

**Life
Group**

**LEADER
GUIDE**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN LIFE GROUPS AT PURPOSE CHURCH!

Whether you are just beginning to consider helping to lead a Life Group, have been leading a group for many years, or somewhere in between, we have designed this guide to give you information, inspiration, and tools to help you launch, sustain, renew, or revive a thriving Life Group.

Remember, you're not in this alone. We are dedicated to helping you along your journey of leading your Life Group. Please feel free to contact our team with any questions you may have. Some of us have been at this group thing for a long time and if we don't have the answer we will do our best to find it!

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VISION MISSION VALUES

OUR VISION

EVERYONE EVERYWHERE FOLLOWING JESUS

THE GREAT COMMISSION

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:19-20

OUR MISSION

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

Jesus replied: "'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

As followers of Jesus, and as a church, our mission is to carry out the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. As a church, we believe this is accomplished by:

HELPING PEOPLE FIND THEIR PURPOSE TO:

CONNECT WITH GOD,

CONNECT WITH OTHERS,

CONNECT OTHERS WITH GOD

VALUES

Found people find people. JOHN 1:40-42

As a follower of Jesus, you are called to find and reach those who don't know Him.

We are better together. HEBREWS 10:24-25

God created you to share life with others.

Growing people change. ROMANS 12:2

As you follow Jesus, you will always have a next step to take.

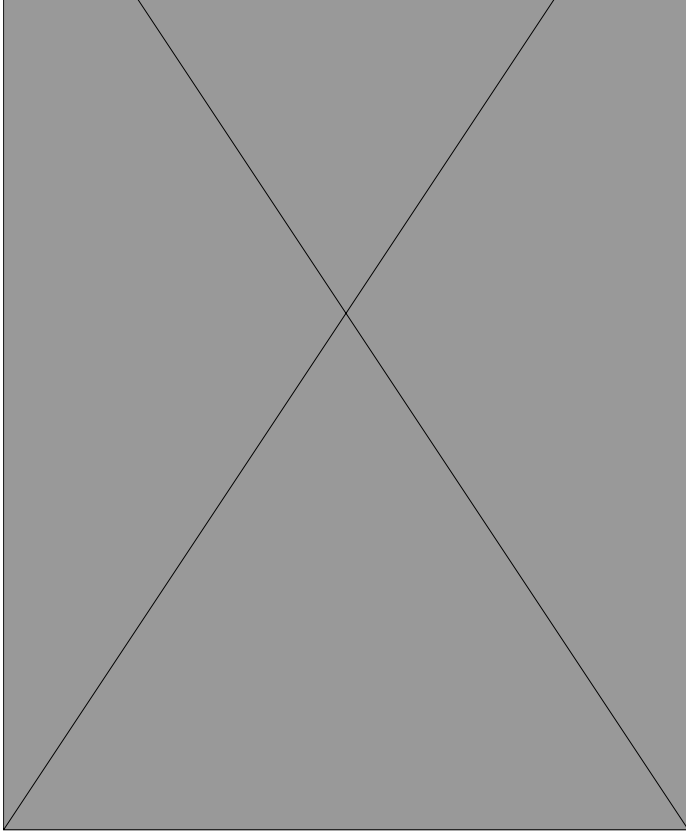
Everyone is designed to serve. 1 PETER 4:10

God made you to make a difference when you serve others.

Generous people transform the world. 1 TIMOTHY 6:18

The local church is the best place to invest financially because every dollar you give goes further faster.

PURPOSE CHURCH
VISION LOOP
EVERYONE EVERYWHERE
FOLLOWING JESUS



Rooted and Life Groups are uniquely positioned in the Loop to build communities where lives are transformed and our vision, mission and values are lived out.

Why Are Life Groups So Important?

Have you ever wondered why we do Life Groups at Purpose Church? Can't we just read our Bibles, pray, go to church, love our families, tell our co-workers about Jesus, and be just fine without having to gather once a week for stale cookies and awkward discussions?

As a leader it is helpful to have to have answers to these questions not just for yourself, but for others who ask. But that's not the only reason you need to have a good answer. Without a crystal clear reason for meeting together, your group will begin to wander aimlessly from one distraction to another, always looking for something nobody can ever find, and never experiencing the vital life changing community God designed us to experience.

The reason Life Groups are so important is that God designed us to grow together with other believers and this does not happen unless we are intentional about it. Life Groups provide a place for us to be intentional about building relationships with Jesus at the center. It's that simple, but also that profound. Jesus said that everyone would know that we are His followers by our love for one another, and by that He meant the same kind of love He shows us.

The New Testament is filled with very practical instructions on how to treat ONE ANOTHER to love each other through genuine relationships.

Without a crystal clear reason for meeting together, your group will begin to wander aimlessly ... never experiencing the vital life changing community God designed us to experience.

Life Groups with Purpose

What is a Life Group? If you ask 20 different people you are bound to get 20 different answers to this question. The term is often used to refer to a wide range of groups. In the pages ahead we want to describe what a healthy thriving Life Group is at Purpose Church.

