



LIFEGROUP LEADER COACHING GUIDE



CROSSBRIDGE
COMMUNITY CHURCH

Game Plan for Leading Life-Giving Life Groups that Accomplish the Mission of the Church

The goal of this guide is to:

1. Equip leaders to experience joy in their role of shepherding others. Following this approach will result in less pressure on you and more life for you and those you lead.
2. Unify leaders together around a common vision of life group and three key values.
3. Equip leaders with a common way of leading life group that is less leader centric, more life-giving, more reproducible and scalable so we can see God's Kingdom expand.

Contents:

1. Training in the Vision and Values for Life Group
2. Training in the Stages of Life Group
3. Training in the Flow of Life Group
4. Learning to Lead in a Way That Leaves Footprints Behind
5. Learning to Lead The Core of the Life Group Meeting
6. Recapping, Announcements, and Logistics
7. Blessing Children in Life group
8. Multiplying and Starting a new Life Group

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. 1 Peter 5:2-4



1

Training in the Vision for Life Group

It's hard to over state how important clarity on the vision is. This is especially true in a context where everyone's familiar with the themes and vocabulary. Sometimes one person uses a word, intending it convey one thing, but the listener thinks the word means something else.

Understanding the role of the church in the kingdom of God and, then, the role of the life group in the church will help you and your group experience all that God has planned for them.

The mission of the church: To love God, love one another and to make disciples of all nations.

One of our great joys on earth is getting to be part of the family of God and to build one another up. Then, as a family, we are to reach out to love the lost so they can experience the family of God, becoming disciples of Jesus. This is how the kingdom of God expands!

God wants to multiply your life, giving you spiritual descendants in his kingdom. He says this in Matthew 28 and it's the same promise he made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David. The question is: *Do we believe him and do we believe he can do it?*

The role of life group: Life group is the most important gathering of the church.

Life group is the starting place of the family of God. In this sense it *is the church*. Life group is what best matches how we see the church described in the New Testament. The biggest difference between the Sunday service and life group is that life group is where people are known and when they are known, they can be discipled effectively.

Here are some of the ways we disciple someone more deeply at CrossBridge:

- Discipleship teams of 2-3 men or women
- Bible studies and Freedom Groups
- Freedom Prayer
- A retreat or event
- CrossBridge Discipleship School
- Counseling
- A class of some kind (Financial Peace University for example)



It's important for the life group leader to not carry the burden of trying to make life group the place where the deepest experience of discipleship, counseling, freedom or teaching takes place. The role of the life group leader is to facilitate a life-giving experience, leave footprints behind, and to help people find their next step of discipleship.

Because the life group is the most important gathering of the church, we come around three key values:



Our life groups will be life-giving and centered on Jesus.
(Acts 2:42-47)

"Life-giving" is a vague term that needs some definition, however we'll never be able to completely define all the ways our infinite God might bring a life-giving experience to his children. Here are some the ways the early church experienced life which we can emulate:

- Encourage one another. 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- Work with one another to make disciples. Philippians 1:27
- Help guard one another against sin. Hebrews 3:1
- Edify one another with encouraging words from the Lord and the spiritual gifts he's given you. 1 Corinthians 14:3,31
- Worship with one another and be in the Word together. Colossians 3:16
- Help one another persist in the mission of the church. Hebrews 10:24
- Welcome one another and others into fellowship. 1 Peter 4:9
- Bear with one another. Colossians 3:13
- Raise up leaders who can lead others in this. 2 Timothy 2:2

The group must not be leader centric and revolve around the leader's personality, gifts, or experience. If it is, the result is eventual leader burnout and cripples the group's growth and effectiveness for Kingdom impact. To help keep the life-giving experience centered on Jesus, the life group leader needs to keep the words of John the Baptist in mind:

"He must become greater, I must become less."



Life Drain Alert: Type A leaders often talk too much. Type B leaders often do not set the stage well enough.





We will lead our life groups in a way that leaves footprints to follow.
(2 Timothy 2:2)

Because life group is like home-base for the church, it must be led in a way that other potential leaders can emulate. It's not enough to for life group to be a life-giving experience; it must be led in a way that leaves footprints behind so that other leaders can follow.

Everything the leader does must be done in a way that someone else with different gifts can also do. If we accomplish this, we will see all kinds of potential leaders rising up. An added benefit to leading this way is that the life giving experience centers on what God is doing among the people in the life group and less on the leader. The life group leader will experience a new level of joy and freedom when they really get this and others, likewise, will see how they can lead. Just like Paul said in I Corinthians 11:1 "*Imitate me just as I also imitate Christ.*"

Remember, we're teaching people to *be* the church. Leading in a reproducible way has an incredible life-giving *and* multiplying effect--it can't be underestimated.



