

*The*  
**BEGINNING TOGETHER**  
**Study**

An 8-week Group Study of **COMMUNITY**

*Experiencing authentic relationships with a few others where  
the life and love of Jesus Christ is tangible,  
grace is freely given and  
real stories are amazingly rewritten to  
become all that God has created us to be.*



*We live our mission to help people find their way back to God.*

## **Overview of the BEGINNING TOGETHER Study**

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>Session 1</b> | <b>Life is Better Together</b>                 |
| <b>Session 2</b> | <b>The Journey Is Better Together</b>          |
| <b>Session 3</b> | <b>Habits for A Better Community</b>           |
| <b>Session 4</b> | <b>Practicing A Better Grace</b>               |
| <b>Session 5</b> | <b>"We Believe Hope is For Everyone"</b>       |
| <b>Session 6</b> | <b>"We Demonstrate Extravagant Generosity"</b> |
| <b>Session 7</b> | <b>"We Are Extraordinary Neighbors"</b>        |
| <b>Session 8</b> | <b>"We Are World Changers"</b>                 |

### **Group Resources**

**LIFE Group Member Contact List**  
**LIFE Group Prayer List**  
**LIFE Group Roles**  
**LIFE Group Agreement**

## LIFE Groups

*The Beginning Together Study, WEEK 1*

**Life is Better Together!**

**John 10:9-10; Ephesians 2:1-10**



*Helping People Find Their Way Back to God*

Welcome to your new LIFE Group! The mission of First Christian Church (and this LIFE Group) is to help people find their way back to God through worship, community, service, and multiplication. This participation in your LIFE group will help you discover powerful relationships that help you navigate your way to a deeper relationship with God. It will also empower you to help others find their way to God.

This group will be a source of great friendships, strength, wisdom, care and growth for you. Actively invest yourself into the connections it will offer in the weeks ahead. Give this group a test run for this eight-week period. After that, you can decide to stay connected with the relationships that you have formed, or step into another group format

### **Get Acquainted (10 minutes)**

This is possibly your first or second times meeting most of the people in your LIFE Group. So, take time to introduce yourself and tell a little bit about your family.

Question for discussion: "If there was a book written about the *last month of your family life*... what would be a well-suited title for the book?"

Write down the names of the people in your group as you meet them (you may use the "Member Contact sheet provided at the end of this lesson, page 5).

### **Pray Together (5 minutes)**

Don't make prayer more difficult than it has to be. Prayer is simply talking to God. There are no "magic" words. Just talk honestly and respectfully to you Creator. Have someone in your group pray for God to help real friendships be built through this LIFE Group.

### **Study Together (30 minutes)**

Read John 10:9-10 together. Underline any words or phrases that stand out to you.

*"Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pasture. The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life." (John 10:9-10, NLT)*

1. How does Jesus describe the new life that He provides in these two verses?
2. What does Jesus mean by His warning about the "thief"? In what ways have you experienced what this "thief" does in your life?

First Christian Church, 20794 Hwy 92, Council Bluffs, IA 51503

[www.firstchristiancb.org](http://www.firstchristiancb.org)

3. Have someone in your group read the Ephesians 2:1-10. Describe the dramatic difference between the life without Jesus and the life with Jesus from these verses.

Dead

Alive

Tell the group how you have experienced either of these realities of this difference in your personal life?

4. Ephesians 2:10 says “we are God’s masterpiece”. Imagine that! The God of creation considers your life, gifts, abilities and potential to be a wonderful demonstration of His best work. Most of us don’t feel much like a “masterpiece”. How does our faith in Jesus bring out more of the “masterpiece” elements in us?
5. Try to put Ephesians 2:8-9 in your own words here. What important truth about your old life and new life are noted here?

