



LIFE GROUPS

LEADERSHIP CARE GUIDE

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Leadership Care Guide

This Care Guide is here to help you meet the needs of those in your groups during whatever season of life they are in.

We will see people in moments of joy and also in tough times. This is meant to be a resource to you to meet the needs of those you are leading.

In order to lead well we must care well...

C - Connect - Open lines of communication to start relationship building

A - Accountability - Be intentional about asking how they are doing in their faith, family, and personal life

R - Resource - Think of ways you can resource people to succeed in growing spiritually

E - Encourage - Energize and inspire those you lead to pursue authentic and life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ

CARE IN MOMENTS OF JOY

“Rejoice with those who rejoice...” - Romans 12:15

You have an opportunity to share love and care in these moments.

Birth of a child

“Behold, children are a gift of the Lord.” - Psalm 127:3

Ways to Care

- Organize to provide some meals to the family
- Offer to care for older children the first few days the mom is home
- Visit them in the hospital
- Purchase a gift together with your group
- Host a baby shower

House move

“Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established...” - Proverbs 24:3

- Offer to help pack
- Offer as a group to help move on moving day
- Organize to provide lunch for those moving and helping
- Organize child care for moving day
- Pray together for blessing over their home and neighborhood

Preparing to get married

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” - Genesis 2:24

Ways to Care

- Plan a shower for the couple or bride
- Prayer for them each week, especially as wedding day approaches
- Attend the wedding as a group
- Go in together in buying a wedding gift

CARE IN TOUGH TIMES

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” - Isaiah 41:10

Ways to Care

God’s Word says we will have trials of many kinds, but we are not to have fear or be discouraged. He is our strength and comfort in times of trouble.

- Pray with them and for them.
- Spend time with them so they know they are not alone. Presence speaks louder than words.
- Send them a note as way of encouragement and strength. Consider including scriptures that are appropriate.
- Provide meals if applicable.
- Offer other services such as driving to doctor appointments, shoveling, mowing, cleaning, running errands, or providing childcare
- Attend the funeral, if a loved one has passed.
- Invite them over for dinner or coffee or a walk one month, two months, and regularly so they know you haven’t forgotten about their loss.

Death of a loved one

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” - Matthew 5:4

When someone loses a parent, a child, or a sibling to whom they are closely connected, please let the pastoral staff know. Be sensitive to their needs, but also be sensitive to their space and vulnerability.

Ways to be communicate love

When a spouse passes away

Things you can say

- Sometimes the best thing to say is nothing. Your presence and your tears can say more than your words.
- “I’m so sorry - this is a terrible loss.” This is better than simply saying, “I’m so sorry;” the last phrase helps validate and share in that person’s grief.
- “I’m here for you. Can I call you in a few days?” Grieving people may have trouble asking for help, so it is helpful to take responsibility for contact and follow through.
- “May we bring you a meal Tuesday?” or “We would like to rake the leaves in your yard Saturday - is that okay with you?” instead of “If there’s anything I can do, just ask.”

Things to avoid saying

- “Your spouse is in heaven.” Even if this is true, it doesn’t minimize the loss that the surviving spouse is going through.
- “Maybe we should have prayed harder.” You never want to make them feel responsible for the death.
- “Don’t worry, God has something new planned for you.” This invalidates the need to mourn the loss of a loved one. They should not be finding comfort in hoping for a replacement.

When a child passes away

Things you can say

- Sometimes the best thing to say is nothing. Your presence and your tears say more than your words.
- “I am so sorry. My heart breaks for you.”
- “I care about you and am praying for you.”
- “I don’t know what to say. But please know that I’m here for you. We are here to walk through this with you.”
- After an appropriate length of time you may want to ask how their marriage and relationships are doing.

Things to avoid saying

- “God wanted your child with Him.” This statement makes the parents feel as if God is angry with them or is punishing them.
- “Well, at least you have your other children.”
- “Everything happens for a reason; God will work this out for good.”

When to encourage an individual to meet with a pastor

- The person has stopped eating or drinking
- When the grief paralyzes the rest of life and prevents the person from caring for themselves, sustaining a job, or taking care of their children.
- When the person becomes inward, or reclusive.
- The person doesn’t leave the home for an abnormal period of time.
- The person shows signs of suicidal intent.
- When the grief never seems to end - after a natural period of grief, the person makes extreme effort to keep his/her loved one alive.

