



# LEADER MANUAL

2025-2026

## OUR MISSION

Together, leading people to multiply genuine life in Christ.



# LIFE GROUPS MINISTRY PURPOSE

Life Groups exist  
to multiply disciples by  
equipping and empowering  
people to **connect relationally,**  
**grow spiritually,**  
**and live missionally,**  
for the sake of every man,  
woman, and child.

# WHAT IS A LIFE GROUP?

A Life Group (LG) is a life-giving community focused on following Jesus Christ into spiritual transformation through embracing these core values:



**CONNECT RELATIONALLY** with each other in close, biblical relationships.

- Spend time together – within and outside of group time
- Transparency – open and honest sharing
- Trust – vulnerability with confidentiality
- Care – serve each other and meet needs
- Warmth – enjoy and engage in company with each other

**GROW SPIRITUALLY** in our relationships with God; understand, embrace, and apply God's word

- Worship God together (praise, thanksgiving, confession)
- Spend time in God's Word together
- Pray together
- Encourage each other to take spiritual next steps
- Deal with personal sin
- Promote personal disciple making

**LIVE MISSIONALLY** with people far from God with the love of Jesus.

- *Use BLESS as an acronym for each individual's missional strategy*
  - **B**egin with Prayer (develop a heart for people, praying regularly for people far from God)
  - **L**isten with Care (entering spiritual conversations, asking questions & listening)
  - **E**at Together (building relationships while sharing a meal or coffee)
  - **S**erve with Love (serving people and accepting their help)
  - **S**hare your Story and God's Story (sharing your own spiritual story and sharing God's story—The Gospel)

# WHEN & WHERE DO LGs MEET?<sup>4</sup>

LGs meet throughout the week at a time that is most convenient for participants and at one of the following locations:

**HOMES** – Either the Leader's home or a Host home will be selected as the primary meeting place

**CHURCH CAMPUS** – Rooms in the church building may be requested for use on Sunday or Tuesday evenings only. If interested, please contact Rachel Parkhurst at [rparkhurst@parkway.church](mailto:rparkhurst@parkway.church) to request a room.

**CHILDCARE** – If your group needs childcare at your meeting location, you can hire your own childcare workers and you will be reimbursed up to \$25 a week. If your group desires to take advantage of this, please fill out this form:

<https://parkway.churchcenter.com/people/forms/428678>

Childcare is also available at the church campus on Sundays 4pm-6pm and Tuesday nights from 4pm-8pm for a fee of \$45 per child for the semester. To request childcare, please contact Danilove Butler at [dbutler@parkway.church](mailto:dbutler@parkway.church).

**ANOTHER OPTION** – If childcare or the size of your group is a barrier with available space, you may want to consider having the men in the group meet one week and the ladies the following week and alternate accordingly.

## KEY DATES

- **Momentum Leader Training** - August 24th from 4-7pm
- **Connect Meetings** - 4th Sunday of each month (September, 2025 through May, 2026) at 11:00am in Swenson House (Bldg. B)
- **Fall Semester** - September 7th - December 7th
- **Family Meeting** - Sunday, September 21st at 5pm  
*\*The Fall Family Meeting is our annual church meeting that celebrates what God has done during the previous year and launches our annual focus for the upcoming year.*
- **Spring Semester** - January 11th - May 3rd
- **Multiply Meeting** - Sunday, January 25th at 5pm  
*\*Multiply is our annual evening to spotlight and unify around mission and multiplication, celebrating and calling one another to ongoing discipleship & evangelism.*
- **Holidays & Summers** - Leaders and groups are free to choose appropriate weeks to break for the Christmas season and over the summer. Or some groups continue through the summer.

A large orange circle graphic located in the bottom right corner of the page, containing the text 'WE GROW BEST WHEN WE GROW TOGETHER' in white capital letters.

