

A LIFEWAY CHURCH CELINA LIFEGROUP RESOURCE

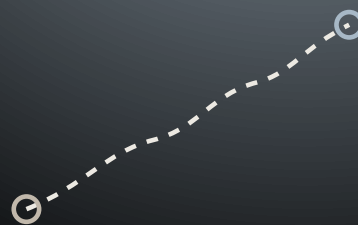
LAUNCH

A TWO-WEEK GUIDE TO STARTING YOUR LIFEGROUP WELL

This curriculum leads new Lifegroups from Launch into P.L.A.C.E.D. and, in time, into Life Maps.

Week 1 **Life Is Better Connected**

Week 2 **Own Your Growth, Own Your Group**



BEFORE YOU BEGIN

WELCOME TO LAUNCH

Every new Lifegroup starts in the same place: a room full of people who don't yet know each other, wondering what they've signed up for. This Launch curriculum exists to answer that question well.

Over the next two weeks, your group will get on the same page about what a Lifegroup is, why God designed us for community, and what it will take for each person to actually experience what He intends for group life.

This is intentionally the on-ramp for everything that follows. After these two weeks, your group will move into P.L.A.C.E.D. — six weeks unpacking the biblical "one anothers" that shape healthy community — and from there into Life Maps, where each member has the opportunity to share the story of how God has been at work in their life. Launch lays the foundation; P.L.A.C.E.D. builds the walls; Life Maps furnishes the house.

Leaders, don't rush these two weeks. The trust and clarity your group builds here will determine how much they get out of everything that follows.

LAUNCH → P.L.A.C.E.D. → LIFE MAPS

Foundation. Walls. A house furnished with real stories.

WEEK 1

Life Is Better Connected

WHY WE DO GROUP — AND WHAT IT WILL TAKE

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.”

ECCLESIASTES 4:9–10, NIV

SAME PAGE EXPECTATIONS

People end up in a Lifegroup for all kinds of reasons — a friend invited them, they're new to the church, they know they need connection, or they simply signed up without thinking too hard about it. Whatever brought each person to this table, the goal for all of you now is the same: this group exists to give you the opportunity to experience authentic community and real spiritual growth.

It's worth being clear about what a Lifegroup is not. This isn't a support group where the goal is simply to vent your emotions and be heard. It's a place where you open up so that others — people who know you and love you — can actually speak into your life. There's a difference between being heard and being helped, and a healthy Lifegroup aims for the second.

Here's the truth underneath all of it: you cannot grow spiritually unless you're growing relationally. Spiritual growth was never designed to be a solo project. God built it to happen in the context of people who know you.

Maybe this is your first Lifegroup ever. Maybe you've been in a dozen groups before this one. Either way, you belong here, and this is a fresh start — for you and for everyone else in the room.

CIRCLES ARE BETTER THAN ROWS

On Sunday morning, you sit in rows, facing forward, taking in a message. That's valuable — but it's not where discipleship finishes. It's where it starts. A circle is where you're known and where you grow. It's often not until you sit in a circle, discussing what you heard on Sunday and how it actually applies to your life, that the truth starts to take root.

A Lifegroup gives you a regular, built-in opportunity to ask the hard questions you can't ask from a pew. But it only works if you lean in. If you participate — really participate — this group can become one of the biggest catalysts for growth in your life.

TWO ARE BETTER THAN ONE

Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, made a simple observation about relationships: two are better than one, because they get a good return for their labor. If one of them falls, the other can help them up. But pity the person who falls and has no one there to lift them up (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10).

Think about how many times you've heard of someone collapsing — financially, spiritually, morally, in their marriage, wherever — and the story includes some version of the same detail: they were alone. They had no one they felt they could turn to.

That is exactly what this group is for. Here's God's expectation for community, and it's ours too: the people in the circle around you right now are meant to be the ones who are there for you if something like that ever happens. They will be the ones who ask if you're really okay — and they'll actually know if you're not. And you'll have the chance to return the favor. That's the nature of group life. Some things only happen in circles like this one, and that's by design. You can't grow spiritually unless you're connected relationally, because God created you — created all of us — for community.

Our hope for you is simple: that you'd discover, firsthand, that life is better connected.

YOUR ROLE IN GROUP: SHOW UP, JOIN IN, BE REAL

For this Lifegroup to become a place that actually supports your growth, each person has a role to play. It starts with three simple commitments.

Show Up. Community takes time to build, and it rises and falls on how often you show up. If you don't show up, you miss out — and just as importantly, someone else misses out on what you have to bring to the group.

