



NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

THIS WEEK:

⇒ PREPARATION FOR THIS WEEK:

- Do the home work and choose questions best suited to your group.
 - Consider reaching out to the group (using the church center app!) for feedback on which questions to use.
 - Find the CHURCH CENTER app in your Apple or Android App stores!
- Listen to the [Audio Guide/Podcast](#) for more discussion suggestions.
- New Leaders – find training articles in the church center app, under resources!

LEADER ANNOUNCEMENTS:

⇒ LIFE GROUPS BEGIN THIS WEEK!!

- We are just overjoyed that this week has come! In such a time as this, meeting together is more important than ever, and we are glad that you leaders are willing to work on gathering clusters of God's people together.
- We do request that you do all you can to get the pulse of your group on where they stand with levels of concern regarding COVID-19 and how you can help each member feel safe.

⇒ YOUR FIRST MEETING:

- Because our vision has us focused on *meaningful relationships*, we invite you to keep your first meeting casual, and make sure that everyone knows each other and is comfortable. Play a get-to-know-you style game, share a meal (we've got lots of Burgers, Hot Dogs and buns for a BBQ!), or spend more time on the first two questions of our discussion guide.
- Be sure to have a comfortable, clean and tidy home, free from pet smells, and ready to welcome your members! Greet them with warm smile, and show them around your space.
- If you need to provide parking instructions ahead of time – be sure to do so!

⇒ LIFE GROUP COVENANT:

- Discuss the Life Group Covenant in your first meeting. Help your members relate the covenant to wearing a mask in public – that we wear the masks to protect others. We sign the covenant to protect the other members in our group!

LEADER INFORMATION:

⇒ WEEKLY LEADER TRAINING:

- We believe that ongoing training is the best way to give you insights on how to lead your group. At the ends of this guide, find two pages of thoughts and ideas to help you plan out your first meeting!

⇒ ATTENDANCE:

- Submit your group's attendance online at: <https://gatewaycrc.churchcenter.com/groups/life-groups>. Be sure to [submit your attendance right away after your meeting](#).

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

This is the first week of LIFE GROUPS!

1) The summer of 2020 will surely go down in history as memorable! What is the most fun, creative activity that you did as a result of having to think differently about your usual summer activities

LEADER NOTE: This may be a good question to go around the room with, inviting all to respond.

2) Would you rather travel back in time to meet your ancestors, or to the future to meet your descendants?

LEADER NOTE: Ask your members why they feel that way, and maybe flip the question and ask why would they not choose the other option.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

Are there specific ancestors they would like to meet?

Is there a time in the future that you would specifically like to see your descendants in?

QUICK REVIEW

LEADER NOTE: These are two questions that have your group reflecting back upon last Sunday's message.

1) Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?

2) This past week, Pastor Justin quoted Hermann, the Lutheran German Minister who was put to death in a Nazi camp. He writes, "Today is the great day! I have put everything into the hands of God, and now he demands this end of me. Good! His will be done!" How did Hermann's letter make you feel about your faith?

GOD'S STORY - TRIADS

LEADER NOTE: This are three question that we ask each week, and have us look at each passage we study through the same lens.

READ Ephesians 1:15-23

1) **GOD** - What does this passage say about the character of God?

2) **THE WORLD** - What does this passage say about fallen humanity?

3) **ME** - Where does this passage specifically expose sin or unbelief in my own life? How does it specifically call me to change my thinking, redirect my affections, replace my behaviors, and trust my Savior?

DIGGING DEEPER

1) [READ Ephesians 1:15; Matthew 22:36-40](#). Paul gives thanks for two elements of the Ephesian Christian's practices. [Their "faith" and "love."] How do they relate to Jesus' words in Matthew 22?

LEADER NOTE: Jesus in Matthew 22 summarizes the Old Testament law for his listeners in two statements that can be wrapped up in these two words, *faith* and *love*.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

As Ephesus was being blessed by the new believers there, what are some examples from real life where you have seen *faith* and *love* in action in Abbotsford/Fraser Valley?

- Paul had heard about their faith in God and love for each other. What would someone say about what they see in you? Do these two elements properly describe your patterns? The patterns of our church?

LEADER NOTE: This question takes your previous discussion just a little deeper, and likely a fair bit more personal. Because our season is just beginning, ~~don't push your members to respond, but also,~~ lead by example, and allow yourself to become a little more vulnerable.

