

ROOTED TOGETHER

LEADER'S EDITION

Facilitator's Guide for a 4-Week Life Group Series

FLCC Life Groups Ministry

Facilitator's Handbook · All Scripture quoted in ESV

FOR LEADER USE ONLY

Table of Contents

Section	Page / Topic
Leader Introduction	Letter to the Leader; Your Role; Facilitation Mindset; Psychological Safety; Pastoral Care Basics; Pre-Session Checklist; How to Use This Guide
Week 1 — The God Who Gathers	Why Community Matters · Leader Prep · Facilitation Guide · 4 Discussion Questions
Week 2 — Masks Off	Authentic Vulnerability · Leader Prep · Facilitation Guide · 4 Discussion Questions
Week 3 — When Community Gets Hard	Conflict & Grace · Leader Prep · Facilitation Guide · 4 Discussion Questions
Week 4 — Sent Together	Life Group on Mission · Leader Prep · Facilitation Guide · 4 Discussion Questions
Appendix A	Difficult Situations Guide

Section	Page / Topic
Appendix B	FLCC Life Group Leader Covenant
Appendix C	Sample Group Communication Templates
Appendix D	Pastoral Care Escalation Protocol
Appendix E	Leader Self-Care & Spiritual Formation
Appendix F	Recommended Leadership Books
Appendix G	FLCC Life Group Director Contact

Leader Introduction

A Letter to the Leader

Dear Leader,

What you are holding is more than a curriculum guide. It is a testament to the trust your church has placed in you — and a reminder that the God who calls also equips. You did not end up in this role by accident. Whether you volunteered eagerly or were gently nudged by a pastor, the Spirit of God is at work in and through you, and that matters more than any training, natural gifting, or past experience you may or may not feel you have.

The *Rooted Together* series is built on one conviction: that authentic Christian community does not happen by accident. It is cultivated, protected, and guided — and you are the person God has positioned to do exactly that in your group. Over the next four weeks, you will walk with your members through some of the most foundational and vulnerable terrain in the Christian life: why community matters, what honest vulnerability looks like, how to navigate real conflict, and how to move outward on mission together.

You will not do this perfectly. No leader does. There will be a week when the discussion falls flat, a moment when someone says something unexpected, or a night when you leave feeling like you failed. On those nights, remember what the Apostle Peter wrote to leaders just like you: *"Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would*

have you." (1 Peter 5:2, ESV). The call is to be willing and present — God handles the results.

This guide will give you everything you need: theological grounding, discussion questions, facilitation tips, pastoral care guidance, and much more. But no guide replaces the single most important thing you can do each week: **pray for your group by name before they arrive.**

You are seen. You are supported. You are not alone in this. Let's go do this together.

With you in the journey,

The FLCC Life Groups Team

Your Role as a Life Group Leader

Biblical Foundation

Scripture

"So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock."

— 1 Peter 5:1–3, ESV

Scripture

"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

— Ephesians 4:11–13, ESV

These two passages together paint a complete picture of your role. From 1 Peter, you are a **shepherd** — present with your flock, modeling the way, exercising gentle oversight. From Ephesians, you are an **equipper** — not doing the ministry for your group members, but drawing out and developing their gifts so they grow toward maturity in Christ.

Notice what both passages share: neither describes a lecturer, an expert, or a performer. You are a fellow traveler with particular responsibility. Your authority comes not from having all the answers, but from faithfulness, presence, and love.

What a Life Group Leader Is — and Isn't

A Life Group Leader IS...	A Life Group Leader is NOT...
A facilitator of Spirit-led discussion	A preacher delivering a sermon
A shepherd who knows each sheep by name	A manager running a meeting
A model of vulnerability and authenticity	A theological expert with all the answers
A bridge-builder in moments of tension	A referee who declares winners and losers
A connector who links people to resources and pastors	A solo counselor carrying people's crises alone
A prayer warrior who intercedes for your group	A spiritual performance for your group to observe

Leading vs. Lecturing — The Facilitation Mindset

The single most common mistake new Life Group leaders make is **over-talking**. When discussion gets quiet or goes in an unexpected direction, the instinct is to fill the silence with information. Resist this urge. Silence is not failure — it is often the Holy Spirit creating space.

The 80/20 Rule: Aim for your group to talk 80% of the time. You talk 20% of the time — and most of that should be questions, not answers.

The Facilitation Posture:

- **Ask, don't tell.** Replace statements with questions. Instead of "The answer is love," ask "What does that passage suggest about how we're supposed to respond?"
 - **Affirm the effort, redirect if needed.** "That's a really honest response — does anyone see it differently?"
 - **Sit in the tension.** Not every theological question needs to be resolved in one evening. It's okay to say, "That's a question Christians have wrestled with for centuries. Let's hold it together."
 - **Follow the Spirit, not just the guide.** This guide is a tool, not a script. If the Spirit leads your group somewhere meaningful and unscripted, go there.
 - **Name what you observe.** "I notice several of us got quiet just then — what's coming up for people?"
-

How to Create Psychological Safety in Your Group

Psychological safety is the shared belief within a group that it is safe to speak up, be honest, make mistakes, and be vulnerable without fear of shame or rejection. It is not optional for effective Life Groups — it is foundational. Without it, discussion stays shallow, community stays performative, and transformation is stunted.

Five Practices That Build Safety:

1. **Model vulnerability first.** Before you ask your group to share something personal, share something personal yourself. Not trauma-dumping — appropriate, real, honest self-disclosure. This sets the tone.
2. **Establish and enforce group norms.** In your first session, establish explicit agreements: what is shared here stays here; we listen to understand,

not to respond; everyone belongs here regardless of where they are spiritually.

3. **Never shame or mock a response.** Even if someone says something theologically questionable, respond with curiosity rather than correction. "Tell me more about that thought" is almost always the right move.
4. **Follow up privately.** If someone shares something vulnerable in group, check on them afterward — a text, a call, a cup of coffee. This communicates that they are more than a group member; they are a known person.
5. **Be consistent and present.** Safety is built by showing up reliably. Cancel rarely. Start on time. Put your phone away. Your group learns what to expect from you — make it trustworthiness.

What to Do When Discussion Goes Off Track

Even in the best-prepared sessions, discussions drift. Someone introduces a rabbit trail, a hot-button political topic hijacks the conversation, or one person begins to vent rather than engage. Here is your toolkit:

Situation	Suggested Response
Rabbit trail / tangent	"That's a great topic — let's table it and maybe revisit it after. I want to make sure we get to the heart of tonight's question."
Political or divisive topic surfaces	"I hear that this connects to real convictions — the passage actually gives us a better framework. Let's stay with the text."
One person monopolizing	Make warm eye contact with others: "Let's hear from someone who hasn't shared yet — [Name], what are your thoughts?"
Dead silence — no one responds	Rephrase the question more personally: "Let me ask it a different way — has there been a time in your own life when...?"

