

# LIFE Group Ministry Leadership Training

New LIFE Fellowship, Charleston, SC

## Session 1

### I. Biblical Basis for Small Group ministry (or LIFE Groups)

(Luke 10:1-11; John 13:34-35; 17:1-26; Acts 2:42-47; 5:42; 20:20; Romans 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15)

- A. Jesus' method of evangelism and church planting related to **homes** (Luke 10:1-11)
  - a. Finding a person (home or family) of **peace**
  - b. Hang-out with that (or those) family (families), developing **relationships**
  - c. **Reaching** out through that (those) home(s) to the surrounding area(s).
  
- B. We know from various passages that Jesus taught in **public** contexts  
(e.g.: the Temple → specifically in Solomon's Porch (portico), on the beach, in the synagogues, etc.)
  
- C. The early church continued with that methodology
  - a. They met **publicly** (in the Temple – day by day)
    - i. Teaching oriented settings (didactic)
    - ii. Public-oriented worship setting
    - iii. They were experiencing the **transcendence** of God
  
  - b. They met from **house** to **house** (in homes – day by day) – in relational-based settings
    - i. They **ate** their **meals** together (broke bread and ate meals with a glad heart)
    - ii. They were **worshipful, praising** and thanking God with joyful hearts
    - iii. They were in settings that provide the context for **support, encouragement, edification, accountability, care, and loving** relationships
    - iv. They had the **attitude, commitment, and behavior of sharing** (Acts 2:44-45)  
... as anyone might have need.
    - v. They were experiencing the **immanence** of God. (i.e. God's closeness)  
(see Matt. 18:20 → **Jesus**' special **close** presence)
  
  - c. God was using them (publicly and in-homes) to **reach others** for Christ (Acts 2:47)  
God was using both contexts to add to their number daily.
  
- D. One Mind, Single Mindedness, One Heart, One Passion, Unity of purpose, and **Simplicity**  
(**John 13:34,35; John 17; Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 15:25; Eph. 4:1-6; Philippians 2:1-4**)
  - a. **Relationship** with God through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit
  - b. **Loving** One Another (i.e.: doing the "one anothers") → this creates unity
  - c. Loving the **Lost** to Christ (because the world sees our unity with one another in Christ)
  
  - d. The **goal** of our instruction (our teaching, our doctrine) **must** be: (see 1 Tim. 1:5)
    - i. **Love** from a pure heart (**Love** God, **love** one another, and **love** the lost to Christ)
    - ii. a **good** conscience
    - iii. a **sincere** Faith (trust in God and His Word that is pure, undefiled, & truth-based)

- E. The “One Others” must have a social-relational **context** in which to thrive, so that all saved individuals within the local Body of Christ can participate (i.e.: a “can do” ministry).
- a. Typically there are few opportunities for this to occur on Sunday mornings when we gather. And this is designed this way, it is the “public” expression of the Body of Christ, very teaching oriented and “public” worship oriented. It is a Biblical design, necessary, and just fine.
  - b. **But...** in order to fulfill the rest of the mandates of Christ, we also need a context in which the “one others” thrive in. (let’s read Hebrews 10:24,25).
  - c. Doing the “one others” seems to best be done in and through the context of **in-home** small group.
  - d. Since most of us are raised in homes instead of laboratories or test-tubes, it is the “natural” context for small groups to thrive. Folks can “let their hair down” easier, take “off the masks” and just be real. In-home functions tend to be more relaxed, easy-going and more comfortable, relationally speaking. And we get to see the “real you” by going to your home, or you get to see the “real me” when you go to my home. People can just “hang-out” with one another, and get to know one another.
  - e. We know that in order to be more effective in “loving one another” it is best to get to know each other more.
  - f. All the “one others” are relational-based attitudes and activities, and are best suited in more **relaxed** and **less** structured contexts, such as in a home.
  - g. It is a “**can do**” ministry.
 