DISCUSSION TIP: When tackling the "patterns of our church" – be careful to not let the conversation be led by gossip, slander, or negativity; but focus on the strengths and look for areas of growth. In there, consider how your group can be a part of the solution!

2) [READ Ephesians 1:18-19](#). The main thrust of Paul's prayer is that his audience would come to know Christ both personally and intimately. In light of that, talk through the three things that Paul wants his audience to know about their faith.

LEADER NOTE: The three elements that Paul is wanting his audience to know are: (1) Hope in Christ, (2) Glorious inheritance, & (3) Great power available to Christians.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

How do each of these elements take shape in our lives? i.e. What does it mean to live a life filled with Christian hope? How does this knowledge about the Christians glorious inheritance affect how we live today? How do we tap into God's immeasurable greatness?

- [READ 1 Peter 1:3-6](#). Peter refers to the same three elements, and also about *all kinds of trials*. How, in these uncertain times, can these three elements give us strength for our days to come? (see also: [Titus 1:1-3](#), [Romans 8:15-17](#), [Matthew 19:26](#))

DISCUSSION TIP: We are all living through some kind of trial. A lot of responses may revolve around our current pandemic, which may be good, but be careful to not let that reality encapsulate the entire response. Try to steer your members to think about the trials that they regularly face – declining health, aging parents, troubled children, work place differences, etc.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

What other passages in scripture offer you hope and assurance?

3) [READ Ephesians 1:22-23; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; 27-29; John 17:20-23](#). The picture that Paul presents in this prayer is that of being both connected to Jesus, and to each other. Which area do you need to grow in? What are some measures that you can take in order to grow there? Where do you see your Life Group playing a key role?

LEADER NOTE: This question has your group looking internally at themselves and their own journey of faith. Lead by example by sharing your own answers.

DISCUSSION TIP: The church is not just an institutionalized organization, but a living, breathing, organic collection of people who are all designed to play a special part in its function! We are however sin filled people and will always be His imperfect body. Together however, we are designed to be better. Help your group understand that our Life Group ministry is an ideal place where each person in attendance can leave strengthened and encouraged for their journey of faith.

TAKING IT HOME

1) Imagine that your parent, your spouse, or a close friend is praying Paul's prayer for you right now. Which part of the prayer is most important to you personally? Why?

LEADER NOTE: This is simply an intriguing exercise. Consider going back and re-reading the prayer from Paul's words. If someone in your group has a different version to read from than what you read earlier, invite them to share the different wordings. Maybe even come prepared with the NLT or the Message translation.

CLOSING YOUR MEETING: Close your meeting by asking for prayer requests, and spending time praying for each need that arises.

ADDITIONAL SELF STUDY *(Optional Personal Reflection Questions)*

LEADER NOTE: As you know, these questions are completely optional for participants' personal reflection.

1) **READ Ephesians 1:16.** Paul writes to his audience that he is grateful for them, and that he remembers them in prayer, often. How grateful are you for your surrounding community? How do you remember to lift them up in prayer? Write out a list of names of people that you are grateful for. Then, take this prayer from Ephesians 1:15-23 and pray that over them. Consider looking up the NLT version of this text!

2) **READ 1 Kings 3:3-14.** In this Old Testament passage King Solomon asks God for wisdom. What strikes you about Solomon's request? Do you think you would ask God for the same? Or would you have something else you would ask God? In Ephesians 1:17, Paul prays that his audience may be given the spirit of wisdom. It is like he knows that we are fallible human beings. In what area of life do you specifically need wisdom? Spend some time in prayer, letting the Lord know your heart.

GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS

PICTURES: We are looking for pictures – from your meetings, upcoming serve projects, or socials! We want to put together a highlight video to be shown to our church after this Life Group semester wraps up. Please email them directly to pastor Adam – adam@gatewaycrc.org.

HASHTAG CHALLENGE: Be sure to encourage your group to use the #GatewayLifeGroups hashtag on Facebook and Instagram. Remember that there is going to be a \$300 gift card draw at the end of the semester. [One COVID tip – try to inspire the public sharing of photos that follow covid-19 protocols. Optics & perception play a role]

"PAUL'S PRAYER FOR US"

1. OUR HOPE IS IN GOD.

2. OUR WORTH TO GOD.

Eph. 3: 17b-19; Psalm 103: 11

3. GOD'S POWER IN US.

Psalm 62: 11; Acts 2: 24; Romans 14: 8; I Corinthians 15: 55

4. THE FINALITY OF JESUS' RULE & POWER.





TRAINING PACKET

Fall 2020 Semester

Dear Life Group Facilitators & Hosts,

On behalf of the Life Group Coordinators, thank you once again for your servant leadership in this church. We have been praying for you and are eager to see the ways in which God will work in your groups this semester.