Addiction

“...He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.” - Isaiah 61:1

Things to say

- “It is ok to feel powerless by yourself. But with Jesus freedom is at hand.” It is validating for the person to hear hope.
- “You’re not alone.” Addiction can be a stigmatized subject so the person may not have met anyone else who have struggled with and publicly acknowledged an addiction.

Things to avoid saying

- “I don’t know anyone else in the church struggling with this issue.” Sometimes it can seem as if they are the only ones struggling with the issue because people have not had the opportunity to share their struggle in a secure environment.
- “If you really wanted to, you would just stop.” It is not your position to judge that person, but instead to point them towards Jesus. Let God handle the conviction and you do the loving.

When to encourage a person to meet with a pastor

- The person asks for a referral.
- The addiction has become dangerous.
- The addiction significantly impairs relationships with others and with God.
- The person begins to experience depression or anxiety after stopping the addictive behavior.

Marriage Struggles

“Love is not self-seeking, it’s not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrong.” - 1 Corinthians 13:5

Marriages take work and can face significant struggles at times. As a church, we should rally around couples and not take sides in these moments.

How to help a couple struggling in their marriage

- Give them hope. Show them places in scripture where it talks about God’s hope for restored and reconciled relationships.
- Let them know that many couples experience rough roads but that getting some outside help is the best next step.
- Be an encourager of the relationship rather than taking sides. Be FOR the marriage and hold them both equally accountable for working on the relationship.
- Encourage them to meet with a pastor for counseling/mentoring.

Divorce

When couples are wrestling with the future of their marriage, we must use wisdom. It is not our choice - it rests solely between the couple and God. There are situations when divorce is a reasonable option according to scripture (abuse and unrepentant unfaithfulness). Whether or not we agree with the decision, we are exhorted to love one another.

When a divorce decision is made, we want to support either individual who wants to move on in their relationship with God. We want to include them, pray for them, and be there for them.

However, we strongly recommend that someone of the same gender provide the support and encouragement.

Things you can say

- “We will be praying for you.” Show the love of Jesus.
- “Please join us.” After divorce, many people have trouble adjusting to the single life. Sadly, sometimes, divorced people are left out of social situations because they are divorced. Make an effort to include them in activities. If they express being uncomfortable with other couples, assure them that they are welcome and that the group would love to have them involved in activities.
- “We live in a broken world - and that affects everything - even marriage.” It can be helpful to acknowledge that brokenness, sinfulness, and grief we experience on this earth are far from God’s ideal for us. But in the midst of every situation, He will provide comfort and will lead.

Things to avoid saying

- “God hates divorce.” Regardless of how you view divorce, broken relationships do happen within the church because of the presence of sin in the world. Instead of judging the couple, show God’s love, healing, and grace.
- “It’s not your fault.” Don’t discourage their acceptance of personal responsibility; eventually, part of the healing process comes from acknowledging their responsibility, receiving forgiveness from God, forgiving their spouse, and allowing God to work in their heart.
- “I’m on your side.” Do not take sides in any divorce. Refuse to feed bitterness or resentment in either person toward the other individual. That is destructive behavior and will only delay healing. Instead, promote redemption of the situation by encouraging an amicable relationship. Do what you can to keep both of the individuals connected to God, to a life group, and to the church.

When to encourage the person to meet with a pastor

- When an individual references self-destructive or suicidal thoughts or feelings
- If either individual shows a lengthy pattern of isolating themselves from other people
- When an individual misses work repeatedly or is unable to consistently perform their daily activities.

Terminal Illness

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.” - 2 Corinthians 1:3-5

When a person receives a diagnosis from their doctor that they have a terminal illness, it feels like the world is crashing in. The shock, the medical decisions, and the unknown are some of the things that an individual or family may face. A caring and loving life group can be incredibly meaningful to the individual in times of challenge and difficulty.

Please inform a pastor immediately if a life group member receives a diagnosis of a terminal illness

Things to say or do

- Offer specific practical help (example: “May we bring you a meal?” or “We would like to rake the leaves in your yard Saturday - is that okay with you?” rather than “If there’s anything I can do, just ask.”)
- “It’s ok to be angry.” God desires open dialogue - encourage your friend to let out their emotions with you and God.
- Keep them focused on God’s faithfulness - God is not the Author of sickness and disease. He is there with them in the midst of their struggle. He is the Way through every challenge they will face. He is faithful. “We’ll see you later when we come back to visit you again.” It’s important for your friend to know you won’t abandon them when times get tough - they will be encouraged knowing that they can look forward to future times together.
- Try to fit your life group around their schedule - if it is possible for them to actively participate, create normalcy by moving the meeting to wherever they are. If they cannot meet, phone them during your group to let them know you are praying for them.