We will focus our life groups on a kingdom vision. (Matthew 6:33, 24:14)

Because life group is the most important gathering of the church, it must be centered on what God is doing in the world: reconciling people to himself and bringing them into the church. Life groups that focus on God's expanding kingdom impact their oikos and stir passion in the hearts of Christ followers for all the nations of the world.

The life group can do this in three effective ways:

1. **Inviting people.** Both those who are lost and also believers not engaged in the church. Inviting new people is one of the most life-giving activities and it brings joy to Jesus' heart. Don't ever stop inviting.
2. **Opening our arms wider to love whoever Jesus brings.** Life group isn't static, it's always changing. If a family with young children joins us, we adapt. If we have a person with special needs, we adapt. Regardless of someone's life stage or ethnicity or spiritual maturity, we adapt to love them--just like Jesus would. Life group isn't about a nice, orderly Bible study, it's about genuinely loving whoever Jesus brings.
3. **Being willing to release one another for the sake of loving more people.** We will spend eternity in heaven together (Yay!) For now, we have a mission to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10.) As the vision is consistently emphasized and new people are consistently added, the group will begin to take joy and pride in multiplying. Being willing to multiply is saying, Yes! to Jesus' commands. He always blesses when we say, Yes!

2

Training in the Stages of Life Group

Healthy things grow and growing things are healthy. Leaders will partner with the Holy Spirit to grow and progress in health towards new “Life”. Hence, Life groups!

The goal is to thrive in each stage of Community life while progressing towards reproduction. Multiplication is a by-product that will happen as you pray, walk closely with Jesus, stay diligent with the vision and take steps of growth in each stage. Every time a new group is started, it is a new Church birthed that expands the impact of the Kingdom of God.

Your role as a Life group leader is:

1. To ENCOURAGE your people to get over the key hurdles  that may hinder the group’s progress.
2. To COACH them in weak areas and CELEBRATE progress in key indicators.
3. To GUIDE them in navigating their transition between the stages of community life.

Here are the 3 Stages of “Life” in Life group:



Resistance to community: Consumerism, Individualism, Traditionalism

ESTABLISHING 2-3 mo.

Leader’s Role	Indicators showing
Relational	Consistent attendance, deeper level sharing, members asking for prayer
Modeling	Transparency, 3 core values, giving the Spirit room-not over controlling
Rhythmic	Consistent Meeting Flow, progress in 7 key logistics, rotating hosting
Cultivate culture	Authenticity, Active listening- God and each other, people sharing stories of group’s impact, talking more like family, actively inviting others



Resistance to actively engaging and sacrificing: selfishness, conflict

ENGAGING 8-10 mo.

Leader's Role	Indicators showing
Encourager/ Coach	All members lead in parts of the Flow and a few lead the Core
Outward focus	Group consistently inviting Sunday guests and sharing stories of loving their Oikos. Collaboration of meeting needs in LG.
Delegator	Healthy ownership of key roles: Admin., Children's, Guest connection
Ministry facilitator	Members are praying for and sharing words of encouragement regularly both in meetings and between meetings.
Disciple Maker	Intentionally investing in potential leaders in discipleship, a few leading the Core, and all leading parts of the Flow.



Resistance to releasing people: comfort

MULTIPLYING 2-3 mo.

Leader's Role	Indicators showing
Equipper	Potential leaders come to CB Equipping, vision talks with future leaders
Growth monitor	Critical mass of 8-12 families and future leaders ready
Strategic envisioning	Communicate proactively with the group and future leaders the Multiplication vision and Timeline, partner with your Zone Leader
Launcher	Group prayer times for the vision, group remembrance times and party, CB celebration in Sunday gatherings



Challenge of new group norms: the feeling of loss, change in energy/size etc.

Remember, we are teaching people how to be the Church! Be patient and always operate in grace, but keep tracking in these stages towards new life! The timeframes are only a guide as to how long each stage may last. As always, give the Holy Spirit room to guide and lead.

3

Training in the Flow of Life Group

One of the best tools to build the life group around the mission of the church is develop a common, life giving flow to the meeting. The CrossBridge flow is comprised of five elements which need to be reproduced in a life group meeting. The best way to view these are as points of blessing that the Holy Spirit loves to bless. So, each part of the flow provides the chance for Him to move and speak to us and through us. Leaders can do it in a way that is consistent with their personality and gifting, but it's important to develop this basic pattern. This will help others with leadership ability learn to lead.

The flow of life group:

1. Fellowship
2. Announcements
3. Vision
4. Worship
5. The Core (three ways to lead the core)
 - Word Spirit Ministry in groups
 - God stories and prayer
 - Spiritual health check

How does have a unified, consistent flow to life group fit reinforce our three values?