PREPARATION FOR YOUR FIRST NIGHT OF LIFE GROUPS

As we gear up for our second semester of Life Groups, we thought it would be great to visit some of the basics regarding the first night of your Life Group. This is obviously relevant for those leading a group for the first time. But for those who've been leading for a while, this can be a good reminder of things we may start to take for granted and neglect. We're going to be very practical and basic, discussing what it takes to get off on the right foot...

BEFORE the First Meeting:

REMINDERS: Before the first night of your group, you'll want to email or call those who have signed up for your group. Express excitement that they have joined your group and give them the details: When the group is meeting? Address? Other details? You'll want to include your phone number in case anyone gets lost, making sure to have your phone on you the night of the group so you'll receive any calls.

POTLUCK: Nothing creates conversation and community like cuisine, so either plan a POTLUCK for the first night, or plan ahead regarding any snacks for your group. One of the benefits of a potluck is that it gets the entire group involved. Some people might be anxious about the first meeting and look for a reason not to attend. The fact that they have committed to bringing a side dish allows them to be contributors to the process while reducing the tendency to miss that crucial first meeting. **[REMEMBER IN THE COVID SEASON TO PLAN THESE WITH EXTRA CARE AND CAUTION]**

HOSPITALITY: You'll want to be sure you create a welcoming environment as well. Set up enough chairs for the number of people you expect, make sure enough lights are on so the room is well lit, and if there are any funky odors, consider lighting a candle. Have music playing in the background when people arrive. Let them know you were expecting them and are glad they came!

PRAYER: Most importantly, the day before or day of your group, be sure to spend some time in prayer, asking God to be with you and your group. If possible, consider praying as a Facilitator/Host team every week, but especially before the first meeting. We're helping people follow Jesus and that's not something we can do on our own – we need His help to do so.

DURING Group Meetings:

MAIN GOAL: On the night of the group, your highest priority is to help people re-establish old connections and/or establish connections with newcomers. The goal is to *get to know each other*. Make sure to provide plenty of time for conversation. In fact, that could be your only agenda item for the night. You want to help people to connect and begin developing relationships. This is the foundation of any healthy and effective small group.

Greet people as they arrive and if you observe anyone standing alone, engage them in conversation and help them to connect to others in the group. If it's a big group, consider using name tags. You might also want to play the name game – having each person share their name plus an adjective that describes them which starts with the same letter as their name. It's a bit silly, but it really does help names stick.

You might also want to include an icebreaker, perhaps asking them to share a funny story about a childhood friend or to describe their hometown. This helps them gain insight into one another, both in terms of what they share and how they share it, cultivating connection.

VISION CASTING: On the first night, it's also important to cast vision for the group. You should explain:

- The mission of Life Groups (MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS centered on God's Word and Prayer),
- Why YOU are leading the group (remember, transparency starts with you as leaders), and
- What you hope to accomplish (Connecting people to God's Word & Fellow Christians = Spiritual Growth!)

Everyone has ideas on what makes a good Life Group. Casting that vision on day one will give your group the opportunity to understand why we do what we do and to catch that vision.

COVENANT: You should walk through the Covenant together in order to establish expectations. Establishing expectations on the front end is much easier than trying to change the small group culture once it's developed later on. As some of you already know, some people will balk at the notion of signing a covenant. Do your best to explain that making a commitment as a group is the conduit to a healthy group. For example, if someone in your group is worried about sharing personal details, the covenant serves to establish trust and accountability.

AFTER Group Meetings:

FOLLOW UP: After group, be sure to send a follow-up email or text thanking them for coming and reminding them of any details regarding logistics or homework for the following week. Also, if anyone missed the meeting, be sure to follow up with them and let them know they were missed!

And finally, don't forget to pray for them. Let the group know you are committing to that. Remember, this isn't just a meeting you're having – every Life Group meeting is, by definition, a "Holy Moment" since we are coming together in the name of Christ. As leaders, you're helping them to follow Jesus and you need His help to do that so allow prayer to be central to your role as leaders.

Remember that we are here if you have any questions. Don't hesitate to reach out to us. Thank you once again for choosing to serve!

*In Christ,
Pastor Adam and the Life Group Coordinator Team*