Join In. Speak up. Be an active participant in the discussion, not a spectator. Come prepared and make the effort to actually be present for your group, not just physically in the room.

Be Real. Let the people in your group know what's really going on in your life. Give them permission to not accept "I'm fine" as your answer when they ask how you're doing.

When everyone in the room commits to these three things, your initial connection starts to feel like real community. That gives your group the best possible chance of becoming a meaningful, lasting community for everyone in it. And on top of that, God can begin using the members of this group to grow you — and to grow them through you.

LEADER NOTE

This first week is mostly about buy-in and honesty. Don't feel pressure to "solve" anything tonight — the goal is simply for everyone to leave understanding why this group exists and what it will cost them to get something real out of it.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

- 1 What has your experience with small groups or "circles" been like in the past — good, bad, or nonexistent? What are you hoping is different (or the same) this time around?
- 2 Think of a time you tried to walk through a hard season alone. What happened? What might have been different if a group like this one had been around you?
- 3 Read Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 again slowly. Who has been "someone to help you up" in your life? Have you ever been that person for someone else?
- 4 On a scale of 1–10, how easy is it for you to be real with people you don't know well yet? What makes that easy or hard for you?
- 5 Of the three postures — show up, join in, be real — which feels like it will be the hardest for you personally? Why?

GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1** Go around the group: what made you decide to join a Lifegroup this season?
- 2** Why do you think God designed spiritual growth to happen in community, rather than just privately, alone with Him?
- 3** Talk through the difference between "rows" and "circles." What can happen in a circle that can't happen in a row on Sunday morning?
- 4** What would it look like for this group to become a place where "I'm fine" isn't an acceptable answer?
- 5** What are some practical ways we can make sure everyone in this group shows up, joins in, and feels safe enough to be real?
- 6** What's one fear or hesitation you have about being part of this group? (This one takes some courage — but it's a great way to start.)

IDEAS FOR LIVING OUT THIS WEEK

- Exchange contact information tonight so you can reach one another during the week.
- Before you leave, have each person commit out loud to the three postures: show up, join in, be real.
- Put next week's meeting on your calendar right now, before life gets in the way.
- Pray for one another to have the courage to be known this season.

WEEK 2

Own Your Growth, Own Your Group

WHAT OWNERSHIP LOOKS LIKE — AND WHERE WE'RE HEADED

"'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

MATTHEW 22:37-39, NIV

WHAT BEFORE HOW: WHAT IS SPIRITUAL GROWTH?

One thing will shape your growth and the community you experience with this group more than anything else: ownership. But before we can talk about how to grow, we must talk about what spiritual growth actually is.

Paul says the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love (Galatians 5:6). We look at Jesus to see what that looks like. When asked which commandment is greatest, He said: love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind — and love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37–39). The basis of spiritual growth is love.

Before we talk about how to grow our faith, we must be clear about something first: you are not earning your salvation through acts of spiritual growth. God sought you out while you were still a sinner (Romans 5:8), to be in relationship with Him, accomplishing what you never could have accomplished on your own — providing salvation and sealing you with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13).

Spiritual growth, then, is an outpouring of your love for God — being in relationship with Him and with others, made possible by submitting to the power of the Holy Spirit now living in you as a believer in Jesus. In short: spiritual growth is a growing faith in God, validated by a growing love for God and others.

With that as our foundation, let's talk about how we can own that growth for ourselves.

FIVE THINGS THAT GROW A PERSON'S FAITH

Private Disciplines — practices like reading the Bible and praying that give you the opportunity to spend time with God. The more you get to know Him, the easier it becomes to trust Him in your everyday life.

Practical Teaching — listening to someone teach the Bible in a way that's applicable to your life, seeing how the teachings of Jesus actually connect to what you're facing right now.

Providential Relationships — the people God has used to help you grow, the ones who have most impacted your faith.

Personal Ministry — the ways God has used you to help others grow. Serving at church and going on mission trips teach us to depend on God in a deeper way. The more we trust Him, the more our faith grows.

Pivotal Circumstances — the joys and challenges of life that present new opportunities to trust God. Every time you trust Him, He demonstrates His trustworthiness, and your faith grows bigger.

Owning your spiritual growth means having a clear starting place for what growth looks like, and then actively pursuing the ways God grows faith. It's an ongoing journey that plays out one step at a time, in the context of everyday life. Any step forward is growth, and every step forward is progress.

OWNING YOUR GROUP EXPERIENCE

Now that we've talked about owning your own growth, let's talk about owning your group experience.

