

Facilitating
Life Changing
Life Groups at



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Introduction

This booklet is designed to assist, equip, and instruct facilitators of Life Groups at Palm Coast Community Church.

It is particularly intended to help Life Group Facilitators (LGF) build healthy Life Groups centered on our purpose statement "challenging people to discover real life in Christ."

As you study this guide, please keep in mind that every Life Group is unique and different with its own set of needs and priorities. The information within this guide is intended only to be a starting point, not an ending point. It is a means to an end, not simply an end.

Thank you for your interest in being a Life Group Facilitator or Apprentice! We believe that Life Group Facilitators and Apprentices are an essential part of how God wants us to do church together!

Thanks for your interest in this kingdom-critical ministry.

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pc3 Life Group Leaders

pc3 Life Groups

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SECTION 1: THE WAY WE DO THINGS AT PC3

PC3 MISSION

PC3 VALUES

PC3 SPIRITUAL GROWTH STRATEGY

PC3 BELIEF: ABOUT GOD

PC3 BELIEF: ABOUT THE BIBLE

PC3 BELIEF: ABOUT SALVATION

PC3 BELIEF: DECIDING RIGHT FROM WRONG

MINISTRY, THE BIBLICAL MODEL

LIFE GROUPS, THE BIBLICAL MODEL

pc3 MISSION

Challenging people to discover real life in Christ.

pc3 VALUES

Being Real

The beginning and end of all healthy relationships is being real with God, self and others.

Honoring God

God is number one, and we adjust our lives accordingly.

Valuing People

We focus our time, energy and money on people because people are of ultimate importance to God.

Serving God and Others

We actively adjust our lives to better serve God and people.

pc3 SPIRITUAL GROWTH STRATEGY

Love God/Love People/Live It!

Love God (come to a weekend gathering). The greatest commandment Jesus ever gave us: "Love God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength".

- Loving God involves having a personal relationship with Jesus and then growing in that relationship every day.
- Weekend gatherings are recommended for personal growth with God.
- Daily time with God in prayer and reading the Bible is critical to a growing faith.

Love People (join a Life Group). The second commandment, and equal to the first is: "love people as we love ourselves."

- Loving people shows them Christ's love for them.
- Life Groups are great places to start learning how to love people and how to learn the spiritual discipline of community.
- Once someone is connected within a Life Group, the next step we recommend is learning how to live out their faith through their giftedness.

Live It! (do your part) God has designed each of us uniquely to fit into the overall body of Christ. Each one of us has a critical part to play.

- Everyone is encouraged to discover how God has wired them (spiritual gifts, abilities, passions, etc.) and where God wants to plug them in and use their gifts.
- There are many places to serve inside and outside of our pc3 family.
- Other people benefit when we use our gifts and so do we!

pc3 BELIEF: ABOUT GOD

There is no way for our finite little human brains to get our minds around who God really is. We have many glimpses of God in the Bible, yet we won't see Him clearly or understand Him fully until we are in His presence in heaven. If we could fully understand, then we probably would not need Him. We need a God who is bigger than we are. Someone outside our physical world who can reach into our world to save us from ourselves. From what we can understand from the Bible about God, He is the following and much more:

ALWAYS EXISTED

"In the beginning God..." is how Genesis 1:1 starts. When there was a beginning to the universe we live in, God already existed. He has always been and will always be. There never was a time when God did not exist. For infinity past, God existed. For infinity future, God will always exist.

OMNISCIENT

Omniscient means "all knowing." The Bible teaches that God knows everything. There is nothing on the planet earth that God doesn't fully know about. There is nothing that we can keep secret from Him. He even knows the hairs on our heads. Scripture verse for further study: 1 John 3:20

OMNIPRESENT

Omnipresent means "ever present." There is no place that we can go on the earth that God's not already there. He is every place all at the same time. He can be everywhere in the world at the same time. Scripture verses for further study: Psalm 139:7-12

OMNIPOTENT

Omnipotent means "all-powerful". There is nothing too big for God to handle. There is no force on earth too strong for God to defeat! There is no enemy around that can stand as His equal. Scripture verse for further study: Jeremiah 32:17

EXISTS IN COMMUNITY

God exists in what is called "the trinity". The trinity is made up of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Although the word "trinity" isn't found in the bible, the concept is consistently seen. For example, when Jesus (God in human form) was baptized on earth, God the Father spoke from heaven saying "This is My Son who pleases Me greatly!" Then the Holy Spirit, flew down upon Jesus in the form of a dove.

God exists in a loving community and invites us to join that relationship.

Scripture verses for further study: Genesis 1:26, 2 Corinthians 13:14

pc3 BELIEF: ABOUT THE BIBLE

The Bible is not only an amazing book but the greatest book ever written. In it, we find the thoughts of God captured in written form. It was written by over forty different authors over a span of 1,500 years. Christians believe that even though the writings of the bible were authored by many different human writers, they were all done so under the direct guidance of God Himself.

The writings in the Old Testament are those collected before the life of Jesus. From early in their history, Jewish people (God's specially chosen people) began to collect writings that were important to their faith and history. These early writings include the Ten Commandments, the Law, poems, songs, historical documents, and letters from the great prophets God spoke through to the Jews. These writings were collected into what are known as books. The Old Testament consists of 39 books. The Old Testament describes events from the creation of the world until approximately 400 B.C.

From 400 B.C. to the life of Jesus, various other Jewish writings were completed. These writings in this time period are known as the Apocrypha. Some churches today (i.e. the Roman Catholic Church) include the Apocrypha in their Bibles but neither Jews nor early Christians believed in their biblical authority.

The New Testament writings developed over the first few centuries of the early church. Shortly after Jesus' death and resurrection, writings began to appear from Jews and non-Jews who believed Jesus was the Savior of the world.

What began to develop were different types of letters. "The Gospels" refers to the first 4 books of the New Testament. These books are written by people who had first hand experiences with Jesus Christ. Other writings of the New Testament books include letters from church facilitators to specific individuals or to specific early churches. To be included in the New Testament the following criteria was applied:

- 1) Apostolic authorship – It was important that a work be authored by or associated with an apostolic witness. Apostolic witness means someone who had actually seen the risen Jesus.
- 2) Widespread usage and acceptance – As the early church grew quickly, Christians of different backgrounds, nationalities and perspectives developed. When a writing maintained or gained universal usage and acceptance among the majority of different groups, this met the second criteria.
- 3) Conformity to the faith – Probably the most important criteria was its consistency with the general beliefs and practices of the early churches. Therefore, writings with questionable theology or practices not followed by early churches were excluded.

We believe that God guided the overall process of the Bible's formation. God has protected and promoted His thoughts in written form for many generations to read and follow. The Bible remains God's primary means of communication to His followers and is still as relevant today as when penned.

pc3 BELIEF: ABOUT SALVATION

“Salvation” is the term Christians use to describe being rescued from the power of sin and death. The Bible teaches in Romans 3:23 that everyone has sinned and fallen short of God’s standard for living. Sin is anything we do that hurts our relationship with God.

Sin affects everyone! It controls us; it shapes us; it drives us; it separates us from God. Because of that, **we are all in desperate need of a Savior**, someone outside of our sinful situation who is not affected by sin to reach into our world and break sin’s control over us.

John 3:16 says, “For God loved the world so much that He gave His One and only Son so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent His Son into the world not to judge the world, but to **save** the world through Him.”

Referring to Jesus, Acts 4:12 says, “There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.”

Jesus is our Savior! The One who brings us salvation.

Jesus overcame sin’s power of us by giving His life for ours. Jesus provides salvation through His death, burial and resurrection! We “get saved” when we place our faith and trust in Jesus Christ. When we confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, we will be saved!

At pc3, we believe that once a person has placed his/ her trust in Jesus Christ, salvation can never be taken away. Here are some verses we believe support that position:
John 5:24 – 25 and John 3:3 – 5

Once a person is born physically, they cannot reverse that event to a time when it didn’t happen. And the same is true spiritually. Once a person is truly born again spiritually, it cannot be reversed or taken away from them. Those who are truly born again are safely tucked away in the powerful, protective hands of God. No one can take us out of God’s grasp, not even ourselves.