- A common flow helps the group learn to trust one another as they see a life-giving, pattern to the group. When people know what to expect, they can engage more quickly.
- A common flow helps those with leadership ability see how they might become an effective leader.
- A common flow helps people know how to describe life group to others, giving them more confidence to invite others.
- A common flow brings built in accountability as we scale up and multiply, bringing more people in to experience the joy of the body of Christ.



4

Learning to Lead in a Way That Leaves Footprints Behind

As leaders, we want to do everything in a way that other potential leaders can follow. If we do, we will see potential leaders rising up and actually eager to lead. (Wow!)

This section describes how to lead each element of the basic flow. As we stay consistent in the flow, the people in the group learn to do life group better and better. This makes it easy for others with leadership gifts to step up and lead. It also helps members feel more safe and willing to be transparent.

Periodically, recap the flow and values, so the group can recognize what you do and how you do it. One of the key parts of this section are the  Life Drain Alerts. These identify common ways that we can inadvertently kill the life-giving experience if we're not careful.

I. Leading the Fellowship time

This time helps create an environment of openness utilizing food, ice breakers, games or introductions, especially if new people are there. When people laugh together or just hang out, it breaks down walls to vulnerability.

Gather to share the House rules, so Host homes are valued and honored. Then pray over the food and welcoming God's presence. Make sure to welcome guests, sit with them and members include them during this time. This is critical at the start, so they know you are glad they are here. This is also a good time to engage children.



Life Drain Alert: don't let the Gathering time go too long and compromise the rest of the meeting time.



Life Drain Alert: move intentionally toward having everyone hosting the group if they're at all able. Even those in apartments.



Life Drain Alert: always, always, keep inviting new people, both believers and non-believers. It makes the vision come alive and the need for multiplying obvious to all.



II. Leading the Vision

Each week a different person shares what the church is about, reminding people why we're gathering. Vision leaks, so this is vitally important for every life group meeting. If we don't emphasize the vision, then it's easy for the group to become just a place where we meet our friends, but with little kingdom impact. This time is 1-2 minutes max and reminds everyone why we are gathered.

Here are a few ways to share the vision:

1. Read a scripture passage that speaks to the inward and outward call of the vision of the church. God will work through his Word. See below for suggestions.
2. Use a brief YouTube video or a song that conveys the mission of the church.
3. Have a person share their spiritual growth, family impact, or blessing as they have been in this community. People's testimonies are powerful!
4. Celebrate the group's progress in a key area. Ex. Inviting guests, welcoming new people, blessing kids, stepping out in prayer etc. What gets rewarded gets repeated.

****Acts 2:42-47** is the constitution of the church, describing what it should look like and experience. Reading this at the beginning of the meeting, or one of the other verses below helps reinforce the vision.

Here some other passages which describe the vision of the church:

John 17:22-23

Matthew 28:18-20

Ephesians 1:11-12

Ephesians 3:10-11

Ephesians 2:19-22

Matthew 5:13-16

Ephesians 4:11-16

1 Corinthians 14:26-27

Hebrews 10:22-25

Colossians 3:13-16

Mark 1:17

Acts 1:8

Romans 12:1-6

1 Corinthians 12:12-27



Life Drain Alert: Whoever is speaking the vision, be concise--about 1 minute--otherwise, no one else will think they could ever articulate the vision. Do not go into teacher mode...

III. Leading Worship and Ministry

Worship is essentially surrendering to God and engaging his presence. It's a unique time to set our minds on Jesus together. Worship refreshes and realigns our view of God.

Worshiping in life group is an upward experience, but also an opportunity for an outward experience as we pray for one another and encourage them. Songs, scripture, prayers of gratitude or praise can all be part of how we worship in life group. Here are some basic ways to facilitate a life giving worship time:



Pre-worship: (here are some ways to set the stage for meaningful worship)

1. Pray for your LG worship time during the week.
2. Prepare 15-18 minutes of songs.
3. Have song sheets with lyrics or YouTube videos with lyrics prepared. Use our YouTube Red account to access playlists from CrossBridge.
4. Whoever is leading this time, make sure you have given them this info to coach them in leading. One idea is have the host home lead since they know their sound system.

During worship

1. If you have kids, try to begin by worshiping with them to one upbeat, fun song encouraging them to jump, dance, shake an instrument. Conclude with time of prayer as families, kids, or differing groups to generate a culture of prayer and worship with our kids.
2. Have everyone begin standing. Explain they are free to kneel, sit, raise their hands, whatever helps them worship. Encourage freedom in this time.
3. Ministry during worship: Begin by being still and asking the Lord for something encouraging to share with someone in the group. Let the group know our desire is to encourage, comfort, strengthen one another—I Cor. 14:3—New Testament Prophecy. You don't have to "hear" from God to pray for someone. Often the simple exercise of reaching out to bless will open the door for the Holy Spirit to do more than you expected. Here are a few options to start with:
 - In the time of waiting, each person ask the Lord for a scripture to share with the group to encourage the group. Sharing God's Word is always a good thing!
 - Draw names of group members from a hat and ask the Lord for encouragements to write on the card. Place them back in the hat and at end of worship distribute them to each person to read and be edified.
 - During worship, encourage the group to go to a person and pray for them or share something encouraging with them. (a picture, word, scripture, etc.)
4. Periodically worship by participating in communion together.
5. Read a Psalm together: let it inform your praise
6. Picture Jesus: using a scripture that gives imagery to Jesus (Ex: Ps. 23- Good



Shepherd, Rev. 1:12-20 Jesus), share it with your group and have them picture Jesus the way he is described in scripture while singing, acknowledging his attributes, and having fellowship with the Holy Spirit during songs.

