



LEADER —————
TRAINING
CONTENT
GUIDE

*Living the life we were created for in Jesus— **together.***

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**THIS CONTENT GUIDE
BELONGS TO**

IF FOUND, PLEASE CONTACT

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MINISTRY APART OF

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INTRODUCTION

WHY GROUPS?
+
HEIGHTS HEART

WE MUST UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE OF WHY WE GATHER TOGETHER OR WE WON'T KNOW HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS.

We must understand the purpose of why we gather together or we won't know how to measure success or healthy growth. In this training and throughout this guide, we will dive into the heart of small group gatherings, look at practical tools to create quality discussions, and lay the groundwork for healthy relationships.

THE BIG "C" CHURCH

After Jesus ascended into heaven the disciples were left alone, but they had each other. Jesus left them His example and His framework for spending quality and intentional time together—this is the foundation where groups springboard from.



“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Acts 2:42-47, NIV

Being together, sharing meals, and praising God goes all the way back to the very beginning of our family history as the Church. These qualities are in our DNA as humans—we were created for it!

Jesus spent time with His disciples. The disciples spent time together after Jesus ascended into heaven. The Early Church spent time together unpacking the apostles' teaching, praying, eating, and caring for one another.

As the Church, this is who we are. Time together is a cornerstone of our spirituality presented by and exemplified by Jesus. Nowadays, believers around the world gather on Sunday mornings or tune in online for teachings and worship. This is a good tradition, but sadly, we have let other powerful traditions fall away. We don't spend time together like God had in mind. And, when we do spend time together, we typically lack focused, face-to-face, intentional time together. Groups during the week exist to create space for what God had in mind for intentional community. It is a block of time specifically carved out for us to circle up together, sit shoulder-to-shoulder, and intentionally be in relationships with God and each other. We are better together; we were created to experience God alongside one another.



“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 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 10:23-25, ESV

GOD'S HEART DICTATES THE HEART OF HEIGHTS

God gave the Church its mission and Heights willingly comes under this authority. The mission of Heights is condensed into three words: Encounter, Engage, and Empower. We exist to see people encounter Jesus, engage in their faith with Jesus, and be empowered to serve Jesus.

1

ENCOUNTER

We see the starting point of our faith journey beginning with encountering Jesus. Everything we do is through the lens of seeing people experience genuine encounters with Jesus.

2

ENGAGE

Encountering Jesus opens up the opportunity to engage in our faith with Jesus. Everything we create as a church family is with the intention of seeing everyone develop a rich relationship with God and others.

3

EMPOWER

Engaging in our faith with Jesus naturally builds the desire to be empowered to serve Jesus. As a family, we believe God is on the move, continually looking for opportunities to empower each other to follow God into serving our communities, both locally and globally.

Group-based ministries at Heights focus on engaging in our faith through meaningful relationships that are Christ-centered. People grow best when they are connected to each other and connected to God.

TAKE NOTE

What ministry do you serve in?

In this training and throughout this guide, there will be things that will need to be contextualized to the specific ministry you serve in. There are places for notes and questions if clarity is needed on how to apply specifics to the ministry you serve. Staff ministry directors, pastors, and leads are always available for you!

GROUPS ALIGNMENT WITH HEIGHTS CORE VALUES

Our prayer and desire is to be a church that is made up of groups, not just a church that “has groups”. In groups, people are connected to God and each other and this is where discipleship and transformation can take place. Groups give us a consistent and practical place to live, love, and look like Jesus. The narrative we live in describes a God who created space for us. God is a space creator from beginning to end, making space for us through the use of his time and energy. His relational bandwidth always provides space for us and His Kingdom continues to expand as space is made for more family members. Because we were made in God’s image, we mimic Him as space creators!

We will create space...

FOR JESUS—

It’s all about Jesus. Everything was created by Jesus, and for Jesus—that’s why everything we do will be to create space for people to encounter the love, life, and grace of Jesus. We will strive to keep Jesus as the main thing, diligently fighting to keep ourselves off of the center stage, and creating space for Jesus to remain there.

FOR PEOPLE—

All people matter to God, so everyone matters to us. From the creation of the universe, to the eternal homecoming, God continues to create space for humans to belong with Him. We will follow His example as we give everything to love people. We will be a place for all people to belong. We will treat every person with eternal value as we guide them towards joining us at humanity's eternal homecoming.

FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT—

We are completely reliant on the Holy Spirit to empower, to lead, to transform. In all we do, we make space for the Holy Spirit to be present and work. We will be controlled and impassioned by the Holy Spirit for the Kingdom mission put in front of us.

FOR GENEROSITY—

We believe the healthiest life is a generous life, one that is given away for Jesus and others. Following Jesus calls us to be generous with all of our life. Knowing this is not our home, we hold everything with an open handed posture. Love leads us to give away all of our gifting, time, energy, and resources for the good of others.

FOR SERVING—

We are on the planet for Jesus and people, so we will give our lives away in service. Jesus displayed a leadership that serves first, and as apprentices to Him we will be the first ones to pick up a towel and serve. We are servant leaders and a life of servitude is our calling. We will create space by holding loosely all roles as stewards with the goal of releasing our roles to others, striving to create space for others to step in and fulfill their calling to serve. All of us are servants first.

FOR THE BEST—

Excellence is our pursuit in all of the spaces we create. God gave his best, so we give our best. Whatever we put our efforts into, no matter how grand or insignificant, we will strive to do with the best we have to give. God and people are worth our best.