At Purpose Church Life Groups are not defined by the size or makeup of the group, or by what type of study they do, they are defined by their purpose. A Life Group is a place where people join together with the purpose of doing life together and living out the mission of the church. Our mission is to help people find their purpose by Connecting with God, Connecting with Others and Connecting Others with God.

In the following pages we will look to the Bible to describe what a Life Group is and what it looks like when it is healthy. These descriptions apply to all Life Groups no matter the size of the group, the age and stage, or the length of time the group has been together.

We begin our description of Life Groups with the picture we get In Acts chapter 2 of how the first Christ followers walked through life together and carried out the mission of the church.

Acts 2:42-47 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

CONNECT WITH GOD

LIVING OUT GOD'S WORD

“There are a variety of ways that we strengthen our connection with God, but there is none more foundational than through the Bible ... The Bible is called God’s Word because it is authored by God. In other words, it is not a book that originates from human minds, but from God—it is God-breathed.”

(From Day 1 of week 3 of Rooted)

Life Groups are often called “Bible Studies” because studying the Bible together is at the center of what we do and essential to our spiritual growth. But “Bible study” is to be much more than an educational endeavor. The purpose of reading and studying the Bible is life application and spiritual transformation. Spiritual maturity is measured not by what we know of the Bible but rather by what we “do” of the Bible. “Correctly handling the word of truth” results not only in correct doctrine but in transforming our lives by the renewing of our minds to become more and more like Jesus.

God has gifted Bible teachers in the church to help us grow spiritually. However, we are not to depend on knowledgeable, gifted teachers to spoon-feed us in our study of the Bible. Gathering for Bible study as a group should not be in place of personal Bible reading and application but should encourage group members to have daily time reading, studying and memorizing the Bible. Life Group leaders facilitate the group to engage every member in learning, “teaching,” and life application.

2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

James 1:22-25 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does

not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

2 Timothy 2:15 *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

LIFE-CHANGING PRAYER

“Many people assume that the primary purpose of prayer is for us to speak to God. While it’s true that prayer is a way for us to speak to God, it actually has a much more profound purpose. When we genuinely pray, we go into the presence of God. While God may be omnipresent, there is no certainty you are engaging Him. It is possible to have dinner with your spouse, child, or parent, and because you are distracted, never enter into his or her presence ... When you pray in earnest, you come face-to-face with the God of the universe, the God who shows you grace, the God who adopts you, the God who guides and strengthens you ... Prayer is not just talking to God, it is giving space for Him to communicate back to us.” (From Day 4 of Week 3 of Rooted)

We believe that God answers prayer and intervenes in our lives. But prayer is not so much about changing our circumstances. Rather, it is about changing us. As we encounter God in prayer, our lives are transformed and we become more and more like Jesus. Participating in a group encourages everyone to experience this kind of lifechanging personal and group prayer.

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

Read Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 *Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

Matthew 6:6-13 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. “This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

INSPIRING GROWTH

One of our core values at Purpose Church is “Growing People Change”. We believe that everyone has a next step of growth in their relationship to Jesus. When groups gather to study God’s Word, group members identify next steps of growth and the group relationships and accountability help spur one another on to take those steps and become more and more like Jesus. As the group fixes their eyes on Jesus together, everyone is inspired to turn from sin, break strongholds, and find endurance when they become weary.

Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 12:1-2 *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Proverbs 27:17 As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

Mark 12:28-31 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

CONNECT WITH OTHERS

BEING AUTHENTIC AND SAFE

Everyone is loved, valued, and heard. What is shared is received with a confidentiality, grace, and care that creates safety. The safety of the group encourages and invites vulnerability and authenticity. Groups are able to share with honesty and depth because of the way the Holy Spirit and the Bible speak to our deepest thoughts, feelings, and needs.

Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

1 Thessalonians 5:11 *Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*

Romans 12:9-10 *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.*

John 13:34-35 *A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

BEING PRESENT AND CONNECTED

In Matthew 18:20, Jesus promised, *“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”* We know that Jesus is with us when we are alone, but we also know that Jesus is present in a special way through the Holy Spirit when we gather as a group. Community is built and preserved through a strong commitment to be present when the group gathers. The group is also connected, communicating, and caring for one another between gatherings.

Hebrews 10:24-25 *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Acts 2:42-45 *They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.*

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 *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.*

HAVING FUN & CELEBRATING

Our relationships and community are characterized by an authentic, infectious spirit of joy, laughter, and celebration. We shed tears and mourn losses, but we also celebrate victories together. We join with heaven in celebrating salvation, baptisms, breaking of strongholds, birthdays, anniversaries, and anything else that gives an opportunity to praise God and enjoy His goodness!