Practicals for leading worship

The source of music can be an instrumentalist, YouTube worship videos, an iPhone or CD. Multiple sources of music open up the door for non-instrumentalists to lead. Here are good tips for worship:

- Song selection: choose 3-4 songs, most of which are familiar. Start with upbeat tempos and progress to more slower paced songs. If you want, maybe introduce only one new song at each worship time. We want them to engage fully, so knowing the songs helps.
- Remind them of why we worship: use the paragraph above to remind the group why we worship.
- Start standing: this is what we do on Sunday and is a good way to get people engaged... especially after a meal.
- Higher volume: set the volume loud enough so that people don't feel self conscious about singing in a small group
- Prayer or scripture between songs: prior to worship ask the group to ask the Lord to bring to mind a scripture to read in between the songs. Don't stop the music, but turn the volume down some, giving people room to share or pray.
- Prayer at end: after the last song pray. Bless the Lord, pray with gratitude, affirm your need for his continued presence in the next part of life group.



Life Drain Alert: allowing the worship time to be stagnant. If something's not life giving, then ask for help, don't do anything for the sake of "just doing it."

5

Learning to Lead The Core of the Life Group Meeting

The Core is the part of the life group meeting where people interact with each other, the Word, and the Spirit (worship can also be a place where this happens.)

The three ways described are basic ways the church has been utilizing since the New Testament. Each way is like a recipe for a life-giving experience made with the ingredients of the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and the people of God.

We want every life group leader to become competent in these three, life-giving recipes.

Pay careful attention to the Life Drain Alerts. We know that the Word of God and the Holy Spirit are always life-giving. We need to be conscientious leaders so we don't inadvertently drain the life out of the experience. We can do this by over controlling or talking too much as well as allowing the group to get off track.

1. Word Spirit Ministry approach

In this approach, the group is broken into smaller groups based on gender or couples or families. In the group, the members will engage a passage of Scripture from the ones in the weekly Bible study or some other passage. They'll discuss it then have a time of reflection for personal application, followed by a time of sharing and ministry.

To help you group understand the supernatural realm better, explain how God weaves together his Word, Spirit and our relationships with people to bless us through one another. We should come excited to experience this!



To help your group learn how to do this well, here's some insight:

- Begin by modeling the process in the large group. In the large group, we're learning the life-giving way to engage the Word and Spirit, and to minister to one another. This will set them up for success when they do this in small groups. Don't worry that some won't talk much in the large context or that the depth of sharing isn't as deep. Deeper conversations and ministry will happen in smaller groups.



Life Drain Alert: if you don't model this for several weeks, people will do their own version of it when they get in small groups later on. Modeling establishes the process. Try to do this periodically as a refresher.

- Invite the Holy Spirit to lead. We want to go beyond an intellectual discussion, so we invite the Holy Spirit in at the beginning, through prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide our thoughts. Give him permission to speak; tell him we're eager to know his will as we read and discuss his Word.
- Let Scripture speak. After prayer, give everyone in the group time to read the passage twice through silently. Don't read it aloud, people don't assimilate it as well. Discuss questions like these:
 - What does this passage tell you about God and what's important to him?
 - What does this passage tell you about people and what's important to them?
 - How is this good news?



Life Drain Alert: resist trying to sum up the passage or stating the lesson everyone is "supposed" to get out of it. Instead, look phrase by phrase. This keeps even familiar passages fresh and alive.



Life Drain Alert: emphasize the need for everyone to speak briefly. One "talker" can drain all the life out of it.

- Reflection: Learning to hear God. Many people don't know how God speaks or what the experience is like. Teach them that when we wait on him, asking him for wisdom, he often brings to mind a picture or thoughts like these below. These are some of the ways he may want us to respond:
 1. Identify a lie and embrace a truth
 2. Do something or stop doing something
 3. Love or forgive someone



Life Drain Alert: this is a time for personal reflection not impersonal theological pontificating. We want to hear from God about how we're personally to respond.

- Sharing what you heard from God. Share with the group how you sense the Lord wanting you personally to respond to his Word and the Holy Spirit.



