

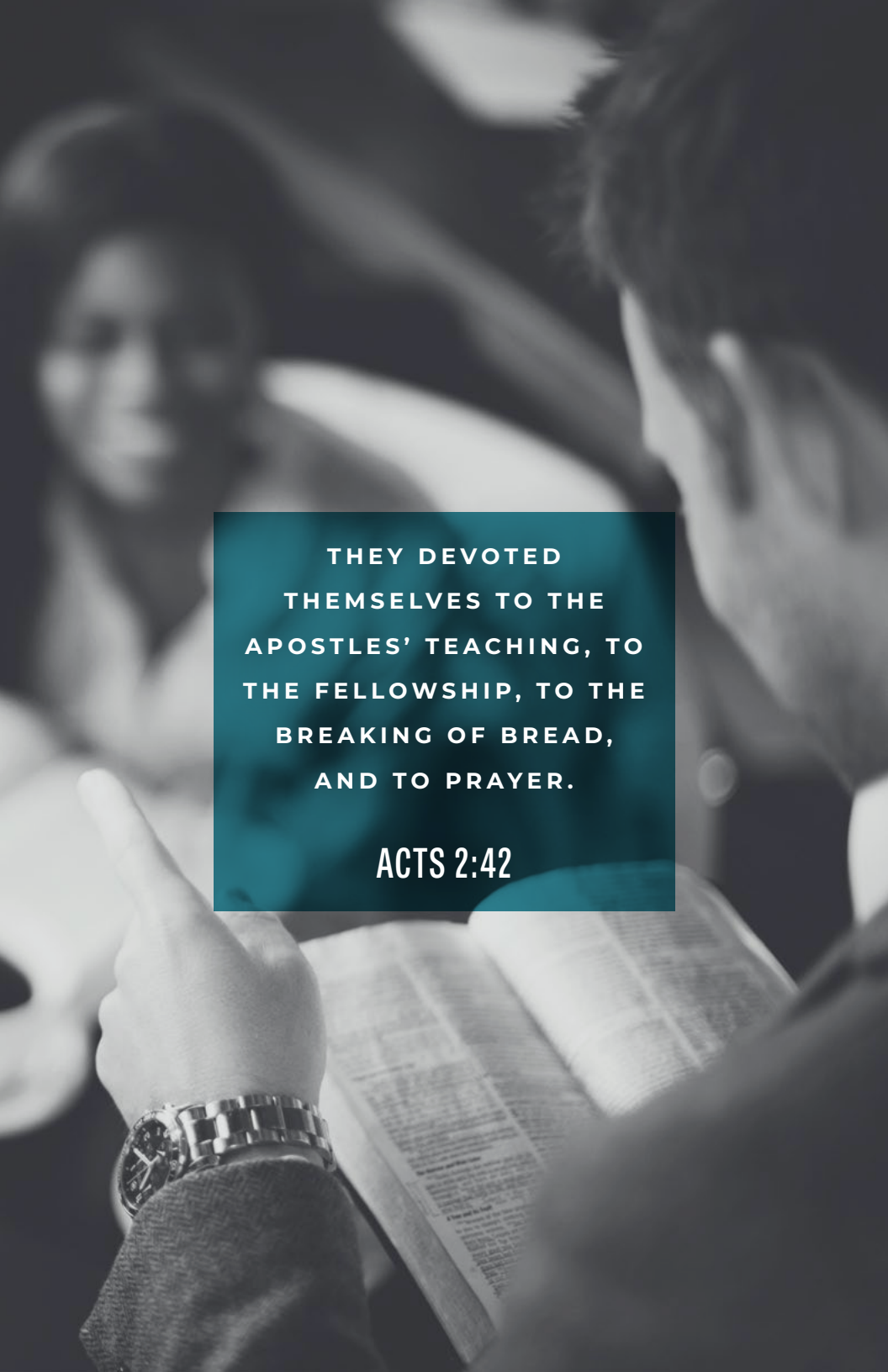
# LIFE GROUP

## STARTER GUIDE

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**DO LIFE TOGETHER**  
VERSE BY VERSE





THEY DEVOTED  
THEMSELVES TO THE  
APOSTLES' TEACHING, TO  
THE FELLOWSHIP, TO THE  
BREAKING OF BREAD,  
AND TO PRAYER.

