

Life Group Leaders Manual



Why are Life Groups Important?

Coventry Vineyard exists to make disciple-making-disciples of Jesus.

Everything we do is designed to help people meet with and follow the person and life of Jesus.

In practical terms we:

Encourage one another to worship God in everyday life

Equip one another to become more like Jesus

Express love and compassion in practical ways to those in our community

Life Groups are designed to help people connect with one another and become the people God has called them to be.

We expect that those who may reject 'church' or 'religion' will step into relationship with Jesus and grow spiritually through these groups.

Each group will look and feel a bit different, but each will share the same core values.

- a) Each gathering will be **fun** ...a place where we laugh together and enjoy each other's company.
- b) Each group will be intentionally focussed on becoming **disciple making disciples** of Jesus.
- c) **Prayer ministry** will be offered to regularly.
- d) Each group leader will have a plan for how they are going to provide **pastoral** care for their group.

"They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity – all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved."

– Acts 2:46-47

Life Group Check-List

When initially planning the group:

- ☐ Plan the Life Group- what will be covered each week and are your aims for the term? Who will lead each session, have you planned when it starts and finishes and how you will grow/multiply? How will you reach out to your neighbourhood?
- ☐ Talk through your life group plans with your Neighbourhood Leader and check they are suitable for the area before making them public.
- ☐ Secure a place for the group to meet, the times it will start and finish and make sure all the details are on church suite so people can sign up. (Check with Nicola- office@coventryvineyard.org.uk if you need any help with this).
- ☐ Pray regularly for those who have signed up for the group.
- ☐ Have the plans and expectations for the group ready at the 1st group meeting.

*Challenge: Plan 12 weeks of sessions for your group, what the objective is for each session and who will lead it, then talk over these plans with your Neighbourhood Leader

Before the group starts:

- ☐ Invite friends, neighbours and co-workers to join the group and encourage all those in your group to do the same.
- ☐ Ask people on Sunday to join the group.
- ☐ Identify and recruit someone as a leader in training and to act as a deputy leader for your group

*Challenge: Ask one person who does not go to Coventry Vineyard to join your group.

How to follow up with those who sign up for your group:

- ☐ Contact every person who signs up for the group immediately with all of the important information: day/time/location, start date, syllabus, contact info, etc.
- ☐ Send a reminder two days before the group begins (you may want to have your coordinator set up a private facebook page for LG members).
- ☐ Continue following up with those who don't show up for Life Group at least 3 weeks into the group (don't remove their name from the list until they request it).

*Challenge: Don't let anyone slip through the cracks.

When the group is running:

- ☐ Communicate weekly with the group (or get your deputy to do this): prayer requests and group reminder e-mails/messages.
- ☐ Continually identify potential leaders from the group, talk about their potential with your Neighbourhood leaders and then give them the opportunity to serve/lead within the group.
- ☐ Ensure the group is serving in the community and that they are encouraged to reach out to their neighbours/colleagues. Be faithful in leading the group to serve.
- ☐ Begin and end the group on time- showing you value peoples time.
- ☐ Communicate with members of the group to see how they are doing if they are facing a tough week or particular situation.
- ☐ Communicate with your Neighbourhood Leaders after each session to let them know how it went, any issues and things to celebrate/pray for.
- ☐ Encourage the group to look after each other (rather than you doing it all. This is a good way to see them grow spiritually.

*Challenge: Contact your Neighbourhood leader each week with things you are celebrating in your Life Group.

If things go wrong:

- ☐ Life is messy. The people in your group will often bring the “mess of life” with them to your group. Don’t be intimidated by mess and keep praying.
- ☐ If people fall out with one another (and this does happen!) don’t take it personally. As the leader of the group you have the right to challenge poor behaviour but always do this with love and respect. (Check with your neighbourhood leaders if you aren’t sure about this).
- ☐ If you are concerned about a member of your group, talk with them. Offer to pray for them or get someone appropriate in your group to do this.
- ☐ If there is a safeguarding concern, immediately talk with the Coventry Vineyard safeguarding officer to seek advice. (See https://www.coventryvineyard.org/important_info.html for contact information).

*Challenge: Let your **Neighbourhood Leaders** know if there is someone in you group who is struggling or you are finding difficult, so that they can pray with you and for them.

Pastoral Care

We want everyone that comes into our community to find some meaningful friendships, places to serve alongside others, and a deep and compelling relationship with Jesus. Our plan for pastoral care revolves around these values so you can receive help and care if you need it.

OUR STRUCTURE FOR CARE

LIFE GROUPS: We encourage everyone in Coventry Vineyard to get involved in a Life Group because these are the places they will receive ongoing support and care through the relationships developed with those in the group. Our plan is that people will help each other through the highs and lows of life. Life Group leaders will need to listen out for particular needs and ask after those who are facing tough situations.