Life Drain Alert: Vulnerability is the key! Encourage people to share personally. Life group is a safe place. The blessing of the church is found in vulnerability and trust.

- Ministering to one another in prayer. This is where the money is. Encourage them to pray specifically for one another. Pray encouragement, agree with the Lord's conviction, thank him for his power.

Once the group has learned the way we do a Word Spirit Ministry time, start having them do it in small groups. Groups of 2-4 will always go deeper than a large group.

You can be creative in how you create the small groups:

- 2-3 people in gender specific groups
- All of one gender in a group
- Couples in groups
- Families with kids



Life Drain Alert: without a little training, small groups often skip one or more of the important steps, especially asking the Holy Spirit for wisdom and the time of reflection. A good way to ensure your small groups are successful is to have a Word Spirit Ministry time as a large group for a couple of weeks so they see it modeled.

2. God Stories approach

This is a time to hear how the Lord included us in the kingdom during the past or what he's been teaching us personally. Everyone will be encouraged and very likely it will help focus the group outward.

Before worship, explain what the group will be doing tonight. As you start worship, encourage them to ask the Lord to bring to mind something they might share. After worship, open the floor for people to share



Life Drain Alert: head off the "talker" and the later "teacher" by explaining that the purpose is to share something *personal* and to be mindful of others who want to share. As the leader, resist sharing first. It's awesome when you don't even get a chance to share because others are!



Life Drain Alert: Make sure people know every God story is welcome. Maybe starting with a simple, short one will help. Sometimes people think I only share if I lead a person to the Lord...

After each person shares, consider having the group pray in agreement or intercede for what's been shared. You can encourage someone near them to lay hands on them. It can also be good to ask someone who is close to that person or who might have an experiential connection with that person to begin praying.



Life Drain Alert: as the leader, resist the urge to pray yourself and ask others to pray for that person or need. Let the group get the blessing.

If you have time at the end, break into smaller groups of 2-4 to pray and minister to each other and ask for more God stories and pray the "Include Me" prayer together.

3. Spiritual Health Check approach

The goal is for people to get into smaller groups of 2-3 men or women and share how they're doing spiritually. Use these three questions as the basis of the sharing:

- How's your walk or personal time with Jesus?
- Where are struggling to be like Jesus?
- Who are you loving for Jesus' sake?

In the smaller groups, if someone has a big hurt or need, the group should always defer to caring for that person, otherwise, the goal is for everyone to share about all the questions. This is a key time to focus outward. It's important for the leader to set this time up prior to breaking into smaller groups, reminding all to stay away from the life drain alerts.



Life Drain Alert: impersonal or surface sharing is a killer. Encourage openness and confidentiality. Make sure to place a strong person in each smaller group.



Life Drain Alert: the "talker" is the most common life drainer. Head this off before you break folks into groups. As the leader, make sure you're not the talker.



Life Drain Alert: when someone shares a need or concern, avoid counseling or giving practical advice. Make prayer the priority.



Life Drain Alert: don't spend too much time on any one question or you'll miss the power of covering all three.

End this time by ministering in prayer to one another. You can help this by having a timekeeper that stops group so they have time to pray. Encourage the people in the small groups to check in with one another during the week about something they shared. The more that the life-giving experience doesn't center around the leader, the more the group will carry each other's burdens. In fact, there may be times of significant ministry is happening and you're not even aware.

6

Recapping, Announcements, and Logistics

Recapping

Regularly recap the flow of your Life group time at the end of your meeting. Saying something like, *“Did you see what we did tonight—we ate and fellowshiped, covered announcements, shared the vision for LG, spent time in worship and did the Core of”*

Keep it short like 1 min. This helps all members and new people have a clear grasp of what we are doing (footprints) and also how to describe to guests they invite.

Another option is to recap along with announcements up front. This is helpful when you use the Spiritual Health Check Core option or break out into smaller groups at the end or have lots of smaller children who are ready to go after two hours.

Announcements

Announcements connect people with the bigger picture and the rest of CrossBridge. This is super important. People want to know they're part of something bigger than themselves. Plus, they might miss important ministry opportunities if we don't tell them. If you want, you can do the announcements at the beginning of life group. Use the info from the bulletin for basic info about ministry events.

Find someone social, who loves to spur people on. Ask someone that may have a connection or experience with that announcement to speak about it and spur others on for that event or opportunity. Ex. A lady to share Women's retreat announcement who went last year. Have the person sharing the announcements pick up a bulletin on Sunday.

***Mission teams:

As group members feel called to go on mission, it is important that they feel the support of your group. Plan to pray over them as a group before they leave, have them share prayer needs during the trip, and give them time to share what God did when they return.





Life Drain Alert: not doing announcements contributes to people feeling isolated, only knowing the people in their group.

Logistics

Being attentive to the following logistics will facilitate the life-giving experience and greatly enhance its reproducibility. Logistics aren't fun, but if they aren't followed, they can diminish the group's kingdom impact.

