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Thanks for leading a Life Group!

You are making a huge difference in the lives of others by providing a way for people to connect and experience community. Life Groups are very important to Gateway and they also help fulfill our mission statement of leading everyday people to become fully devoted followers of Christ.

As you lead your Life Group, you are going to witness firsthand how God is going to work through your group and through the lives of your group members. We can't wait to hear those stories!



What are Life Groups?

To make things simple, Life Groups do three things.

- Meet regularly
- Build relationships
- Study biblical content

We believe that these three components will help your Life Group feel like your extended family. To further the family-like analogy, we encourage Life Groups to meet in homes, go do social things together, serve your world, and do a lot of eating!



This kind of community and fellowship was modeled for us in the early church (Acts 2:42-47)...so why should we stop doing those things now?

Why do we do Life Groups?

In John 17:22, Jesus prays, “...so they may be one as we are one.” Jesus is praying for His disciples to experience community like He has with God, and that anyone (us) who believes in Jesus, may experience this kind of community with others.



God lives in community, so that's a pretty good reason for us to experience community as well!

Life Groups provide a way for Christ-minded individuals to connect with one another. This follows the model of community that God lives through the Father, Spirit, and Son.

All human beings have a longing for relationships. Why? Because God created us this way. We are wired to be with other people and to seek God.

Characteristics of a Life Group

- Encourage one another- Hebrews 10:25
- Honor one another- Romans 12:10
- Carry one another's burdens- Galatians 6:2
- Pray for one another- James 5:16
- Serve one another in love- Galatians 5:13
- Forgive one another- Colossians 3:13
- Be at peace with one another- Mark 9:50
- Love one another- John 13:34
- Accept one another- Romans 15:7
- Teach one another- Romans 15:14
- Build one another up- I Thessalonians 5:11
- Live in harmony with one another- I Peter 3:8



To make this simple, we strive to be 'one-another groups'. Although, we expect and understand that it will take some time to get there!

How do I start a Life Group?

It's simple!

- Just grab a few friends
- Choose a place to meet
- Pick some biblical content
- And you're good to go.



We don't want to make it tough for Life Groups to get started because we know how important and transformational they can be.

You will need to either fill out the 'START A GROUP' form on our website or contact the Groups Director in order to become an official Life Group at Gateway.

Once you do that, we will do everything we can (training, meeting, etc.) to help you get your Life Group up and running!

How do I get people into my group?

Personal Invite

This is your Life Group, so you should be inviting people who you would want in your group! This is the best approach to invite your friends, neighbors, family members, co-workers, or whoever else you think of.

Promotional Events at Gateway

Gateway would be more than happy to promote your group, along with many others, to the congregation if your group is open and looking for members. Gateway will do church-wide promotions at least 3 times a year and they may also hold special events certain seasons of the year. This is a great opportunity to open you group to the public.

Groups Management Software

Gateway uses an online database where you can manage your group, take attendance, and most importantly for this section, add members into your group. All the basic information about your group will be listed on here so people can see it and join your group!

We provide training for you in order to utilize this software

How do I prepare for my first meeting?

Pray! This is a big deal, but know that God is going to be with you the entire way. Here are a few things to consider before your first meeting...

- Follow-up with your members quickly once they sign-up for your group
- Use group texting, emails, or other apps to communicate with your group beforehand
- Pick a starting and ending time...and be sure to honor and respect those times

Communication is key! Let every group member know how excited you are to have them in your group. Make sure you get their contact info so you can follow-up with them and even check on them if they miss a group meeting. People have a longing for connection, and by checking-in on them, they will feel loved and you also hold them accountable at the same time.



What does a typical Life Group meeting look like?

As long as Life Groups build relationships and study biblical content together...we are happy!
Each group has their own personality so we do not give a structured routine to follow.



However, we do provide some suggestions (it's up to you to use these or not) based on what other Life Groups typically do...

- Meet for about 90 minutes
- Start with informal fellowship
- Serve some finger foods
- End with prayer and prayer requests

Take a break from the norm every so often and go out & do something social together.
Go to dinner or some type of event!

What will we study?

Gateway has a Group Resources area that has reviewed and appropriate content for small groups to study. These studies are located in the Next Steps area (see picture→).