Situation	Suggested Response
Theological disagreement escalates	"We may land in different places on this — and that's okay. What we agree on is [core truth]. Let's anchor there."
Someone gives a "Sunday School" answer	"Love that foundation. Now let's go deeper — what does that actually look like in your week?"

Handling Sensitive Disclosures — Pastoral Care Basics

Life Groups create the conditions for people to share real pain. At some point, someone in your group may disclose something serious — abuse, addiction, mental health crisis, suicidal thoughts, marital collapse, or profound grief. **You are not a therapist or a pastor. You are also not alone.**

Mandatory Reporting Awareness

In most U.S. states, certain disclosures — particularly involving child abuse, elder abuse, or imminent risk of self-harm — carry legal reporting obligations regardless of setting. If you are unsure whether a disclosure requires a report, contact your FLCC Life Group Director *immediately*. Do not wait. You are not expected to navigate this alone — that is exactly what the pastoral team is for.

In the Moment of Disclosure:

6. **Stop. Listen fully.** Do not rush to fix, advise, or quote Scripture. Simply be present. "Thank you for trusting us with that" is a complete and powerful response.
7. **Acknowledge without evaluating.** "That sounds incredibly hard" is better than "Well, the Bible says..." in the first 60 seconds.

8. **Protect confidentiality — and know its limits.** Remind the group:
"What's shared here stays here." But if someone is in danger, confidentiality has limits you must exercise.
 9. **Connect to resources.** After the meeting, follow up: "Would you be open to talking with one of our pastors? I'd love to help make that connection."
 10. **Debrief with your Life Group Director.** You should not carry heavy disclosures alone. Contact your director after the session. See Appendix D for the full Escalation Protocol.
-

Pre-Session Checklist

Complete this checklist before every group meeting:

48 Hours Before

- Read through the full week's facilitation guide, including all Leader Notes
- Look up and read all session scriptures in your own Bible (not just this guide)
- Pray specifically for each group member by name
- Identify which discussion questions feel most alive to you — and which feel most challenging
- Review any follow-up items from the previous week's meeting

Day Of

- Send a reminder to your group (see Appendix C for template)
- Confirm location, time, and any hospitality needs (snacks, childcare, etc.)
- Prepare your physical space: seating arranged in a circle or horseshoe, no barriers between people

- Have a Bible and this guide accessible (not buried under your phone)
- Arrive at least 10–15 minutes early to welcome members as they arrive
- Pray one more time — and release the outcome to God

After the Meeting

- Follow up with anyone who shared something vulnerable or seemed withdrawn
 - Note any pastoral care concerns to escalate to your Life Group Director
 - Send a brief "glad you were here" message to the group or individuals who attended
 - Spend a few moments in personal reflection: What worked? What would you do differently?
-

How to Use This Guide

Each week's section is organized as follows:

11. **Leader Preparation Notes** — Theological context, key concepts, potential resistance points, and facilitation considerations. *Read before the session; do not read aloud to the group.*
12. **Facilitation Guide** — The session flow you will follow in real time, including opening prayer, icebreaker, discussion questions, and closing prayer.
13. **Discussion Questions** — Each question is followed by a **LEADER NOTE** box containing the intended insight, follow-up probes, and common misunderstandings to redirect. The question itself is participant-facing; the Leader Note is for your eyes only.
14. **Scripture, Memory Verse & Resource** — Weekly anchor texts, a memory verse, and a recommended resource for leaders who want to go deeper.

This guide is written for you, the leader. Share the discussion questions verbally with your group — you do not need to distribute this document to participants.

Week One

The God Who Gathers

Theme: Why Community Matters

Session Scriptures (ESV)

"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." —

Genesis 2:18

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers... And all who believed were together and had all things in common... And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." — **Acts 2:42-47**

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." — **Hebrews 10:24-25**

Memory Verse — Week 1

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together."

Hebrews 10:24-25, ESV

Leader Preparation Notes

Leader Prep — Theological Background

The Arc of Community in Scripture: Community is not a program the church invented — it is woven into the very nature of God. The triune God (Father, Son, Spirit) exists in eternal loving relationship. When God declares in Genesis 2:18 that "it is not good for man to be alone," He is not diagnosing a deficiency in Adam — He is revealing something essential about what it means to be made in the image of a relational God (Imago Dei).

This arc runs through all of Scripture:

- **Creation:** Humanity created for relationship with God and one another (Genesis 1-2)
- **Israel:** God forms a people, not just isolated believers — the covenant is communal (Exodus 19; Deuteronomy 7)
- **Church:** The New Testament church is the new covenant community — the body of Christ with many members (1 Corinthians 12; Acts 2:42-47)
- **New Creation:** Heaven is depicted not as isolated bliss but as a great gathering — the City of God, the wedding feast (Revelation 21-22)

Key Concept: Community is not optional, therapeutic, or supplementary to the Christian life. It is the shape of the Christian life. This week, you are helping your group move from a consumer mindset ("I come to get something from this group") to a covenantal mindset ("I am committed to these people regardless of what I receive").

Potential Resistance Points

- **"I'm an introvert / I don't need community."** The biblical call to community is not about personality preference — it is about discipleship. Acknowledge introverts are real and valued, then return to the question of

need vs. preference.

- **"I've been hurt by church before."** Treat this with great care. Don't rush past it. Acknowledge the real pain of church wounds before pivoting to hope. This may come up in Week 3 more than Week 1.
- **"I have community outside the church — friends, family."** Good observation — explore what is uniquely different about *gospel-centered* community specifically.

Facilitation Notes for Quiet Groups

Week 1 is a first impression. If your group is new, shy, or mixed in familiarity, lean hard on the icebreaker before diving into theological content. Warmth and laughter at the start creates permission for depth later. Icebreaker alternatives if the suggested one doesn't land:

- "Show us one photo on your phone that tells us something about who you are."
- "What is one thing people in this room might not know about you?"
- "If your life had a theme song right now, what would it be?"

Facilitation Guide — Week 1

Opening (10 minutes)

✦ Suggested Opening Prayer

Father, thank You for gathering us tonight. You are a God who does not leave us alone — You draw us to Yourself and to one another. As we open Your Word and share our lives, would You do what only You can do — soften our hearts,

sharpen our minds, and make this place feel like home for everyone here. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Icebreaker

Question: "Tell us your name, how long you've been at FLCC, and — describe the best community or 'team' you've ever been part of. What made it so good?"