ACTS 2:42

# KEY COMPONENTS OF A LIFE-CHANGING COMMUNITY

In Acts 2:42-47, we see a snapshot of the life-changing community that our Life Groups foster.

*42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.*

*43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. 44 Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. 45 They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.*

*Acts 2:42-47*

## **LIFE GROUPS ENGAGE WITH THE BIBLE, PRAYER, AND ONE ANOTHER**

In verse 42, Luke describes how the Early Church was engaged in the apostle's teaching, fellowship, and prayer. These three things guide our Life Groups today. In all our discussions, we focus on the application and discussion of our Sunday through the Bible teachings.

Though we discuss the Bible in Life Groups, it is more than a Bible study. We take the fellowship part (and the breaking of bread) of Acts 2:42 seriously. The Greek word for fellowship (koinonia) means something deeper than a friendly association. It describes people who gather under a common idea or purpose. Though they may differ in wealth, social status, ethnicity, interests, and maturity, they are unified by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It's the unity of the whole, despite its diversity, that makes Gospel fellowship (koinonia) so powerful. Also, once a month, we have a Hangout Night where there is no set agenda, but to connect with one another "and invite new people in."

## INWARD AND OUTWARD FOCUS

As the early church committed to the Word, fellowship, and prayer, God did something in them (inward) and through them (outward). Starting in Acts 2 and continuing throughout the book (6:7, 9:31, 16:5), Luke describes the church's two-fold impact: the strength of the community and the advancement of the mission. The Church grew both in depth (discipleship, or maturing believers) and in breadth (evangelism, or new believers).

It is our hope that Life Groups would feel like a group of close friends or family, and that they would reflect the kind of unity the Acts 2 Church had. We will approach this kind of unity by living out the "one anothers" of the faith. In doing so, we put Christ on display and share the Gospel with each other through every selfless act.

In verse 47, Luke describes not just the impact the Early Church had with each other, but outside the church. It says that they had favor with "all people" and that the "Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

When our Life Groups function as Acts 2 fellowships, we will provide a life-changing community where non-believers, new believers, and mature believers can belong, believe, and become.

**WHO IN YOUR LIFE (2-8 PEOPLE) WOULD BE INTERESTED IN STARTING THIS LIFE GROUP WITH YOU?**

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## A WELCOMING AND ACCEPTING PLACE

If you look at the life of Jesus, He spent time with tax collectors, prostitutes, and Gentiles. He always met people where they were and never required people to clean up their lives before He loved them. Just as Jesus did, we strive to create an environment where everyone feels like they belong.

### OPEN GROUPS

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Life Groups create a place where people come just as they are, and meet Jesus just as He is. Our groups are open to anyone at any time, and we create an environment where everyone is welcomed and accepted. When this happens, people are able to experience Christ through the life-changing power of Biblical Community. Todd Engstrom described it this way:

*“The most persuasive argument for the Christian faith is the Christian community. The majority of conversations throughout church history have come not through argumentation, but through belonging to a meaningful community before belief is ever required.”*

### INTENTIONALLY INVITING

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We want every member of our Life Group to ask, “Who in my life would benefit from a group like this?” And for this person, we want the members of our group to pray for that person, invest in that relationship, and invite them to join the group. Once a month, we create easy opportunities to invite our friends by hosting a Hangout Night ([see pg. 10](#)).

To help our Life Group members be intentional on inviting new people into their group, we ask each member: “Who’s Your One?” Take a moment and identify who in your life would benefit from a group like this and how you can pray for and invest in that relationship.

## ENCOUNTERING JESUS THROUGH HIS WORD AND PEOPLE

Along with creating a welcoming and accepting place where you can meet Jesus personally, our Life Groups provide a place where you can know Jesus through His Word and His people. When you meet, you will facilitate group discussion where people can encounter Jesus and experience life change. Here are five key elements of life-changing discussion:

**WORD-CENTERED:** Life-changing discussion starts and ends with God's living and active Word. We believe that the Bible is sufficient and relevant for all issues of our life ([Heb. 4:12](#)).