Instructions for checking out curriculum

- Find your study
- Complete the Sign-Out sheet
- Use the study until completed
- Let us know you returned the study on the Sign-Out sheet
- Return & place the study in the bin



What will we study...cont'd

We encourage you to use the content we have, but if you want to study something we don't have...feel free to do so! Just keep in mind that you may have to pay for the curriculum and you will need to choose content that is biblically sound. If you ever have questions about what curriculum you should choose, please contact the Groups Director and they will help you.

Sometimes when doing a study, you may run into some tough questions or have discussions about differing theology. Please let us know what your question or issue is!

We can ask our Senior Pastor, Discipleship Director, or our content review team to help provide resources to help your group and make sure it aligns with Gateway's beliefs.



How do Life Group Leaders stay connected?

Emails

Our Groups Director will send out emails from time to time to inform you about any information you need to know. Information such as when an event is happening, when group sign-ups begin, training videos, helpful tips, new curriculum, etc.

Meetings

Gateway will gather Life Group Leaders annually to provide some combination of fellowship, training, vision casting, and food. Our hope is that you will not only learn tips on how to lead your group... but that you will also build meaningful relationships with other Life Group Leaders so you can encourage and help one another.

Check-ins

We try to keep things informal, so just checking-in and having a brief conversation is an excellent way to stay connected. The Groups Director and Life Group coaches will check-in with Life Group leaders from time to time. Always feel free to check-in with them whenever you have any questions, concerns, ideas, or comments.

Additional goals of your Life Group

Open Chair Policy

Know that you can always add members into your group. Leave a chair open during your discussion time to remind the group that there are a lot of people out there who are longing and searching to experience community within a small group. Invite your unconnected friends!

Service Projects

This is a great opportunity to have fellowship with your Life Group as you follow the commands of Jesus by serving your world together.

Either contact us or our Missions and Community Outreach ministry for recommended serving opportunities.

gateway-community.org/m&o



Additional goals of your Life Group...cont'd

Seasonal On-Ramps

Each year, Gateway usually launches two big-scale opportunities for all of the groups in the church to do the same study. At the start of the New Year and right after Labor Day. We encourage your Life Group to do one or both of these large-scale group studies along with a large majority of our congregation. It's a great time to add members to your group.

Seasonal Breaks

This may sound weird...but we encourage our Life Groups to take a break from meeting every once in a while (especially in the summer). Instead, you can hold a social event every so often, join a seasonal group at Gateway, or just rest. God rested on the 7th day, Jesus kept the Sabbath, and Ecclesiastes 3 writes of how there is a season for everything, including rest.

Training

We want to provide you with as many tools, tips, and suggestions as possible. We will have both training videos and in-person trainings to help equip you as a leader. Trainings will cover concerns or issues you may have...like how to deal with a dominant talker in the group.

FAQs

Do Life Group leaders do everything?

No! We suggest that each member of the group should take on a small role. Someone can write down prayer requests, someone provides the host home, someone brings the food, someone leads the discussion, someone plans the social events...you get the point.

What if a member brings up a serious personal issue?

Although you should be supporting and caring for one another, it's important to know when someone needs additional or professional help. If it becomes clear that someone needs more help than your group can provide, please let us know so we can refer them to our pastoral care team.

How many people are in a Life Group?

Ideally you should have no less than 4 and no more than 14 members. If you have less than 4, try inviting some more friends. If you have more than 14, we suggest your group splits into two smaller groups during the discussion time so everyone gets an opportunity to talk.

What do we do about childcare? Does Gateway offer childcare?

The first thing you should do is discuss with your group what will work best for everyone. Some groups hire a babysitter together and keep the children at a member's house nearby. Currently, Gateway does not offer childcare at times that do not fall under our current childcare programming.

Stay in contact with us!

We are always here to help you in any way possible, so please don't hesitate to ask us any questions at groups@gateway-community.org. We want to support, encourage, and pray for you and your group!

Finally, please share any cool or encouraging stories from your Life Group with us. We want to let others know the difference it can make in your life when joining a Life Group!

CONTACT US.
[we'd love to hear from you]



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