PRAYER MINISTRY: We offer prayer ministry in our meetings and everyday life and encourage everyone to learn to receive from Jesus when being prayed for and to pray for specific needs. We offer these times because we have seen people renewed, re-envisioned, healed and set free after being prayed for. We encourage everyone to regularly receive prayer ministry, especially if they have specific needs that they need help with.

FURTHER HELP:

As Life Group leader you will be responsible for directing people to further help or support if needed (ie, support from the group via meals, hospital visits or external help from other groups or professionals. Your Neighbourhood Leader should be made aware of any situation where you feel extra help is needed.)

Life Group leaders are not expected to 'fix' everyone in their group, but with help from Neighbourhood leaders, direct people to relevant organisations for further support if needed.

Life Group Team

As the Life Group leader, part of your role is to train up others. As we serve one another we grow spiritually. Get yourself one or two deputies who can support you and the group. These may also be people who oversee communicating with the group, or who organise the food rota. They may be the person who ensures that people are looked after, receive a drink when they arrive, etc. Or you may appoint different people for different roles and responsibilities.

You will need to have someone who can deliver the material if you are not available. In fact, as you train up others, it's important that at least once or twice during the term you have some else lead a discussion or host the life group. This is where people learn and new leaders are developed.

Expectations of Life Group Leaders

What we are looking for in our leaders...

1. Passion: passion for Jesus, passion for worship, passion to live a sacrificial lifestyle. Someone who is an enthusiastic leader, who encourages others to worship God in their everyday lives.

2. Integrity: an ability to be trusted with small and big things, to maintain confidentiality, communicate well and complete tasks. Someone who is loyal, responsible, refuses to gossip and is quick to forgive others.

3. Commitment: whole-hearted commitment to Coventry Vineyard, its' vision, leaders and people and a willingness to participate & get involved by serving on a Sunday. Someone who demonstrates this as they serve and lead others, giving their time, talent and treasure.

4. Generosity: serving and relating to others with a good and generous spirit, giving financially to Coventry Vineyard and living a life that benefits others. We expect all our leaders to tithe (or give generously). It is a spiritual discipline and important for the health of the leader as what we spend our money on is what we value.

5. Sensitivity: growing in sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, making time to listen to his voice and to allow him to minister to you and through you, through prophesy and healing. People who you lead will follow you. They will watch how you receive from God and will generally not be more adventurous than you. Be prepared to take risks, pray for healing and practice the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

6. Outward Focused Vision: looking beyond the church to the local community, a desire to see the Kingdom come in people coming to know Jesus, becoming disciple making disciples. Getting involved in reaching out to your local community through regular acts of kindness and monthly Neighbourhood Initiatives that express God's compassion.

7. An Apprentice: someone who is a disciple seeking to become more like Jesus in thought, speech and in action, learning from him how to live life. Making sure our speech is wholesome, not putting down nor criticizing others.

8. Character: A willingness to change and to develop a life known for its humility, holiness, purity and service, to show evidence of a sincere walk with God, a reliance on the Holy Spirit and a hunger for knowing the bible. Someone who is committed to doing the stuff of the kingdom (healing the sick, casting out demons, rising the dead, bringing people to Jesus etc).

9. Influence: someone who shows others how to live like Jesus would. Who demonstrates godly conduct and a lifestyle appropriate to a leader in the church (see 1 Tim 3:1-12)

10. Unfinished Material: a desire to pursue God's calling for your life, whatever that may be, to trust God as you continue your journey of faith. None of us have everything sorted. We are all learning, and need to be humble in this, and be prepared to admit this to others.

A Five Step Model for Prayer

This prayer model is based on a series of simple questions to follow while you pray to help you determine what to do next and how effective the ministry is going. This is not a formula, but a set of questions that help us listen to what God is saying, see what God is doing and obey the Holy Spirit as we pray for people. We encourage you to use this model as you pray and to help instruct your group in praying for one another.

STEP 1: What do you need Jesus to do for you? (Matt 20:32)

Ask the person's name. Ask what they want Jesus to do. Listen to the Holy Spirit

STEP 2: Why is the person in this condition?

Discern between Emotional, Spiritual, Demonic or Physical cause.

Where appropriate invite confession and repentance.

STEP 3: Prayer: How should I pray?

Invite and bless the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Speak to the pain and condition. Lay on hands (Mark 16:18)

STEP 4: What's happening? (Mark 8:22)

Observe the person (pray with your eyes **open!**)

Ask the person "What's happening?"

Jesus Heals a Blind Man at Bethsaida (Mark 8) *Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"*

24 He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around."

25 Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

Continue to listen to the Holy Spirit.

Go back to steps two and three if necessary.

STEP 5: Follow up: How do I finish?

Has the Holy Spirit apparently finished ministering?

Has the person indicated ministry is over?

Have you run out?