Being in the group is not the same as being a part of the group. You can show up every week and still just be checking a box. You can fake your way through a discussion, give surface-level answers, and never make an effort to know anyone outside of group time — and if you go about group that way, you won't get much out of it. The problem won't be your group. It will be you.

Give effort. Get to know everyone and actually ask about them. Don't view group as something you do for one hour on one night of the week. Talking about real stuff and taking personal ownership will make your group experience far more worthwhile.

Ownership is pivotal to a great group experience, and it has two sides: ownership of your personal growth — something no one else can do for you — and ownership of your group, which means making group a priority, being engaged, bringing snacks, volunteering to help host, and getting to know each other better. Meeting outside the group might seem like a small thing, but small things like that are what create the space for real life to happen. If you make the effort, your group experience will be worth it.

WHAT OWNERSHIP LOOKS LIKE

Spiritual growth comes from identifying next steps and taking them, with your group's help — opening up about the things you'd rather hide, and letting your group speak into them, and doing the same for others in return.

The fact that you took the step to join this group is already evidence of your desire to take ownership of your spiritual growth. It's likely that everyone in this room will face some kind of pivotal circumstance in the months ahead, and it's very likely that this group will be the providential relationship the Lord uses to grow one another's faith.

WHERE THIS IS HEADED: P.L.A.C.E.D.

The next time you meet, your group is going to spend six weeks in P.L.A.C.E.D. — six core values of biblical community, drawn from the "one anothers" of Scripture, that will shape how you actually operate as a group: Pursue Relationally, Live Authentically, Admonish Faithfully, Counsel Biblically, Engage Missionally, and Devote Daily. Everything we've talked about tonight — ownership of your growth, ownership of your group — is the soil that P.L.A.C.E.D. will grow in. After P.L.A.C.E.D., your group will move into Life Maps, where each of you will have the chance to share the story of how God has shaped your life.

GETTING ON THE SAME PAGE: THE GROUP AGREEMENT

If you're going to own this group experience together, it's important that everyone is on the same page about the purpose of the group, when it meets, and what happens when you're together. Clear expectations are the key to starting your group well, and your Lifegroup Agreement will help you do exactly that.

Take the rest of your time tonight to walk through the Lifegroup Agreement together as a group. Read through each commitment out loud, talk through what it will look like for your group specifically, and fill in the group details together — when and where you'll meet, and how long your group will run.

Circles are better than rows, and the people God has placed around you in this Lifegroup have real potential to become a genuine community — one that supports and encourages each of you as you grow in your relationship with Jesus.

LEADER NOTE

Leave at least 15–20 minutes at the end of tonight's meeting to walk through the Lifegroup Agreement together as a group. Fill in the group details section as a group so everyone is genuinely on the same page before you begin P.L.A.C.E.D. next week.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

- 1 Read Matthew 22:37–39 again. In your own words, how does love — for God and for others — relate to spiritual growth?
- 2 Of the five things that grow a person's faith (Private Disciplines, Practical Teaching, Providential Relationships, Personal Ministry, Pivotal Circumstances), which has God used most in your life so far? Which do you tend to neglect?
- 3 Be honest with yourself: are you more often in the group, or truly a part of it? What would change if you leaned in fully?
- 4 What's one specific way you could take ownership of your own growth this season — something no one else can do for you?
- 5 What's one specific way you could take ownership of the group as a whole this season (hosting, bringing food, reaching out midweek, planning something outside of group, etc.)?

GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1 Which of the five things that grow faith do you think will be easiest for our group to grow in together? Which will take the most intentionality?
- 2 What's the difference between faking your way through a discussion and actually engaging? Have you experienced both in past groups?
- 3 Why do you think ownership — not just attendance — is so important to a meaningful group experience?
- 4 What are some practical, specific ways we can share ownership of this group this season?
- 5 As a group, read through the Lifegroup Agreement together. Is there anything you want to add, clarify, or ask about before you commit to it together?
- 6 Fill out the Group Details section of your agreement together right now — when, where, and how often will you meet?

IDEAS FOR LIVING OUT THIS WEEK

- Commit to the Lifegroup Agreement together, out loud, as a group.
- Volunteer or assign hosting and snacks for the next several weeks.

- Identify one next step you want to take in your spiritual growth this season and share it with the group.
- Start a group text or app so you can stay connected between meetings.
- Preview P.L.A.C.E.D. for next week — encourage everyone to come ready to talk about what it means to pursue relationships with genuine affection.

NEXT: P.L.A.C.E.D.

Six weeks. Six core values. One growing community.