WE GROW BEST  
WHEN WE GROW  
TOGETHER

# HOW TO SHEPHERD A LG

## KEYS TO SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

### WALK WITH GOD

Grow in a close and personal relationship with Jesus Christ; grow in Biblical character; live out the Greatest Commandment (**LOVE GOD**)

### WORK WITH PEOPLE

Lead and serve incarnationally (living out the call and lifestyle of Christ in the flesh); exemplify the 2nd Greatest Commandment (**LOVE PEOPLE**)

### ACCOMPLISH THE MISSION

Lead people into **CONNECTING RELATIONALLY, GROWING SPIRITUALLY, and LIVING MISSIONALLY**. Live out the Great Commission (**MAKE DISCIPLES**)

### LIVE AS LEARNERS

Be self-aware; pursue growth and improvement in leadership position skills; humbly accept feedback from people at any level—superior, subordinate, or peer (**CONSTANT EVALUATION**)

## KEYS TO PERSONAL MINISTRY

In personal ministry and leading people, our approach to ministry is to ask and answer three basic questions:



1

Who are you personally? - Get to know a person through personal conversation and asking questions.

2

Where are you spiritually? - Don't make assumptions about where anyone is spiritually. Ask meaningful, non-threatening questions to find out what a person is really thinking and feeling about their spiritual life.

3

How can I help you take your next step? - Determine how you can help a person grow spiritually. Understand the resources you have available both in the church and in the community to refer people to for help.

## LEAD BY EXAMPLE

- Parkway Partnership (Membership) - Parkway doctrine, mission, vision, & values.
- Grow in personal spiritual life & Biblical character.
- Grow in leadership and discipling skills.
- Embrace and implement the Life Groups definition of CONNECTING RELATIONALLY, GROWING SPIRITUALLY, and LIVING MISSIONALLY.

## EMBRACE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Enter a discipling relationship with a coach/elder/experienced disciple-maker as the first phase of leadership development (if not previously disciplined to be a disciple-maker).
- Promptly respond to people who are interested in visiting or joining your group.
- Pray daily for your group and the group members.
- Know the personal and spiritual condition of your people. Shepherd your people well.
- Prepare well for your group time and pray prior to the meeting.
- Seek 2-3 people within the group to personally disciple. Identify disciple makers in the group & have them disciple other group members.
- Identify potential new Leaders & develop them through shared responsibility. Have at least one apprentice.
- Communicate with and be accountable to your coach.
- Manage any transition out of your leadership role.

## MANAGE YOUR TIME

- Once per week - group time preparation (1 + hour per week)
- Once per week - group time (2 hours per week)
- Engage with weekly communication through email and social media.
- Every month - Attend Leadership Connect meetings.
- Annually - Attend and be involved with church-wide events (Fall Family mtg, Baptisms, Multiply mtg, etc.)
- Summer months - Reduce group meeting frequency and rest if desired.

## SUCCESS

### *What are the measures of success for a Life Group?*

- Group members are experiencing spiritual transformation
- Groups are open and regularly inviting and welcoming new people to the group
- Groups are seeing people come to faith in Jesus Christ through intentional gospel sharing and BLESS implementation
- Potential new leaders are in development as apprentices, and the group is growing toward healthy multiplication.

# THE CURRICULUM QUESTION

## WHAT DO I CHOOSE AS THE CURRICULUM OR STUDY FOR THE GROUP?

- Your "default" should be the message notes and the weekly discussion plan found online at our website: [www.parkway.com/messages](http://www.parkway.com/messages) or on the Parkway app under "Messages." We can use this as a basis for personal spiritual growth by focusing on how we apply truths and principles from God's Word each week. Sermons are planned strategically, so following the sermon content in Life Groups brings great alignment in the church.
- Often, we will have a church-wide focus during the course of the year. Whenever we do this we will always provide a short-term curriculum for all Life Groups to use. We ask that all Life Groups follow any church-wide initiative or campaign.
- We provide a library of recommended life group resources that cover essential topics of Christian faith & growth as well as a subscription to Right Now Media where you can find incredible resources for your group. You can get access to our Right Now Media subscription by emailing Rachel Parkhurst: [rparkhurst@parkway.church](mailto:rparkhurst@parkway.church).
- Finally, Leaders should know their people. Based on their needs, feel free to provide a curriculum that will meet them where they are to help them grow. For example, read through a book of the Bible together and discuss or study it. Pick a book on Marriage, Parenting, or Apologetics and discuss it each week.