Leader Note — Icebreaker

This question is intentionally low-stakes (sports team, work group, friend circle all qualify). The goal is to prime the group's memory with a positive experience of belonging before connecting it to theological truth. Listen for words people use — "trust," "shared purpose," "showing up for each other" — and echo those back during the discussion as bridges to the biblical concept of community. Go first to model. Keep your answer brief (60 seconds) so others have room.

Bible Reading

Ask a volunteer to read **Acts 2:42-47** aloud. Encourage the group to listen for the verbs — what the early church *did*.

Discussion Questions

DISCUSSION QUESTION 1

In Acts 2:42-47, the early church is described doing specific things together. Which of those activities stands out most to you — and which feels most foreign to how you experience church today? Why?

Leader Note — Question 1

Intended insight: The early church practiced communal life at a level that feels radical today — shared possessions, daily gathering, public testimony. The goal is gentle discomfort: helping the group see that our modern, privatized faith is historically unusual, not normative.

Follow-up probes:

- "What do you think made that kind of community possible for them?"
- "What would need to be true of *this* group for even one of those practices to feel possible?"

Redirect if needed: If responses stay at the level of logistics ("they lived closer together"), gently redirect: "That's true — but do you think geography was the primary driver? What was fueling the *desire* to be together?"

DISCUSSION QUESTION 2

God declares in Genesis 2:18 that "it is not good for man to be alone" — before sin even enters the picture. What does that tell us about why we need community? How does that shift the way you think about your own desire for connection?

Leader Note — Question 2

Intended insight: Loneliness is not a post-Fall problem; it is a creation design revelation. God is not solving a problem in Genesis 2 — He is revealing the shape of His image-bearers. This means our longing for community is not weakness; it is evidence that we are made in the image of a triune, relational God.

Follow-up probes:

- "Does it change anything for you to know that the desire for community isn't just emotional — it's theological?"
- "What has our culture taught you to believe about needing people? How

does that conflict with what Genesis says?"

Watch for: Individualism ("I'm pretty self-sufficient"). Affirm self-reliance as a gift, then explore whether there's a difference between self-sufficiency and the kind of flourishing that only happens in relationship.

DISCUSSION QUESTION 3

Hebrews 10:24-25 says we should "stir one another up to love and good works" and not neglect meeting together. What's the most honest reason you've been tempted to skip or coast in community? What helped you show up anyway?

Leader Note — Question 3

Intended insight: Honest engagement with the barriers to community. This question invites self-disclosure and normalizes the pull toward isolation. The phrase "stir up" (Greek: *paroxysmos*) is a provocation — it implies community takes intentional effort, not just passive proximity.

Follow-up probes:

- "What would it look like for *this* group to 'stir one another up' — not just encourage, but actively provoke toward growth?"
- "Have you ever had someone in your life who did that for you? What did they actually do?"

Model vulnerability: If the group goes quiet here, share your own honest answer first. "The most honest reason I've skipped community is..." This is a turning-point question for Week 1 — go real.

DISCUSSION QUESTION 4

If this Life Group became everything God designed community to be — what would it feel like to be a part of it? What would be different? What would it cost you personally to help build that?

Leader Note — Question 4

Intended insight: Vision casting for the group's own covenant. This question is intentionally forward-leaning and slightly uncomfortable. The phrase "what would it cost you" is key — real community requires sacrifice, not just attendance. You want the group to begin naming the vision they share so that it becomes *their* vision, not just FLCC's program.

Follow-up probes:

- "Who do you know right now who needs a community like the one you just described?"
- "What is one concrete thing you could do this week to invest in someone else in this group?"

If time allows: Ask each person to share one word that describes what they hope this group will become. Record these words — you can return to them in Week 4 as a way of measuring and celebrating growth.

Life Application Debrief (5 minutes)

Close discussion by asking: "**What is one thing from tonight you want to carry with you this week?**" Allow 2–3 brief responses. Do not pressure everyone to share — this is a low-stakes landing.

Leader Note — Debrief Tip

This is your weekly "cement" moment. Research on group learning suggests that brief verbal articulation of takeaways significantly increases retention and behavior change. Don't skip it, even if you're running short on time. Cut a discussion question

if needed — but protect this closing window.

♦ Suggested Closing Prayer

Lord, You gathered us tonight and we are grateful. You know each person in this room by name, and You have a purpose for this community. Help us not to settle for shallow when You are inviting us into something deep. Give us courage to show up — fully, honestly, repeatedly. Make us the kind of people who don't just attend community but who build it. Amen.

Recommended Resource — Week 1

For Deeper Study: *Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer — particularly chapters 1 and 2. Bonhoeffer's opening line remains one of the most searching invitations to genuine community ever written: "It is by the grace of God that a congregation is permitted to gather visibly in this world to share God's Word and sacrament."

Week Two

Masks Off

Theme: Living in Honest, Grace-Filled Community

Session Scriptures (ESV)

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."

— **James 5:16**

"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should

restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." — Galatians 6:1-2

"O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar... you are acquainted with all my ways." — Psalm 139:1-3

Memory Verse — Week 2

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed."

James 5:16, ESV

Leader Preparation Notes

Leader Prep — Theological Background

Why Vulnerability Is Counter-Cultural and Gospel-Driven: We live in an age of curated identity. Social media, professional culture, and even church culture often reward the projection of strength, success, and spiritual vitality. Genuine vulnerability — confessing sin, acknowledging need, admitting doubt — runs directly against this grain.

But the gospel makes vulnerability possible in a way nothing else does. The cross declares that God already knows the worst about us — and came anyway. Because we are justified by grace through faith and not by our performance, we no longer need to manage our image. We are free to be known. James 5:16 is not merely a practical suggestion for emotional health — it is the outworking of the gospel in community.

Key distinction to hold: Vulnerability is not oversharing. It is appropriate, intentional, honest self-disclosure in a context of trust. Help your group understand

that "masks off" does not mean airing every grievance or processing every wound publicly — it means living without the performance of spiritual perfection.

How to Model Vulnerability as a Leader

Before this session, identify something genuinely real you will share — a current struggle, a recent failure, a persistent fear. It does not need to be dramatic. It does need to be *true*. When leaders perform vulnerability ("I sometimes struggle with pride — who doesn't?") the group senses it and stays equally guarded. When leaders share something that costs them something, the room shifts.

A helpful guide: share from your *scar*, not your *wound*. Share something you have processed enough to speak about clearly, not something so raw that you will need the group to take care of you during the session.

