



One Neighborhood at a Time

Life Group Leader Guide

What can you do to make a difference...

Everyone wants a better world but most feel powerless to improve it. We become paralyzed in the quest and choose to accept the status quo.

Instead of changing the world, we can focus on changing our street. When we aim small, we gain more traction in making a difference. Jesus commands us to love our neighbor, to serve others with compassion and meet the tangible needs of others. When we seek to practice those actions right where we are; we begin to change the world one neighborhood at a time.

Over the coming weeks, we will learn what we can do to practice the art of neighboring.

Together, we will look at the following themes::

1. Luke 10:25-28 "Love your Neighbor"
2. Luke 10:29-37 "Compassion toward our Neighbor"
3. Luke 10:38-42 "Too Busy to Neighbor"
4. Matthew 25:31-40 "A Life of Neighboring"

In this packet, you will find links to connect your group with short video teaching segments that will be the foundation for your meetings along with sample discussion questions for our study and several helpful tools & handouts that you can use in leading your group meetings.

In addition to these materials, watch for our regular leadership emails and other helpful resources as you lead your group. Feel free to contact your group coach or our team with any questions or concerns that come up during this series.

Discussion Questions

At each group meeting you will have the opportunity to discuss a series topic and explore the passages we are studying in worship each week. Our sessions are aligning with the sermon series beginning the weekend of April 27 & 28 and will give your group a chance to dig a little deeper into our weekly theme.

Each session's discussion includes three groups of questions:

- 1. *Get to know me:*** Questions written to help your group open up to one another and begin sharing life experiences related to the topic.
If your group is meeting for the first time, consider using all (or most) of the questions included here.
If your group knows one another fairly well, you might consider skipping the first question or two in this section and starting your group discussion with question three, etc.
- 2. *Into the Bible:*** Questions designed to draw you into the text from the most recent week's sermon. These questions include Scripture passages to study as a group. This might be the first time some of your group members have really explored the Bible. Don't miss an opportunity to let them really read the Word of God. These questions are written with the most direct questions first and the more complex questions last. Feel free to select the questions that best fit your group and will get them discussing the ideas that will be most valuable to them.
- 3. *Application:*** No lesson is complete without the opportunity to apply the learning to our lives. The questions and discussion prompts in this section are just that. Complete as many as your group has time for and/or focus on the questions that stimulate the greatest interest in your group.



Additionally, each week's lesson in this series will feature a Life Group edition video segment that will set the stage for your discussion. Video segments can be streamed through your computer or mobile device by visiting here:

<http://christchurchohio.org/grow/life-group-leaders>

Session One: Luke 10:25-28 “Love your Neighbor”



This week's lesson features a Life Group edition video segment that will set the stage for your discussion. Video segments can be streamed through your computer or mobile device by visiting here: <http://christchurchohio.org/grow/life-group-leaders>

Get to know me

- If your group is meeting for the first time, be sure to introduce yourselves to one another and welcome any newcomers. As you begin this series, discuss who you might like to invite to join you in the coming weeks. Complete the group roster in the appendix of this packet and use the “Circles of Life” handout to brainstorm who would benefit from joining your group.
- As we begin our look at being a neighbor, tell about an experience you had moving. Were you house shopping or looking for an apartment? What did you want in a neighborhood?
- **Tell us a little about where you live. Good or bad, what have your experiences been like with your neighbors?**

Into the Bible

- What stood out to you most from this week's sermon and video teaching segment?
- Ask someone in the group to read Luke 10:25-28. What do we learn about the art of neighborly in this passage?
- **How does this passage connect the idea of loving God with loving others? How has loving God changed the way you look at people?**
- ALTERNATE SCRIPTURE: In each session of this study, we will have an additional scripture designed to give your group another option for discussion. Feel free to look at these suggested verses as time permits and consider similarities or differences that you find. This week, consider Paul's description of the law in Galatians 3:12. How does the lawyer's desire to live by the law fall short of bringing salvation?

Application

- **In your group, share what kind of neighbor you think you are.**
- **What stops us from making an effort to get to know our neighbors?**
- **What are some small steps that we can take to start making a better neighborhood?**
- DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS: In each session of this study, we will have an application designed to help your group focus on a personal discipline. This week, consider the value of the Scriptures in building your connection with God. If you haven't already, consider starting a reading plan using the YouVersion Bible App. The Bible App has hundreds of very good reading plans and it would be great for your group to choose one together. How might growing through reading the Scriptures help you love your neighbor better?