### **Support Each Other (20 minutes)**

6. Do you tend to be an introvert or extrovert? In light of this, how will you actively engage in the LIFE that this group can offer to you?
7. What desires or expectations prompted the other members of your group to step out of isolation and to connect to a LIFE Group? How can you help them actively engage in the LIFE that this group offers?
8. This group can help lead you to the life Jesus created you to experience. Write here something that you hope God will do in your life in the coming months through this group.

### **Pray Together (10 minutes)**

Pray with two other group members that God will use this LIFE Group to lead each member to the best life possible in the weeks ahead. Record the prayers on your “prayer list” sheet to help you keep track of God’s answers.

First Christian Church, 20794 Hwy 92, Council Bluffs, IA 51503

[www.firstchristiancb.org](http://www.firstchristiancb.org)

# LIFE Group member list

Record the names of the other participants in your life group and their preferred contact information. You will probably want to connect with each other between LIFE Group meetings over the next few weeks. Keep this for your records. Remember LIFE Group is meant to be a safe place for sharing our faith-life and relationship together. So please do not share this information with others. Thanks.



| NAME | PREFERRED CONTACT INFO |
|------|------------------------|
|------|------------------------|

---

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

# LIFE Group prayer list



Use this sheet to record prayer requests from members of your Life group. This list will help you pray for each other between meetings. Leave some space to record any answers that God provides. You will enjoy celebrating those answers together.

Keep this for your records. Remember LIFE Group is meant to be a safe place for sharing our faith-life and relationship together. So please do not share this information with others. Thanks.

**PRAYER REQUEST**

**GOD'S ANSWER**

---

Week 1

Week 2

Week 3

Week 4

Week 5

Week 6

Week 7

Week 8

## LIFE Groups

*The Beginning Together Study, WEEK 2*

**The Journey Is Better Together!**

**Romans 12:1-2**



Welcome back to your new LIFE Group! Our mission is to help people find their way back to God through worship, community, service, and multiplication. Your LIFE group will help you continue to find your way to God and it will empower you to help others find their way back to God.

This group will be a source of great friendships, strength, wisdom, care and growth for you. Invest yourself into the community it will offer in the weeks ahead.

### **Get Acquainted. (10 minutes)**

In groups of three (triad), introduce yourself to the others by telling of a generous and unexpected kindness that you have received from another person in the past three weeks. After each person has shared in your group, pick one person to introduce your triad to the larger group.

Write down the names of the others in your LIFE Group. This will help you begin to remember everyone's names.

### **Pray Together. (5 minutes)**

Talking to God actually helps us get to know Him better. God is good. Invite God to reveal His kindness to you as He walks you through today's session.

### **Study Together. (30 minutes)**

1. Read Romans 12:1-2. (underline the most important word to you)  
*<sup>1</sup> "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercies, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing, and perfect will."*

Circle the plural words in verse 1. Of the words you underlined and circled, tell which one seems most significant to you and why? Listen to the responses of others in your group.

2. Describe the meaning of some of the key words in these verses.
  - a. "urge you"
  - b. "God's mercies"
  - c. "living sacrifice"
  - d. "pattern of this world"
  - e. "transformed"
  - f. "God's ... good, pleasing, and perfect will"

3. When you reflect on how God demonstrated His mercy through Jesus, what items come to your mind? List five blessings from God that are meaningful to you and share your top one or two blessings with the group. Why is surrender an appropriate response from us to a God of such great mercy?
  
4. It is true, isn't it. The world can easily pressure us according to its pattern. Think of a form mold making its impression on a piece of play-dough. The world slowly (virtually unnoticeably) puts pressure on you to be like it – “everyone else is doing it”, we say. How does verse 2 say God's transformation occurs in us? How has this been happening in your life?

**Action Steps for the week. (20 minutes)**

5. Paul uses the word “living” to communicate the ongoing journey of our devotion to God. How can this small group support each other to live for Jesus as “a living sacrifice”?
  
6. Life can sometimes feel like you are in a pressure cooker. In what area do you sense the pressure to conform to the world's pattern rather than what God created you to be? Discuss how this group can help you be like Jesus.
  