Affirm the person and encourage them to follow Jesus. Speak words of prophecy sensitively and humbly. Encourage further ministry where necessary or for them to seek further help if needed.

Who can pray? Anyone. But it's helpful to be trained in order to pray in a loving and effective way. Jesus trained his disciples and they were accountable to him.

What are we aiming at?

Safety - Confidentiality - Mercy - Dignity. Jesus to be honoured.

Life Group Roles and Responsibilities

WHAT DOES MY LIFE GROUP DO?

- Meets together once a week (or every other week)
- Provides pastoral care for people.
- Plans and completes a Neighbourhood Initiative once a term
- Socialises together at least once a term, preferably more!

WHAT DOES A LIFE GROUP LEADER DO?

- Plans, oversees and leads the Life Group, developing a curriculum/syllabus for the term. (usually around 12 weeks) with support from the Neighbourhood Leader.
- Prays for group members regularly and those not yet in the group, inviting new people and aiming for multiplication of the group.
- Leads the group regularly, creating a culture where people can grow spiritually, build friendship and have fun.
- Communicates weekly with their Neighbourhood Leader for help and support.
- Encourages members of the group to grow spiritually (become more like Jesus) and develop key friendships.
- Coordinates pastoral care for those in the group, making it a place where we learn to care for one-another, that no need goes unnoticed.
- Develops a team around them who provide hospitality, communication within the group and organise a Neighbourhood Initiative.
- Identifies new group leaders from their current group once a term.

WHAT DOES A LIFE GROUP ASSISTANT LEADER DO?

- Prepares to potentially become a Life Group Leader by serving as an apprentice who supports and assists the Life Group Leader.
- Facilitates group discussion during the term.
- Prays for the Life Group Leaders and the group regularly.
- Sends emails of prayer requests (allowing for confidentiality) & attendance reminders to everyone in the group, around 2 days before the group is to meet.
- Leads the group in the absence or request of the Life Group Leader.

WHAT DOES A LIFE GROUP HOST DO?

- Provides a clean, warm and inviting atmosphere for the meeting.
- Ensures that those who attend know how to find the venue, park appropriately and leave quietly, (love your neighbours!)
- Greet guests at the door, offering to take coats and make them a cup of tea/ coffee, introduce them to another member of the group.
- Organises a weekly refreshments rota, reminding those who are bringing food (savoury, sweet and maybe healthy option).
- Organises at least one social event (this may be in the form of a bring and share meal). This is best done at the start and end of the term.
- Communicates with the Life Group leaders as and when needed.

WHAT DOES A LIFE GROUP WORSHIP LEADER DO?

- Leads two to three worship songs during the evening if requested.
- Provides lyric sheets for people to use. Available from Worship Coordinator.
- Look after your instrument, keep guitar in tune and have new strings available.
- Sings songs that are used on a Sunday Morning (see Spotify, “Songs we sing, Cov Vineyard”), singing loud enough for people to hear and ensuring that how you play the song is the way it’s meant to be sung!

WHAT DOES A LIFE GROUP ADMINISTRATOR DO?

- Organises a Life Group Facebook Page if requested, letting people know when the next meeting is.
- Keeps track of peoples names, telephone numbers, email addresses.
- Invites newcomers to the next ‘Connect” Lunch.
- Highlights any important church events that are coming up.
- Keeps a track of who attends the group. This can be done on Church Suite on your life group page.

WHAT DOES A NEIGHBOURHOOD LEADER DO?

- Supports the Life Group Leaders in their neighbourhood.
- Prays for group leaders and neighbourhood regularly.
- Meets with the Life Group leaders each term.
- Communicates with the Life Group leaders each week to support and encourage.

Possible Itinerary for your First Life Group Meeting

- People arrive- provide drinks and snacks, introduce one another, create a relaxed atmosphere (15 min)
- Pray to start
- Have everyone introduce themselves and share what they do, where they are from, and why they decided to join the group.
- Icebreaker: something that will encourage people to share something about themselves. Eg see <https://insight.typepad.co.uk/40-icebreakers-for-small-groups.pdf> for ideas.
- Briefly introduce the Life Group. Hand out Life Group syllabus and any other important information. Answer any questions. Discuss expectations of the group. For example the importance of turning up on time(!), serving and supporting Coventry Vineyard. What are people hoping to achieve in this group? Ask people to write down some objectives or goals that they can look back at in 12 weeks time.
- Explain and ask for volunteers for the different roles within the group: Socials Coordinator, Food Coordinator, etc.
- Cover any material planned (make sure this is never a monologue. This should be a discussion, and people learn a lot more and are more likely to apply it if they are involved in a discussion).
- Share prayer requests and pray together (break into smaller groups, separating guys and girls!)
- Finish on time.

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Email: office@coventryvineyard.org.uk
Phone: 024 7663 3966
1 Mill Street, Coventry CV1 4DF

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