**CONVERSATIONAL:** Life-changing discussion focuses on facilitating a conversation, not teaching a Bible lesson. Better learning and connection are accomplished when people are able to ask questions and share their personal insights and experiences.

**AUTHENTIC:** Life-changing discussion happens when people are real with themselves, with God, and with others. We foster this authenticity by providing a safe environment where people can be honest and transparent.

**APPLICATION-FOCUSED:** Life-changing discussion focuses on application because the measure of maturity is not information, but obedience. Healthy Bible discussion doesn't just answer the question "What does the Bible say?" but it also helps people answer, "How does this personally impact my life today?" That is why we end each discussion by helping people identify a personal, relevant, and practical step they can take to grow in their faith.

**NEWCOMER-FRIENDLY:** Life-changing discussion should always consider the person who is joining for the first time. We want to eliminate any barriers that would prevent new people from participating.

By focusing on application, it allows non, new, and mature believers to engage in conversation together.

When our Life Groups function as Acts 2 fellowships, we will provide a life-changing community where both non-believers, new believers, and mature believers can belong, believe, and become.

**BECOMING WHO GOD DESIGNED YOU TO BE**

Lastly, our Life Groups provide a place where you can follow Jesus as you become who God designed you to be. One of the best ways to do this is to encourage your group members to not just attend Life Group, but to participate. Encourage people to share their perspective in the discussions and consider how they might contribute their time, talent, and resources to serve the group. On pages 9-10, we provide multiple opportunities that help people participate in the group.

The primary way that we help people become who God designed them to be is through Discipleship Groups. As relationships form in the group and people become faithful, a natural next step for members is to start or join a Discipleship Group where they can enter a season of accelerated spiritual transformation. These gender-specific groups of 3-5 men or women help your people deepen their relationship with God and one another. These groups focus on spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading and journaling, Scripture memory, accountability, and prayer.

Ideally, all faithful Life Group members will eventually join a Discipleship Group. As these members participate in a Discipleship Group for 12 months, these groups eventually will multiply and start new Life Groups and/or D-Groups. The graph on the next page helps identify the differences between Life Group and Discipleship Group and why both are important.

**HOW DO YOU SEE DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS  
ENHANCING YOUR LIFE GROUP EXPERIENCE?**

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# DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A LIFE GROUP AND A DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

	LIFE GROUP	DISCIPLESHIP GROUP
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	A life-changing community where you can belong, believe, and become.	A time-stamped, gender-specific, closed group that meets weekly for accelerated spiritual transformation.
<b>PRIMARY PURPOSE</b>	Connect people into life-changing community	Grow people as disciplemakers of Jesus Christ
<b>MODEL</b>	Open group	Closed group
<b>MAKE-UP</b>	Non, new, and mature believers	Composed of believers
<b>SIZE</b>	Varies, but usually 10-20 people	3-5 people maximum
<b>DYNAMIC</b>	Co-ed	Gender-specific
<b>CURRICULUM</b>	Sermon-aligned	Reading Plan
<b>NEXT STEPS</b>	Members move into and/or lead more Life Groups	Members multiply and lead their own group.



## RECOMMENDED MEETING RHYTHMS

Our groups have a simple, dynamic rhythm:

- **MEET OFTEN**
- **PARTY MONTHLY**
- **SERVE QUARTERLY**

This simple framework helps our groups provide a life-changing community where you can belong, believe, and become.

### MEET OFTEN

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Our Life Groups meet often because consistency builds community. We want our groups to become part of the rhythms of our people's lives. Whenever you schedule Life Groups less frequently, it can be difficult to gain traction and if someone misses, they will go a month without seeing the group members. By meeting often, you make the group a priority on your calendar and community forms quickly.