I John 5:13 “I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.”

God wants you to know with confidence that you have eternal life. He doesn’t want us wandering the earth in fear and panic, constantly wondering if we are “saved” or have been “born again.”

Some people hold the perspective that one can lose his/her salvation, based on verses such as Hebrews 6:4-6. If you have any questions, dive into studying all the verses for yourself. Ask God to teach you His truth related to salvation.

pc3 BELIEF: DECIDING RIGHT FROM WRONG

- **Does the Bible Specifically say “yes” or “no”?**

For example:

“Do not misuse the name of the Lord your God.” Exodus 20:7

“Do not steal.” Exodus 20:15

- **Does the thing I’m “considering” give the appearance of evil?**

“Keep away from every kind of evil.” 1 Thessalonians 5:22

“Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God’s people. Obscene stories, foolish talk and coarse jokes – these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God.” Ephesians 5:3-4

- **Does it cause me to be influenced by the wrong people?**

“Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character.”

1 Corinthians 15:33

- **Does it control my life?**

“I must not be a slave to anything.” 1 Corinthians 6:12

“Let the Holy Spirit fill and control you.” Ephesians 5:18

- **Does it violate God’s temple?**

“Don’t you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

- **Does it cause a weaker Christian follower to stumble?**

“You are sinning against Christ when you sin against other Christians by encouraging them to do something they believe is wrong.” 1 Corinthians 8:12

“Live in such a way that you will not put an obstacle in another Christian’s path.” Romans 14:13

“We live in such a way that no one will stumble because of us, and no one will find fault with our ministry.” 2 Corinthians 6:3

- **Do I believe it is wrong?**

“If you do anything you believe is not right, you are sinning.” Romans 14:23

- **Is it against the law?**

“Obey the government, for God is the one who has put it there. There is no government anywhere that God has not placed in power. So those who refuse to obey the laws of the land are refusing to obey God, and punishment will follow.”

Romans 12:1-2

- **Does it draw me away from Jesus?**

“Let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us.” Hebrews 12:1

MINISTRY: THE BIBLICAL MODEL

Imagine the overwhelming task of being told that you are personally responsible for the needs of over six hundred people. The word “impossible” probably comes to mind! In many churches today, though, that very thought prevails. The thought is this, “We have hired the pastor and the church staff to do the work of the ministry.” But is that the biblical model?

We believe it is not! In Ephesians 4:11-13 we read, “[God]...gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do His work and build up the church, the body of Christ, until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ.”

Note again what verse 12 states, “Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do His work...”

Understanding how ratios work can help us better understand this concept! Which is a better model: one person working directly with six hundred people, or one person working directly with ten people?

The answer seems obvious! One person is much more effective when working with ten people rather than six hundred. If a large number of people are broken down into smaller groups, their needs can be met much more effectively.

Jesus developed the model!

Just imagine when Christ returned to Heaven after His resurrection. The angels were rejoicing and asking, “Is it all over with? Did you accomplish what you set out to do?”

Just imagine Christ’s reply, “Yes, I have accomplished what I set out to do! I left My message in the hands of My small group of eleven men!”

“You did what?” might have been the angel’s thoughts. “You left the most important message of eternity in the hands of eleven sinful humans who could not even stand by You in Your death?”

His message is in our hands now. And it is our duty to spread the Good News to a dying world! Life groups are but one way we can do this!

LIFE GROUPS: THE BIBLICAL MODEL

The biblical model seems clear. Throughout the Bible, the idea of community was accomplished within small groups of people.

- In Exodus 18 we read how Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, advised Moses not to try to minister to the people of Israel all alone. Jethro wisely recommended for Moses to delegate his ministry to others who could help support him in that ministry. Moses wisely heeded Jethro's advice.
- Jesus began his earthly ministry by establishing His small group with 12 men. His purpose was to transform these 12 men into His own image and to send them out to do the same thing with others.
- How did He accomplish this? By doing life with the 12 disciples! He did not simply say, "Do it this way because I said so." He ate with them, He walked with them, He lived with them, He did life with them!
- In Acts, we read how the first century church met in temple courts (like our Sunday morning gatherings) and in individual's homes (small groups).
- Acts 2:46-47 "They worshipped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity – all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.
- We are admonished many times in the scripture:
 - to be unified
 - to love each other
 - to encourage each other
 - to bear each other's burdens and
 - to put other's needs before our own

We must be in relationship with each other for this to happen – life groups.
(Ephesians 4; I Corinthians 13; Galatians 6:2, Philippians 2:3)

'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has!' ~ Margaret Mead

SECTION 2: MORE ABOUT LIFE GROUPS AT PC3

DEFINITION: WHAT IS A LIFE GROUP?

BENEFIT: BRINGING REAL LIFE CHANGES

OTHER BENEFITS OF A LIFE GROUP

FEARS OF JOINING A LIFE GROUP

DEFINITION: WHAT IS A LIFE GROUP?

Definition: A Life Group is an intentional gathering of three to ten people who come together on a regular basis with the common purpose of growing in their love by serving God and others.

- ❖ **"Intentional gathering"** – Our Life Groups at pc3 are designed to be intentional in purpose. We intentionally decide to meet together so that we might grow together.
- ❖ **"Three to ten people"** – Life Groups operate best when there are no more than ten members. More than ten makes it very difficult for more members to actively participate and can actually start to deteriorate the group.
- ❖ **"A regular basis"** – Meeting on a regular basis establishes continuity and promotes commitment, both of which eventually lead to a real bonding and genuine community. A regular pattern of meeting together must be set and followed to build community. We develop community through shared experience. We cannot grow together in community if we are not going to spend large amounts of time together.
- ❖ **"Common purpose"** – Having a clearly defined purpose will help keep the group from floundering. Our Life Groups do not meet together for social activities alone. Our common purpose is to grow to be more like Christ. A Life Group will not ultimately be effective unless it exists to achieve biblical purposes.
- ❖ **"Growing"** – Growth is necessary for everyone. We never will come to the place where we have no more growing to do. This type of growth environment makes our Life Groups a great place for new Christians to mature right along with older Christian.
- ❖ **"Serving"** - As we grow individually and discover the way God has designed us, we seek ways to use our gifts, passions and abilities for the overall body of Christ. In a Life Group, we find ways to regularly serve our church family in very practical ways such as cleaning together, doing lawn maintenance together, setting up and taking down whatever is needed for special events or other helps. Groups, instead may choose to reach out and serve the local community or people in other countries through special projects. Be creative as you serve together!

FOUR STEPS TO AN AWESOME LIFE GROUP

❖ MEET

It's a Life Group, right? You've got to meet! Get everyone together on a regular basis and make the *group* a part of your *life*. Let your group know what God is doing in your world this week!

The Bible shows us that meeting together is the path to growing in every way: it helps teach us to Love God, to Love People, and to Live It Out!

❖ SERVE

Nothing brings a group together like serving! Maybe your group can watch the kids in Journey or Quest at a Sunday gathering, maybe you'd rather do something with our Local Missions Team, or maybe you just want to throw a barbecue for your neighbors. Whatever you do, if you're serving people, you're serving God!

So get your group to serve together at least three or four times every year. That way, the group can bring life to others!

❖ CONNECT

Meeting once a week as a group is great, but if you're a Life Group leader, you'll want to get the people of your group connecting with each other regularly.

You can set the pace for building relationships in this way: every week, pick one or two people in your group and connect with them. Call them, meet for coffee, chat over FaceTime, whatever it takes to find out how their week is going. People love the personal touch!

And do more than texting! A real connection takes real conversation.

❖ PRAY

Before you end your meeting, leave your comfort zone and pray out loud for your friends. You'll be amazed how that will help them AND help you!

...and that's it! If you're *meeting*, *serving*, *connecting*, and *praying* with your group, then you're well on your way to an awesome Life Group!

If this sounds like it takes a lot of time, remember that you're giving your life to what matters most: the people God loves!