1. Rotate homes

Non-negotiable for life groups. Encourage this in the group, personally ask people if they'd be willing to give it a shot. Consistently remind people it's not about having a big home. Be willing to meet in an apartment and celebrate how it feels like the underground church. Do everything you can to be reproducible and not limited to the biggest or nicest homes.

2. Have a strategy for blessing the children (See Section 7)

If you've got kids in your group, then count yourself highly honored by the Lord! He's counted you worthy to play a big role in discipling them. Here are some basic ways to make the most of this opportunity:

- As a spiritual family, whoever is hosting that night share at the start their house rules and expectations for the night, so respect is given and safety is considered.
- Include kids in meal times. Teach the adults how to include the kids at the table and talk with them. Super powerful!
- Include the children in worship at least for first song (no playing on iPads) Caring for the kids is the whole group's role as a spiritual family.
- After worship, try to have a brief time of prayer with the kids. Families praying together, Kids pray for each other or for parents, pray over moms/ dads, mission teams, countries. Mix up weekly, but the idea is to help kids have norm of praying together! Not long- maybe 2 minutes or so, depending on attention span of kids ages.



Life Drain Alert: if you don't have a strategy, the kids may be seen as annoyance or obstacle. If you aren't attentive to safety issues, bad things can occur.

3. Have a group administrator

It's amazing how much this adds life to the group, so let the one gift with administration use their gift! Here we are some key administration functions:

- Thinking ahead 6-7 weeks with a hosting rotation and upcoming events is a must to keep logistics from hindering group involvement.



- Leverage group texts or Facebook group to foster connection through the week.
- Use Signup Genius to coordinate meals and who is bringing what weekly.
- Empower a Guest Connector person: Utilize the Life Group vision card to share with guests after their first visit explaining what we do and how we do it. Make sure to let them know group details for next week and follow up within 24 hours after their visit.



Life Drain Alert: don't think that you need to do the scheduling because you're the leader. If your not administrative, it will drain life from you and the group.

4. Be a good time manager

- Start on time and End on time. It communicates respect and value.
- Encourage people to be on time, though some simply can't due to work.
- Don't let the Gathering time dominate.
- In a two hour meeting aim for 45 minutes for the Gathering time.
- Seek to find a healthy balance for all elements, with priority for worship and the core, but don't leave out vision or recap.

5. Coach others to lead

Remember, you're leading reproducibly, so let others give it a try. They don't have to lead the whole meeting the first time, just give them a piece to lead. Coach them and encourage them in their efforts.



Life Drain Alert: if you don't do this, no one will ever step up and, even worse, you'll feel an increasing weight to make the group life-giving.

6. Keep inviting people

Never stop. It's vitally important. It needs to be the culture of your group. Even the most "huddle up" members of your group will likely become excited about the vision as the group grows and they see "their" group making a difference in the lives of others.



Life Drain Alert: stop inviting and the group loses kingdom impact and multiplying becomes highly unlikely or divisive

7. Strive to have a multi-generational group

The most obvious reasons for multi-gen groups is that older people often provide wisdom and younger people often provide life, but there are other important benefits:

- You don't get over run with children in a multi-gen group. Young parents have others who will love to hold their baby.
- Remember, the goal of life group (the church) goes way beyond being a place for friendship. We're the family of God on a rescue mission.

7

Blessing Children in Life group

(Utilize the Blessing Children in LG card available in the office)

Goal:

Our aim to equip leaders for blessing and equipping the children is:

1. **Parents Role: *Every life counts!*** Give understanding to Lifegroup families that every life has worth and matters. We desire that the parents understand the value of their children's spiritual development, and that the parents are the primary source for love and kingdom investment/discipleship to pass onto the next generation. *Deuteronomy 6:4-9*
2. **Lifegroup Role: *We love who Jesus brings!*** As every Lifegroup looks unique in terms of ages/stages, we look like the church when we include every person who Jesus brings to us, including children. This can make the LG feel chaotic, loud, distracting, etc, but they belong and are apart of the church as much as we are. We continue in the chaos.
3. **Valuable Members of the Kingdom: *Children Have the Holy Spirit!*** For children who have received Jesus as their Savior, we must recognize that they have the Holy Spirit too, and that there is no junior Holy Spirit. Can you imagine what the future generation would look like if there were a generation of kingdom shakers that were raised up who started as children laying hands on the sick, praying for others and sharing the gospel? Let's partner with God in what He is already doing in raising up a generation of passionate followers of Christ.

***Children are valuable members of the Lifegroup and Kingdom, and just like anyone who Jesus brings to the Lifegroup, we have a responsibility to help grow and disciple them into the Kingdom.

