Life Group leaders are often part of the Rooted Group that transitions into a Life Group.
- Groups may be formed around common interests e.g. single groups, men's groups, marriage groups, etc.
- Groups determine a rhythm for meeting that enables them to achieve the goals of living as a family of disciples on mission.
- Groups typically slow down or take a break in the summer months.
- Groups either discuss Fearless resources or other recommended, Bible-based and theologically sound material.
- Life Groups typically meet in homes but may meet elsewhere.
- All group members have equal right of participation in the Life Group.

YOUR ROLE

YOUR JOB DESCRIPTION:

Position Summary:

- A Life Group Leader creates environments for their Life Group to grow as a family of disciples on mission.

Supporting Relationships:

- The Life Groups Coordinator and Shepherding Elders support the Life Group Leader.

Responsibilities:

- Lead the Life Group by promoting participation among group members and monitoring the group's health and duration.
- Lead the group in determining and practicing healthy and sustainable rhythms that help them become a family of disciples on mission.
- Delegate and practice shared leadership.

Time Investment:

- 2-4 hours per week

Commitment:

- 2 years

Qualifications:

- Character
Has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that results in a life that pursues God's best as described in the Word of God and is evident by spiritual fruit. Shows a desire to share faith story and helps others come into a relationship with Jesus. Supports and believes in Ridge Point's mission and statement of belief.
- Chemistry
Has a desire to be supportive to other team members and the faith community by showing flexibility, cooperation and teach-ability.
- Competency
Possesses the gifts needed to carry out the role and has a willingness to continually learn and practice best practices. Shows a desire to invite, equip and empower others to join in serving.

Prerequisites

- Member of or willing to join the Fearless Family of Churches
- Member of or willing to join a Life Group
- Have the time, emotional capacity and moral discernment to lead a Life Group
- Attend Life Group leader trainings.

Note: Previous experience in facilitating group conversation is an added advantage.

HEALTHY LIFE GROUP LEADERS

- Have a healthy and growing personal spiritual life.
- Have the time, emotional capacity and moral discernment to lead a Life Group.
- Pray regularly for divine wisdom, guidance, discernment and growth in their group.
- Offer a listening ear and an encouraging word.
- Establish and maintain healthy and ongoing communication with members outside group time.
- Prepare in advance for group time.
- Share leadership responsibility.

HEALTHY LIFE GROUPS

The most critical element for healthy Life Groups is leadership. As a leader, you set the pace and tone for your group by:

Providing Leadership and Direction

Your group will look to you to provide consistency, value and direction.

Sharing Leadership

Sharing responsibility helps everyone participate and bring their gifts to the group. Participation leads to greater commitment.

Providing a compelling Life Group experience

A compelling experience is achieved through:

- Depth of Study
It is relatively easy for the Life Group to be a social gathering. Strive for moving the group from social engagement to biblical study, application and accountability for spiritual growth.
- Biblical Study
The Bible is your primary study tool. Center your group on the truth of God's Word. Devote sufficient time to studying Scriptures, asking the Holy Spirit to bring truth and revelation.

- **Practicing Community**
Biblical community involves worship, prayer and communion. Incorporating these practices in your group life enhances the spiritual unity of the group.

Seeking to know and to be known

As a leader, your authenticity flows into the group. Share honestly from your own life. Show care and appreciation for the members of the group and get to know them individually. This fosters trust, the glue that holds the group together.

LIFE GROUP **YOUR**

DOs AND DON'Ts

Things to do...

- Do meet regularly for fellowship
- Do have guided discussion
- Do pursue spiritual growth
- Do pray and worship together
- Do pursue missional engagement together

Things to avoid...

- Don't turn the Life Group into a business meeting
- Don't take offerings
- Don't invite controversial speakers
- Don't use extra-biblical material
- Don't pursue controversial topics

GROUP DYNAMICS

The goal of the Life Group gathering is to grow as a family of disciples on mission. You should respond to different scenarios with these goals in mind. Here are some examples and how to respond.

Overly Talkative

- Affirm what they are saying, and redirect the question to other members to share their thoughts on the subject.
- Maintain interest while looking for an opportunity to redirect. A pause may be an ideal opportunity to jump in.
- If you experience push back, or if they persist in taking over the meeting time, consider meeting them one-on-one rather than confronting in front of the group to discuss the issue.

