
Life groups

EMMANUEL'S START-UP GUIDE

2025-2026

Introduction

WELCOME

We're glad that you are interested in being an active disciple of Jesus. Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ at all stages of life. By starting a life group, you are committing to walking alongside others as they embrace the Jesus-shaped life.

Following is some information on what a life group leader looks like. We invite you to prayerfully read through the material and contact us if any questions arise.

WHAT IS A LIFE GROUP?

A life group is an intentional community of people that meet on a regular basis to encourage each other towards a vibrant faith in Jesus, provide a place to belong, and find creative ways to live out the gospel in our world.

WHAT HAPPENS THERE?

Think of a life group as an intentional community on mission. A typical evening often includes eating together, sharing how the week went, a study time, praying together, and encouraging each other to live out the week in a Jesus-shaped way. A life group also embraces the responsibility of everyday discipleship through asking questions like, "What is Jesus saying to you?" and "What are you going to do about it?"

WHO CAN BELONG IN A LIFE GROUP?

Anyone can belong to a life group; they can even belong before they believe. Life groups reflect our entire church and are comprised of mature Christians, new Christians, and non-Christians. Although all programs at Emmanuel seek to have the main components of discipleship built into their DNA (Belong, Grow, Share), we believe life groups are the best way to practice Jesus-shaped living.

WHAT DO I TEACH?

There are many options for study in a life group:

- Bible passages
- Specific spiritual themes or topics
- Shared stages of life, such as parenting, finances, etc.
- Recovery material, like addictions, divorce, or loss
- Study plans that follow the sermons series from Sunday mornings

Whatever a group takes on, we desire them to embrace specific spiritual rhythms and move in a common direction. You can find more curriculum ideas in our resources section on our website. We also encourage you to sign up for your free account at [rightnowmedia](#), a video resource library available through the church.

HOW DO I START?

The best way to start a life group is with others!

Find one or two couples or individuals who are willing to start a group together with you. You can also ask the church staff for names of people that are interested in being part of a new group. It is important to have a common understanding and goal for the group, so take time before-hand to discuss what this looks like. Also, determine the kind of people you are looking to have in your group. For example, think about people at the same stage of life, or that have similar interests, or perhaps you would like a variety people from different stages of life, or new Christians, etc. From there, let the church know that you have started a group and begin to invite people in.

HOW DOES THE CHURCH HELP ME?

Emmanuel comes alongside group leaders and offer support in a variety of ways:

- Providing curriculum
- Offering encouragement, support, and prayer with you and for you.
- Giving guidance and direction in navigating group dynamics.
- Helping you grow your group and resourcing your leadership.
- Answering any question that you might have!

Leading a life group

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF A LEADER?

THEY FACILITATE LIFE GROUP DISCUSSIONS. The leader acts as the defacto face of the group and initiates the direction and conversation of the evening.

THEY CULTIVATE RELATIONSHIPS. The leader is alert to group dynamics and encourages the participation of everyone. They provide care, monitor the groups health and duration, and are on the look out for ways to develop deeper friendships.

THEY HAVE CAPACITY AND MATURITY TO LEAD. Leaders are committed to the task and provide time in their schedule for the life group. They know how to balance their personal responsibilities with the responsibility of the group, and understand the importance of making decisions when the direction is not clear.

THEY ARE COMMITTED TO THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES. The leader aims to keep their faith vibrant and growing, evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit.

THEY ENDORSE THE BELIEFS, MISSION, and VALUES OF EMMANUEL. The leader recognizes that their group is part of a bigger whole, and represents the church in their words and actions.

THEY PRAY REGULARLY FOR GROUP MEMBERS. Leaders take time to present the different people in their care to God on a regular basis.

THEY ARE LIFE-LONG LEARNERS. The leader is willing to learn and grow in their capacity of leading a small group of people.

THEY PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR APPLICATION. The leader is always on the lookout to invite and challenge their life group to respond to what they have been learning about together.

Essentials for Success

SUCCESSFUL GROUPS:

Connect and Grow

While study materials and prayer are key elements, the main emphasis of the group is connection with Jesus and one another.

Share responsibilities

Group members may share participation by being the host, preparing the snack, facilitating the study, leading the prayer time, arranging social activities, etc. This creates a greater sense of belonging and it shares the load.

Care for one another

A priority of the group is to support and care for one another.

Encourage authenticity

The atmosphere should encourage openness and transparency among members, where people feel free to be themselves.

Keep confidentiality

Groups should be a safe place where issues discussed within the group will not be shared outside the group.

Show commitment

Group members will try to attend on a regular basis.

Launching a new group

- 1. DETERMINE THE MAKE UP OF THE GROUP.** Who is going to be in it?
- 2. FIND SOMEONE TO LEAD WITH YOU.** Cast your vision with them. Maybe it is someone who would be willing to host, or they have leadership abilities, and they just need someone to give them some opportunity to do so. The key is, don't do this alone!
- 3. DETERMINE YOUR RESOURCES.** Chat with the pastors or friends about the direction you want to take the study. Do some research on rightnowmedia. Discover what initiatives the church is embarking on.
- 4. CHOOSE YOUR SCHEDULE.** Pick a meeting place, a day, a time, the structure and your rhythms. What will the evening look like? Will some weeks look different than others? Is there a missional component? How will you incorporate elements of challenge and accountability?
- 5. COMMUNICATE WITH PASTOR DAKOTA.** We want our life groups to all have similar goals and purposes to reflect Emmanuel's heart and vision. As well, we want to support you in any way we can!
- 6. COMPLETE OUR VOLUNTEER COVENANT.** You can find it in our discipleship resources online, or just ask at the connectdesk.
- 7. BEGIN GATHERING!** You can add to your group as you build more relationships.
- 8. CONSIDER CREATING A GROUP ON THE CHURCH CENTER APP.** The church app allows a place for group members to encourage one another through sharing files and messages, study helps, articles, similar to having your own social media page!

Hosting etiquette

THE JOY OF HOSPITALITY

Hosts provide a warm and open setting, regardless of where the group meets. The group might be in your home or another home. It might also meet at the church building. You do not need a mansion to host a life group, or have everything in perfect order. Humble homes often end up being the most hospitable!

Here are some practical tips to keep your mind at ease as you play host to a life group:

EXPECT VISITORS. Show them where the kitchen and restroom are located and make them feel at home in your space.

NO FINE DINING NECESSARY. Snacks are just perfect. You can also invite others to take turns to bring a little something as well. Or you can even do a regular potluck.

TISSUES ARE A NICE TOUCH. You never know when the conversation might become a little emotional. Have some tissues nearby for ministry time.

LOSE THE PHONE. Yes, we appear to be attached at the hip when it comes to our devices. But they do become a distraction, especially when the conversation is going really well. Practice a group silencing your phone in order to provide everyone with undivided attention.

IT'S OKAY TO BE CLEAR. There is nothing wrong having a set closing time on the evening. You may not care if the evening lasts forever, but a guest might! So state your usual end to an evening. This is helpful to both you as a host and to your guests.

PRAY BEFORE LIGHTS OUT. Your home is a special place of hospitality, both for your friends and for the Holy Spirit. Make sure to pray through the room, thanking God for all that he did during the meeting, and asking him to fill your home with his love.