BENEFIT: BRINGING REAL LIFE CHANGES

Where does real life change occur? Let's start by deciding where real life change generally does not occur. Real life change does not occur within large groups of people, like Sunday morning services, or large evangelical events. "But many people's lives are changed dramatically by these events," you might be thinking. That is very true! But what we are talking about is real sustaining life change!

Real sustaining life change is what takes place over a person's whole life and affects their whole being. Real life change occurs when we allow ourselves to be in close relation with others who are following Christ and who are determined to help us stay on track when life becomes overwhelming. We need each other to grow closer to God.

- ❖ Proverbs 27:17 ~ "As iron sharpens iron, a friend sharpens a friend."
- ❖ Galatians 6:2 ~ "Share each other's troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ."
- ❖ James 5:16 ~ "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results."

'Real life change occurs within a distance of three feet or less.'

~ Dr. Torrence, Pastor of Blue Ridge Community Church

OTHER BENEFITS OF A LIFE GROUP

Are there any benefits to getting involved in a Life Group? **Most definitely!**

Here are just a few:

- ❖ More friends
- ❖ Significant conversations about real life
- ❖ People who care about you
- ❖ Opportunities to contribute to the lives of others
- ❖ Laughter, fun and refreshment
- ❖ A safe and challenging place to grow in Christ
- ❖ A better understanding of the Bible
- ❖ A place where you belong, where “everybody knows your name”
- ❖ A safe place to share and deal with our hurts, habits and hang-ups
- ❖ A place to have our needs met and to meet the needs of others

FEARS OF JOINING A LIFE GROUP

Do you remember what it was like the first time you joined a Life Group?

That can be a very scary thing for people. Don't ever forget that the people you are inviting have very real fears they need to get over. We can help them overcome some of their fears by simply being reminded of what some of those fears are:

What if I am asked to talk about something I don't want to talk about?

What if I am asked to pray in front of the group?

What if I'm asked to find something in the Bible?

What if I don't like these people?

What if these people don't like me?

What is really going to happen in this group?

Are these Life Group people a bunch of hand-holding, song-singing weirdos?

What will they ask me to do or commit to?

Can I trust these people?

Will I fit into this group?

What if my spouse reveals too much about me?

What if I don't know enough about the Bible?

What if I share something and it is not held in confidence?

What if someone sees right through me into what I'm really like?

What if someone tries to hurt me emotionally or physically?

What if I say or do something stupid?

Is this some type of group therapy?

SECTION 3: EXPECTATIONS OF A LIFE GROUP FACILITATOR

LIFE GROUP FACILITATOR COVENANT WITH PC3

WHO CAN LEAD A LIFE GROUP

WHAT A LIFE GROUP FACILITATOR IS NOT

FEARS OF FACILITATING A LIFE GROUP

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A LIFE GROUP FACILITATOR

ESTABLISHING GROUP VALUES: THEIR IMPORTANCE

BUILDING A LIFE GROUP TEAM

CHOOSING/ORDERING CURRICULUM

USING A SAMPLE AGENDA

FACILITATING EFFECTIVELY

SPECIFIC FACILITATION TECHNIQUES & SKILLS

ASKING GREAT QUESTIONS

DEALING WITH CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS

RAISING UP AN APPRENTICE FACILITATOR

BIRTHING A NEW GROUP

GROWING THROUGH REGULAR TRAINING

LIFE GROUP FACILITATOR COVENANT WITH PC3

1. **Christ-Follower** – a Life Group Facilitator (LGF) must have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.
2. **pc3 Church Member** – a LGF must have completed Discovering Church Membership class and have been accepted as a church member. LGFs must agree to submit to pc3's Statement of Faith without reservation or addition.
3. **Attend Church Regularly** – a LGF must attend and participate regularly in our weekly services.
4. **Participate In Training** – a LGF must become equipped to do the work of the ministry, including active participation in our training system.
5. **Commitment To Personal Spiritual Growth** – each LGF must take on the responsibility for his/her own spiritual growth! We lead out of our ever-growing relationship with God.
6. **Authentic Facilitating** – a LGF must set the example to group members by being honest about their lives, including both spiritual successes and struggles.
7. **Teachable Spirit** – being teachable is more important than being able to teach.
8. **Spiritual Integrity** – a LGF must not have current habitual moral or marital struggles (drug abuse, cohabitation, infidelity, divorce in process, separation, etc.).
9. **Participate in Church-wide Campaigns** – a LGF will eagerly lead each his/her group to be involved in the church-wide study, whenever they occur.

**“What do you look for in a leader?
Give me a **SERVANT-LEADER** every time!”**

~ Mark Hine, Vice President Liberty University

“Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others.” Matthew 20:26-28 NLT

WHO CAN FACILITATE A LIFE GROUP

At pc3, Life Group Facilitators (LGF) are church members who are committed to the vision of the church and are called to utilize their gifts to significantly impact and serve others. LGF's should be constantly growing in their relationship and walk with Jesus Christ.

A LGF is a person who is open to God and who possesses and demonstrates the Fruit of the Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control (Galatians 5:22-23).

In addition to possessing and demonstrating the Fruit of the Spirit, a LGF possesses the character qualities of **F.A.I.T.H.**

- **Faithful:** steadfast, trustworthy, honest and dependable
- **Available:** willing to give of their time and resources
- **Inspiring:** exude an excitement about life
- **Teachable:** always open to learning new things
- **Humble:** others-centered not self-centered

WHAT A LIFE GROUP FACILITATOR IS *NOT*

A Life Group Facilitator is **NOT** necessarily:

A teacher

A Bible scholar

An extrovert

The most popular person

A strong personality

A church elder

There is a major difference between group facilitators and Bible teachers. The expectation is NOT to have group members sit quietly while the facilitator teaches the Bible lesson!

Instead, group members are invited to do most of the active contribution to the group process. That is accomplished most effectively by having group facilitators rather than teachers. Facilitators create an environment where group members feel comfortable enough to participate in the process of growing to be more like Christ. People learn better when they have an opportunity to actively engage in their learning process instead of when they are simply told what to believe and how to live.

A LGF is to facilitate and guide the discussion toward personal life change, helping members discover God's truth in ways that are personally meaningful to them.

FEARS OF FACILITATING A LIFE GROUP

Is being a LGF a scary thing to you? Read through the list below and see if you can identify with any of these real fears people experience as they step up to lead a Life Group.

- Will I be able to get the group started?
- What if no one shows up?
- What if no one talks?
- What if people talk too much?
- What if someone asks a question I don't know the answer to?
- What if I don't know enough about the Bible?
- What if someone challenges something I've said in the group?
- What if I like some members better than others?
- What if I make a fool of myself?
- What if someone needs more help than I or the group can provide?
- What if the group gets off task?
- How do I get group members back on track in a tactful way?
- What if a group member says something very negative about the church or about another group member?
- What if the group does not like me?
- What if I give someone the wrong advice?
- What if no one follows my facilitating?
- What will we study?

If you didn't have fears of facilitating a group before reading this list, maybe you have some now! The reality is that we all have fears - fears of joining a group, fears of getting active in ministry, fears of facilitating a Life Group, fears of getting hurt feeling etc. Satan loves it when we are fearful because many times it's the fear that keeps us from moving on.

But God is not afraid of our fear. In fact, fear can be a good thing, because it keeps us dependent on Him to direct our steps.

We want to tackle our fears in a way that honors God and supports people. We want everyone to feel connected and supported as they move through their fear and toward God. One of the ways we deal with LGF fears is to provide each LGF with training and a willing Life Group Leadership Team.

'My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.' So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses so that the power of Christ can work through me.

II Corinthians 12:9 NLT

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A LIFE GROUP FACILITATOR

1. Further the mission of pc3
2. Establish group values
3. Build a working team
4. Lead group members toward spiritual growth and service
5. Choose curriculum
6. Develop an agenda
7. Hone facilitating skills
8. Coordinate with the Life Group Leadership Team
9. Recruit new members
10. Raise up Apprentice Facilitators
11. Expand life of the group through birthing

ESTABLISHING GROUP VALUES

Group values help to regulate the group as it proceeds through group life. These values are designed to make the group experience most beneficial for all involved. Firm adherence to these values is of utmost importance if the group is to operate most effectively. Allowing the group to discuss and develop additional group values is an effective way to help the group members take ownership in the group from early on. It is also a great idea to review the values periodically with the group as a way of continually keeping them fresh in the group's mind.