Nehemiah 8:10 Nehemiah said, *“Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”*

Romans 11:15 *Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.*

Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4 *There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.*

Proverbs 17:22 *A joyful heart is good medicine.*

CONNECT OTHERS WITH GOD

REACHING OUR WORLD

Jesus' final instructions, command, commissioning to His followers and to us was to "Go and make disciples" and to be His witnesses, starting with those closest to us and extending throughout the world. This is central to our calling as Christ-followers and as the Church. The experience of authentic, loving, community in a group is powerful! A Life Group was never meant to be a "cul-de-sac" where we get insulated from others, but rather a "launching pad" to propel us to reach our oikos, our community, and our world. Spending time in our group rather than focusing inward should turn our focus more outwardly to bring the love, hope, and truth of Jesus to our oikos, community, the world, and to serve and value the marginalized.

Matthew 28:18-20 *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Acts 1:8 *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*

1 Peter 3:15 *But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect*

Matthew 25:37-40 *“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”*

GENEROSITY AND SERVICE

God has richly blessed everyone in the body of Christ with spiritual gifts, financial resources, time, skills, passions, and experiences to invest in the advancement of His Kingdom here on earth. Life Group participation should cultivate a lifestyle of gratitude, and generosity towards the gifts and resources God has given us, and should propel us to be good managers of all these gifts. Jesus modeled for us a life of service and called us to follow his example. The time we spend in our groups should cause us to increase, not decrease, our time devoted to serving in the church and the community.

Matthew 25:14-30 Parable of Talents

Romans 12:6-8 *We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.*

Malachi 3:10 *“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.”*

John 13:14-17 *If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.*

MULTIPLYING COMMUNITY

We are to cherish and protect the experience of community that we have, and the depth of our friendships that are formed. But we are never to choose our comfort and enjoyment of these relationships over God's calling. When God is working in community, new people will be reached and welcomed into the group. Everyone is welcome and deserves a seat. We don't keep community to ourselves, but rather are intentional to multiply leaders and groups to make room for people to be connected and cared for.

Acts 2:47 Praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

2 Timothy 2:2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

Matthew 5:13-16 You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

“One Another’s of the New Testament

This is not an exhaustive list, but these are some of the ways Christ followers are commanded to treat each other:

| | |
|--|----------------------|
| Accept one another as Christ accepted you | Romans 15:7 |
| Admonish one another | Colossians 3:16 |
| Bear with each other | Colossians 3:13 |
| Be at peace with each other | Mark 9:50 |
| Be devoted to one another in love | Romans 12:10 |
| Be kind and compassionate to one another | Ephesians 4:32 |
| Be patient, bearing with one another in love | Ephesians 4:2 |
| Build each other up | 1 Thessalonians 5:11 |
| Carry each other’s burdens | Galatians 6:2 |
| Confess your sins to each other | James 5:16 |
| Consider others better than yourself | Philippians 2:3 |
| [Display] humility toward one another | 1 Peter 5:5 |
| Don’t grumble against one another | James 5:9 |
| Don’t lie to each other | Colossians 3:9 |
| Don’t slander on another | James 4:11 |
| Encourage each other | 1 Thessalonians 5:11 |
| Forgive one another | Colossians 3:13 |
| Greet one another [affectionately] | 1 Corinthians 16:20 |
| Have equal concern for each other | 1 Corinthians 12:25 |
| Honor one another above yourselves | Romans 12:10 |
| Instruct on another | Romans 15:14 |
| Lift each other up with Psalms...and songs | Ephesians 5:21 |
| Live in harmony with one another | Romans 12:16 |
| Love one another | John 13:34-35 |
| Make your love...overflow for each other | 1 Thessalonians 3:12 |
| Offer hospitality to one another [joyfully] | 1 Peter 4:9 |
| Pray for each other | James 5:16 |
| Serve one another humbly | Galatians 5:13 |
| Spur one another on to love & good deeds | Hebrews 10:24 |
| Stop passing judgment on one another | Romans 14:13 |
| [Stop] provoking and envying each other | Galatians 5:26 |
| Submit to one another | Ephesians 5:21 |
| Teach one another | Colossians 3:16 |
| Use your gifts to serve others | 1 Peter 4:10 |
| Value others above yourselves | Philippians 2:3 |
| Wash one another’s feet | John 13:14 |
| When you gather to eat...all eat together | 1 Corinthians 11:33 |

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could just read these commands and then live them out in our relationships? The problem is that even as Christ followers we all sin and fall short of God's design in our lives. We are selfish, unforgiving, dishonoring, self-reliant, greedy, judgemental, distrusting, self-absorbed, fearful, prideful, timid, independent, impatient -- do we need to go on? We don't naturally know how to love each other the way Jesus told us to, so we need help. In fact, we need supernatural help from the Holy Spirit, we need instruction from the Bible, and we need encouragement and challenge from other believers.

Forgiving each other does not come naturally. Serving each other takes practice. We learn to love one another by intentionally practicing with each other. That's where the Life Group comes in. Every week a small group of Christ followers choose to get together to practice building loving relationships with each other.

No sports team ever won without practice, no business ever grew without teamwork, and Christ followers were not designed to live independently of others (there are a few exceptions when God lets someone experience isolation for various reasons, but that is rare, not the norm). The Life group is a training field. **The Life Group is the place where our relational skills are built, our biblical understanding is tested, and our Christ-like character traits are forged and sharpened.**

Leader Toolbox

- Read this section as a group and discuss-How does this give you new understanding of the purpose and importance of Life Groups?
- Read through the "One Another's" together-Choose the five that your group needs to practice together during this next season. Brainstorm some ways that you can best practice and grow in those.