7. Take time to discuss the “Life Group Agreement”. Talk about what we need to promise to do and be to make this group the best it can be during this eight week journey.

**Pray Together (10 minutes)**

Close your time together with a prayer for each other. Ask God to bless this group and help strong friendships to be built. Prayerfully express your commitment to this group and the other members in it. Express your gratitude to God that He does not expect us to journey alone.

Thank Him for His acts of mercy over the course of your life thus far, and express your confidence that He will be with you for your whole life's journey.

## LIFE GROUP AGREEMENT

**GROUP NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**GROUP PURPOSE:** To grow in relationship, discipleship and leadership together.



As a group, we agree to the following 7 disciplines:

**1. ATTENDANCE:** To give priority to the group meeting. Call when absent or late. We will meet (frequency/day) \_\_\_\_\_ at (location) \_\_\_\_\_ and at (time) \_\_\_\_\_. If child care is needed for members of your group, discuss and agree on how your group will handle it.

**2. SAFETY:** To create a safe place where people can be heard. No quick answers or judgments.

**3. CONFIDENTIALITY:** To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential. What's said in the group stays in the group.

**4. ACCOUNTABILITY:** To give permission to group members to hold you accountable to the goals you set for yourself.

**5. ASSIMILATION:** To keep the door open to others in our church and community (unconnected people) who need what we have.

**6. SCRIPTURE:** While everyone's thoughts and opinions are valuable and encouraged, we will ultimately rely on the truth of Scripture as our final authority.

**7. GROWTH & MULTIPLICATION:** Healthy communities grow as they extend invitations to their friends. At a designated date, we will seek to multiply the group's influence by releasing new leaders and starting one or more new groups.

*I covenant together with the other members of this group to honor this agreement.*

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# LIFE Group Roles

In the next four weeks we will begin sharing some of the responsibilities of a healthy group and also use the unique gifts that God has given each member. As a group, Identify the individuals who will carry out the roles listed.



## LIFE Group Roles

## NAMES ASSIGNED

### HOSPITALITY:

Provide food/snacks. Host any planned social events.  
Call participants ahead of meetings.  
May lead the "Get-Aquainted" time each week.

### PRAYER:

Make sure each member has a prayer partner.  
Communicate prayers and praises as they occur.  
May lead the "Pray Together" times each week.

### COMMUNITY:

Acknowledge birthdays/anniversaries of members.  
Send email to members between meetings.  
Send cards to those absent at last meeting.

### SERVICE:

Ensure that each member finds a group role.  
Help identify and affirm each member's gift from God.  
May help plan the ministry project for the group to serve  
In the church or community.

### MULTIPLY:

Help members identify their "High 5" and their "ONE".  
Repeat and reinforce the B.E.L.L.S. habits of disciples for the group members.  
    Bless one person each day with a demonstration of God's love.  
    Eat with three people each week to build relationships.  
    Learn from Jesus by spending 30 minutes a week reading the gospels.  
    Listen to the Holy Spirit for guidance with relationships and conversations each day.  
    Share God's story and your story with one person each week.  
May help guide the study session when given opportunity.

# LIFE Groups

*The Beginning Together Study, WEEK 3*

**Habits for A Better Community!**

**Romans 12:3-8**



*Helping People Find Their Way Back To God*

**Big Idea:** Gathering together as a LIFE Group has great benefits. Your experience is much better as you do life together with others. Even the most introverted of us finds encouragement from the grace-filled activity with other people who are also finding their way back to God.

Gathering together in a Connect Group also has responsibilities. The Bible gives us excellent guidance on what our commitment needs to be as we connect with others in our group. Our commitment to do our part according to God's plan, always results in a next experience that exceeds our expectations.

## **Get Acquainted. (10 minutes)**

In groups of three, tell the most recent physical injury you have encountered. What helped speed your recovery?

