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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.