We value...

- ❖ **Authenticity** ~ We agree to be real about our hurts, habits and hang-ups.
- ❖ **Truth** ~ We agree to speak the truth in love to each other. We agree to receive the truth in love. We agree to pursue and live God's truth as found in the Bible. The Bible is our truth source.
- ❖ **Including Others** ~ We agree to invite and include others into the community we are experiencing. We agree to share community with those who need it.
- ❖ **Confidentiality** ~ We agree to keep what is shared in the group confidential. We agree not to share someone's personal information outside the group setting without their permission.
- ❖ **Listening** ~ We agree to be sensitive to other group members by listening to them as they share. Each person is free to express his/her feelings without being interrupted.
- ❖ **Participation** ~ We agree to allow time for other group members to participate in group discussion. We agree not to dominate the group conversations.
- ❖ **Support** ~ We agree to support and challenge each other as we grow in Christ. We agree not to try to "fix" each other but rather to provide support, comfort and encouragement.
- ❖ **Staying on Track** ~ We agree to stick to the information being studied. We agree to avoid "rabbit trails" that will lead us away from learning how to love God and others more.
- ❖ **Not Cross Talking** ~ We agree not to start up side conversations or multiple conversations during our group discussions without including the whole group.
- ❖ **Coming Prepared** ~ We agree to come to group as prepared as possible. Preparation greatly enriches our time together as a group.

BUILDING A LIFE GROUP TEAM

Part of our process of Life Groups is birthing a Life Group. In order to do that, we need to constantly be developing the people within our groups so that they may progress on the facilitator process God has for them. We need to be purposeful about identifying and developing other facilitators from within our Life Groups!

Ideally, each Life Group should have each of the following:

- ❖ **Two (2) Life Group Facilitators** – shares the responsibility of facilitating the Life Group.
- ❖ **Two (2) Life Group Apprentices** – trains to become facilitators of a Life Group; shares the facilitator responsibilities with the group facilitators and will someday co-facilitate a Life Group of his/her own.
- ❖ **Life Group Host** – opens up his/her home for the Life Group meeting, creating a comfortable environment for group members.

Other ways to draw group members into ownership of the Life Group:

Life Group Assistant – assumes responsibility for making needed phone calls to group members about group information (change of group meeting location, reminder of refreshments, etc.).

Prayer Coordinator – assumes responsibility for coordinating the prayer requests of the group and bringing the issue of prayer to the group in new and challenging ways.

Service Coordinator – assumes responsibility for coordinating opportunities for the group to minister to people inside and outside the group.

Hospitality Coordinator – assumes responsibility for coordinating the refreshments or meals your group shares together.

Child-care Coordinator – assumes responsibility for coordinating the child-care needs of the group, if any.

Activity Coordinator – assumes responsibility for coordinating any fellowship activities for the group to enjoy outside of the Life Group study time.

Create other opportunities by using people's unique gifts! For example, someone in the group may be talented musically and have a passion for helping the group experience God through worshipping Him in music. Be creative!

ORDERING CURRICULUM

- ❖ Contact the Life Group Leadership Team to make sure the curriculum you want to study fits into our specific theology and beliefs.
- ❖ Life Group Facilitators will order their own curriculum. Often you can get the curriculum by visiting a local Christian bookstore or by ordering the books online or on Right Now Media. All curriculums must be approved by the Life Group Leadership Team before ordering.
- ❖ There is a list of approved curriculum in this manual.

SHORT TERM STUDIES

There are many ways you can fill a week or two until your curriculum arrives. Here are some ideas:

Proverb of the Day

- ❖ Study the **Proverb of the Day**. Depending on what day it is in the month select the proverb that coincides with that day. If it is the 19th, then go to Proverbs 19 and read and discuss what is being taught there and how it applies to our lives.

Play 3 Questions

- ❖ Play a game of 3 Questions. Pick one person to go first. Then the group gets to ask that person 3 questions about their lives. The questions should not be of an embarrassing or incriminating nature. We want this to be a good experience, not a bad one. After that person goes, select someone else to go next. Depending on the size of your group, this might take more than one group meeting.

Go Out For Dinner

- ❖ Go out to dinner and get to know each other more in a social setting. You can even play 3 Questions while at dinner.

Pray Together

- ❖ Spend your time praying together for each other.

Use Sunday Messages

- ❖ Simply come to church on Sunday and take notes on that Sunday's message. Then take a few moments to develop some questions that you can ask your group members for application. In these conversations ask, "How can we apply what we've learned? How does this message apply to specifically to your life? ..."

USING A GROUP MEETING SAMPLE AGENDA

1) Gather – (first 15 minutes)

- Allow a few moments for the group to gather.
- Make this a time of fellowship and welcome.
- Consider using ice breakers for community building (see Section 4).
- Do not allow this time to go on too long! If some people want to stay and fellowship for a while, a better time to do that is after the meeting rather than before.
- Remember, we are about “intentional gatherings”.

2) Study – (approximately the next 40 minutes)

- Use this time for real discussion of the curriculum.
- Try different ways to prepare the hearts for what is being discussed. Several suggestions include: singing a song together or listening to a song that directs your hearts and minds towards your “common purpose” for meeting.
- **Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit!** Keep the discussion on appropriate material. However, do not demand the group to stay on task of completing the curriculum if some group members have issues that need to be addressed outside the topic of study. “Shop talk” and “personal chatting” needs to be held until after the study is complete.
- There are other times that the Holy Spirit might lead you to stick with the curriculum you are studying simply because it is what will help you or a group member deal with what is going on in their lives.

3) Caring – (approximately the next 30 to 40 minutes)

- Take time for prayer requests.
- Spend time in prayer together. This is a time for bearing the burdens of others.
- Be purposeful about tracking needs and answered prayer!

FACILITATING EFFECTIVELY

An Effective Group Facilitator:

1. Gives everyone an opportunity to express him/herself.
2. Keeps the discussion on an appropriate subject.
3. Limits long speeches to short statements.
4. Directs easy questions to silent members to help draw them out.
5. Makes sure everyone understands the points being made.
6. Turns questions asked of him/her back to the group.
7. Summarizes any conclusions the group has made.
8. Permits periods of silence for thinking to take place.
9. Stays alert to what is going on in the group as a whole.
10. Strives to create an environment of warmth, honesty, safety.
11. Honestly admits when he/she does not know the answer.

An Effective Group Facilitator Does Not:

1. Monopolize the discussion.
2. Allow any one member to dominate the discussion.
3. Act as if he/she knows all the answers.
4. Try to fill all periods of silence within the group.
5. Allow discussion on irrelevant subjects to continue needlessly.
6. Permit quarreling within the group.
7. Let wrong conclusions go unquestioned.
8. Pretend to agree when he/she does not.
9. Always expect the group to agree with him/her.

SPECIFIC FACILITATION TECHNIQUES AND SKILLS

- ❖ **Active Listening:** Reflect, ask open-ended questions and encourage the group member to say more about his or her thoughts, feelings and beliefs.
- ❖ **I-Messages:** “When...I feel...because...and I would like...”
- ❖ **Asking for Clarification:** Encourage group members to expand on what they have said.
- ❖ **Including:** Draw quieter group members or reluctant participants into the discussion.
- ❖ **Affirming:** Respond positively to group members and compliment them on how they performed a task.
- ❖ **Extending:** Invite others in the group to share their thoughts on a topic that someone has introduced.
- ❖ **Refocusing:** Get a discussion back on track, end a discussion or steer a discussion away from inappropriate content.
- ❖ **Redirecting:** Involve others in the conversation when a group member is talking only to you.
- ❖ **Limit Setting:** Let the group or a group member know that it’s time to stop a behavior.
- ❖ **Intervening:** Do what you must to stop a harmful behavior.
- ❖ **Self-Disclosure:** Share your own thoughts and feelings in order to model the honesty and risk-taking you want group members to try.
- ❖ **Group Decision-Making:** This includes three steps:
 - **Brainstorm:** Come up with ideas for what the decision might be.
 - **Sort Down:** Decide which of the ideas merits serious attention.
 - **Gain Consensus:** Help the group reach a decision acceptable to all.