## **Pray Together. (5 minutes)**

Take a moment to pray with your group and thank God for His marvelous design of our body and its many life-giving systems that provide for our health. Ask God to teach you tonight some new insights for a healthy small group.

## **Study Together. (30 minutes)**

1. Read Romans 12:3-8. (underline the most important words or phrases)  
*<sup>3</sup> "Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning; Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. <sup>4</sup> Just as your bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, <sup>5</sup> so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. <sup>6</sup> In His grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak with as much faith as God has given you. <sup>7</sup> If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. <sup>8</sup> If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly."*

What did you underline and why do you think God drew your attention to that truth?

2. **Habit #1- HUMILITY.** What warning is given in verse 3? What kind of trouble can happen within a group of friends if one of us begins to think we are “better than we really are”?
3. **Habit #2- CONNECTION.** How is the “word picture” of a human body (also read Romans 12:4-5) help us understand the workings of a healthy group of people? What helpful insights can you relate to your group? Your Church?

Using the “word picture” of a body, what happens to a church if one part of its “body” ceases to function well, get’s injured, becomes swollen with pride, insensitive to others, or even starts to attack the rest of the body?

4. **Habit #3- PARTICIPATION.** Identify the seven different unique abilities that Paul says God has given to people? Are you expected to have all them? Which one or two might describe you?

P \_\_\_\_\_ S \_\_\_\_\_ T \_\_\_\_\_  
 E \_\_\_\_\_ G \_\_\_\_\_ L \_\_\_\_\_  
 M \_\_\_\_\_

**Action Steps for the Week Ahead. (20 minutes)**

5. Verses 6-8 seem to suggest that it might be possible to possess a gift and not ever use it. So, Paul exhorts people to use the gift they have been given. What might keep a person from using their gift? Identify, as best as you can, the gift God has placed within you. What gift do others see that you have received from God? How can you use that gift to help this group function at its very best?
6. What obstacle may you need to overcome to use your gift to help this group the very best it can be?
7. Review and sign the “Life Group Agreement” with the other members. Have each group member select a LIFE Group Role that they will take to help with life of your group.

**Pray Together.** (10 minutes) Pray a prayer of thanks for the gifts of people in your group. Ask God to help your gifts bless those inside and outside the group.

# LIFE Groups

*The Beginning Together Study, WEEK 4*

**Practicing A Better Grace!**

**Romans 12:6-21**



*Helping People Find Their Way Back To God*

Every group of friends gather with a mixture of expectations of what the group may be like. Members may have to practice some give and take as we adjust those expectations to match what God wants to do in your group.

A great group is a place where members extend GRACE freely with each other. You will encounter a place where GRACE is freely given just as we have received it from God. God has the ability to adjust our personal expectations into one common vision of Life Together.

## **Get Acquainted (10 minutes)**

In triads, tell about a time when you became lost. How did you begin to realize that you were lost, and then regain your bearings to find the right way back to where you intended to go? If someone else helped you, how did they help you ... by giving directions ... or by guiding you to the right place?

After each person has told their story (1 minute each), select someone to tell the most interesting story to the rest of the group.

## **Pray Together (5 minutes)**

Pray as you begin your study together tonight. Admit to God that you sometimes get lost and need His direction. Ask God to give you His direction for your group and to help all of the group arrive at His destination together. Thank God for His grace (undeserved favor) toward us.

## **Study Together (30 minutes)**

1. **GRACE GIFTS given from God.** Last week we identified seven different “gifts” or abilities that God gives to His children. Each individual gift is important to each of the other gifts for full strength and function of the Body of Christ. List and define the seven gifts from Romans 12:6-8 (NIV). How might gifts function in your small group?

P \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_.

S \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_.

T \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_.

E \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_.

C \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_.

L \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_.

M \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_.

