

## Life Groups – An Introduction

### Why Life Groups?

We're passionate about building community and making disciples at New Life. We believe Life Groups are the most effective way to do that.

### Building a community requires a few things:

- Feeling secure enough in our relationships to be vulnerable with each other
- Creating a place where we can encourage one another to continually step up to all God has for us
- Consistently doing life together in such a way that our lives become joined

You can't achieve these things in a meetings or in a crowd. You also can't achieve them quickly. Genuine relationships take an investment of time to build

One key thing we've learned is this: community doesn't just happen in our busy lives. We either **intentionally build community**, or we remain individualistic.

In considering examples of Biblical community (e.g. Acts 2:42-47) we've realized that we need to work at this. The early church in Jerusalem were "devoted to the fellowship", and we read that they *worshipped together both in their homes and in the temple*, and that they ate together "*with glad and generous hearts*". Furthermore, out of this devotion to one another came the most remarkable generosity with regard to their possessions. This community was so powerful that people were being added to the church daily because of their lives and examples.

The primary way we accomplish this is through Life Groups. **Life Groups are small enough that everyone in the group can be connected.** We encourage Life Groups to be in the region of 8-14 adults. They keep the church community small, even though we're growing!

We have 2 main types of groups: Adult Groups and Family Groups. In our Family Groups kids of all ages are welcome. The kids will have a lesson, snack, and activity while the adults are meeting. The adults and in some groups the older kids will rotate facilitating the younger kids activities which is a great opportunity for training and connection with the kids. We believe that it is a great benefit and blessing to include the entire family into our Life Groups. We have many adults without children attend our family groups so feel free to join either type.

Here's how our Life Groups are structured

### Life Group Meetings:

**Life Groups meet together once a week, but that's not actually the point of Life Groups! The point is to do life together.** That means we grow together as we have fun together, as we socialize together, as we walk through difficulty and joy together, and most importantly as we **pursue God together!**

At the heart of Life Group is a weekly meeting. It's our community 'hub'.

**1. Breaking Bread** - because eating together really is at the heart of community. Every culture in the world has this one thing in common: people sit and eat together and share stories. From culture to culture the food might be different, the furniture might be different, the utensils used to eat might be different, there might be different customs, but in every culture people eat together and share stories. How do we celebrate weddings, birthdays, family gatherings? Most often with a meal!

But, beyond that, the early church understood that eating together in the presence of God was worship in and of itself. We don't just eat together for the sake of convenience, we eat together in worship!

Eating together and sharing our stories gives us opportunity to go deeper, to find out about each other, and to share what's been happening in our lives this last week. It's a key to building *deep and meaningful friendships*.

**2. Applying scripture together.** Knowing scripture is one thing, but applying it to our lives is a completely different thing. Life Groups are not Bible-studies. They're an opportunity to spend some time discussing together the way in which the Life Group series or the message preached on Sunday affects our lives, and how we can apply truth to our lives. The important word here is '*application*'. And that means that we're wanting to foster deep conversation with vulnerability and openness to one another.

**3. Worship and prayer.** At the very heart of a Biblical community is relationship with God. Our relationships with God are personal to us, but they're not private. We strengthen one another in faith and love for God as we come to worship and pray together. Often we'll pray for particular people in the group, maybe because of a specific life situation they're walking through. Much of our prayer time will be devoted to praying for our friends and colleagues who don't know Jesus. We actively seek the Holy Spirit's gifts as we come to worship and pray, trusting Him to lead us and empower us as we care for each other and pray for God's breakthrough in our friend's lives.

**4. Live on Mission.** The purpose of the Church is to glorify God by making disciples of all nations. That is our mission and it is one that we are called to together. Life Groups are not an end in themselves. Our groups are focused on reaching the people that God has placed around us with the Gospel. During our group meetings we will learn how to engage our world with the Gospel and pray for each others "mission fields."

### **How do I choose a group?**

Find one with people you'd like to hang out with. We find that natural connection trumps geography, and even common interests! You might want to try out a few groups. And you're free to move to a different group if you don't feel like you're connecting. In fact, we create opportunity for this to happen two times a year between our Life Group sessions - we want everyone to find a group that they really connect in with.

- Fall Session: Sept (after Labor Day) - Dec
- Spring Session: Feb – May

### **Together on a mission:**

We believe that, as a church, we are called together on a mission. 'Together' means community. 'On a mission' means we exist for something beyond ourselves.

We're not really interested in building a church which meets all our needs. We're passionate about building a church where we are changed, and we become like Jesus, working in team to see lost people experiencing the life-changing joy of His love.

### **Here are some FAQs:**

- **Are Life Groups organized geographically?**

*No! While we often refer to groups according to the location of where they meet, we believe the best groups happen where people connect relationally. Thus, our encouragement is not to choose a group based on geography, but rather on connection. Who do you connect with? Join the group they're in! We know that people will travel a long way to spend time with friends, whereas a group which is geographically close, but difficult to connect into, seldom works well!*

- **Can I change groups?**

*Yes! When people first come to New Life we encourage them to try out a few groups. In fact, at the start of each semester we remind people who are not settled in a group to take three weeks to search out a group they connect with. After three weeks we encourage everyone to commit for the session. Although we believe that you will be most successful by connecting with and continuing in a group for multiple sessions there are many reasons why joining another group is necessary. The time to do this is during the session break. Let your current Life Group Leader know you are looking to join another group and then sign up for your new group.*

- **Why do the groups meet in Life Group sessions?**

*Life has seasons to it. In the same way, we want to create a cycle that breathes within church life, a cycle where leaders can have seasons where they can rest from the responsibility of carrying their groups. We do this twice a year, in the summer and over Christmas and New Years. But remember: the point of Life Groups is to do life together, not to hold a weekly meeting! So, as friendships grow you'll likely be connecting together during the breaks, you're just not having an official meeting each week...*

- **What if I am interested in Hosting or Leading a Life Group?**

*We are always looking for new hosts and group leaders. If you are interested in learning more about the process to become a Host or a Leader contact Bob Woznicki - e-mail.*

We'd like to leave you with this thought: **Few things in life that are of deep and lasting value cost us little. Community is the same. It costs commitment, and it costs time. But the rewards are truly worth it! If you'll invest your life in this community we know that you'll get more out of it than you can imagine, and certainly more than you put in!**

We hope this gives you a sense of what Life Groups are all about? Feel free to ask questions, if you have them!

If you're not sure who to speak to regarding getting involved in a Life Group sign-up on our website at [www.thisisnewlife.com](http://www.thisisnewlife.com) or e-mail or Bob Woznicki - email and we will contact you about joining a group.