ASKING GREAT QUESTIONS: NEVER TELL WHEN YOU CAN ASK!

There is awesome power in asking thought-provoking questions to people who are seeking to discover truth!

The aim of asking thought-provoking questions is to lead the group down a path of self-discovery of God's truth as found in the Bible and all around us. The art of asking great questions is not a talent people are born with. It is a skill that is developed through practice. Below are a few points to help us sharpen our questioning skills:

- A progression of good questions **unlocks deeper meaning**.
- Questions that cannot be answered with a mere "yes" or "no" require a thoughtful response which leads to **more conversation**, instead of ending conversation.
- **Ask one question at a time!** Keep them short and specific.
- After asking a great question, **really listen to the answer**.
- **Use silence effectively** – do not force an answer; patiently wait for it! If necessary, try to rephrase the question and wait again for an answer.

❖ REMEMBER THE "WH" QUESTIONS:

(Studying the story of Job in the Old Testament as an example)

What does the Bible really say in this passage?

How does knowing God allowed this suffering affect you?

Which of Job's sufferings would be hardest for you to bear? **Why?**

Who do you know that is suffering similar to Job?

When have you suffered and turned to God in your suffering?

What do you think God is communicating to us through Job's story?

How can you apply the lessons of Job's life to your life?

❖ KEY WORDS FOR EXPANDING DISCUSSION:

Explain... Explain the events surrounding this issue...; Explain how you would respond...Explain your views on this subject, etc.

Describe... Describe a time period, a feeling, an action, a reaction, etc.

Respond... Respond to what you read/heard.

Clarify... Tell more about that...

Never Lecture ~ Never Lecture ~ Never Lecture ~ Never Lecture
(Get it?)

DEALING WITH CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

Not every session will run smoothly all the time! There will be unexpected challenges requiring wisdom and discernment. These situations will eventually arise, when they do, here are suggestions to assist in dealing with them.

IRRELEVANT DISCUSSION

It is easy for any group to become side-tracked and follow “rabbit trails” which do not relate to the intended topic of discussion.

The solutions may be as simple as a statement of refocusing, such as “Thanks, Carol. Now let’s get back to our study.”

DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

When a sidebar conversation or interaction occurs and disrupts the general flow of the group discussion, redirecting may be needed with a comment, such as “Let me interrupt the two of you and bring us all back to our discussion.”

HURTFUL OR INAPPROPRIATE COMMENTS

It is imperative that the Life Group facilitator intervene immediately to stop potentially destructive behaviors such as ganging up on one member, bullying or being insensitive to other’s feelings. The Life Group facilitator will want to use as little force as necessary but make sure that it stops!

A comment such as “John, I need to stop you there. What you just said is not helpful (or is inappropriate) and that’s not okay in this group.” This intervention technique may require helping the individuals resolve any differences or conflicts at another time according to our Core Values.

THE COMPULSIVE TALKER

The compulsive talker can be frustrating for all members of the group and seriously limit the participation of the person who is shy or just learning to participate in the group. The compulsive talker may ramble, attempt to take over the discussion or show an apparent need to add his/her opinion to everyone else’s response.

The solutions may be a simple limit setting statement, such as “Thank you, Mark. I want to make sure everyone has time to share.” Or it might involve use of one or more of the following techniques: “Thanks for sharing that. Now let’s hear from Sue or John.” or “Let me to stop you there. We need to move on.”

It is important when using the skill of cutting off to remember:

- Use a tone of voice that is supportive and non-critical;
- Use a slight pause or a breath in the person's conversation to stop the speaker as graciously as possible;
- Ask a question that will bring the entire group back to the same topic, to another aspect of the same topic or to an entirely new topic;
- Speak to the person privately to express appreciation for the contribution and to enlist his/her help in bringing balanced participation;
- If speaking individually has not resolved the matter, co-facilitators meet collectively with the person to bring balanced participation;
- If the aforementioned has not brought resolution, then a member of the Life Group Leadership Team may need to be involved;
- If a group member refuses to participate in the group in a healthy manner, the Life Group Leadership Team member may suggest it would be better for them to move from the group. Sometimes it's better to lose one very dominating group member than to lose five because of the one.

TECHNIQUES TO AVOID EVEN IN MOST DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

It is easy to slip into using inappropriate techniques when the situation is difficult or we aren't feeling confident about dealing with the difficulty. Such techniques, however, do not contribute to effective communication and should be avoided:

- Ordering, directing, commanding
- Warning, admonishing, threatening
- Exhorting, preaching, moralizing
- Giving solutions
- Judging, criticizing, blaming
- Name-calling, counseling, diagnosing

RECRUITING NEW GROUP MEMBERS

Consider the following strategies:

The Empty Chair—Add an empty chair to the Life Group circle as a constant reminder that our groups are open to others. Challenge members to fill that empty chair with someone they know. Also, take time to pray that God will fill that chair with the person He wants to come to the next meeting—perhaps someone who is hurting and needs a place to belong or someone who is hungry for spiritual fellowship.

One Minute Thing – Take time at the end of our Sunday services to get to know someone you don't know well. You might ask:

“How long have you been coming to pc3?”

“How did you find out about us?”

“How long have you lived in this area?”

“Have you been able to check out one of our Life Groups yet?”

If the person is interested in a group, tell them about yours and invite them. If your group is not appropriate for them, then take them to the Connections Center and give them a Life Group Directory – or introduce them to someone on the Life Group Leadership Team to help them get plugged into a group.

Invite F.R.A.N or F.R.A.N.K -- Don't just limit your group to people at pc3! Think about inviting **F**riends / **R**elatives / **A**ssociates / **N**eighbors / **K**ids – people in your circle of influence that are not fully connected with God and others. Help them find the connection at pc3.

Call People Who Express an Interest

One way for people to get plugged into our Life Groups is for them to fill out a life group interest sheet which is on our website at www.mypc3.com. Once they turn in an information sheet, we will try to find the best fit for them. **Please note:** If you are contacted by the Connections Center and/or the Life Group Leadership Team to call a person who has indicated an interest in joining a Life Group, please call immediately—that day or the next! Invite them; tell them about your group and other pertinent information. Then return a call or email to the Leadership Team to relay the results of that contact.

RAISING UP AN APPRENTICE FACILITATOR

The process of raising up an apprentice facilitator includes these steps

- ✓ Identify potential facilitator(s)
- ✓ Receive approval from Leadership Team
- ✓ Recruit apprentice
- ✓ Commission within the group
- ✓ Develop through training & experience

IDENTIFY POTENTIAL FACILITATOR(S):

It is not solely the job of the LGF to find an apprentice. The Life Group Leadership Team is available for encouragement and guidance in your decision. Here are some ways to find a good apprentice:

- ❖ Pray regularly for God to point out new apprentices.
- ❖ Consider people who embrace the Life Group ministry and pc3 vision.
- ❖ Watch as group members serve in other areas of ministry. Watch their attitudes, their willingness to serve, etc. “Do they work well with others?”
- ❖ Look for people who demonstrate the following characteristics from the Life Group Facilitator’s Covenant with pc3.
 - ~Christ follower
 - ~pc3 member
 - ~regular church attender
 - ~willingness to be trained
 - ~commitment to personal spiritual growth
 - ~authentic example
 - ~teachable spirit
 - ~spiritual integrity
- ❖ Look for someone who does not dominate the group.
- ❖ Pray for God’s facilitating in your identification of a potential facilitator!! (Get it?)

Remember that increasing the number of life-changing Life Groups is a threat to the evil one. He will do everything within his power to discourage your attempts to find and build new apprentices. Growing healthy Life Groups is a spiritual warfare thing! So, be prayed up!