2. **GRACE ACTIONS.** Read Romans 12:9-21 List the actions in the verse and identify whether doing that comes natural to you, or if you need God's help.

| <u>Verse #</u>  | <u>Quality</u> | <u>Natural or w/ God's help</u> |
|-----------------|----------------|---------------------------------|
| a. Verse 9      |                |                                 |
| b. Verse 10     |                |                                 |
| c. Verse 11     |                |                                 |
| d. Verse 12     |                |                                 |
| e. Verse 13     |                |                                 |
| f. Verse 14, 15 |                |                                 |
| g. Verse 16-18  |                |                                 |
| h. Verse 19     |                |                                 |
| i. Verse 20     |                |                                 |
| j. Verse 21     |                |                                 |

3. **GRACE RELATIONSHIPS.** The New Testament has 59 "one anothers" that describe the relationships between people who are followers of Jesus. There are three "one anothers" in this text (see vs. 10, & 16). Discuss why these are important and how do you demonstrate them in a Church or a small group.

4. **GRACE BRIDGES.** The book of Romans has five more "one anothers" that show how GRACE builds bridges over wounds and hurts. Read each verse and describe what the Holy Spirit is urging followers of Jesus to practice in our relationships together. Which "one another" do you most need from the group.

- Romans 13:8
- Romans 14:13
- Romans 15:7
- Romans 15:14
- Romans 16:16

**Action Steps for our Group (20 minutes)**

- If you haven't already reviewed and signed the Life Group Agreement. Discuss the commitments you are making with your group and sign your Life Group Agreement together. (See "Life Group Agreement").
- If these behaviors make your Life Group a safe place to grow, what types of things will you need to be alert to, that might threaten the environment God is wanting to build?
- What role can you provide in your LIFE Group? Complete the Life Group roles sheet.

**Pray Together (10 minutes)**

Ask God to help your group live in God's amazing grace, and grow to be a place where each person can say it is a place where GRACE is freely given.

# LIFE Groups

*The Beginning Together Study, WEEK 5*  
**“We Believe Hope is For Everyone”!**  
**Hebrews 10:23-25**



Every good intention faces challenges. Even God’s good plans for you will encounter obstacles that test your faith. If we were to handle these challenges alone, most of us would falter in our desire to keep trusting and following Jesus. Jesus promises HOPE for surviving each challenge.

So, be prepared for some challenges to test the resolve of your Life Group. These challenges are not a sign of weakness. Rather, they are opportunities for increased growth and strength when we learn to handle them together.

## **Pull Together (10 minutes)**

Start your time together today with the following discussion questions. What groups or clubs were you a participant in when you were in High School? What types of challenges and hurdles did you face to be an active part of that group?

## **Pray Together (5 minutes)**

Have someone pray that our hearts and minds will be open to learn about the LIFE He has for us in our LIFE Group. *“Lord, thank You for this LIFE group. We love you and are ready to learn from you about the best life possible. We open our ears to hear what You want to say. We open our hearts to receive life from Your hand. We are ready to follow wher you lead.”*

## **Study Together (30 minutes) Hebrews 10:23-25**

*“<sup>23</sup> Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep His promise. <sup>24</sup> Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.*

*<sup>25</sup> And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of His return is drawing near.”*  
(Hebrews 1-:23-25, NLT)

1. Review the scripture passage to yourself and ask God to draw your attention to what He wants you to notice. What words or phrases stand out to you? Why did God want you to notice these thoughts? Share your reaction with the others in your LIFE Group.
2. Choose a summary word for each verse in this section.
  - a. Verse 23 \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Verse 24 \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Verse 25 \_\_\_\_\_

Summarize the unifying message of these three verses in a phrase of less than six words and share it with your group.

3. Your decision to place your hope in the forgiveness and grace of Jesus Christ, was not just a decision you did some time ago. It is a decision that you make everyday. Your LIFE Group is here to help you “*hold on ... the hope we affirm*” (v. 23). What types of things might make a person waver in their hope in Jesus Christ?