Red Flags: Performative vs. Genuine Sharing

Watch for:

- **Humble-bragging:** "I just struggle with working too hard for the Lord." — gently redirect toward real vulnerability
- **Proxy disclosure:** Someone shares primarily about someone else's problems (spouse, child, coworker) rather than their own interior life — this can be a protective mechanism
- **Vague spiritualizing:** "I just need to trust God more" without any real content — ask a follow-up: "What does that actually look like for you right now?"
- **Crisis dumping:** Someone shares something extremely heavy and unprocessed that needs more than a Life Group can provide — affirm, protect, and connect to pastoral care

Pastoral Care Note — Week 2

Week 2 is statistically the most likely week for a significant personal disclosure. The theme itself creates an open door, and members who came the first week and felt safe may now share something substantial. Review Appendix D (Pastoral Care Escalation Protocol) before this session. Know the FLCC pastoral team contact information. If someone discloses a crisis situation, your job is to **listen, not fix**, and then connect them to appropriate support after the session.

Facilitation Guide — Week 2

Opening (10 minutes)

♦ Suggested Opening Prayer

God, You already know everything about every person in this room — every fear, every failure, every secret hope. And You love us completely. Tonight, help us practice a little of that honesty with each other. Give us courage to take off whatever we've been performing and to simply be present, real, and open. Thank You that in Your house, there is no condemnation — only grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Brief Icebreaker

Question: "What is something about yourself that takes people a while to figure out — the 'real you' that doesn't show up right away?"

Leader Note — Icebreaker

This question is a gentle step into the theme. It invites authentic self-disclosure

without requiring deep vulnerability. It signals that "realness" is welcome here. Listen carefully — sometimes the most significant things get said casually in an icebreaker.

Discussion Questions

DISCUSSION QUESTION 1

James 5:16 commands us to confess sins to one another. Be honest — does that practice feel normal, strange, or even dangerous to you? What shapes that reaction?

Leader Note — Question 1

Intended insight: Most Western evangelicals are deeply uncomfortable with this practice. That discomfort is culturally shaped (Protestant individualism, privacy norms, fear of judgment) rather than biblically supported. Surfacing that discomfort is itself valuable. The goal is not to shame reluctance but to name the gap between what Scripture calls us to and what we actually practice.

Follow-up probes:

- "Have you ever experienced something like this — someone you confessed to who responded with grace? What happened?"
- "What would need to be true of a relationship before you could actually confess something real to someone in it?"

DISCUSSION QUESTION 2

Psalms 139 says God knows you completely — every thought, every way, every moment. Does being fully known by God feel comforting or unsettling to you — or both? How does it change things to know that God sees everything and still draws near?

Leader Note — Question 2

Intended insight: The theological grounding for human vulnerability is divine omniscience plus grace. We can be honest with one another because God is already honest about us — and responds not with rejection but with pursuit. If the group lands on "comforting," gently probe the "unsettling" dimension too — full honesty about Psalm 139 requires holding both.

Follow-up probe: "If God knows everything and still loves you, what does that suggest about how *we* ought to respond when we really know each other?"

DISCUSSION QUESTION 3

Galatians 6 says to "restore" someone caught in sin "in a spirit of gentleness" — while watching yourself, lest you also be tempted. What makes this kind of confrontational care so rare? What would it take to build a group where this was actually possible?

Leader Note — Question 3

Intended insight: Galatians 6 describes mutual accountability — which requires both honesty and humility. The phrase "lest you be tempted" is often overlooked: accountability is not a position of superiority but a position of solidarity. We restore others *knowing we are equally capable of failure*. This is what separates gospel accountability from moralistic policing.

Common misread to redirect: "This means we should confront each other about sin more often." Redirect: "Yes — but with what spirit? What's the difference between confrontation from a position of superiority and confrontation from a position of shared weakness?"

DISCUSSION QUESTION 4

Where in your life right now are you wearing a mask — performing strength, okayness, or spiritual health that isn't fully true? You don't

have to say what it is — but can you tell us: what would it mean for this group to be a place where you didn't have to wear it?

 Leader Note — Question 4

Intended insight: This is the heart of the session. The two-part structure ("you don't have to say what it is") is intentional — it lowers the barrier enough that people can actually engage. Some may choose to name it anyway; that's their call. What you're listening for is the vision they articulate for this group. You are co-authoring the culture of safety in this moment.

Leader vulnerability moment: This is an ideal place for you to go first with something real. Not catastrophic — but genuine. Your willingness to be imperfect is the greatest permission you can give your group to do the same.

Tip for quieter members: After the discussion, consider making direct but gentle eye contact with those who haven't spoken: "Is there anything you'd want to add — even briefly?" Never force, but do invite.

Preventing one person from dominating: If someone tends to speak at length, use transitional phrases: "That's really meaningful — let's give others a chance to respond to that." Then physically look at others in the group as an invitation.

✦ **Suggested Closing Prayer**

Father, You know us fully and love us completely. Help us learn to love each other that way. Give us the courage to be real — not because it's easy, but because the gospel says we don't have to pretend anymore. Protect this group. Guard what has been shared tonight. Build us into a place where masks aren't necessary. Amen.

Recommended Resource — Week 2

For Deeper Study: *The Gifts of Imperfection* by Brené Brown offers compelling social science on vulnerability and belonging, and pairs well theologically with *True Community* by Jerry Bridges, which grounds these themes in grace. Both are useful for leaders who want to facilitate vulnerability well.

Week Three

When Community Gets Hard

Theme: Navigating Tension with Gospel Truth

Session Scriptures (ESV)

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you... If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church." — Matthew 18:15-17

"Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear... Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." — Ephesians 4:29-32

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." — Colossians 3:12-14

Memory Verse — Week 3

"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as

God in Christ forgave you."

Ephesians 4:32, ESV

Leader Preparation Notes

Leader Prep — Theological Background

Conflict in Community Is Not a Failure — It Is an Invitation: Many group leaders fear conflict. When tension arises, the impulse is to smooth it over, change the subject, or chalk it up to a "difficult personality." But the New Testament does not treat conflict as an anomaly to eliminate — it treats it as an expected feature of human community that requires a specific gospel response.

The presence of conflict in your group does not mean you have failed as a leader. It means you have *real people* in your group. Real people, shaped by sin and sanctification, will inevitably bump against each other. The question is not whether conflict will come — but whether your group has the theological and relational resources to navigate it faithfully.

Colossians 3:12-14 is worth your careful meditation before this session. Notice the sequence: God chose you, God declared you holy and beloved — *therefore*, put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience. The capacity to endure conflict is grounded in received grace, not natural temperament.