Lifegroup Flow Including Children:

1. Fellowship

- **Family Fellowship:** Play a game all together (Find matching stickers on you and your partners back, Age guessing game- winner (kid) with the most right gets a prize).



Spend time talking to kids besides your own asking about their interests, and getting to know them.

2. Vision

- **Vision With Families:** If teens/children are in your lifegroup time together, as a part of the vision go around the group allowing each teen/child to share one thing they love about Lifegroup. Then combine their comments into expressing how it's these elements we bring together that allow LG to be lifegiving, leaves footprints on the children's hearts, and advances the kingdom.



Life Drain Alert: People feeling disgruntled about changing dynamics such as Lifegroup becoming more distracting with the introduction of children to or involved in the LG time. Remember you not only want to practice involving kids, but give vision toward the culture and purpose for WHY we engage the children, and love who Jesus brings.

3. Worship

- **Family Worship:** Allow the children to participate in worship. Sometimes this might be with all the families together, and other times they have their own worship time depending on the setup of the house, childcare, etc. When leading worship for or with children, start with upbeat music that is fun to dance too. Adults, this means you get to show them how worship is fun and interactive with joy, dance, clapping, etc. Start off leading them in worship by asking these questions and being ready to reinforce the answers to them:
 1. Who are we worshipping when we sing songs?
 2. Why do we worship God?
 3. Let's tell God thank you for loving us! (Ex: On the count of 3: 1, 2, 3 THANK YOU!)
- **Family Ministry:** During extended worship and ministry times, allow specific time during a song where parents pray over their children, and ask the children to pray over them. Parents, wait on the Lord with the children, and ask the Spirit together if there is anyone in the room He wants to encourage, share a scripture or have parent/child pray over another person.
- **Worship Elements:** Options you can include that help engage the kids are: Dancing with scarves or ribbon rings, Using a book to briefly share a story about Jesus before the music (Jesus Storybook Bible), YouTube Red- Kids Dance/Worship Videos (Bethel, Hill Song), teach them basic motions to the music. Choosing songs with fewer and repetitive words will make it easy for the kids to sing to. You can include the children in part of the worship time or the whole portion.
- **Options:** Another way to worship with the kids is to go around and ask them to share:
 1. James 1:17 says, "Every good and perfect gift is from above..." What makes you happy? What has God given you?

2. What are you thankful to God for?
3. Pray and thank the Lord for His goodness.

4. The Core

- **Options for Leading:** There are options for who leads the children’s ministry time, and how, depending on the dynamics of your group. If you have regular built in teen babysitters that want to disciple children, you could equip them to lead this out on a weekly basis with the kids. For those who don’t have teens, or don’t regularly have children in their Lifegroup, you could rotate who gets to lead the children’s ministry time. If you don’t regularly have children in your Lifegroup, invest in a children’s story bible and crayons/paper to have on hand with you if and when children do come.



Life Drain Alert: When you have 25 + kids and it’s out of control and loud. This is a clear sign that it’s time to multiply your Lifegroup. Until then, make sure you have 2 or more babysitters for your group. Divide the children into two groups based on ages and personality spreading out kids that need a little more attention. Take turns rotating the children’s group locations. Enlist older/mature children to be “helpers” for the smaller children.

Core Activity Resources:

1. ["Blessing Children in Lifegroup"- CrossBridge Children's Training Manual and Video](#)
 - a. Through this resource, you will view a children’s version of how to do a version of the “Core” with kids through “God Adventures” (*Word, Spirit & Ministry*), “God Sightings” (*God Stories*) & “God Check Up” (*Spiritual Health Check*)
2. **Books:** Jesus Storybook Bible, If Jesus Lived Inside My Heart, If Jesus Came to Visit Me, The Action Bible
3. Object Lessons for Kids:
 - [Bible Lessons for Kids](#)
 - [Sermons4Kids](#)
 - [Children's Lessons](#)
4. [RightNow Media](#)
5. Memory Verses with a cheap toy to pick out of a treasure box once they memorize it.

***** After the Core time with the children, make sure you leave time for them to play.**

Logistical Investment:

- **Host Home Rules:** With changes in a new home, sitters or new LG participants, periodically cover house rules with parents, kids and sitters. Leaders or parents, set the tone with the children that the sitters are in charge of the kids, are their authority



during LG, and will report about the kids to the parents if needed. The children are in charge of their own behavior to have:

1. Happy hearts.
2. Good attitudes
3. Obey right away!

- **Rotation Options:**

- **Lifegroup as a Family:** Rotate kids being in and part of the LG with families. Decide how regular you want to include them and with what elements. Some examples: Every week during worship, or every other week. Every 6 weeks all of LG together doing one of the Kid's Core elements with them. Etc.
- **Childcare Rotation:** Choose what works best for your Lifegroup to hire childcare: Every week, once a month, bi weekly, etc. You can have a Parent rotate in when the sitters aren't present.
- **Teen Discipleship:** Equip your teens who want to disciple by investing into kids with the Children's Flow/Core. They will learn more by what's caught than taught. This will likely require a leader or adult to walk out the core with them and the children first.
- **Parent Discipleship:** Rotate through a sign up for adults/couples who will do the Flow/Core with kids. Make sure this doesn't fall only on the "Moms", but husband/wife serving together for those that can.