Who is hiding behind these struggles to hold on to your faith? (1 Peter 5:8-9)

4. Something amazing happens in the friendships that form in your LIFE Group. We develop a genuine interest in helping each other. Define some of the key words from verse 24 to help you see the synergy of HOPE in your group.
  - a. “think of ways”
  - b. “motivate one another”
  - c. “acts of love”
5. Verse 25 points your attention to an important warning about our life together. What possible danger is the writer warning us about?

How could that warning be helpful to your LIFE Group?

**Action Steps for our Group (20 minutes)**

6. Your LIFE Group can only help you as you make a commitment to let them know the reality of your struggles. What things have been happening in your life that threaten your ability to hold on to your hope in Jesus?
7. Listen to the struggles that the other group members are facing. Be bold and creative in your ideas of how to offer encouraging hope to them. What could you do to care for one of the members of your group this week?
8. Refer to the LIFE Group agreement that talks about resolving conflict and disappointments in a healthy way. Reaffirm your commitment to address challenges in the way God teaches.

**Pray Together (10 minutes)**

Pray with two other group members for the commitments you are making to each other in light of our need for each other.

First Christian Church, 20794 Hwy 92, Council Bluffs, IA 51503  
[www.firstchristiancb.org](http://www.firstchristiancb.org)

# LIFE Groups

*The Beginning Together Study, WEEK 6*

**“We Demonstrate Extravagant Generosity!”**

**Acts 4:32-37**



*Helping People Find Their Way Back To God*

Your LIFE Group will bless others outside of your group even as God is blessing you! Some of your best times as a group will be in times that you serve the needs of others as a group. You will find growth, joy, friendship, and satisfaction increasing in amazing ways as you sweat, share, and sacrifice together in service of someone outside of your group.

If Jesus was living in your neighborhood, He would see and serve in ways that cause people to sense that the God in heaven cares for them. When we see our city as Jesus sees it, and care about its citizens as Jesus cares for them, and demonstrate that care in practical ways, that is when you will become extraordinary neighbors!

## **Pull Together (10 minutes)**

Share your answer to one of the following questions.

- *What are three of the most precious physical gifts that God has given you?*
- *When has someone else's generosity surprised you?*

## **Pray Together (5 minutes)**

Open your group time with prayer. Pray that God would teach us how to follow Him in new ways as we study today. Surrender your heart and mind to Him so that He has your full attention to listen to and obey whatever He teaches you.

## **Study Together (30 minutes) Acts 4:32-37**

*<sup>32</sup> All the believers were united in heart and mind.*

*And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. <sup>33</sup> The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all. <sup>34</sup> There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them <sup>35</sup> and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need. <sup>36</sup> For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed Barnabus (which means "Son of Encouragement").*

*He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus.*

*<sup>37</sup> He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles."*

(Acts 4:32-37, NLT)

1. What themes or phrases in this passage capture your attention? Why do you think God is calling your attention to this?
2. We talk a lot about healthy community in your LIFE Group! What was the tone of the culture described in verses 32-33? How does the example of the life of Jesus create this kind of community for the early believers?

3. Describe the reputation that the early Christians developed as they demonstrated compassion toward one another. (v. 34-35)

Does this describe the reputation of Christians today?

4. What was Joseph's nickname? (v. 36) How do you think he earned this nickname? (v. 37)

What does generosity like Joseph's show you about his attitude about

- Jesus?
- The things he possessed?
- The people around him?
- His control over the money he gave?

5. What two things seemed to gain momentum in the wake of the early Christian's practice of extravagant generosity within their community? (v. 33)

### **Action Steps For The Group (20 minutes)**

6. The Church today will still display the glory and goodness of Jesus when we practice extravagant generosity. But we may have to address some obstacles and thoughts that keep us from being generous. What are some things that restrain our generosity?

How can our group help each other break free from these restraints?

7. Start small. Identify a family in need around you. In order to provide a solution to that need, creatively create some cash. What is something that you could refrain from purchasing, or something you own that you could sell, to give to help people in need? Organize your group to encourage someone by meeting a need in the next two weeks.