You might be thinking "But how do Life Groups fit with the rest of the church?". We need more than just relationships -- we need to worship corporately, learn from Biblical teaching, serve our neighboring community, send missionaries around the world -- all the things we do as a church. So let's look at how Life Groups fit with our vision, mission and values and all the other ministries of the church.

Rooted & Life Groups

What is the relationship between Rooted and Life Groups? Rooted is not a separate ministry from Life Groups, rather Rooted is an essential part of our Life Group ministry. Rooted is the very best way to begin a new Life Group and for a person to enter into a Life Group. To build a healthy Life Group there are certain stages that a group must go through and certain values and rhythms that must be established. Rooted is designed to create an environment for a group to have the best opportunity to build that kind of healthy foundation. A group is able to experience in 10 weeks of Rooted what would normally take many months or even years for a group to experience.

Rooted is
“freshmen
orientation”
for Life Groups.

Pastor Glenn has described what makes Rooted so essential to our Life Group ministry by using the analogy of developing relationships in college. It is possible to develop strong life long friendships if you attend a commuter school or if you transfer into a school midway through college. But the probability of developing those strong life long friendships increases exponentially if you start out your college experience by moving into dorms together with all the other freshmen and having orientation week together. When you all start together with freshmen orientation everyone and everything can be intentionally designed to build those relationships. Rooted is the “freshmen orientation” for Life Groups. It provides an opportunity for a group to start out with everyone and everything being intentionally designed to build the relationships and rhythms that make up a vital long-lasting group.

The 10 week experience of Rooted is a path for people and groups to enter into community together and practice these seven rhythms. These seven rhythms are not just life changing during the 10 weeks of Rooted but remain life changing as the group continues to practice them during each of the seasons as a Life Group.

The 7 Rhythms of Rooted



Daily Devotion



Prayer



Freedom from Strongholds



Sacrificial Generosity



Serve the Community



Share Your Story



Celebration

Leader Toolbox

- What is one way that each of these rhythms impacted us during Rooted?
- What is one way we can make sure to continue this rhythm during this next season as a Life Group?

Why Sermon-based Studies?

We are very committed to the sermon-based method and invest a lot of time and resources in preparing the material. Here are some of the benefits of using the current Purpose Church sermon-based study with your group:

1. It encourages group members to engage in worship services

There are people who love building relationships, but do not place as high of a value on attending worship services. By connecting what we study in our Life Groups to what is taught on Sundays, everyone is encouraged to engage in worship and teaching on Sunday mornings. This allows us to uphold the values of corporate worship and developing closer relationships at the same time.

2. It encourages worship attenders to engage in Life Group studies

Some people make room in their schedules for worship and preaching on Sunday mornings but do not have the same commitment to weekly participating in a Life Group. By connecting the Sunday sermons with what is studied in our Life Groups, everyone is encouraged to participate in a group to go deeper in the study from Sunday mornings. Every time we start a new series everyone is encouraged to join a group “now” instead of joining a group “someday.”

3. It encourages worship and Life Group participants to engage in personal Bible reading.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. 2 Timothy 3:16

God has given us the Bible as a primary tool for our spiritual growth. The discipline of daily reading and studying the Bible is essential to anyone who wants to grow. By connecting sermons, Life Group studies, and daily personal readings everyone is encouraged on a weekly basis to engage in personal Bible reading. (See SOAP Study Method on page 17.)

4. It encourages church wide unity and momentum

Our teaching team chooses each sermon series because they believe it to be important for the entire church. So knowing that the same scripture or topic will be covered both in large-group gatherings and small group meetings is very helpful. When the majority of our church hears a message on Sunday and then meets during that week to study that same passage, everyone interacts with the same verses or topics, which really sharpens the focus of the church and builds unity and momentum.

5. It allow us to focus on life application

Life Group leaders interact with the real needs of people they know personally. They are able to spark application on subjects that are often ignored or tuned out during the sermon. Since application is the bread and butter of a Life Group session, these groups are the perfect place to take the more generalized teaching and to work out the specific life application for each person.

6. It combats information overload and allows for customizing

Our lives are bombarded by information. Our brains can only process and apply so much. We don't need more information. We are educated beyond our obedience. What we need is more space to focus on living out what we are hearing, reading, and learning. When the sermon, daily Bible reading, and Life Group studies are aligned it allows people to experience less overload and more application and obedience. Sermon-based studies are not a one size fits all "cookie cutter approach." Discussion questions and leader notes are provided but there is plenty of room to customize the study for your group and your style as a leader.

7. It helps protect against false teaching and division

When Life Group questions and notes are prepared by church leadership false or divisive teaching can generally be avoided. People sometimes pick "pet topics" or ones they know will stir up controversy. Others want to jump around to whichever group is discussing a "hot topic." But when our Life Groups are studying the same passages or topics, we can avoid group hopping and strange topics that might lead to division, or unbalanced or bad theology.