The Matthew 18 Process — Explained for Leaders

Matthew 18:15-17 describes a three-stage conflict resolution process intended for the church:

1. **Stage 1 — Private confrontation:** "Go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone." The first response to offense is a direct, private, humble conversation — not venting to others, not passive withdrawal.

2. **Stage 2 — Witnessed conversation:** If Stage 1 fails, bring one or two others — not as allies or witnesses for your side, but as ministers of reconciliation.

3. **Stage 3 — Church involvement:** If Stage 2 fails, involve the broader church leadership. This is not punishment — it is the community exercising its covenant responsibility.

Note for leaders: Most conflicts in Life Groups should be resolvable at Stage 1. Your role is often to encourage people to have the direct conversation they have been avoiding. If a conflict in your group escalates to needing pastoral involvement, that is not a failure — it is the Matthew 18 process working as designed.

When to Involve a Pastor or Elder

Involve your Life Group Director or a pastor when:

- A conflict involves a pattern of behavior (not a one-time incident) that is damaging group members
- Accusations of serious sin (abuse, infidelity, financial impropriety) are made within or about the group
- You feel in over your head or the situation is beyond your capacity to navigate wisely
- Someone threatens to leave the church as a result of a conflict
- Stage 1 and Stage 2 of Matthew 18 have been sincerely attempted and failed

See Appendix D for the full Escalation Protocol. You are never expected to handle serious conflict alone.

If There Is Active Tension in Your Group Right Now

If you know going into Week 3 that there is existing tension between group members, this session can feel like walking into a minefield. A few guiding principles:

- Do *not* use the session to address the specific conflict publicly. That is not the purpose of this curriculum.
- Reach out to the parties individually before the session. Acknowledge the tension briefly. Invite them to engage the material with open hearts.
- Let the Scripture do the heavy lifting. Your job is to create space for the Word to land — not to adjudicate the dispute.
- After the session, reconnect with both parties privately and consider involving your Life Group Director.

Facilitation Guide — Week 3

Opening (10 minutes)

✦ Suggested Opening Prayer

Lord, You know us — including the ways we have hurt each other and been hurt. Tonight we are talking about something hard. Give us courage to be honest, and wisdom to be humble. Remind us that the forgiveness we have received from You is the very resource we need to extend to one another. Guard our hearts. Protect this group. We trust You with the tension. Amen.

Brief Icebreaker

Question: "Think of a time when a difficult situation — a conflict, a challenge, a misunderstanding — ultimately made a relationship stronger. What happened?"

Leader Note — Icebreaker

This question frames conflict as something that can be navigated rather than something that is inherently destructive. You are priming the group's imagination with evidence from their own lives that tension can be redemptive. Keep it positive and forward-looking — you don't want the icebreaker to become a wound-surfacing exercise.

Discussion Questions

DISCUSSION QUESTION 1

Jesus gives us a very specific, three-step process in Matthew 18 for dealing with sin and conflict. Be honest — how often do you actually do Step 1 (go directly to the person)? What usually gets in the way?

Leader Note — Question 1

Intended insight: Most people skip Step 1 entirely — they either avoid the situation or go sideways to third parties (venting, gossip, seeking allies). Jesus' instruction to go directly is the most countercultural element of Matthew 18. Surface the real barriers: fear of rejection, fear of escalation, pride, or a belief that the other person "doesn't deserve" the conversation.

Follow-up probes:

- "What does going 'between you and him alone' protect that going to others first would undermine?"
- "What would it take to be the kind of person — or group — who actually does this?"

DISCUSSION QUESTION 2

Ephesians 4:29 says let no "corrupting talk" come out of your mouths — but only what "gives grace to those who hear." Think about how you talk about people when they're not in the room. How does this verse land?

 Leader Note — Question 2

Intended insight: This is a conviction question. The phrase "gives grace to those who hear" is not just about the person being discussed — it is also about what we become when we speak of others with grace or with contempt. The goal is not guilt but awareness: our words in the spaces between community gatherings shape the community itself.

Watch for: Defensiveness or deflection ("well, sometimes you have to vent"). Acknowledge the human need to process — then ask what form of processing actually honors the person being discussed.

DISCUSSION QUESTION 3

Colossians 3 says to "bear with one another" — which implies there will be things about each other that are genuinely hard to bear. What does it look like to "bear with" someone, as opposed to just tolerating them or avoiding the friction?

 Leader Note — Question 3

Intended insight: "Bearing with" (Greek: *anekhoma*) implies active endurance — not passive tolerance. It is choosing to remain present, engaged, and warm toward someone whose behavior, personality, or choices create friction. This is only possible — Paul implies — because you yourself have been forgiven and "borne with" by God. Connect it to the gospel: the ground of bearing with others is having been borne with ourselves.

Optional role-play activity: If your group is comfortable and time allows, present one of these hypothetical scenarios and role-play a Matthew 18 Step 1 conversation:

- Someone in your group consistently interrupts others and has done so again tonight.
- A group member shared something from group in a public setting, breaking confidentiality.
- Two group members had a disagreement over something said last week and have been cold with each other since.

Debrief afterward: "What was hard about that? What helped? What would you do differently?"

DISCUSSION QUESTION 4

Is there a relationship in your life — maybe even in this group — where you know you need to take a step toward reconciliation but haven't? What is one small, concrete thing you could do this week to move toward that person rather than away from them?

Leader Note — Question 4

Intended insight: Application and confession. This question is meant to land the series theme in real relationships, not just concepts. The phrase "even in this group" is intentional — you are giving permission to acknowledge real tension without forcing anyone to disclose specifics.

De-escalation tip: If this question surfaces real group tension, do not try to resolve it in the meeting. Acknowledge it: "It sounds like there are some real things to work through — let's commit to following up this week rather than rushing through it tonight." Then close in prayer and follow up privately.

Closing posture: End this session with a longer prayer than usual — a pastoral prayer that covers the group, names the difficulty of community, and anchors the

evening in God's faithfulness. This is a heavy week; let the closing be tender.

✦ Suggested Closing Prayer

Father, we confess that community is hard — harder than we often admit. We carry wounds. We have caused wounds. And yet You did not give up on us, and You are not giving up on us now. Thank You for the cross — the place where the hardest conflict in history, between holy God and sinful humanity, was resolved by Your love. Help us to be people who run toward reconciliation rather than away from it. Protect the relationships in this room. Give us the courage to make the call, send the text, have the conversation we've been putting off. Make us a community that proves grace is real. Amen.