Anyone (any **saved** follower of **Jesus Christ**) can:

    - i. invite someone into their home.
    - ii. pray for another person
    - iii. care for another person
    - iv. be used of God, according to the **Spiritual gift(s)** God has provided him/her, to help another person in their relationship with God and others
    - v. fix some snacks for food, fun, and fellowship
- F. Biblical Concept: **Span of Care** (based on Exodus 18:13-27 and all the “one others” commands)
- a. Everyone within the Body of Christ needs to be **cared** for (in some way, Biblically).
  - b. Everyone within the Body of Christ needs to **care for** one another.
  - c. But no one should care for too many. (see Matt. 11:28-30)  
Body-Life Ministry must never create “burn-out”, ever.
  - d. The Pastoral / Elder Leadership Team is to equip people of the local expression of the Body of Christ to be doing this kind Body-Life Ministry (see Eph. 4:11-16)
- G. What is a LIFE Group?
- a. It is **NOT** a: *(let’s watch these humorous videos of what small groups / LIFE Groups are NOT)*
    - i. Home **Bible** Study (we get that already in Sunday School or Bible Study hour on Sundays)
    - ii. **Support** Group / or psychological-based support group
    - iii. **Meditation** group
    - iv. **Social** Club / **Clique**
    - v. **Party**
    - vi. A **Holy** Huddle / **Closed** Group

- b. This Small Group Model, “the CELL Group” model is based on the principle taught in Scripture: the **Body of Christ**. (see Roman 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:11-14)

Just like our own **human** body, which is made up of tiny little cells, basic units of life, that work together to form the whole human body... so, in the same way, these “LIFE Groups” are basic units of life within the larger context of the local expression of the Body of Christ (i.e. the local church... and in our case, New LIFE Fellowship, Delta, CO).

- c. The “CELL Group” is in **miniature**, the Body of Christ (Matt. 18:20), yet it is not separate from the local church fellowship (the larger context). Just like cells in the human body have all that is needed in its DNA to create a whole new human body, but it needs the rest of the cells and the whole of the human body to **survive**... so it is with each CELL Group... each group is **not** independent from the rest or from the whole, but each is **inter-dependent** upon the other CELL Groups and upon the “whole” of the local Body of Christ of which each “CELL Group” belongs. **Basic Christian Community**.
- d. The CELL Group → is **people**, **NOT** a meeting, nor just a gathering. It is 8 to 12 people who are “doing life together” in Christ for Christ’s purposes. And we see this in the New Testament church. They met **publicly** and from **House to House**... doing life together... A church **family**. It has nothing to do with buildings, programs, etc. – but has everything to do with **relationships**.
- e. Jesus Christ and His **12** disciples are a great model/example to look at. I am pretty sure that Jesus did not view them as just some folks He would meet with on a certain night of the week. They were His disciples, but they were family to Him. (see Matt. 12:46-50) When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane before His crucifixion... He viewed His small group in a special way (read Matt. 26:36-46). He was looking to His group for support, prayer, and encouragement. He needed them at that time (remember Jesus was fully human), and of course, as we all are today, most of the time, we disappoint our Lord and typically fall asleep on the job when He needs us to be doing the ministry, etc. But try to see the larger picture here. We are to be supportive, encouraging, and prayerful for each other in our group... in addition to support, prayer, and encouragement, we are to hold each other accountable for our walk with Jesus Christ. Of course, Jesus Christ did not need this. (for the concept of “Accountability” see Eph. 5:18-21, especially verse 21)

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#### **Size Matters: The Principle of Communication Lines (CL)**

The formula for **group communication lines** is  $N \times N - (N) = CL$ . “N” stands for the number of persons and “CL” represents **communication lines**. The number of persons present, multiplied by the number of persons present, minus the number of persons present, equals the number of communication lines in the group. For example, suppose four persons get together for a meeting. How many lines of communication will be present? Using the formula, we have this:  $4 \times 4 - (4) = CL$ . 4 times 4 equals 16. 16 minus 4 equals 12. In a group of four there are 12 lines of communication.