Session Two: Luke 10:29-37 “Compassion toward our Neighbor”



This week's lesson features a Life Group edition video segment that will set the stage for your discussion. Video segments can be streamed through your computer or mobile device by visiting here: <http://christchurchohio.org/grow/life-group-leaders>

Get to know me

- **In our culture, we can sometimes struggle to get to know our neighbors. What are some excuses you play in your head for why you don't get to know your neighbors?**
- What are some things that you have seen where someone was especially neighborly?
- What examples come to mind when you think of a great neighbor?

Into the Bible

- What stood out to you most from this week's sermon and video teaching segment?
- **Luke 10:29-37 tells the story of the Good Samaritan. Who do you identify with most when you hear this story; the Good Samaritan or the religious leaders? Why?**
- The Samaritan makes a significant sacrifice to show compassion on the man in this story. Which of his actions most impress you?
- **Share about a time where you were willing to sacrifice or you have gone out of your way to help someone. How did it feel to go out of your comfort zone?**
- ALTERNATE SCRIPTURE: In addition to this verse, consider looking at Matthew 10 (starting at verse 5) as a group this week. How does Jesus' instruction frame our understanding of Samaritans in this week's text?

Application

- **Sometimes our perception of someone's need can keep us from helping. How do we let our stereotypes or judgments of others get in the way of loving and serving them?**
- **What is your biggest take away from this story and what do you believe God is leading you to do this week to respond to needs around you?**
- DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS: In this week's teaching we emphasized a growing desire to have compassion on others. As a group, commit to serving in some way. Tackle a project together, meet a need in your group, pursue a community partnership, or consider participating in our upcoming SERVE Day. (For more information on recommended community projects and SERVE partners, visit the life group leaders page at www.christchurchohio.org or call the church office).

Session Three: Luke 10:38-42 “Too Busy to Neighbor”



This week's lesson features a Life Group edition video segment that will set the stage for your discussion. Video segments can be streamed through your computer or mobile device by visiting here: <http://christchurchohio.org/grow/life-group-leaders>

Get to know me

- **We all seem to lead extremely busy lives. Within your group, share some ways that you stay busy?**
- **Why do we keep ourselves so busy? Can you think of some reason why we might keep ourselves so overcommitted?**

Into the Bible

- What stood out to you most from this week's sermon and video teaching segment?
- **Read Luke 10:38-42 together as a group. As you read this passage, do you relate more with Mary or Martha?**
- When Jesus says, "Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." what is he telling Martha about her sister?
- ALTERNATE SCRIPTURE: In Psalm 16:5-8, the author describes God's presence in a similar way to Jesus' reference in this week's text. What do we miss out on when we're too busy to connect with God and other another?

Application

- **Meaningful relationships take time. What is one thing you can do this week to invest in the lives of others?**
- **Prayer deepens our relationships and helps us connect meaningfully with one another. Share with the group how we can pray for each other.**
- DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS: This reference shows the importance of God's presence. Take time in your group session to commit to memorizing the portions of the Psalm that was suggested as our alternative Scripture. What parts of these verses are most meaningful to you?

Session Four: Matthew 25:31-40 “A Life of Neighboring”



This week's lesson features a Life Group edition video segment that will set the stage for your discussion. Video segments can be streamed through your computer or mobile device by visiting here: <http://christchurchohio.org/grow/life-group-leaders>

Get to know me

- **As we wrap up our series, share how you have taken steps to love your neighbors throughout this study. Is there someone you have met or a way that you have served because of this series?**
- As we conclude this study, also spend some time considering your plans for the summer. Schedule a cookout, go to a game or a concert together, find ways to stay connected through the summer even if your group isn't able to meet regularly.

Into the Bible

- What stood out to you most from this week's sermon and video teaching segment?
- **In Matthew 25:31-40 we see service is a lifestyle where we are actually expressing our love for God through caring for others. How does your perspective shift when you think about doing things for God when you're serving someone?**
- This verse describes providing food/clothing, visiting the sick, prison ministry, and a variety of work that different people are passionate about. **Share some of the needs that God has uniquely put on your heart for your neighborhood, community, or even the world.**
- In what ways does the body of Christ work together to meet a vast list of needs that we see in the world?
- ALTERNATE SCRIPTURE: In addition to this week's verse, consider looking at James 2:14-17 as a group this week. How does our love of others give evidence of our faith?

Application

- **As we conclude this series, what has been the most challenging thing about this study?**
- **Too often serving others becomes reactionary or impulsive, how can you be more strategic with your life to make a difference serving others.**
- DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS: Prayer deepens our relationships and helps us connect meaningfully with one another. Share with the group how we can pray for each other and commit to remembering one another in prayer throughout the summer.

Group Agreement

Our Group's Purpose:

To transform our spiritual lives by cultivating our spiritual health in a healthy small group community.