Recommended Resource — Week 3

For Deeper Study: *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande offers a biblically grounded, practitioner-tested framework for conflict resolution rooted in Matthew 18. Essential reading for any leader navigating real tension in their group. Also highly recommended: *Conflict Resolution: Conflict-Wise Theology and Skills* by Judy Dabler.

Week Four

Sent Together

Theme: From Inward to Outward — Community with Kingdom Purpose

Session Scriptures (ESV)

"And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been

given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." — **Matthew 28:18-20**

*"After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go... Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'" — **Luke 10:1-9***

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." — **John 17:20-23**

Memory Verse — Week 4

"That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

John 17:21, ESV

Leader Preparation Notes

Leader Prep — Theological Background

From Holy Huddle to Missional Community: One of the most common failure modes of mature Life Groups is what missiologists call "holy huddle" syndrome — a group that becomes so focused on its own internal life, warmth, and cohesion that it closes off to the world around it. This is natural but dangerous. A Life Group that exists only for itself is not yet a biblical community — it is a social club with Bible study attached.

John 17:20–21 reveals something profound: Jesus' prayer for the unity of His followers is *instrumental*. The purpose of our oneness is not merely our own flourishing — it is the evangelistic witness of the Church. "That the world may believe." Our community is not a destination; it is a demonstration.

Luke 10 provides the model: Jesus sends His disciples *in pairs* — never alone. Mission is fundamentally communal. A Life Group on mission is not individuals who happen to volunteer in the same church — it is people who go *together*, sharing the weight, the joy, and the witness.

Ideas for Group Mission Projects

Offer these as options when casting vision for the Group Mission Challenge:

- **Adopt a neighborhood:** Commit to praying for, meeting, and serving a specific geographic area near where your group meets
- **Partner with a local school:** Volunteers for tutoring, supply drives, teacher appreciation meals
- **Serve a FLCC ministry together:** Coordinate with the church's benevolence fund, food pantry, or outreach teams
- **Intentional hospitality:** Each group member hosts a "third place" gathering with one unchurched friend — then debrief together
- **Sponsor a family in need:** Coordinate practical support for a family going through crisis within the church or community
- **Serve internationally:** Commit to prayer, giving, and correspondence with FLCC's global ministry partners

Casting Vision for What Comes Next

Week 4 is both a conclusion and a beginning. The final session of any series carries

the pastoral responsibility of helping people see beyond the series to an ongoing life together. Consider raising these questions in your own mind before you lead:

- Is this group ready to commit to another term together? What would the next series focus on?
- Are there group members who might be ready to apprentice toward leading their own group?
- How has the group grown over these four weeks? What can you name and celebrate specifically?

Closing well is as important as opening well. The Week 4 session should feel like a commissioning, not just a conclusion.

Facilitation Guide — Week 4

Opening (10 minutes)

✦ Suggested Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, You did not come to gather a community for its own sake — You came to gather a community for the sake of the world. Tonight, as we close this series, open our eyes to the people around us who need what we have found in You and in each other. Make us generous with the grace we have received. Send us — together. Amen.

Opening Activity — Looking Back

Before moving to the discussion, take 5 minutes to reflect on the journey together. Ask: **"What is one thing you will carry from these past four weeks that you didn't have when we started?"**

Leader Note — Opening Activity

If you collected one-word visions from your group at the close of Week 1, this is the moment to bring them back. Read them aloud without attribution and ask: "How have we moved toward any of these this month?" This creates a powerful sense of narrative arc and celebrates growth that might otherwise go unnamed.

Discussion Questions

DISCUSSION QUESTION 1

In John 17, Jesus prays that our unity would be the world's evidence that He was sent by the Father. What does that suggest about the stakes of our community? How does it change your understanding of why our group matters?

Leader Note — Question 1

Intended insight: The church's internal unity is an apologetic — a piece of evidence for the truth of the gospel. A Life Group that is genuinely loving, reconciled, and diverse is not just nice — it is a witnessing community. The inverse is also true: a divided, superficial, or closed group actively undermines the church's gospel witness. Help the group feel the weight and the privilege of this.

Follow-up probes:

- "When you imagine someone outside the faith looking in on this group, what do you hope they would see?"
- "What would need to change in how we operate for that to be true?"

DISCUSSION QUESTION 2

In Luke 10, Jesus sends his disciples out two by two — never alone. What is it about being sent *together* that changes the nature of the mission? Who is someone in your life right now who needs to encounter

the grace you have found here — and how might this group support you in reaching them?

 Leader Note — Question 2

Intended insight: Mission is communal by design. The "two by two" model is not logistical — it is theological. We witness together, carry each other's faith when ours falters, and embody community as we invite others into community. This question also moves the mission from abstract ("the world") to personal ("someone in your life").

Listen for: Names. When someone names a specific person, honor it: "That sounds like a real relationship God may be calling you toward — how can this group pray for you and that person?" This is how groups begin to think and pray missionally.

DISCUSSION QUESTION 3

Over these four weeks, we have talked about gathering, vulnerability, conflict, and mission. If you had to name the one thing that is keeping this group from moving from "inward" to "outward" — what would it be? What would the first step look like?

 Leader Note — Question 3

Intended insight: Honest diagnosis of the group's current center of gravity. This is a courageous question — it invites the group to evaluate itself honestly rather than accepting "we're doing great." Common honest answers: comfort/fear of disruption, busyness, lack of a specific vision, not knowing what to do. These are all workable starting points.

Redirect if discussion becomes self-critical: "That's honest and important. Now — given that's true, what is the *smallest* step we could actually take? Not the perfect plan — the first step."

DISCUSSION QUESTION 4

The Great Commission ends with a promise: "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20, ESV). As we close this series — what does it mean to you, personally, that you are not sent alone? How does that promise change your capacity for risk, generosity, and mission?

Leader Note — Question 4

Intended insight: The Great Commission is bookended by authority and presence. We are sent under the authority of a risen King, and accompanied by His perpetual presence. This is the foundation of missional courage. The goal of this final question is to close the series not with obligation but with *hope* — rooted in the character and commitment of the One who sends us.

Closing tone: Allow this discussion to breathe. Don't rush to the Group Mission Challenge afterward if the Spirit is moving here. This final discussion can be the most significant of the series if you give it room.

Group Mission Challenge

How to Facilitate the Mission Challenge

Present 2-3 mission options drawn from the "Ideas for Group Mission Projects" list in the Leader Prep section above. Briefly describe each option. Then ask the group to vote on one to commit to together. Establish:

- **What** — the specific project
- **When** — a target date within the next 4-6 weeks

- **Who leads** — one or two people who will coordinate logistics
- **How you'll pray** — commit to praying together for the mission at each group meeting until it happens

Write down the commitment. Consider a simple group "commissioning moment" where each person says: "I'm in." This embodied act of verbal commitment is more powerful than a signed form.