8. It minimizes the financial barriers

There are many great Bible studies being published for groups today. But many of the books or videos come with a substantial cost. Many people simply don't have extra money or will use finances as an excuse for not engaging in a Life Group. With sermon-based series we provide all the materials at little or no cost to the group.

9. It reduces prep time for our facilitators

Most group leaders are not Bible scholars (and most Bible scholars are not good group facilitators). Leaders often feel inadequate when it comes to preparing their own lessons. We understand that most small group leaders have a lot on their plate. Providing study guides and leader notes allow the leader to maximize their time to prepare for the group time and engage in developing relationships.

10. It helps recruit new Life Group leaders

There are not many people who are gifted and skilled as Bible teachers. But there are lots of people who can facilitate a discussion and use their gifts to lead a vital group. God has always provided enough shepherds for his flock, and at Purpose Church, they are called Life Group leaders.

The primary curriculum for Life Groups at Purpose Church are the sermon-based studies provided by church leadership. If you have gifts in designing, writing, or editing curriculums please let us know if you desire to help us create our series.

We recognize that there are many great studies available beyond the current sermon-based study being offered. Your group always has the freedom to choose the study that best fits the group. We ask that you consider doing the current sermon-based study first and then look at the other available options to choose what is best. If you use another study that is good for your group and you believe would be good for other groups—please let us know. If you are looking for study options ask us and we can help you find the one best for you and your group.

SOAP Study Method

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

God has given us the Bible so that our lives would be transformed by the Holy Spirit. However, when we are new to studying the Bible we can be intimidated, confused, and unsure what to do. And when we have been reading and studying the Bible for a long time there are times when it can seem stale or repetitive, and no longer seems to have an impact on our daily lives. The SOAP study method is a simple yet powerful tool to help guide you into a deeper understanding and life application of the Bible.

S

SCRIPTURE

As you read the passage for the day, ask God, through the Holy Spirit, to highlight one verse for you. Write it down.

A

APPLICATION

How does it apply to your life right now? Where is it challenging you? How does it encourage you? How will your life be different as you live out this verse? Be specific.

O

OBSERVATION

As you look at the verse you wrote down, consider the context and make some observations: What is going on in this passage? What comes before and after this verse? How do these observations help you understand this verse?

P

PRAYER

Ask Jesus, "In light of this verse, what would you have me do, confess, or give thanks for?" Write down your prayer.

If you, or any of your group members have not used the SOAP method before we have a video that you can watch to orient you. The video can be found at purposechurch.com/soap

The SOAP method is primarily for your group members to engage in personal reading and study in between your Life Group meetings. As you come together and work through discussion questions your discussion will be deepened as group members share from what God has shown them in their SOAP study times.

Curriculum Options

We recommend engaging in a healthy blend of studies in order to help your group engage in a holistic discipleship and community building experience.

There are plenty of great study options available but we think sermon-based studies are a great option for every group!

We will offer a new sermon-based study every Winter, Spring and Fall. You can go through the study concurrent with the sermon series or it will be put into a form for groups to use after the series is completed. We currently have these series available:

“Experiencing John” John 1-9 (Winter 2016)

“Upside Down” John 10-21 (Summer 2016)

“Fearless” (Spring 2016)

RESTART (Winter 2017)

James: Long Walk of Obedience (Spring 2017)

Philippians: Unexpected Joy (Winter 2018)

Nehemiah: Fulfilling Your Part in God’s Story (Spring 2018)

The Book of Judges (Fall 2018)

Right Now Media

Purpose Church now has rights for all members and groups to use this resource for free. There are hundreds of Bible studies available for groups. To get started using this resource, go to PurposeChurch.com/rightnowmedia to sign up.

How To Facilitate Great Discussions

Experts tell us that on average we remember only 20 percent of what we hear, 30 percent of what we see, 50 percent of what we hear and see but 70 percent of what we say. We learn through interaction.

As we ask good questions and relate the scriptures to our lives God's word becomes alive and active in the here and now. Group members become contributors and learners instead of just consumers of information. They also get the opportunity to experience the joy of learning together.

1. Remember that your primary role is to listen to group members as they respond to God's Word and shepherd them as they take their next steps of growth.
2. Help group members move to personal application instead of only making conceptual observations.
3. Customize questions to meet the needs, concerns and interests of your group.
4. Reference some of the teaching points from the sermon and bring in SOAP study sharing as you move through the questions.
5. Pull group members back to the central focus of the passage whenever the group gets sidetracked.
6. Don't be afraid of silence. Silence allows people the time to process their thoughts and feelings.
7. Don't be satisfied with the first answer you hear. Keep probing for deeper responses.
8. Wrestling with the unresolved issues of life is more beneficial than feeding of "right" answers.
9. Generate dialogue between the group members. Don't become the focal point of the group.
10. Don't fall into the trap of "teaching." When we're asking questions that are not engaging, we'll have a tendency to rescue the group through teaching. But when we teach, group members become "students" and the group loses the opportunity to listen to one another's insights and stories.