Now what about a group of twelve?  $12 \times 12 - (12) = 132$ . In a group of twelve, for **everyone** to **relate** to the other members in some kind of **personal** way, **there must be 132 separate incidents of relationship**. Do you see why Jesus **only** had twelve disciples. Size of the group does make a difference in **relationship** and **community**.

(from “*The Second Reformation: Reshaping the Church for the 21st Century*” by William A. Beckham, pg. 63)

- f. Jesus had His inner core of 3 (**James, John, and Peter**), which is a great model to us regarding deeper relationships for mentoring, discipleship, and leadership development.
- g. Jesus followed the Biblical Concept of “**Span of Care**”. He did not violate this principle. Remember He is the one who inspired this concept through Jethro to Moses in Exodus 18:13-27.
- h. **LIFE Groups must provide** (BTW → “LIFE Groups” are people):
  1. Mutual Encouragement and Edification
  2. Prayer with one another and Prayer for one another
  3. Biblically-based friendship and fellowship → intimacy
  4. Helping one another within the equipping process (Eph. 4:11-16)
  5. Safe “times” to “vent” our frustrations in complete confidence  
(i.e.: what is shared in the group time, stays within the group)
  6. Leadership development
  7. Discipleship & Mentoring
  8. Loving and creative ways of outreach to the unchurched – reaching out together as a group (no one needs to reach out alone, anymore).
- i. LIFE Groups are some of the best social contexts for us to exercise the gifts of the Spirit that God has given us to edify one another with. Remember the gifts God has given you are not for you, but for others within the Body of Christ. They are not to create self-aggrandizement, nor are they for you to gain recognition, fame, or power. But they are for humble, servant-hood usage within the Body of Christ to help others grow in their relationship with God so that they can become more effective and fruitful in God’s Kingdom for His Glory, etc. Thus, within the context of the fellowship relationships of a small group, like a LIFE Group, the gifts of God’s Spirit will thrive and flourish.

**Example:** a small church of 200 people.

That traditional church ministry was just meeting on Sunday mornings in the church building on the church campus. Their typical percentage of church population doing all of the “work”? **20%** → We call that the **20 - 80** rule. **20%** do **80%** of the “work”  
But why is this a problem? Whose fault is it?

It is actually fostered by the way typical traditional church ministries are designed. It is not the people of the congregation’s fault, but the leadership and the way that church’s ministries are designed. **But** having a “LIFE Group” ministry satisfies this need, since now everyone actually views themselves as a “**minister**” of God’s Love toward one another... and toward the lost. **AND** no one has to view themselves as doing it all alone, anymore. And no one has to view that they have to do more than they should be doing (i.e.: **span of care**)

**New Wine for New Wineskins...:**

**1 Peter 2:9** → “The **Priesthood** of the Believer” is fostered with the “LIFE Group” ministry more than the “Sunday-Only – Cathedral” model, where the “ministries” are really “programs” that typically only meet some needs and cannot involve all of the population of the congregation in hands-on / gifted-based “ministry”. In the Old-Model (spawned during the Industrial Revolution), most people will continue to just be spectators and consumers while just a few “do” the ministry “to” and “for” them. That is not a Biblical model. **The “Priesthood” of the Believer - “everyone is a minister” model** → that is the Biblical Model. And the “LIFE Group” church model seems to be able to foster this mandate/command much more efficiently.

## This week's Assignment.

1. Read through the "Small Groups" concept packet (chew off some bite-sized chunks as you go). You can read through this for the next several weeks. We might bring up some of the concepts in the upcoming sessions.
2. Listen to the 2 "Wine Skins" CDs → must be done in a quiet, non-distracting setting where you can listen to both in one sitting... this is so you can digest it. And if need be, please listen to it several times until it makes sense. If you are going to be leading as a married couple, it would be good for both you to listen to it together, if at all possible.
3. Re-Read through this Session 1 and its various Scripture Passages that we went over.
4. Begin praying for those whom God has laid on your heart to be the core for your group. We suggest at least 1 other couple, minimum, that would call New LIFE Fellowship their home church family to be a part of your core group (2 other couples would be better). We will discuss more about this during future training sessions.