Emotionally Needy

- Show healthy concern and do not minimize the person or issue.
- Offer to meet with them outside of group for prayer and more focused support instead of focusing on them for the entire group time.
- If more care is needed than the group can offer, recommend additional support, i.e. a counseling group or one of the other care options provided by the church.

Shy

- Never directly call them out for not speaking. Rather, encourage the participant by listening to, appreciating, and affirming their comments.
- Bring them into the conversation by saying something like.... "So (person's name), what do you think?"

Overly Spiritual

- This is someone who makes everything deep and spiritual without sharing how it personally applies to them or how they are living out these truths.
- Thank them for their insight and affirm their knowledge of scripture.
- Encourage them to avoid using cliché phrases and to speak from actual related experiences and personal application.

Going Off Topic

- A little digression is good for people to share related stories and for relationship building, but always try to avoid unnecessary tangents, especially if they are avoidance tactics. Gently bring the group back to the discussion at-hand and refocus the conversation.
- Be prepared to change the direction of the meeting if needed. The primary goal is to create an environment where people feel loved and accepted.

Differences of Opinion

- Difference of opinion is part of healthy dialogue. Don't feel the need to ensure everyone is in agreement before you move the conversation along. Affirm each person for what they are sharing, and avoid turning the meeting into an argument over facts, figures or opinions.
- Sometimes, it is better to let the group go and afterwards research the issues, then come back to the matter later. You may consider inviting someone well versed in that field to speak into the conversation.

DEALING WITH INHIBITORS

As a leader, one of your responsibilities is to help facilitate authentic conversation during your time together.

Unfortunately, over time some of us have developed coping mechanisms that might inhibit this authentic interaction. Here are some examples of inhibitors:

The Clown

- Clowns use humor to avoid difficult or uncomfortable topics. When someone asks a question or shares something that makes them uneasy, the clown will try to make a joke to relieve their own tension. This inhibits depth and encourages superficiality. If left unchecked, this can lead the entire group to engage in additional funny comments and a diversion from the topic of discussion. While it is okay to joke and laugh, make sure it does not take away from the depth of the relationship. Remain focused on the person and topic, and bring everyone back by asking follow-up questions.

The Comforter

- Sometimes, members of the group get emotional when sharing. The comforter will then spring to action, looking for tissues and even hugging the other person. The comforter may use words like "It's okay, I got you" and offer themselves to help. Though, this is often a good gesture, it results in the one sharing stopping and never finishing what they were talking about. It is important to explain that the group is a safe place to share and that when one becomes vulnerable and emotions well up, we should give them the time to say all they need to say and offer support in a manner that enables them to do so. Keep your group from going to the rescue when a member is sharing something deep.

The Deflector

- In some groups, you may find that one member talks about the others rather than themselves or deflects the question asked. Instead of a member explaining why they behave a certain way, they deflect the question towards a spouse or another group member. To avoid this, set a rule that everyone needs to share their own stories and only share other people's stories with their permission. When a member deflects, gently refocus and bring them back on topic.

DEALING WITH CONFLICT

Conflict is part of group life. It is not a matter of if but when conflict happens. Conflicts can actually be positive when handled biblically and with mutual respect and can result in incredible growth for the group.

A word of caution: Never avoid or let conflicts go unaddressed for longer than necessary. Always seek a way for the group to work through it.

Jesus' words in Matthew 18:15-17 offer some practical steps for solving conflict between individuals:

- Disagreements should first be handled by the individuals involved, outside of group time.
- If the individuals still cannot work it out, they might ask their small-group leader to play the role of arbiter.
- In extreme cases, if the above steps do not result in resolution, it may become necessary for the group leader to ask an offending person(s) to take a break from the group until healing comes. Sometimes the health and survival of a whole group cannot be sacrificed for one or more stubborn individuals.
- Reach out to staff if more help is needed.

