



lifegroup

resource guide

for the week of 17 September

14 For the love of Christ impels us, once we have come to the conviction that one died for all; therefore, all have died. 15 He indeed died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

16 Consequently, from now on we regard no one according to the flesh; even if we once knew Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him so no longer. 17 So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. 18 And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him. (2 Corinthians 5.14-21)

Do you know what the goal of our LifeGroups is? Our goal is to grow in our trust in God and one another so that meaningful community can develop. I've been thinking again about how that happens. How do we grow in our trust in God? How do we grow in our trust for one another? Yes, we can learn people skills, leaders can become aware of group dynamics, and we can share our stories. But LifeGroups need a starting point that is at once compelling and accessible for all. A starting point that disintegrates bias and creates welcome. A starting point that can become our connecting point. A connecting point that might become a dynamic catalyst for growing our relationship with God and each other.

What is a starting point that might be common for everyone who desires to connect through a LifeGroup – for first-timers and old-timers alike? The answer I have come to is simple and should be no surprise. The common ground and catalyst for our LifeGroups must be the Cross of Jesus.

Paul writes: “In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us” (2 Corinthians 5.19). In the Cross God was reconciling everyone and *anyone* to Himself. Everyone who wants to follow Jesus shares this supreme act of grace and kindness together. In fact, 2 Corinthians 5 has a lot to say about LifeGroups that embrace the Cross of Jesus in common.

LifeGroups must be motivated by the love of Christ (5.14). The Greek word, which is translated “impel, compel, control, or urge” in many Bibles, carries the idea of being hemmed in and pressurized. The love of Christ should be so strong that it sweeps every one of us along.

LifeGroups must be a safe place because we hold people in high regard (5.16). LifeGroups create and nourish relationships that no longer regard others “according to the flesh.” We regard and encourage one another towards the “new creation” we become through the Cross of Jesus.

LifeGroups must experience the power of Christ (5.17). This power makes new people— men and women free and whole. Men and women who will no longer be held hostage by their former ways; men and women who can see their world through the opportunities of God's love and encouragement.

LifeGroups must be an extension of the ministry of Jesus (5.18,19). Jesus' death brought people and God together and He has passed on this ministry of reconciliation to us, his church. We need to remain close to God and relationally connected with others to do this.

LifeGroups must focus on the Cross of Christ. God “made him who had no sin to be sin for us.” This is one of the most devastating truths of the whole Bible. God intends that we become the righteousness of God (5.20, 21). Life begins at the Cross... therefore so must our LifeGroups. We can expect the very presence of Jesus to grow our relationships if we keep the Cross of Christ central in our LifeGroups.

Enjoy your LifeGroup!

Getting to know one another better...

What was your favorite meal of the summer?

What was your favorite hangout of the summer?

1 Timothy 3.15: God's "high view" of the Church

But if I should be delayed you should know how to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth.

NOTE: Paul is writing to Timothy who he has left in charge to appoint leaders in Ephesus. The word translated "foundation" means far more than "support" as some translations suggest. It carries with it the understanding of a foundation that is firm, immovable, enduring – something that the truth of God can be built on.

What do you think is the behavior Paul wants Timothy to embrace and express? (Feel free to quickly skim through this letter to see if anything stands out.)

Since a building cannot be "alive", what do you think Paul means by "household of God"? (see also Ephesians 2.19-22; 1Peter 2.4)

Most evangelicals when asked, "What is the Bible referring to when it describes something as the 'pillar and foundation of the truth'?" will answer, "The Bible" or "the Word of God". But we know that this is a description of the Church. What do you think Paul was thinking of when he wrote this?

Does this description of the Church challenge your understanding of the Church? Why or why not?

Does this impact how we speak about the Church before others who do not share our faith? Why or why not?

How might your LifeGroup (a Church in miniature) press into this description and reflect this reality relationally as a group?

Reviewing our commitment together...

We are all different! We have different temperaments, experiences, gifts, and strengths. Yet, Jesus wants to bring us together to experience genuine community that includes friendship and authentic spiritual growth. Community does not “just happen”. It requires intentionality. LifeGroups are for those who want to build and experience community that gathers in expectation that Jesus is present and we will be too! Therefore, we have created the following expectations for our LifeGroups so that, together, we might experience:

**a common call/story
a common set of values
a common expectancy
a common vision
and a
vibrant community of friends**

We will meet on _____.

We will arrive between _____ & _____ and we will meet from _____ to _____.

We will make a 12 week commitment to our LifeGroup.

We will express our commitment by attending weekly, completing the Resource Guide beforehand, praying, participating in the discussion, and relationally engaging. We recognize that these are key to a healthy group!

We will make a commitment to pray for one another in our gatherings and outside of our group meetings.

Anticipating our future together...

What are your hopes and aspirations for participating in a LifeGroup?

What is one way that you would like to grow spiritually this Fall?

My prayer requests (write in advance what you want your group to pray for...)

Praying for my group...