- Encourage them to consult their physician about any changes in medications rather than making decisions on their own in difficult moments.
- If they want a visit from a pastor, please ask them to contact one of the pastors with whom they have a relationship

Things to avoid saying/doing

- “All things work for good through God’s plans.” Though this is true, it may come across wrong to someone going through a terminal illness. They may get the false impression that God wants them to die, when in fact John 10:10 says, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and they may have it more abundantly.”
- “Just believe more, and you won’t be angry/will be healed.” This statement causes guilt and inadequacy. God never uses guilt to inspire faith.

Financial Assistance

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” - Philippians 4:6-7

We know at times that either through unforeseen circumstances such as a job loss, medical costs, etc. or bad financial decisions, individuals or families may find themselves struggling to make ends meet. In order to address a variety of situations with regard to financial assistance, Wrightsville Assembly of God leadership has established guidelines to provide assistance to an individual or family.

Things to say/do

- Pray with them
- In some situations, if the need is small, you may want to consider how your group can assist the need before turning to the church’s benevolence funds. *We do not expect a life group to support an individual in financial difficulties to a significant degree.*
- Encourage the individual or family to apply for benevolence assistance. They can pick up a request form from the church office.
- You also may want to encourage them to utilize financial counseling resources through the church.

Things to avoid saying/doing

- Never make any promises, on behalf of yourself or the church, for financial assistance.

Hospital Visitation

"I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." - Matthew 25:36

Group support

- Be sensitive about the timing of your visit. Call the patient or a close family member to determine when is the best time to visit.
- If possible, have one member of the life group set up the meetings with the patient so that there is a consistent visitation schedule.

Please...

- Knock before entering a room. Observe signs, notices, and precautions on the patient's door.
- If possible, sit where you can maintain comfortable eye contact with the patient.
- Be cheerful, make pleasant conversation.
- Shape the tone and substance of your conversation from cues offered by the patient.
- Listen attentively by giving the patient your undivided attention.
- Let patient know he/she can talk about sensitive subjects
- Excuse yourself when the doctor enters the room unless requested to stay.
- Share scripture and ask patient if they have special needs as you prepare to pray (see below for suggested scriptures).
- Inform the pastor of your visit if possible.

Please don't...

- Be insulted by patient's words/attitudes or register shock at a patient's appearance.
- Offer false optimism or participate in criticism about the doctor or the treatment.
- Touch the equipment or sit on the patient's bed.
- Tell the patient unpleasant news - including your own troubles.
- Whisper or talk about the patient's condition with family members in the room. Step outside, if necessary when talking to family member or medical staff.
- Break hospital rules or violate confidentiality issues.
- Awaken the patient unless a nurse gives approval.
- Help the patient get out of bed or give food or drink without a nurse's approval.

Scripture References

- Psalm 23; 34; 46; 61; 62; 63; 103; 116; 121; 139
- Mark 2:3-5

RESPONSIBILITY

It's very important that as we care for people we understand the difference between being responsible "FOR" versus responsible "TO". We are NOT responsible to fix or parent adults. Christians can get confused when we equate being responsible FOR others with being responsible TO others.

We are helpers and guides meant to encourage, share, confront, listen, and show empathy. We cannot fix, rescue, control, or carry their feelings. We must be concerned with respecting and listening, but not manipulating or expecting them to live at our level of expectation.

ADDITIONAL HELPFUL SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Death of a child or spouse

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding." - Proverbs 3:5

"Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them." - Psalm 139:16

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in him.' The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord." - Lamentations 3:22-26

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God." - 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Marriage Struggles

"In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered." - 1 Peter 3:7

"For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything. For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's Word." - Ephesians 5:22-26

Terminal Illness

"We put our hope in the Lord. He is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. Let your unfailing love surround us, Lord, for our hope is in you alone." - Psalm 33:20-22

"Then Jesus said, 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls'" - Matthew 11:28-29