Life Group Prayer Experiences

Another important ingredient of a vital Life Group is to have regular prayer experiences. Schedule these for what works best for your group:

- Choose a weekend time for a 2-3 hour experience
- Designate one of your regular meeting times for a Prayer Experience
- Plan to do it the same day as the Rooted Groups
- Encourage the group to practice the spiritual discipline of fasting

WE WANT TO PROVIDE WHAT YOU NEED:

- Let us know if you will need a room reserved
- Use your Rooted Facilitator's Guide to plan your time. There is an additional Prayer Experience plan in the appendix page 108-110 that you can use!
- If they will be helpful we will provide a new Prayer Experience plan each session to keep your experiences fresh.

Breaking Strongholds and Communion

As you experience different studies together and hear the sharing in your group we encourage you to consider taking a week with your group when you feel the time is right to go back through the Stronghold material and take a session to pray to break strongholds.

As you go through studies or sessions as a group plan for times where you enjoy communion/The Lord's Supper together.

Life Group Seasons and Stages

Every Life Group is like a living organism, which grows and changes and adapts to various circumstances and environments. There are natural stages of a growing Life Group and there are also seasonal changes that appear during the cycle of each year. Every leader must understand these naturally changing dynamics and help the group to grow and adapt, rather than be surprised or discouraged that things are somehow different than expected.

SEASONAL CHANGES

The seasonal changes in a group are not necessarily progressive stages of growth but are more like changes in the weather. Sometimes they are predictable and gradual, but often they come as a surprise and happen very quickly. Whether they bring mild or severe changes, watch for them, recognize them when they come and respond to each appropriately.

EXAMPLES

- Natural breaks (holidays, school schedules, summer, big events)
- Unavoidable absences (work schedule, health, extended family issues)
- Crisis in a person's life or family (when the whole group should respond)
- Curriculum changes (each time you finish a study)

STAGES OF A GROWING LIFE GROUP

As a leader it is important to recognize the stage your group has been in, what stage it is in now, and what stage is likely next.

FORMING (Best experienced during Rooted)

In the forming stage, people are connecting for the first time, checking out the group, and figuring out if this is a place where they can belong and grow. They are evaluating the leader, other members, the purpose of the group, and its expectations in order to determine whether the group is the right fit. A gracious, welcoming and encouraging environment where people have opportunities to get to know each other and feel safe to be themselves all help to form a strong group.

Stages of a L

| STAGE | FORMING | EXPLORING | |
|--------------------------|---|--|--------|
| Time frame | Rooted | Rooted | |
| Key Questions | Why are we here? | Who said this was as good idea and how can we work on life together? | Are ot |
| Theme | Connecting Honeymoon | Conflict/Commitment | |
| Tasks | Orientation Direction Testimonies | Consistency Involvement Care | |
| Relational Issues | Safety Acceptance Dependence | Discouragement Belonging Support | |
| Member Questions | How should we behave? Who is in the group? Do I fit here? | How open am I willing to be? Do I like my group? How is our group doing? | |
| Member Feelings | Awkwardness Excitement Anticipation | Tension, Anxiety, Openness, Support | |
| Member Roles | Sharing and Listening | Provide feedback Express frustration Express feelings Apply Grace | |
| Leader Role | Caring, Accepting Identifying a co-leader Primary discussion leader | Encouraging Confront and Challenge Self-disclosure Reminding goals and purpose Allowing others to lead | |
| Content of Communication | Honest sharing and Response to reading | Personal, Thoughts, Feelings, Values | |

a Life Group

| OWNING | | RENEWAL/REBIRTH |
|--------|--|---|
| | First Year | At Each Transition |
| | Are we growing closer to the Lord and each other? Are we more equipped to reach our oikos? Who is growing as a leader? | How can more people experience what we have experienced? How can we launch a new group? |
| | Growth | Mission/Purpose |
| | Spiritual Growth Outreach Accountability | Personal Growth Ministry Growth |
| | Interdependence Synergy | Celebration Recognition |
| | How can I experience life-change? How can I reach my oikos? What will we accomplish together? | Will we survive? Who is going and who is staying? What is God teaching me/us? |
| | Excitement, Eagerness, Support, Friendship | Loss, Grief, Excitement, Anticipation |
| | Using gifts Accepting accountability Caring for each other Take ownership | Blessing and Support Accepting Reality Buy-in |
| | Challenge, Guide discussion Planting seeds to start new groups Celebrate results Keep balance | Acknowledge feelings Affirm members Keep focused on mission Empower new leader Cast vision high Encouragement Support |
| | Group, Relationships | Vision and goals Strategy and logistics |

EXPLORING (Best experienced during Rooted)

Group members are learning more about one another and starting to trust each other. Commitment to the group increases as friendships continue to grow. As each person shares more personally and vulnerably and the group responds with support, care, and acceptance, others are encouraged to share. As the group becomes more open and authentic with one another, personality conflicts or clashes of opinions may arise. When such conflicts are handled with gentleness, truth, and grace, the group will be propelled to deeper levels of trust and love for one another.