We do this through:

Group Attendance

To give priority to the group meeting. We will call or email if we will be late or absent. (Completing the Group Calendar will minimize this issue.)

Safe Environment

To help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. (Please, no quick answers, snap judgments or simple fixes.)

Respect Differences

To be gentle and gracious to people with different spiritual maturity, personal opinions, temperaments or imperfections. We are all works in progress.

Confidentiality

To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group, and to avoid sharing improper information about those outside the group.

Encouragement for Growth

To be not just takers but givers of life. We want to spiritually multiply our lives by serving others with our God-given gifts.

Welcoming Newcomers

To keep an open chair and share Jesus' dream of finding a shepherd for every sheep.

Shared Ownership

To remember that every member is a minister and to ensure that each attender will share a small team role or responsibility over time.

Rotating Hosts/Leaders and Homes

To encourage different people to host the group in their homes and to rotate the responsibility of facilitating each meeting. (See the Group Calendar.)

- Refreshments/meal times _____
- Child care _____
- When we will meet (day of week) _____
- Where we will meet (place) _____
- We will begin at (time) _____ and end at _____
- We will do our best to have some or all of us attend a worship service together. Our primary worship service time will be _____
- Date of this agreement _____

Group Calendar

Planning and calendaring can help ensure the greatest participation at every meeting. At the end of each meeting, review this calendar. Be sure to include a regular rotation of host homes and leaders, and don't forget birthdays, socials, church events, holidays, and mission/ministry projects.

DATE	LESSON	LOCATION	DESSERT/ MEAL	FACILITATOR

Group Roster

Use this chart to record contact information for the members of your group.

[illegible]

CIRCLES OF LIFE

DISCOVER WHO YOU CAN CONNECT IN COMMUNITY

The diagram consists of four overlapping circles arranged in a square pattern. Each circle is labeled with a category and a description, followed by several blank lines for writing.

- Family**
(immediate or extended)

- Familiar**
(neighbors, kids' sports teams, school, and so forth)

- Friends**

- Fun**
(gym, hobbies, hangouts)

- Firm**
(work)

Follow this simple four-step process:

1. **Prayerfully** list 1-2 people in each circle.
2. **Prepare** the group for them. Share a few names with your group and update your progress.
3. **Place** a call to them.
4. **Pick** them up and bring them to your next meeting.

"Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." Matthew 4:19

Leading for the First Time

Sweaty palms are a healthy sign. The Bible says God is gracious to the humble. Remember who is in control; the time to worry is when you're not worried.

Those who are soft in heart (and sweaty palmed) are those whom God is sure to speak through.

Seek support. Ask your leader, coleader, or close friend to pray for you and prepare with you before the session. Walking through the study will help you anticipate potentially difficult questions and discussion topics.

Bring your uniqueness to the study. Lean into who you are and how God wants you to uniquely lead the study.

Prepare. Prepare. Prepare. Go through the session several times before your group meets. Set aside time to discuss the material with your coach and bring up any questions or ideas that you are unclear about. Consider writing in a journal or fasting for a day to prepare yourself for what God wants to do. Don't wait until the last minute to prepare.

Ask for feedback so you can grow. Perhaps in an email or on cards handed out at the study, have everyone write down three things you did well and one thing you could improve on. Don't get defensive, but show an openness to learn and grow.

Prayerfully consider launching a new group. This doesn't need to happen overnight, but God's heart is for this to happen over time. Not all Christians are called to be leaders or teachers, but we are all called to be "shepherds" of a few someday.

Share with your group what God is doing in your heart. God is searching for those whose hearts are fully His. Share your trials and victories. We promise that people will relate.

Prayerfully consider whom you would like to pass the baton to next week. It's only fair. God is ready for the next member of your group to go on the faith journey you just traveled. Make it fun, and expect God to do the rest.

Leadership Training

Congratulations! You've responded to the call to lead a group.

There are few other tasks in the family of God that surpass the contribution you will be making. As you prepare to lead, whether it is one session or the entire series, here are a few thoughts to keep in mind. We encourage you to read these and review them with each new discussion leader before he or she leads.