## MULTIPLICATION

### THE HEALTHIEST PATH TO GROWING BIBLICAL COMMUNITY

In any growing church like ours, Life Groups of all ages and stages regularly receive interest in joining. We have a statistic above the national average for proportion of our people engaging in life changing community through groups.

One of the best ways for us to ensure we aren't having to turn people away is to be creating more group space NOW – before we get to that place. Opening more space. Launching more groups.

MODELS OF MULTIPLICATION: Not every group does it the same way...

- A. Mitosis model - new leaders raised up from within the group, and group roster divides in half between the two resulting groups
- B. Missionary model - new leaders raised up from within the group, then they launch out on their own to begin a new group with the church recruiting to fill the new group
- C. Incubation model - new leaders brought in from outside the group to incubate within for a season, learn their practices & DNA, then they launch out to begin a new group

#### A PATHWAY TOWARD MULTIPLYING

1. Pray & talk about the vision for multiplication together with the group (help the concept be out on the table, not an intimidating idea)
2. Identify & raise up apprentice leadership (Who has potential to be leaders in the future? Ask them to prayerfully consider it)
3. Start sharing more leadership responsibilities over time (e.g. hosting, running segments like group prayer, taking up the role of communicating with the group, etc.)
4. Set a timeline with goals for a multiplication date + start preparing for it
5. Officially launch a multiplied group, complete with lots of vision & celebration



# GROUP MEMBERS COMMITMENT<sup>8</sup>

*These represent statements of agreement to honor and foster trustworthy & positive community within your group. They help safeguard and ensure mutual respect and love for one another equally.*

*Feel free to review these commitments at the beginning of each semester.*

=====

- **Confidentiality** – What’s said here, stays here. I will never repeat what others say unless given permission.
- **Openness** – I will strive to reveal who I am –my hopes, hurts, joys, and struggles-as well as I am able. I will help others by risking to be known and sharing my thoughts, feelings, and experiences.
- **Sensitivity** - I will refrain from sharing my thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a way that causes discomfort or embarrassment to others in the group. I will refrain from gossiping or criticizing others. This includes sharing political opinions that would tend to be divisive. I don't want to drive off people I am trying to impact for Jesus Christ.
- **Courtesy** - I want everyone to share. I will keep others in mind, allowing time for each person to speak. I will limit my time and will not interrupt when another group member is speaking.
- **Acceptance** - I realize that we are all works in process. We are all at different places in our spiritual journey, come from different backgrounds, and the Holy Spirit works in us in different ways. I will not be judgmental or offer unsolicited advice.
- **Prayer** - I will pray for the other members of this group and rejoice in the confidence that they are praying for me.
- **Commitment** - I will make a diligent and sincere effort to participate in the discussion each week. I will make group attendance a priority.
- **Accountability** - In all of these commitments invite my fellow group members to hold me accountable, as I will do for them.

# DEALING WITH POTENTIAL PROBLEMS IN DISCUSSIONS

*Maintaining discussions often means dealing as smoothly as possible with the problems that arise. Here are some common problems, with suggestions on how to deal with them.*

## THE MEMBER WHO TALKS TOO MUCH

- Redirect the discussion to a less talkative person or to another question.
- Watch for a pause in what they are saying, thank them, and ask if someone else would share.
- Have a one-on-one conversation with the talkative person and ask them how they could work with you to draw others into the conversation.

## THE MEMBER WHO WILL NOT TALK

- Ask opinion questions occasionally (e.g., "How do you feel about this?" or "I'd love to hear your opinion on this.") to reduce the member's fear of answering incorrectly.
- Have a one-on-one conversation with the shy person and assure them of their value in the discussion.
- Ask them if it would be all right if you called on them to speak occasionally. Give them the freedom to decline if they have nothing to share.