OWNING (Best begun during Rooted)

Group members, are no longer just exploring—they now take “ownership” in the group. They have come to know and accept one another, recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of each person. The group is cohesive, mutual respect is high, and members are interdependent. Desire for personal growth and greater missional purpose drives the group’s relationships and activities. The group goes “beyond itself” to reach out to their oikos and to others in need. Members regularly engage in spiritual disciplines. The group consistently looks for ways to encourage and hold each other accountable in their commitments toward change and growth.

REBIRTH OR RENEWAL

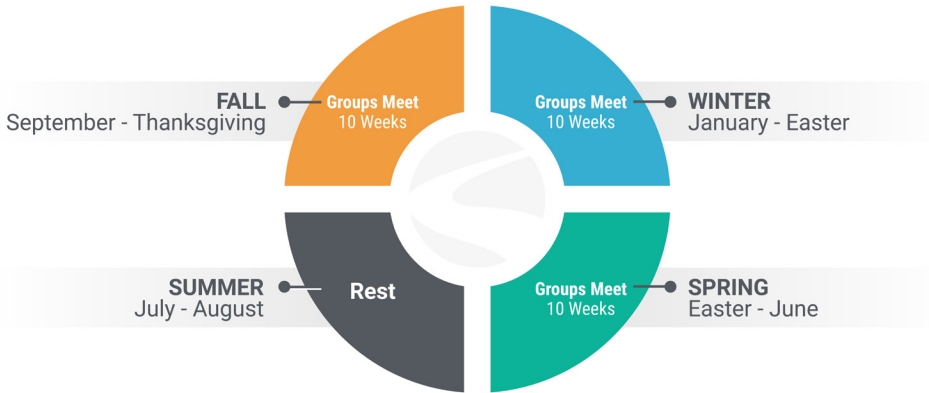
Groups will enter this stage at each point of transition and will need to go “back through” previous stages in order to remain vital. The first opportunity for renewal is during the transition from Rooted to a continuing Life Group. New people are added to the group and/or people may move away or become unavailable due to work or family. While some friendships will continue and others will end, the impact of the group on the members’ lives will endure. A healthy group will go through some renewal or rebirth at least once a year. There are times where a group will send members to facilitate a Rooted group or to start a new group to accommodate growth. There are also times when a group decides to join with another group or disband for a number of natural reasons.

Scheduling Your Group

MEETING IN 10 WEEK CYCLES

Life moves in natural rhythms. There are moments where we begin new things and moments where we are more intentional about finding rest. The trimester rhythm approach encourages groups to embrace these natural rhythms by meeting in three 10-week sessions. These trimesters are not regimented schedules like Rooted, but they give people the opportunity to both enter and exit groups at strategic points of the year (just like freeway on & off ramps). It also provides seasons of rest for groups during busy months of the year (July, August, December).

We ask that you consider meeting during the following 10-week sessions throughout the year. This allows each session to typically begin with a launch for all groups.



Start New Each Cycle

LIFE GROUP COVENANT

Many groups find it helpful to lay out a set of group expectations and commitment within their first weeks of meeting together.

Things to consider in your covenant may include:

- A statement on the goals and purpose of the group.
- Setting the meeting start/end time and place.
- A statement on group confidentiality, accountability, and attendance.
- A commitment to regularly serve in some capacity.
- What to do about childcare if needed.

Your First Meeting Each Cycle

It is key to build in a shared ownership and excitement from the very first meeting. Make sure you create an environment that is both welcoming and safe. You may want to consider a shared meal.

We will provide some resources with ideas for your first meetings, to get each session off to a great start!

Build with the end in mind. We want our groups to be highly relational while at the same time developing hearts that are outward focused. Here are some questions you may want to consider asking during your first meeting:

- What is God currently teaching you about Himself?
- What are you hoping to gain from our times together?
- What passions has God placed in you for serving others?

OIKOS & LIFE GROUPS

We believe that God has supernaturally and strategically placed each of us in a series of 8-15 regular relational connections. The New Testament calls that group of relationships your “oikos” the Greek term for extended household.

After healing the demon possessed man, Jesus told him specifically to: “Go home to your family (oikos) and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you.” Mark 2:13

*When Jesus healed the son of a royal official:
“... he and all his household (oikos) believed.”
John 4:53*



When Christians are asked how they came to Christ, we find that 90% of the time it was primarily through an oikos relationship. This is why it is so important for us to prioritize fostering these relationships.

But what is the connection between your oikos and your Life Group? Someone once said, “If my oikos is 8-15 people whom God has supernaturally and strategically placed in my life, then my Life Group is 8-15 people whom the church has randomly placed together in my home.” It might feel that way sometimes! And although there may be some overlap in the two groups, they are distinct from each other and both are equally important.

While your oikos consists of people who are not yet followers of Jesus or who are not connected to a church, your Life Group will primarily contain believers, all of whom are trying to do a better job reaching their own oikos. One of the purposes of each Life Group meeting is to encourage and sharpen each other to be better at relationships, so all of us can be more effective in reaching our oikos.