### **Pray Together (10 minutes)**

After you have your plan made, pray that God will provide a "great blessing" on those you are trying to help. Pray that God will increase your ability to be generous and your capacity to trust that He will take care of your needs.

# LIFE Groups

*The Beginning Together Study, WEEK 7*  
**“We Are Extraordinary Neighbors!”**  
**Acts 4:32-37; 1 Peter 4:7-11**



*Helping People Find Their Way Back To God*

One of the amazing benefits of a LIFE Group is discovered when we serve together. As we grow to trust and follow Jesus, we will find our hearts prompted to see the needs of others inside and outside of our group. Your LIFE group can do amazing things for others as each individual member uses their abilities, resources, and experience to help address the needs around you.

Over the next few weeks we will see how our LIFE Group can live out a grand mission to help others find their way back to God as we serve your neighbors with grace and generosity.

## **Pull Together (10 minutes)**

Share your answer to one of the following questions.

- *What is one thing you do that gives you great pleasure?*
- *What is one thing you are good at?*

## **Pray Together (5 minutes)**

Open this lesson by asking God to help you see some needs around you that your LIFE Group could help address. Ask specifically, *“If Jesus were in our situation, what need would He see?”*

## **Study Together (30 minutes) 1 Peter 4:7-11**

*“<sup>7</sup> The end of the world is coming soon.*

*Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers. <sup>8</sup> Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins.*

*<sup>9</sup> Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay.*

*<sup>10</sup> God has given each of you a gift from His great variety of spiritual gifts.*

*Use them well to serve one another. <sup>11</sup> Do you have the gift of speaking?*

*Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you.*

*Do you have the gift of helping others?*

*Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies.*

*Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ.*

*All glory and power to Him forever and ever. Amen.”*

(1 Peter 4:7-11, NLT)

1. As the Apostle Peter writes to Christians in this passage, what words or phrases stand out to you? Why?
2. **Extraordinary urgency.** Examine verses 7-9 to see what kinds of service is Peter pointing believers to focus on in the days that approach the Lord’s Return?

3. **Extraordinary kindness.** The word that Peter uses in verse 9 that is translated “hospitality” is from a compound greek word that joins the two words “love” and “stranger”. It seems that God prompts Peter to encourage believers to actively care for people in need that we may not be overly familiar with. This is why we say Christians can be “extraordinary neighbors”! How can your group do this?

What keeps us from loving strangers around us?

4. **Extraordinary gift.** Verses 10-11 now direct our attention to the “how” of extraordinary service. This verse reminds us of the gifts of grace God has given to us (Romans 12:6-8). What is the impact, in your mind, of the truth that God has given every believer a spiritual gift/ability?

What is our responsibility once we have received the spiritual ability?

5. **Extraordinary capacity.** Verse 11 suggests your service becomes “extraordinary” when you do it at a God-enabled capacity? Look at the two instructions in verse 11
  - a. How should you use a speaking gift?
  - b. How should you use a helping gift?
  - c. What is the extraordinary outcome of your utilization of your gift?

#### **Action Steps for our Group (20 minutes)**

6. Consider Volunteering. Talk together as a group about some places where you could use your gift to help the Church in its work and mission.
  - a. Make a commitment to personally offer 60-90 minutes each month to volunteer in some ministry at church.
  - b. If you already volunteer, tell others in the group how you got started and how you found the right fit for your gifts and interest.
  - c. If you need help in identifying where you might use your gifts, ask the other group members to help you find a place to start volunteering.
7. Put action to the plan you started last week. Bless someone in a generous way that utilizes the gifts and abilities of the members in your group.

#### **Pray Together (10 minutes)**

Ask God to empower your words and service so that people that others will see His love and goodness more than they notice you as you do service. Pray that your eyes can be open to the needs around you as you seek to love strangers as an extraordinary neighbor.