Celebration & Commissioning Closing Ritual

Close Week 4 with intentionality. Acknowledge what this group has shared, wrestled with, and built together. Then commission one another into the week and into mission.

Suggested ritual: Go around the room. Each person speaks one sentence of blessing or encouragement over the person to their left. Keep it simple: "I'm grateful for you because..." or "I believe God is going to use you to..." Then close together in prayer.

✦ Suggested Closing Prayer — Commissioning

Father, what You started in this room, continue. Each person here carries something of Your kingdom in them — gifts, stories, faith, hope. Send us out. Send us to our neighborhoods, our workplaces, our families — and to one another. May what we have built here be a foretaste of what heaven looks like: people from every background, fully known, fully loved, fully committed to Your purposes. We go in Your name, by Your power, for Your glory. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Recommended Resource — Week 4

For Deeper Study: *The Missional Church* by Darrell Guder (ed.) offers the theological foundation for the shift from attractional to missional community. For a

more accessible, practical read, *Designed for Good* by Scott Rodin or *The Tangible Kingdom* by Hugh Halter and Matt Smay are excellent resources for groups discerning what outward mission looks like.

Appendix A

Difficult Situations Guide

Every Life Group leader will eventually encounter situations that go beyond normal facilitation. The following guide is designed to give you an initial response framework — not a complete resolution, but a starting posture.

Situation	Immediate Response	Follow-Up Action
Dominating personality — one person speaks at length every week, shutting others out	In session: "Let's hear from some others — [Name], you've shared some great things. Let's give others a chance." After session: Have a private, warm, direct conversation about the pattern.	If behavior continues after private conversation, involve your Life Group Director for coaching support.
Chronic absence — member repeatedly misses sessions without communication	Reach out after every absence: a personal text, not a group reminder. "Hey, we missed you — is everything okay?" Prioritize relationship over attendance.	If absence extends to 3+ consecutive sessions, escalate to a personal call or visit. Consider whether the person needs pastoral care, not just a group reminder.
Crisis disclosure — member shares they are suicidal, being abused, or in acute mental health crisis	Do not minimize. Do not move on. Gently stop the meeting flow: "Thank you for trusting us. That matters. Can we stay with that for a moment?" Connect the person to pastoral care after the session — tonight.	Contact your Life Group Director immediately after the session. Do not carry this alone. Follow the Pastoral Care Escalation Protocol (Appendix D).
Theological disagreement —	Distinguish between <i>essential</i> doctrine (non-	If the disagreement is over an FLCC distinctives or

Situation	Immediate Response	Follow-Up Action
members express conflicting views on doctrine, politics, or ethics	negotiable, held by all orthodox Christians) and <i>secondary</i> matters (where faithful believers differ). Redirect to the text: "Let's see what the passage actually says here."	essentials of faith, involve your Life Group Director. Do not attempt to adjudicate theological disputes alone in a group setting.
Couple in visible conflict — a married couple in your group is clearly at odds during a session	Do not address the couple's dynamic publicly. Facilitate normally. If tension escalates to something disruptive, call a break: "Let's take five minutes." After the session, check in on both individuals separately.	Connect both parties to your Life Group Director or recommend marriage pastoral care through FLCC. Protect the group environment while caring for the couple.
Gossip or confidentiality breach — something shared in group is repeated outside the group	If reported to you, take it seriously. Private conversation with the person who shared outside: "I need to share something with you that was brought to me — I want to handle it directly and graciously." Do not name the person who reported it unless given permission.	Revisit group confidentiality norms with the full group at the next session — without singling anyone out — as a recommitment, not a punishment.

Appendix B

FLCC Life Group Leader Covenant

As a Life Group Leader at FLCC, I am entering into a covenant relationship — not merely a volunteer role. I make the following commitments freely, in the spirit of 1 Peter 5 and Ephesians 4:

15. **I will shepherd my group faithfully.** I will show up prepared, present, and prayerful — prioritizing my group's spiritual well-being over my own comfort or convenience.

16. **I will facilitate, not lecture.** I commit to creating space for the Holy Spirit to move through the voices and stories of my group, not only through my own insights.
17. **I will guard what is shared.** I will model and enforce confidentiality within my group, honoring the trust that members place in this community.
18. **I will escalate when needed.** I will not carry pastoral care situations beyond my capacity alone. I will connect group members to appropriate support and will contact my Life Group Director when a situation requires pastoral intervention.
19. **I will invest in my own growth.** I will prioritize my own spiritual formation, pursue accountability, and remain open to coaching and development from FLCC's leadership team.
20. **I will remain in alignment with FLCC's vision and doctrine.** I will not use my group as a platform for theological positions or agendas outside FLCC's stated beliefs and direction.
21. **I will communicate proactively.** I will keep my Life Group Director informed of group health, attendance, and any significant pastoral needs on a regular basis.
22. **I will pray for my group by name.** Before every session, and throughout the week, I will intercede for each person in my group by name.

I enter this covenant in dependence on the grace of God and the community of my fellow leaders at FLCC.

Leader Name (Print):

Signature:

Date:

Life Group Director Signature:

Sample Group Communication Templates

Welcome Text (New Member)

Hey [Name]! This is [Leader Name] from FLCC Life Groups. We are so glad you're joining us! Our group meets [Day] at [Time] at [Location/Address]. No prep needed — just come as you are. Looking forward to getting to know you. Any questions at all, don't hesitate to text me. See you [Day]!

Weekly Reminder (Day Before or Morning Of)

Hey [Group Name] — just a reminder that we're gathering tonight at [Time] at [Location]. We're in Week [#] of Rooted Together, and it's going to be a good one. Bring yourself — that's all you need. See you tonight! — [Leader Name]

Follow-Up After Absence

Hey [Name] — we missed you last night. Hope you're doing okay. We talked about [brief topic] and it was a really meaningful conversation. You were thought of. No pressure — just wanted you to know you matter to us. Let me know if there's anything going on or anything you need. — [Leader Name]

Post-Session Group Encouragement

Thanks for tonight, everyone. What you each brought to the conversation made it real and meaningful. [Optional: one specific non-identifying highlight or encouragement]. Proud to do this with you. Praying for you this week. — [Leader Name]

Mission Project Coordination

Hey team — just a reminder that our Group Mission Project ([Project Name]) is coming up on [Date]. Here's what we need: [list 2–3 specifics]. Reply here or text me if you have questions or need to adjust your role. This is going to be a great thing to do together. — [Leader Name]

Appendix D

Pastoral Care Escalation Protocol

You are not alone in caring for the people in your group. FLCC's pastoral team is your partner. The following protocol ensures that people in need receive appropriate care as quickly as possible.