This is one of the differences between Life Groups at Purpose Church and small groups at many other churches. Many other small group programs are focused merely on helping people better themselves. They help people learn their Bibles, grow in relationship with Christ, overcome some difficulty in life, or simply develop relationships with each other. Those are all great goals, and our groups help with those things too! But that is only one side of the coin. We are in community for the community. The healing and freedom we experience in community should also be expressed as we live out the gospel “for the community”. We receive new life in Jesus and learn to live it out in community but this was never meant to be hidden and kept to ourselves. Jesus expressed it this way:

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:14-16

In Life Groups we strive to grow in our relationships SO THAT we can better reach the people in our oikos! You can share with your group about your shortcomings, your fears, your questions, and your successes. They will care about your progress and pray diligently for you and your oikos. They will be there when you are uncertain how to proceed and they will celebrate with you when someone from your oikos finally takes a step towards trusting in Jesus. And you will care about their progress too! You will pray for their oikos connections by name and maybe God might use you to help reach them.

Leader Toolbox

- Read this section together as a group and assess how inward or outward focused your group has been. Brainstorm ways that you can best help each other reach your oikos.
- At the beginning of your next study pass out, or bring out, your 8-15 oikos BLESS cards. Spend time sharing about those who are currently in your oikos and committing to make this a focus of your prayer each week. At the end of the study, celebrate what God has done in the lives of these people.

Life Group Serve Experiences

One of the most important ingredients of a vital Life Group is scheduling regular serve experiences.

As you plan your group calendar, try to plan for two types of serve experiences:

- A) On campus special events: Volunteer as a group to paint a room, serve a meal, host Rooted Kickoff, Celebration Dinner or seasonal outreach events. (VBS, Fall Festival, Christmas, Easter, Etc.)

- B) In the community: Choose an opportunity that will be highly relational as you serve the poor, disadvantaged or marginalized from our community. The best project for your group will be one that will be a new experience for most of your group members that will allow them to talk to, interact with, and listen to those you are serving.

**Get a current list from us at
Groups@PurposeChurch.com**

Adopt a Mission Local and/or Global

Using Groups - Planning Center

Groups is one of Planning Center tools that make it easy for leaders to manage group's information, calendar, add new members, and take attendance. There are also easy ways to email your group as a whole and even upload group documents or curriculum for your group to access.

TRACKING YOUR GROUP ATTENDANCE

Planning Center Groups makes it simple for group leaders to take attendance. At the start of each meeting, they'll get an attendance request email. A single tap, a few checkmarks, and they're done! If you don't receive the email, you can simply go to your group, go to the attendance tab on the bottom left, and click report now on the date you would like to input attendance.

If you are having any problems or need help with Planning Center, please email Groups@PurposeChurch.com.

Share Your Stories

Stories are a huge part of who we are as a church. We believe that God has incredible things in store for how He wants to work both in and through your group to bless others. Our team would love to hear how God is working in your group.

There's no story too big or too small, we want to hear from you! It could be an example of seeing God at work in the everyday routine of life or seeing Him completely bring freedom to someone in your group. Stories of God at work fuel who we are and give us a bigger picture of who God is calling us to be.

FAQs

HOW BIG SHOULD MY LIFE GROUP BE?

The average Life Group size is 8-12 people, but every group is different. If you lead a married couple's group and have the space to hold 8-10 couples, great. But if you lead a single women's group in your studio apartment, you may only be able to hold six people.

CAN I INVITE SOMEONE TO MY LIFE GROUP THAT HASN'T BEEN THROUGH ROOTED?

Yes you can, especially if that person is new to Purpose Church and is looking for community; however, we do ask that person to commit to experiencing Rooted within 3-6 months.

WHERE AND WHEN SHOULD MY LIFE GROUP MEET?

Homes are usually the best as long as you are able to maintain a welcoming atmosphere. Sometimes it's not possible to meet in a home. Consider choosing a location out in your community (i.e. a café or park).

CAN MY LIFE GROUP MEET ON CAMPUS?

While it is possible to meet on campus, our preference is to have groups meet in their communities wherever possible. If you have no way of making that possible then let's see if we can work something out.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO ABOUT KIDS?

There are several creative ways to offer childcare for your group. Some groups will go in together on a sitter for each week to be in the home where group time will be held or another designated location. Other groups will assign “point people” within the group to be with the kids that week.

If you have kids in your group, the most important thing to communicate in the group is an understanding that things might be messy at times but that we are committed to each other despite the mess. Think of ways to involve your kids in the group. Invite them to pray with the group. This is a great opportunity to model family and true community!

HOW CAN OTHER PEOPLE JOIN MY GROUP?

Once your group is up and running, we will work with you to get your group’s information posted on our online directory.

Once posted as an open group, people looking to join a Life Group will search the group type they are looking for and contact you if your group seems like a good fit. We will also reach out to Rooted graduates at the beginning of each Life Group season to invite them to join a group. However, the best way to add people to your group is always for you and your group members to invite people personally.