# LIFE Groups

*The Beginning Together Study, WEEK 8*  
**“We Are Becoming World Changers!”**  
**1 Timothy 1:12-17; Acts 1:8**



*Helping People Find Their Way Back To God*

The ultimate mission of every Christian is to help people find their way back to God. Jesus Christ still heals broken lives, saves rebellious sinners, and gives hope and purpose to those worn out by the troubles of life. All over the world the message about Jesus is changing lives. Those destined for an eternity separated from God are discovering the hope of everlasting life. People ravaged by poverty, oppression, sin and sickness have assurance of a better life here and in Heaven, because Jesus' life, death and resurrection changes everything.

Your group exists to help people who are searching, to find their way back to the God who loves them. When you determine to be a World Changer, your story will help others re-write their own story!

## **Pull Together (10 minutes)**

How would you complete the following statement?

- *“When people look at my life, I hope they see someone who . . .”*

## **Pray Together (5 minutes)**

Open this session with a prayer that God will show us how He can use us in His mission to seek and to save lost people. *“Open our eyes Lord, to the real purpose that we were created to fulfill so it can consume every aspect of our life.”*

## **Study Together (30 minutes)**

**1 Timothy 1:12-17**

*“<sup>12</sup> I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength to do His work. He considered me trustworthy and appointed me to serve Him, <sup>13</sup> even though I used to blaspheme the name of Christ. In my insolence, I persecuted His people. But God had mercy on me, because I did it in ignorance and unbelief.*

*<sup>14</sup> Oh, how generous and gracious our Lord was!*

*He filled me with the faith and love that come from Christ Jesus.*

*<sup>15</sup> This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” – and I am the worst of them all. <sup>16</sup> But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst of sinners. Then others will realize that they too, can believe in Him and receive eternal life. <sup>17</sup> All honor and glory to God forever and ever! He is the eternal King, the unseen one who never dies; He alone is God. Amen.”*

(1 Timothy 1:12-17, NLT)

1. What phrases or themes stand out to you from this reflection on Paul's life and mission? Why do these catch your attention?

2. Note the story of what had happened in Paul's life because of Jesus!
  - a. How did Jesus view Paul? (v. 12)
  - b. How did Paul view his own life before Jesus changed him? (v. 13, 15)
  - c. What did God do to change Paul? (v. 12, 13, 14, 16)
  - d. What does Paul's story imply for others who are far from Jesus? (v. 16)
  
3. Why do you believe Paul intentionally points to all of the things God did to change his life, rather than the things that he had done to change himself? Look at three verses to describe God's part in saving, changing, and using Paul.
  - a. John 3:16
  - b. Romans 5:8
  - c. 2 Corinthians 5:21

How do these items of God's grace make you feel/respond?

4. Paul describes his response to God's grace, in verses 12, 14, & 16. What does Paul mention? How would those responses be demonstrated?

When and how did you respond to the saving grace of Jesus Christ?

5. You are a World Changer! Jesus gave a promise and a purpose to all of His disciples in Acts 1:8. You are His disciple if you are trusting and following Him. So, what is His promise to you? What is His purpose for you? How can you make sharing your God-story a regular part of your life mission?

### **Action Steps for our Group (20 minutes)**

6. Each of the members of your group take a piece of paper and take five minutes to write out your story of how God changed your life. Be sure to include a) "You before Jesus", b) "How/when Jesus changed you", and c) "You after Jesus changed you".
7. Share your short stories briefly with each other over the next few weeks of your group. Encourage each other to tell their story to two other people this week.
8. Congratulations! You have enjoyed eight weeks of growing faith, community and friendship in LIFE Group. Take time to celebrate what has happened in the past eight weeks.
9. Plan a meal together to talk about your next step to either continue with your current group or jump into another Life Group experience.

### **Pray Together (10 minutes)**

Express in your own words your gratitude for what God did over the course of the past eight weeks. Thank Him for the new friendships you have formed. Pray for each other as we take our next steps to continue the LIFE Group Experience. Ask God to make you a "World Changer" for Jesus.