Some helpful tips for dealing with conflict

- Always hear both sides.
- Speak the truth in love.
- Don't take sides; ensure you validate each person's experience.
- Look for immediate solutions.
- Use "I feel" statements rather than accusatory "you always, you never" etc.... statements.
- Try to identify the deeper issues where they exist.

ks | minister to people | mission | safe | fun | relationship movement | making disciples | accountability | encourage one another | love | fellowship | spiritual growth | interaction | speak the truth in love | promoting participation | a listening ear | encouraging word | ongoing communication | expectations | commitment to one another | rhythm of life | shared ownership

GETTING STARTED

PREPARING FOR THE FIRST GATHERING

So, what should you do now that you are the Life Group leader?

Prepare to contact your Life Group.

- Select a place and 2-3 dates that work for you to gather with your Life Group.
- Determine if children will be included in the first gathering.
- Confirm you have everyone's contact information. Check with the Life Groups Coordinator if you're missing any information.

Send an email to contact your Life Group.

- Introduce yourself briefly, especially if you don't know everyone in the group.
- Offer a couple of days, times and locations for your group's first touch point.
- Communicate whether or not children are involved in the first gathering.
- State your agenda for the first night: to get to know one another.
- Provide a snack theme (desserts, nachos, etc.) and ask everyone to contribute.
- Ask if anyone has any particular food allergies or aversions.
- Share your contact information and your preferred method of communication.
- Communicate finalized details about your upcoming gathering to your Life Group.

Prepare for your first gathering.

- Be prepared to share a bit about yourself and what your hopes are for the group. (Hint: check out the first page of this packet!)
- Surf the web for some icebreaker questions.
- Have some of the "Family of Disciples on Mission" handouts ready to explain to your group.
- Put together a plan for your time together.
- Which icebreaker question will you ask?
- When will you share a bit about yourself? What will you share?
- What will you invite others to share about themselves?
- When will you talk about the aim of a Life Group?

If you're gathering...

- ...in your home, clean up well in advance, set up anything you need to and rest for a few minutes before your group arrives.
- ...in a public place, arrive early, use the restroom and set up anything you need to before your group arrives.
- ...in someone else's home, ask when you should arrive (suggest 15-30 minutes early), set up anything you need to, and use the restroom before your group arrives.

Pray by name for the people in your Life Group.

- Pray that your Life Group's first gathering is a positive experience.

YOUR FIRST GATHERING

Here are some goals for your first gathering:

- The rhythm of your Life Group - weekly, twice a month or otherwise. Align this with the mission of being a family of disciple on mission. Settle on a rhythm that ensures consistency and participation of all group members.
- Clarify expectations for the Life Group. What are realistic and unrealistic expectations?
- Make a commitment to one another to stick with the agreed expectations and rhythm of life. This is the key to shared ownership.
- Determine how you will include children and guests in your group.

STUDY MATERIAL

This will probably be a critical question for your continued Life Groups gatherings. We offer the following options (you may find some books at the book store):

- Recommended topical book studies in alignment with the rhythms of Rooted.
- Bible study journals around the 5R's (Respond, Relate, Reach, Restore, Replicate).
- Studies of the books of the Bible.
- Sermon based study guides will soon be available for groups.

LEADER SUPPORT

On-Going Equipping

Our team is committed to providing you with care, support and encouragement as you begin leading your new Life Group. The Life Groups ministry team will serve as guides during your first three months of meeting helping you find resources for study. After this you will receive on-going support, training, prayer and care to better equip as a life group leader.

For more information email [**groups@fearlessfollower.org**](mailto:groups@fearlessfollower.org).

Life Group Leaders Network

At the start of every quarter we gather Life Group leaders for a time of networking, encouragement and equipping. These gatherings provide space for us to collectively look toward how God is working in our groups and expand our vision towards where He continues to lead us.

Care Resources

Shepherding Elders provide care to Life Groups and life group leaders. If there are situations in your group that require additional or specialized care, the Care and Support team will guide you. For a full list of options and more information please email [**care@fearlessfollower.org**](mailto:care@fearlessfollower.org).

NOTES:

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missional | authentic interaction | conflict of group life | speak the truth | promoting participation | practicing healthy and sustainable rhythms | leadership pray regularly | divine wisdom | offer a listening ear

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| encouraging word | ongoing communication | depth of study | social gathering | truth and revelation | practicing community