RECEIVE APPROVAL FROM LIFE GROUP LEADERSHIP TEAM:

Before talking with any group members about becoming an apprentice, make sure you first talk with your Life Group Leadership Team. It is imperative that the Team partner with you on your selection of a Life Group Apprentice.

RECRUIT AN APPRENTICE:

Once all agree on a potential apprentice, ask the person—perhaps over dinner or coffee—to pray for God’s directing the decision. Be prepared to help the person overcome possible objections, such as:

- ❖ **“I’m not a facilitator.”** We are looking for someone who has a godly character not someone who is always in charge and in control. It is more important to be loving, caring and willing to shepherd others toward Christ.
- ❖ **“I don’t know enough about facilitating a group.”** Facilitating a Life Group is not about knowing everything there is to know about groups. Someone is always walking through it with the apprentice through the time of learning. In addition to learning “on the job,” training in facilitation skills is provided by the Leadership Team.
- ❖ **“I’m too afraid to do that.”** Good! A little bit of fear never hurt anyone! Fear keeps us teachable and dependent on the Holy Spirit to guide us.
- ❖ **“I don’t know enough about the Bible.”** We are not looking for Bible scholars to lead our groups. That actually is the last thing we want. Rather, we are interested in facilitation of groups where the group members do most of the participation and discovery of God’s truth. We don’t want our groups to become lecture sessions where group members sit and listen to the teacher lecture about how much he/she knows about the Bible.

WHAT IF A POTENTIAL APPRENTICE SAYS, NO?

If a person has prayerfully considered being an apprentice and truly believes that God does not want them to do that, then accept their answer. If they have not genuinely prayed about it, then really challenge them to seek God’s will.

COMMISSION WITHIN THE GROUP:

The Life Group Leadership Team will meet with the apprentice before being officially recognized as an apprentice. This is a great time to cast the vision of Life Groups at pc3.

Next, introduce your apprentice at your next group meeting. Tell everyone in your group that “Jean, has been asked and has agreed to be the apprentice for this group. That means that she will help facilitate some meetings and might one day help out to birth a new life group.” Let people ask any questions they might have and then move on in your meeting.

DEVELOP THROUGH TRAINING & EXPERIENCE:

- ❖ Meet with your apprentice before your group meeting time to discuss the lesson and decide which part(s) the apprentice will lead.
- ❖ Pray together for the group, for members by name and for life change to occur.
- ❖ Ask your apprentice to lead the group on pre-determined occasions.
- ❖ Provide constructive feedback first; then suggest possible growth areas.
- ❖ Make sure they are on their own spiritual growth process with God.
- ❖ Ask them to help care for group members outside of group meetings.
- ❖ Arrange for your apprentice to participate in the next LGF “Turbo Training” provided by the Life Group Leadership Team.

WHAT IF I CANNOT FIND AN APPRENTICE?

Pray, pray, pray. There may be times that you feel like no one in your group is qualified to become an apprentice. Pray that God will bring someone in who is qualified and/or that God will make someone qualified who is in the group already. God may have someone in mind that we have overlooked many times. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s leadings.

WHAT CAN AN APPRENTICE EXPECT?

- ❖ To learn from the Life Group Facilitator (between and at each group meeting)
- ❖ To participate in LGF Training Sessions
- ❖ To arrive at group meetings early to plan with the LGF
- ❖ To periodically lead the group (as needed or requested)
- ❖ To help the LGF care for the needs of the group members (as needed)
- ❖ To attend “Turbo Training” as provided by the Life Group Leadership Team

BIRTHING A NEW LIFE GROUP

“Birthing” is a term used for the process of group multiplication. It involves taking an active Life Group and creating a new group out of the original one. The analogy of birthing is very appropriate for what is actually occurring. What all is involved in birthing? Just think about an actual birth for a moment. Initially, images of pain come to my mind. But then think about the joy of what has been birthed: NEW LIFE! The joy of NEW LIFE most often softens the pain that has been experienced during the birth.

Initially when most people think about birthing a Life Group, images of sadness, pain and separation come to mind. But is that an accurate depiction of what is really occurring? There is pain involved but the product of the birth – NEW LIFE - should help us to see what is actually occurring. A new group means NEW LIFE for our purpose as a church designed to make and grow fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ! It may hurt to feel the pains of separation but that birth can breathe NEW LIFE in more people which will enable that NEW LIFE to be reproduced again and again!

What an exciting concept that Jesus put into place. He did not tell the eleven disciples to hold His promises and truths to themselves. He commanded them to “GO!” and share these life-changing truths with all who will hear them. Just imagine how the Good News might have been squelched if the disciples had thought, “No, this stuff is so good we just want to hold it to ourselves!”

A healthy group will multiply their group by multiplying new facilitators from within the group. Rather than encouraging our groups to solely grow by simply dividing their group, we want to encourage our groups to grow and send out new facilitators equipped to multiply that growth into new groups and new facilitators, thus replicating the process.

**~ Lead ~ Train ~ Transition;
~ Lead ~ Train ~ Transition...**

We want to model facilitating by doing it; then train others to lead; then transition that facilitator role to those new facilitators; and repeat the process over and over again!

This idea of “Birthing” needs to be held in front of the Life Group from the beginning of the group and then regular reminders need to be emphasized as the group grows. The natural birthing process takes at least 9 months. Within that time, the baby grows and develops until he/she reaches their optimal birthing period. In like fashion, we need to allow our group members time to grow develop and prepare for birthing.

GROUP LIFE SPAN

Every group has a life span. The trick is to find out where a group is in that life span and to help that group get the most out of its life. It is unfortunate that many groups do not recognize the need to birth until well after they should.

Life Group dynamics change with every addition and subtraction of group members. Add one person to the group and the group dynamics change. Take one group member away and the dynamics change. The closer a group grows to 10 or more, group members start to participate less and less. With a group of 10 people, even if everyone truly wanted to participate, they couldn't just because there isn't enough time for everyone. Group members that are more on the quiet side will participate little or not at all as the group grows. But put those same people back in a group of 6 people and they most often will participate at a higher level.

Remember, our desire is that every Life Group member be prayed for, prayed with, loved and discipled (grown spiritually). That is not possible once our groups grow more than 10 people. Birthing is essential to group life. Without it our groups start to die.

Here are some signs that tell you your group might need to birth:

- ❖ **Meeting for too long** – When a group has been meeting for too long, it can become ingrown. It views newcomers as intruders instead of welcomed guests. Group members feel threatened by “outsiders” and desire to keep it “us four and no more.”
- ❖ **Loss of Direction** – When groups have met for too long they tend to lose a sense of sharpness that was generally experienced early in group life. Maintaining the status quo seems more important than charging a new hill together.
- ❖ **Too Many People** – When a group grows beyond 10 people, the dynamics change so that most of the conversations become superficial instead of deep life-on-life stuff. Even if everyone wanted to participate, they cannot when the group is too large.
- ❖ **Superficial Conversations** – If your group seems to only talk about the weather instead of challenging each other to continually grow in a personal way with God, then it's probably time to birth your group.

BIRTHING STRATEGIES

Begin your group with thoughts of birthing

- ✓ Cast the vision that one day this group will birth new life.
- ✓ Help the group members understand that this is a group purpose.

Remind the group every month or two

- ✓ Express excitement about inviting people who are not yet experiencing Christian community—about growing—and eventually, birthing.

Identify potential apprentices/group facilitators

- ✓ Remember, a key part of birthing involves having facilitators for the next group.
- ✓ Pray that God will help you identify someone within your group.
- ✓ Check with Life Group Leadership Team for approval of your recommendations.

Ask

- ✓ After receiving approval, sit down with the potential apprentice/facilitator.
- ✓ Ask him/her to take the challenge to see if God would want them to be an apprentice and **pray with them.**

Team with your apprentices/new LGF

- ✓ Plan together for meetings; allow apprentice to facilitate meetings.
- ✓ Discuss items like:
 - Timing – When is the right time to birth the new group?
 - Member Selection – What is the best way to separate the group members?
 - Relationship Method - With prayer, the Life Group Facilitator, Life Group Leadership Team member and apprentices/facilitators sit down to divide the group, considering specific connections within the group. Inform the group of those decisions.
 - Group decision method - Allow the group to decide for themselves, attempting to avoid anyone's hurt feelings or sense of favoritism.
 - Perhaps some combination of the two methods.