- **Multi Generational Groups:** Being a multi generational group allows the LG to not be overly dominated by kids.
- **Solo Parents:** Take special care of the single moms/dads, and those that have a traveling/working or an unbelieving spouse not in attendance. They need your support whether it's meals when kids are sick, child care, or encouragement that they are doing a good job as a parent. Make sure they don't feel isolated by only addressing people as "couples".
- **Size Factors:** For groups with 15 kids or more you need 2 babysitters depending on ages of kids. If needed, break up younger and older. One group inside and the other outside and then switch, or use rooms instead of outdoors.
- **Childcare Money:** Have someone regularly tracking and gathering childcare money to pay the sitters. This person will also communicate with visitors that become LG members the cost for childcare. Typically kids under 12 are considered needing childcare.
- **Supplies:** For LG's that don't have families with children, it's helpful to be prepared (toys) for a family with kids that might visit. Likewise, for multigenerational groups you may visit a host home that doesn't have things to keep kids occupied. In such cases, it's helpful to have a person designated to care for visiting children. The LG Leader or another member should always keep some crayons, paper, balloons, and a few blocks or small toys on hand. This can easily fit in a plastic baggy to save space and transfer.

- **Food:** Have options for Snack/drinks for kids if you don't eat dinner together.



Life Drain Alert: The LG Leader feeling overwhelmed in having a strategy to bless kids, recruit and pay a sitter, rotate parents, etc. Find out who has an administrative gift or a heart for kids to be the “**Children’s Shepherd**” for the Lifegroup.

Resources:

- **Books:** Jesus Storybook Bible, If Jesus Lived Inside My Heart, If Jesus Came to Visit Me, The Action Bible
- **Worship:** Scarves, rings/ribbon, (Find scarves/wooden rings on Amazon, ribbon-Hobby Lobby), YouTube Red
- **Toys:** So we can accommodate visiting families, if you don't have children in LG invest in a small plastic bin or bag, and fill it with crayons, paper, a few toys that aren't too small to swallow (blocks, beach ball, dolls, action figures, jump rope, balloons). You can go to Salvation Army or goodwill and get most of this cheaply. Also you can ask a mom with kids at home if she is planning on getting rid of anything. Most of the time they will say yes!
- **Activities:** Balloons, Bubbles, Beach ball, Tag, Red Rover, Simon Says, Relay Race, Duck Duck Goose,

8

Multiplying and Starting a new Life Group

Life group Multiplication Timeline

Leading up:

1. Begin empowering the future leaders in facilitating the Core as much as you can.
2. Set aside times of coaching with future leaders seeing where they are in the vision and any concerns they have in leading in it.
3. Get the future leaders a copy of the Leader Coaching Manual to read and process if they don't already have it.
4. Involve your Zone Leader as they are partners with you in prayer and on the mission. There will be times of coaching together towards the vision of multiplication in the life group.
5. Map your current group's locations to see geographically where your members are located and what group to place them in.
6. Determine a projected date for multiplication. Set a plan 6 weeks prior to the multiplication to weekly communicate and pray over.

6 week Plan and Timeline:

Life Group #1:

At the meeting, cast the vision for multiplication and share with the group that you're going to discuss multiplication next week. Share scriptures: *(NKJV) Acts 9:31, Acts 2:46-47, Deut. 30:14-16, Acts 6:7, Heb. 10:22-25, Matt. 28:18-20, Acts 1:8*

Life Group #2:

Announce multiplication, and explain that the groups will be formed geographically for the purpose of reaching their oikos. Let them know that you'll be emailing them a map that shows the geography of the multiplication.



At least three days before the meeting

- Email the map
- Both leaders call their new members individually about which LG they are multiplying with. Questions or concerns? Reassuring

LG #3-4: Continue consistency in Flow and envisioning multiplication with scripture.

- Finalize your Multiplication Celebration as a group and all church commissioning date.

LG #5: Celebrate Communion and do God Stories and share testimonies from people about what the group has meant to them or how multiplying is hard, but good.

LG #6: Multiplication Celebration party/Fellowship

- Set a date for two groups to gather together for a fellowship or outreach in 6 weeks.
- Begin meeting as two healthy groups the following week.

Future Leader Steps:

1. Read the LG Leader Coaching Manual and LG Leader Role Sheet.
2. Meet with your Zone Leader to process and clarify LGL role.
3. Sign up for Freedom Prayer
4. Begin attending Zone Life group and Huddle equipping