1. Remember that you are not alone. God knows everything about you, and He knew that you would be asked to lead your group. Remember that it is common for all good leaders to feel that they are not ready to lead. Moses, Solomon, Jeremiah and Timothy—they all were reluctant to lead. God promises, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). Whether you are leading for one evening, for several weeks, or for a lifetime, you will be blessed as you serve.
2. Don't try to do it alone. Pray right now for God to help you build a healthy leadership team. If you can enlist a co-leader to help you lead the group, you will find your experience to be much richer. This is your chance to involve as many people as you can in building a healthy group. All you have to do is call and ask people to help, you'll be surprised at the response.
3. Just be yourself. If you won't be you, who will? God wants you to use your unique gifts and temperament. Don't try to do things exactly like another leader; do them in a way that fits you! Just admit it when you don't have an answer, and apologize when you make a mistake. Your group will love you for it, and you'll sleep better at night!
4. Prepare for your meeting ahead of time. Review the session and the leader's notes, and write down your responses to each question. Pay special attention to questions that ask group members to do something other than engage in discussion. These exercises will help your group live what the Bible teaches, not just talk about it. Be sure you understand how a question is designed, and bring any necessary supplies (such as paper and pens) to your meeting. If the exercise employs one of the items in the appendix, be sure to look over that item so you'll know how it works.
5. Pray for your group members by name. Before you begin your session, go around the room in your mind and pray for each member by name. You may want to review the prayer list at least once a week. Ask God to use your time together to touch the heart of every person uniquely. Expect God to lead you to whomever he wants you to encourage or challenge in a special way. If you listen, God will surely lead!
6. When you ask a question, be patient. Someone will eventually respond. Sometimes people need a moment or two of silence to think about the question, and if silence doesn't bother you, it won't bother anyone else. After someone responds, affirm the response with a simple "thanks" or "good job." Then ask, "How about somebody else?" or "Would someone who hasn't shared like to add anything?" Be sensitive to new people or reluctant members who

aren't ready to say, pray or do anything. If you give them a safe setting, they will blossom over time.

7. Provide transitions between questions. When guiding the discussion, always read aloud the transitional paragraphs and the questions. Ask the group if anyone would like to read the paragraph or Bible passage. Don't call on anyone, but ask for a volunteer, and then be patient until someone begins. Be sure to thank the person who reads aloud.

8. Break up into smaller groups each week. If your group has more than ten people, we strongly encourage you to have the group gather in discussion circles of three or four people. With a greater opportunity to talk in a small circle, people will connect more with the study, apply more quickly what they're learning and ultimately get more out of it. A small circle also encourages a quiet person to participate and tends to minimize the effects of a more vocal or dominant member. It can also help people feel more loved in your group. When you gather again at the end of the section, you can have one person summarize the highlights from each circle. Small circles are also helpful during prayer time. People who are unaccustomed to praying aloud will feel more comfortable trying it with just two or three others. Also, prayer requests won't take as much time, so circles will have more time to actually pray. When you gather back with the whole group, you can have one person from each circle briefly update everyone on the prayer requests. People are more willing to pray in small circles if they know that the whole group will hear all the prayer requests.

9. Rotate facilitators weekly. At the end of each meeting, ask the group who should lead the following week. Let the group help select your weekly facilitator. You may be perfectly capable of leading each time, but you will help others grow in their faith and gifts if you give them opportunities to lead. You can use the Small Group Calendar to fill in the names of all meeting leaders at once if you prefer.

10. One final challenge (for new or first time leaders):

Before your first opportunity to lead, look up each of the five passages listed below. Read each one as a devotional exercise to help equip yourself with a shepherd's heart. Trust us on this one. If you do this, you will be more than ready for your first meeting.

- Matthew 9:36
- 1 Peter 5:2-4
- Psalm 23
- Ezekiel 34:11-16
- 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, 11-12

How to lead in Prayer

One of the most powerful aspects of small groups is the opportunity to offer prayer requests, to pray together, and then to see how God follows through on those prayers. It's amazing to see how God works over three months or six months or a year. Prayers gets answered, situations change, hearts change—your group sees God work in mighty ways.

Just as powerful as the group dynamic of prayer is the impact that a praying leader can have on his or her group. A praying leader ministers to the group not only by showing how much he or she cares about their needs but also by modeling a life of prayer.

As with most things, becoming a small group centered on prayer doesn't just happen. Here are seven tips on how you can minister to your small group through prayer:

- Dedicate the last half hour of each bible study to "personal prayer needs" time.
- Write each member's prayer requests down on 3x5 cards or the prayer sheets provided. Bring the cards/sheets to every study so you can check back on their requests.
- After the requests are given, pray immediately with your group.
- Set up a prayer-partner system where each member has another member praying for him or her, and vice versa.
- As a leader, continue to pray for each specific prayer request of each of your members (use your cards as reminders) daily.
- Call mid-week (or mid-session) to see how things are going.
- Call or email whenever the Holy Spirit prompts you. God may use you to help answer a member's prayer. If you feel the Holy Spirit giving you wisdom that could help a member in a quandary, let that person know.

Prayer and Praise Reports

Prayer is essential to group life, use this chart as a place to record prayer requests that are shared in your group each week.

PRAYER REQUEST	PRAISE REPORT