### PARTY MONTHLY

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Once a month, our groups host a Hangout Night, which is when the group intentionally creates a warm and welcoming place to invite new people to experience their life-changing community. These nights provide strategic invite opportunities for each person's friend that they are praying for and investing in.

Jeff's story is a great example of this. Jeff was walking through a tragic season of life and needed help when one of his friends invited him to come to a grill out with his Life Group. While Jeff was there, he got to meet several new people, including one of the leaders, Steven, who had recently walked through the exact same situation. As they shared their stories with each other, they shared phone numbers, and Jeff returned to Life Group the following week and participated in the Bible discussion. Over the next four weeks, Jeff said yes to following Jesus.

When the group asked him why he joined, without knowing it, he explained the vision of Hangout Nights: "You invited me to a grill out, which sounded fun. Had you invited me to a Life Group meeting, I would have been too intimidated, because I didn't think anyone struggled with what I did...but then I met Steven."

## SERVE QUARTERLY

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Some ways that you can serve together is to adopt a local school or gathering of people to partner with through service projects. Paint hallways, trim hedges, mend fences. Dream up a local outreach that you would want to lead. As you serve together, it is amazing the memories you will make as a group and what God will begin to stir in the hearts of your members.

“ WE WANT OUR GROUPS  
TO BECOME PART OF THE  
WEEKLY RHYTHMS OF OUR  
PEOPLE'S LIVES.”

WHAT DAY OF THE WEEK DO YOU PLAN TO  
HOST YOUR GROUP?

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HOW DO YOU SEE HANGOUT NIGHTS  
ENHANCING YOUR LIFE GROUP EXPERIENCE?

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**LIFE GROUP IS NOT A GROUP OF PEOPLE WITH A GIFTED LEADER, BUT A LEADER WITH A GROUP OF GIFTED PEOPLE.”**

A good leader shares responsibility; they don't hoard it. Hosting and leading Life Group should be a team approach. For the sake of the leader's health, we don't want any individual to have all the responsibility, but instead to share it with other capable members. When you are able to not just give, but receive from the group, leadership becomes a blessing, not a burden.

Secondly, we share leadership for the sake of our people. Life Groups are not a group of people with a gifted leader, but a leader with a group of gifted people. A good

leader creates opportunities for people to use their gifts to contribute to the group. However big or small the contribution may be, we encourage people to not just think about what they can receive from the group, but what they can give.

Below are four different roles that we recommend for our groups. This is not an exact science, but an art. Certain individuals may lead in two roles or multiple people can help facilitate the discussion. We just don't want one person doing all four roles.

### **FACILITATOR**

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The Facilitator leads the group discussion. This role may be done by one person or by a couple. The important part of this role is that the leader facilitates a discussion rather than preaching a message. We want as many people to participate in the discussion as possible. As people contribute to the discussion it creates a sense of belonging and it helps them better process what they are hearing.

### **HOST**

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The Host opens up their home for the group to meet. They also think through their living spaces and design them in a way that accommodates the group and helps foster connection. For example, the host may reorganize their living room to create one big circle so that it better facilitates discussion.

## **COORDINATOR**

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The Coordinator focuses on organizing and communicating with the group. If your group has a snack list, the coordinator organizes whose week it is and sends reminders. They also communicate with the whole group about what is coming up this week. If the group meets online, the coordinator can set up and send out the link each week. Lastly, if your group does childcare, this person will coordinate with the babysitter and the group.

## **HANGOUT NIGHT LEADER**

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The Hangout Night Leader helps the whole group get involved in your monthly Hangout. This includes planning activities that are welcoming to new people and encouraging current group members to invite their friends. The Hangout Night Leader should be familiar with the Hangout Night overview found on our Life Group Page.

## **DISCIPLESHIP GROUP LEADER**

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One of the most important ways that people can help lead the group is to lead a Discipleship Group with people in the Life Group. Hopefully, each Life Group has multiple Discipleship Group leaders within the Life Group. When people start leading their Discipleship Group, they can use the Discipleship Group Starter Guide to help them launch their group!

**WHAT ROLE(S) WOULD YOUR FRIENDS BE INTERESTED IN HELPING WITH?**

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