Pick a date

- ✓ Select a date that is several months away, giving time to process the inevitable birth.

Two (2) months before the birth

- ✓ Remind your group of the anticipated timeline.
- ✓ Allow group members to express and process feelings. Some group members may be upset and against the birth. Allow them time to vent but continually cast vision about new life and new members gaining what the group has gained.
- ✓ Pray together as a group about the birthing process and the feelings involved.

One (1) month before the birth

- ✓ Continue to process the feelings of the group. Recognize that some will warm gradually to the idea, while others will warm after the birth. Some may never warm to the idea, that's okay.
- ✓ Remember the reason—in order for pc3 to experience community at its best, we have to give opportunity for total Life Group numbers to get larger while keeping each Life Group small.

Celebrate the day of birth

- ✓ Throw a party! Be creative! Have fun!
- ✓ Recognize that God is creating NEW LIFE through your group!

Plan a Group Reunion.

- ✓ After a few months get back together to socialize and catch back up with each other.
- ✓ Be sensitive to new group members, making sure they feel welcomed into the larger group with open arms.

SECTION 4: GROUP DYNAMICS

STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

FACILITATOR STYLES AND SKILLS

DEVELOPING TRUST: HOW IT GROWS

BUILDING AND EXPERIENCING COMMUNITY

- ❖ OPENERS: COMMUNITY-BUILDING QUESTIONS
- ❖ SHARING COMMUNITY-BUILDING EXPERIENCES
- ❖ CARING FOR HURTING MEMBERS
- ❖ PLANNING FOR SUMMER OR HOLIDAYS

STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

Much has been written regarding the way in which diverse individuals form themselves into functioning groups. Typically, the progression proceeds from tentative origins through various stages to a place where individuals eventually view themselves as part of a body, a community or a group operating for the good of all rather than the good of the individual alone.

One theory, origin unknown, suggests the following stages:



Specifically, in the **Forming** stage:

- Individuals meet and get acquainted
- Members form initial impressions of each other
- Interactions are “polite”
- Discussions tend to be superficial

In the **Warming** stage:

- Purpose becomes more evident
- Interactions break through a façade of “politeness”
- Questions and answers require somewhat greater self-revelation
- Members prepare to trust and work as a group

In the **Storming** stage:

- Members experience conflict of ideas and personalities
- Testing of power and influence occurs within the group
- Differences of opinion are expressed regarding group activities/issues
- Members set the stage for future cooperation

In the **Norming** stage:

- Members work together smoothly
- All commit to the group’s purpose and intent
- Consensus decision-making prevails
- Potential facilitators become identifiable

In the **Performing** stage:

- Purpose of the group is fully realized
- Members grow personally and spiritually
- The group accomplishes its work efficiently
- Facilitating is openly shared in preparation for birthing

FACILITATING STYLES AND SKILLS

Facilitating styles are often divided into three general operating modes:

- **Autocratic** - an autocratic facilitator is often controlling and claims ownership of the group; may demonstrate aggressive behavior
- **Passive** - a passive facilitator is laid back and not proactive
- **Assertive/effective** - an effective facilitator is neither autocratic nor passive but has a passion to accomplish the task to which he/she has been called in an assertive manner

Effective facilitating requires a variety of facilitator skills as a group develops. Bill Hybels, in his book, *Courageous Leadership*, identifies a number of Leadership types which are needed for effective operation of a congregation in general. We might, rather, view them as desired skills appropriate at different times as groups develop. For example:

During the **Forming** stage a strategist skill may be beneficial. This skill enables the facilitator to take the vision for a Life Group and organize individuals, energy and resources in such a way that the **mission** of the group is eventually met. At the earliest stage of development, the facilitator must communicate the purpose and help members understand the means to achieve that purpose.

During the **Warming** stage a shepherding skill of nurture and support is likely to draw members of a group into closer relationship with each other. The gentle heart of the “shepherd,” who listens patiently, creates a safe place for individuals to **trust** one another and to increasingly reveal themselves. As members risk further disclosure of themselves and their needs, bonding of the group increases.

During the **Storming** stage a bridge-building skill may be most effective in bringing **resolution** to conflicting ideas and personalities when politeness is no longer the manner of communication. Compromise and negotiation require listening, understanding and thinking “outside the box” in order to help members with differing thoughts and experiences relate to each other. This aids the group to work toward meaningful cooperation.

During the **Norming** stage a managing skill may be beneficial. A manager continues to bring order, motivating members toward their initial vision of a well-working group where cooperation, **growth** and care are evident. The facilitator will organize and fine-tune the group to work effectively together.

During the **Performing** stage the facilitator may need to use his/her directional skills as the group approaches the critical **decision** of the right time for birthing. Just as the group is performing as once envisioned, it is time to begin preparation for **expanding** through birthing from within. The facilitator, with help from Life Group Leadership Team members, gives direction through this process.

DEVELOPING TRUST: HOW IT GROWS

LEVELS OF TRUST AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

In the beginning stage, a person:

- Takes a small risk, sharing facts;
- Finds acceptance;
- Builds some trust.

In the growing stage, a person:

- Takes a greater risk, sharing opinions, ideas and beliefs;
- Finds acceptance;
- Builds more trust.

In the mature stage, a person:

- Takes the greatest risk, sharing deepest feelings, hopes & dreams, fears & failures;
- Find acceptance;
- Builds maximum trust.

BUILDING & EXPERIENCING COMMUNITY

OPENERS: COMMUNITY BUILDING QUESTIONS & STATEMENTS

1. I come from...
2. I work at...
3. I go to school at...
4. My family is made up of...
5. The best thing I did during the past year was...
6. Some of my nicknames are (have been)...
7. I feel happy when...
8. Something I do for fun is...
9. The greatest person I have ever met is...
10. I'm afraid of...
11. Something I dislike doing is...
12. Something I regret is...
13. I feel sad when...
14. My major goof last year was...
15. I feel uneasy or embarrassed when...
16. Something I like about you is...
17. Describe the circumstances that led you to pc3.
18. I was born in...
19. How would you describe your hometown?
20. How did your faith journey begin?
21. The important people in my life are...
22. Tell us about a childhood event that brings back warm memories.
23. Three major events in my life have been...
24. How do you feel about your current vocation?
25. In my leisure time, I like to...
26. The favorite places of my life are...
27. If you could put a plaque on the wall to mark your most significant achievement, what would that plaque say?
28. Several things I would still like to achieve are...
29. If I had nothing to hold me back, I would like to...
30. In my more reflective moments, I think about...
31. I would like to be remembered for...
32. I most often get angry about...
33. Tell us about your most hair-raising experience.
34. What are your three greatest strengths?
35. What are your three greatest weaknesses?
36. The part of me I'd like to change the most is...
37. When I think about God, I...
38. When I pray, the thing I most often pray about is...
39. What does it mean for you to serve God?
40. God is most real to me when...
41. I really laugh when...
42. The biggest hurdle I have had to overcome in my life is...
43. I think I have the potential to...

SHARING COMMUNITY-BUILDING EXPERIENCES

Community is built through shared experiences. Here are some ideas for building community outside of the meetings:

- ❖ Go to the pc3 Baptisms and enjoy the beach.

- ❖ Go to the movies. Then after the movie, get something to eat and talk about the lessons of the movie.

- ❖ Play a sport (go bike riding, golf, tennis, soccer, fish, etc.).

- ❖ Go shopping.

- ❖ Play board games.

- ❖ Find a project your group can do to serve those around you (paint someone's home, repair someone's car, clean someone's home, make a meal for someone in need, be creative in ways you can reach out to others).

- ❖ Serve in a ministry at church.

- ❖ Take a short-term mission trip.

- ❖ Brainstorm with your group as many ways as possible for your group to spend time together!

CARING FOR HURTING MEMBERS

Life Groups act as the “first responders” to people and situations that need support and/or encouragement. It is often within the Life Group that needs are first identified and that initial support to meet those needs is made available. In fact, when people are hurting, it is those closest to them that usually can minister best!