## DISCUSSIONS THAT GET OFF TRACK

- Deal with a rabbit trail by acknowledging what the member said and bringing the interaction back to the main focus of the discussion.
- Invite members to stay after the session to talk about what they're saying, and then move the discussion back to the main focus.
- Take a strong position as a moderator, preventing participants from interrupting each other or speaking simultaneously.
- Ask members to focus any conflict on ideas rather than people and to resist being judgmental. If a conflict is one of values, the facilitator can help participants become aware of the values involved, admit differences, and redirect to the main topic.

# LIFE GROUPS & DISCIPLE MAKING

- Life Groups themselves do not make disciples – only disciples make more disciples.
- Life Groups are similar to the larger church. Not all who attend will want to commit to become a disciple of Jesus Christ at the same pace. The Life Group focuses on being an environment for spiritual transformation through the core values of **CONNECTING RELATIONALLY, GROWING SPIRITUALLY, and LIVING MISSIONALLY.**
- Leaders are to use the group as a "pool" of people from which disciple makers select a few for more focused disciple making. Don't feel like you need to need to coax everyone along spiritually at the same rate. Disciple those who are ready.
- Leaders are vision carriers of disciple-making by inviting people into the discipleship process as well as reinforcing the definition and key identities and life-patterns of a disciple during their group times.
- Leaders are key leaders in building the movement of disciple multiplication: Whenever you start a new group, email Scott DeSanders at [sdesanders@parkway.church](mailto:sdesanders@parkway.church) to let us know who you are discipling so that we can celebrate all that God is doing.

## MISSION MEASURES

ARE YOU "IN"...

### 1 THE WORD

1. What is God saying to you through His word?
2. What are you doing about it?

### 2 THE FAMILY

1. How are you prioritizing authentic relationships?
2. What risks have you taken recently for others' good and your growth?

### 3 THE TRENCHES

1. Where are you finding joy in serving others?
2. How are you using your gifts for God's glory?

### 4 THE FIELD

1. Who are you currently B.L.E.S.S.ing?
2. What are your disciples' current celebrations and challenges?

# SAMPLE GROUP MEETING

## TAKE OFF

- *If you are meeting in a home, please make sure some light snacks and refreshments are available and allow time at the beginning for people to socialize.*
- *First meeting: If there are new people to your group take time to introduce yourselves. You may want to say something like, "As we begin our group lets take a moment and introduce ourselves by sharing who you are, one interesting fact about yourself, and why you decided to be apart of the group this semester."*
- *First meeting: Set expectations by reviewing the Group Member Commitments. You may want to print off a copy for every group member and have them sign it as a form of agreed expectations and accountability.*
- *Regular group time: You may want to start this time by asking a question like, "What has been the best part of everyone's week so far?" Or, "What has been the most challenging part of everyone's week so far?"*

## IN FLIGHT

- *The questions below are from our "Move to Normal" series going through the book of James. Remember, questions are written each week that go along with the sermon of the week to help your group go deeper into the text and application if you should so choose to go this route.*
- *What was your original reaction to hearing we should consider it joy when trials enter our life? Are trials normal, or abnormal in your life?*
- *What is one example where God used a trial in your life to develop character in you, deepen your dependence on Him, or increase your intimacy with Him, etc.?*
- *When you need wisdom in a trial, how do you discern that the wisdom is coming from God? See James 3: 13-18.*
- *Oftentimes trials involve waiting. How can the temporary, transitory nature of life on earth help you persevere through trials? What might someone say to himself/herself, or to others, that would reflect such a perspective?*
- *How would you distinguish between a trial, a test, and a temptation? What part does God play in any of these, and what part does our flesh play?*

## LANDING

- *What trial are you going through for which your group can pray? Take time to pray together.*
- *Thank everyone for coming. Give any instructions for your next meeting time.*