Level	Situation Type	Response	Timeline
Level 1 — Monitor	General personal struggle; life stress; minor relational tension; mild grief	Leader provides personal follow-up, prayer, and check-ins. No escalation required unless situation changes.	Ongoing
Level 2 — Refer	Chronic depression; marital	Leader contacts Life Group Director	Within 48 hours of disclosure

Level	Situation Type	Response	Timeline
	struggle; addiction disclosure; significant loss; spiritual crisis	and recommends pastoral appointment for the member. Director connects member with pastor or counselor.	
Level 3 — Urgent	Active suicidal ideation; domestic violence or abuse disclosure; severe mental health crisis; acute trauma	Leader contacts Life Group Director <i>same evening</i> . If person is in immediate danger, contact 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) or 911 as appropriate. Do not leave the person alone.	Same evening — do not wait
Level 4 — Mandatory Report	Child abuse or neglect (any disclosure or suspicion); elder abuse; imminent threat to another person's safety	Contact Life Group Director and Lead Pastor immediately. Depending on your state, mandatory reporting to authorities may be legally required regardless of church involvement. Do NOT promise confidentiality about reportable offenses.	Immediately — same evening

Important Note

This protocol is a guide, not a script. Use judgment. When in doubt, escalate. It is always better to involve pastoral leadership unnecessarily than to handle a serious situation alone. You will never be penalized for reaching out to your Life Group Director with a concern.

FLCC Life Group Director Contact:

[See Appendix G]

National Crisis Line:

988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline)

Emergency Services:

911

Appendix E

Leader Self-Care & Spiritual Formation

You cannot give what you do not have. Leading a Life Group is a spiritual outpouring — which means you need to be spiritually filled. The following practices are not optional extras; they are the infrastructure of sustainable leadership.

The Three Pillars of Leader Formation

1. Personal Scripture Engagement

Beyond your weekly session preparation, maintain a separate daily Scripture reading practice. Do not let session prep become your only engagement with the Word. Use a reading plan (e.g., M'Cheyne, Discipleship Journal) that takes you through the full breadth of Scripture. Your capacity to facilitate Scripture-rich discussion is directly correlated to your personal saturation in the Word.

2. Personal Prayer & Solitude

Leader prayer is not just intercession for your group (though that is essential). It includes personal communion with God — silence, adoration, confession, listening. Consider a weekly "Quiet Hour" — 60 minutes without agenda, phone, or output. This is where leaders are restored and re-resourced.

Recommended: Pray through your group roster by name once per week. Spend 1–2 minutes per person asking God what they need, what He is doing in them, and how you can serve them better.

3. Personal Accountability

Every leader needs someone who can ask the hard questions — about your marriage, your spiritual life, your hidden struggles, your leadership blind spots. If

you do not currently have an accountability relationship, the most important step you can take for your group is to form one. Consider connecting with a fellow Life Group leader or a trusted pastor in this capacity.

Warning Signs of Leader Burnout

- Dreading group meetings rather than anticipating them
- Feeling resentful toward group members
- Neglecting your own family or primary relationships for group responsibilities
- Finding it difficult to pray for your group or engage Scripture personally
- Feeling isolated — like no one knows how you really are

 Tip — If You Are Burned Out

Contact your Life Group Director. You do not need to white-knuckle through a season of depletion. There is no shame in needing a break, a co-leader, or a pastoral conversation. The bravest and most faithful thing a burned-out leader can do is to ask for help before the group suffers.

Appendix F

Recommended Leadership Books

Title & Author	Why It Matters for Life Group Leaders	Best For
<i>Life Together</i> — Dietrich Bonhoeffer	The most profound theological treatment of Christian community ever written in compact form. Bonhoeffer's chapter on "The Day Together" is	All leaders — read this first.

Title & Author	Why It Matters for Life Group Leaders	Best For
	required reading.	
<i>The Peacemaker</i> — Ken Sande	A biblically grounded, step-by-step guide to conflict resolution. Transforms how leaders think about and navigate tension in groups.	Leaders navigating conflict or anticipating it.
<i>Emotionally Healthy Spirituality</i> — Peter Scazzero	Explores the connection between emotional health and spiritual maturity. Invaluable for leaders who tend to lead from the head rather than the whole person.	Leaders prone to intellectualizing faith.
<i>The Tangible Kingdom</i> — Hugh Halter & Matt Smay	A practical theology of missional community that helps groups move from holy huddle to outward-facing witness. Directly supports the Week 4 theme.	Leaders ready to develop a missional group culture.
<i>Leading Small Groups with Purpose</i> — Steve Gladen	One of the most practical small group leadership handbooks available. Addresses group health, member care, curriculum selection, and leader coaching.	New leaders wanting a comprehensive practical foundation.
<i>The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry</i> — John Mark Comer	Addresses the number-one spiritual and relational enemy of Life Group leaders: busyness. Helps leaders create margin for genuine presence and prayer.	Leaders feeling chronically over-scheduled or shallow.
<i>Deep Work</i> — Cal Newport	While not a theology book, Newport's framework for focused, meaningful work translates powerfully into how leaders approach session preparation, prayer, and intentional group building.	Leaders who want to maximize their preparation time.

Appendix G

FLCC Life Group Director — Contact Information

Your Life Group Director is your primary point of support, coaching, and escalation. Please reach out proactively — not only in crisis. Regular check-ins help us serve you and your group better.

Contact	Details
Life Group Director Name	[Name — to be inserted by FLCC staff]
Phone / Text	[Phone number — to be inserted]
Email	[Email address — to be inserted]
Office Hours	[Days/Times — to be inserted]
Best Way to Reach in Urgent Situations	[Phone call / Text — to be inserted]
FLCC Church Main Office	[Phone number — to be inserted]
FLCC Life Groups Website / Portal	[URL — to be inserted]

✓ A Note from Your Director

Leading a Life Group is one of the most significant things you can do in the life of your church. Your faithfulness matters more than you know. We are committed to walking this road with you — please never hesitate to reach out. You are not a cog in a program. You are a shepherd, and we are grateful for you.

FLCC Life Groups — Rooted Together Leader's Edition

For Leader Use Only · All Scripture quotations from the English Standard Version (ESV)

© FLCC Life Groups Ministry · Please do not distribute beyond the leader cohort