The key to discovering the best way to help is simply to ask. Make it a point to find out what the person truly needs instead of assuming you already know.

Dr. Kenneth Haugk, in his book Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart, reveals a number of practical ways to help, based on his research with individuals who were hurting. The most helpful offers are listed in order of preference by the individuals:

- ❖ Providing or preparing meals
- ❖ Caring for children
- ❖ Doing household chores
- ❖ Providing transportation
- ❖ Shopping or running errands
- ❖ Caring for pets and other animals
- ❖ Making phone calls
- ❖ Staying with an ill family member so the primary care giver can attend to other business.

Consider the following helps for specific situations:

Meals - If there is a confirmed need for meals, get someone in your group to coordinate them and their delivery. Ask if there are any special dietary needs or restrictions. Take food in disposable containers only, so the hurting person doesn't have to expend energy in returning dishes.

Outside Chores - If there is a confirmed need, mow the lawn, wash the car, take care of plants or gardens.

Sickness/Illness -If a member of your group is sick, Life Group members can provide comfort by bringing in meals, making visits, keeping in close touch, providing transportation, sending cards and any other way that would be appropriate for the situation.

Hospitalization - Hospital visits can be a tricky thing depending on the length of stay and the needs and desires of the person (or family) in the hospital. Cards of encouragement are always welcome, however.

If you plan to visit, make sure you are in good health! Wash hands immediately before entering and after leaving the patient's room. Keep visits short—ten to fifteen minutes maximum—to avoid tiring the patient. Offer to pray with the patient and family.

Grief - If someone in your group has suffered the loss of a loved one, it is really important for the Life Group to just “be there” for the person. Often, no words are needed! Listening may be all that is needed. And remember, a heart-felt **“I’m sorry!”** is more appropriate than hurtful clichés that are often spoken.

Funerals - Someone from the group may offer to stay with young children or elderly relatives during visitation and the day of the funeral. You could also arrange for someone to house-sit during the funeral to prevent criminals preying on the grieving. While there, ask yourself if there are dishes to wash, floors to vacuum, beds to make, chores that may make the home ready for the grieving to return.

If the needs of a group member are larger than the group can handle -

There are many times when the Life Group can meet the needs of the member but at other times, it may be necessary to seek outside resources to best help that individual. If someone is processing a depression issue or seeks to use group time as a therapy session, professional help may be needed. Discuss such issues with a pastor or member of the Life Group Leadership Team to help guide you through this process.

If a person in need is not in your Life Group -

We really encourage the pc3 family to “do life” with others in a Life Group. You may, however, encounter people in need who are not part of a group. Reach out to them in their area of need! Encourage them to become part of your group, or if appropriate, direct them to a group that would be more suitable for age or interest. Jesus is our model for reaching out and offering a helping hand to someone in a time of need!

PLANNING FOR SUMMER OR HOLIDAYS

PREPARING IN ADVANCE

Weeks before a holiday or the summer months, lead the group in a decision-making discussion regarding options. This gives the group members the ability to express their preferences and consider their schedules, helping them make the best plans for the group and for themselves. If there is to be a break in the meeting schedule, a restart date should be determined and made known to all members.

MEETING OPTIONS

- Continue with the group according to regular schedule.
- Reduce the frequency of meetings, e.g., meeting only once a month.
- Make some changes to revitalize the group, e.g., rotate facilitation of the group or change meeting locations; encourage apprentices; invite new members.
- Turn meetings into social community-building activities such as:
 - Plan a cook out
 - Go to the beach
 - Watch a movie (rented or theater)
 - Have a picnic
 - Be creative!

CURRICULUM OPTIONS

- Finish the curriculum the group is currently studying.
- Discontinue the current curriculum but set a restart date for continuing later
- Choose a more flexible curriculum, allowing for individual vacations and absences
- Revisit the Sunday message, seeking individual application of the message

RESTARTING A REGULAR SCHEDULE, IF APPROPRIATE

- Contact group members during the break to remind them of the pre-determined restart date
- Inform group members of the location for the first restart meeting
- Consider splitting or birthing to coincide with the restart date, giving opportunity to invite additional members for each group
- Pray together for direction
- Dive back into Life Group life—“doing life together!”

THANKSGIVING / CHRISTMAS BREAK

Many groups experience busy schedules and awkward group life from Thanksgiving until the New Year. Here are some ways to deal with Thanksgiving and Christmas:

- Take some time off, picking a January restart date at your last meeting
- Plan a Christmas party, inviting new people who may wish to join your group at restart in January

Curriculum Suggestions

Websites

RightnowMedia.org

resources.lifechurch.tv

saddlebackresources.com/small-group-studies

smallgroupnetwork.com/small-groupstudies-from-willow-creek

[anthology.study](#) (from North Point Ministries – Andy Stanley)

Books

[Crazy Love](#) by Francis Chan

[Just Walk Across the Room](#) by Bill Hybels

[What on Earth Am I Here For](#) by Rick Warren

[If You Want to Walk on Water, You have to Get Out of the Boat](#) by John Ortberg

[Experiencing God, Knowing and Doing the Will of God](#) by Henry Blackaby

[The Five Love Languages](#) by Gary D. Chapman

[The Cure](#) by John S. Lynch, Bruce McNichol and Bill Thrall

[Breaking Free](#) by Beth Moore

General Life Groups

[Making Small Groups Work](#) by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend

[Walking the Small Group Tightrope: Meeting the Challenges Every Group Faces](#) by Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson

[The Seven Deadly Sins of Small Group Ministry](#) by Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson

[Building a Church of Small Groups](#) by Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson

Leadership

[Courageous Leadership](#) by Bill Hybels

[Unlearning Church: Just When You Thought You Had Leadership All Figured Out](#)
by Michael Slaughter and Warren Bird

[An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had in Mind](#) by Erwin Raphael McManus

[Leading the Revolution](#) by Gary Hamel

Men's Studies

[How God Makes Men](#) by Pat Morley - 10 weeks

[Seven Seasons for the Man in the Mirror](#) by Pat Morley - 7 weeks

[Man Alive](#) - Pat Morley - 7 weeks

DVD

[Battlefield of The Mind](#) by Joyce Meyer

[Daniel](#) - by Beth Moore - 12 weeks

[Esther](#) - by Beth Moore - 12 weeks

[Believing God](#) - by Beth Moore - 12 weeks

[Loving Well](#) - by Beth Moore - 3 or 4 sessions

[Chase, Chasing after the Heart of God](#) by Jennie Allen

[Lord, Change My Attitude](#) by James MacDonald & Barb Peil [Laughing On Purpose](#)– Hosted by Comedian Michael Jr.

Life Group studies available to borrow from pc3 Life Group Leaders (Call church office for info.):

“Chase” by Jennie Allen – DVD and study guide

“Stuck” by Jennie Allen – DVD and study guide

“Let it Go” by Karen Ehman – DVD and book

“Undaunted” by Christine Caine (forward by Max Lucado) - DVD, study guide

“Captivating” by John and Stasi Eldredge - DVD, facilitator’s guide and participant’s guide

“Lies that Women Believe" and the truth that sets them free by Nancy Leigh Demoss - DVD, book & companion guide

“Unglued” by Lysa Terkeurst - DVD & study guide

“Twelve Women of the Bible” by Lysa Terkeurst – DVD & study guide

“Grace” for every trial by Betty Henderson

“Not a Fan” by Kyle Idleman - DVD & Leaders guide

“Forgotten God” by Francis Chan - DVD & book

“The Prodigal Son” by Timothy Keller – DVD , book and discussion guide

“The Story” getting to the heart of God’s story by Randy Frazee- DVD & book

“God’s not Dead” - study DVD, study guide and leader guide in one book

“The Cure” What if God isn’t who you think He is and neither are you – DVD and book that includes study guide

“Spiritual Warfare” terms of engagement by Dr. David Jeremiah – Study Guide and Answers to Questions book about Spiritual Warfare

“Transformed” by Rick Warren – All in one Workbook and small group DVD