FOR CELEBRATION—

We will celebrate often. We will create spaces to celebrate the moments that matter to God and to us, capturing stories of life change and telling them frequently. We aim to define our wins clearly and create intentional space in our community, so that we are ready to throw a party for the right things when we see them.

FOR TOGETHER—

God moved in and through community; so do we. We are better together—together we will go further than we ever could alone. We create space for collaboration and teammates while empowering each other to do what only we can do. We “win” when we get there together.

FOR FORWARD—

God's narrative is always moving forward. We want to join Him in the future He is creating. We create space for improving the present and dreaming about the future. Always moving forward. We will leave our areas ahead of where we found them. Our passion for what we do is out of urgency and preparation for Home.

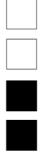


When people join a group, what are they really looking for?

WHAT PEOPLE WANT

- People want to be known—by God and others.
- When it comes to groups, 12-14 people is the sweet spot for relational connection and spiritual growth! Jesus had 12 disciples and we base groups from His model. This number provides space for leaders and group members to thrive, to follow up intentionally, and maintain a level of trust and intimacy that is necessary for rich relationships.
- It is tough to maintain longevity, connection, and interest with smaller groups or larger groups.
 - Groups larger than 12-14 quickly lose safety, vulnerability, and trust. People desire to be a name and have their story known; they do not want to be a number. The bigger the group, the harder it is for long-term connection and relational depth and the easier it is for people to “come and go”.
 - With groups less than 10 people, it can be tough to keep momentum and build energy.

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1

CATCH THE VISION

**CONNECT PEOPLE TO GOD
+
TO EACH OTHER**



What are you most looking forward to in becoming a leader? What are you most nervous about?

BE ENCOURAGED + INSPIRED

- You have been recommended and sought out by other trustworthy leaders and staff. You have what it takes to lead!
- You will never be asked by us to do or handle anything you can't handle. However, you can do and handle a lot more than you realize. In this training, we will give you practical tools to prepare and guide you.
- You have a support system behind you. Your ministry leads are always available.
- Leading is easier than we think. It is hard work, but well worth it.
- Regardless of where you are in your leadership journey, there is always space for learning and growing.

MYTHS OF LEADERSHIP

- 1 You have to be perfect and have it all together, all the time.
- 2 You have to have the answers.
- 3 You have to be a biblical scholar or teacher.
- 4 You have to be a counselor.

If these were prerequisites, there would be no leaders. God wants to use us and sanctify us through our courage and faithfulness in leadership. As leaders, you are on the front lines of ministry! You are pastors and shepherds, caring for a flock. You are a part of something much bigger, just like the folks in the Early Church in Acts 2.



What makes a good or successful group meeting?

As a leader, you cannot evaluate success based on the things you want or what group members want. This drives us to a measurable goal.

HEAR FROM EVERYBODY, EVERY TIME YOU MEET, AND KEEP GOD'S WORD IN THE MIDDLE.

This goal is measurable. If this goal is hit each gathering, for the whole session, then growth will happen because growth happens slowly, over time! From here, being cared for and being heard will happen naturally for each person because a space is being created where everyone is heard and centered on God's Word.

LEADER REFLECTION

As a leader, you will need to be introspective and open to feedback. Invite feedback from those in your group and ministry leads.

- How have leaders in groups you've been in before engaged people?
- What are some ways you can think of to engage people in your group?
- If you are not hearing from everyone, every time you meet, why not?
- Are you, as the leader, engaging everyone? If so, how? If not, what can you do differently?

A LEADER'S KEY ROLE

A leader's key role is to create an environment where significant relationships can be developed and God's Word is at the center. Significant relationships cannot happen without introspection and reflection. Leading people takes awareness and understanding of what the leader's role is versus what God's role is. Relationships thrive through meaningful and intentional conversation, not teaching. The goal is conversation, not teaching; however there are teachable moments.

WHAT IT TAKES TO LEAD

A LEADER'S ROLE

- *Leadership Skills*—Leading good conversation—not dominating or teaching
- *Shepherding Skills*—Coming along side of + supporting one another in tangible ways
- *Facilitation Skills*—Getting people to talk, asking good questions

GOD'S ROLE

- *The Holy Spirit*
- *Growing People*
- *Convicting People*



"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow."

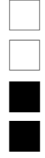
1 Corinthians 3:6-7, ESV

YOU CANNOT MAKE ANYONE GROW—THAT'S GOD'S JOB.

WHAT PEOPLE NEED

In order to thrive in a group setting, people only need 4 things:

- 1 A safe place to build trust—one that honors and respects all voices
- 2 Consistency—weekly or bi-weekly meetings, start and end on time, create a “normal”
- 3 FUN—enjoyment and laughter through the mundane, good, and hard parts of life
- 4 Belonging—a place where people want to be because of the attention + abundant care



2

DESIGN YOUR TIME

**CREATE LIFE CHANGING
CONVERSATIONS**

LIFE CHANGING CONVERSATIONS HAPPEN OVER TIME.

GROUP MEETINGS ARE HOLY GATHERINGS

God is at work, especially when we are together! Life changing conversations often don't happen once, but instead, they happen over time. The #1 Goal is so important because it builds relationships over time—hear from everybody, every time. When God's Word is kept in the middle, spiritual growth, transformation, and accountability happen naturally and in the context of relational discipleship.

Groups gathering together are holy moments because we need one another. When it is just us and God, it is good, but it is not enough. Satan wants us alone and he wants us in isolation; that is where he plants lies and does his divisive work. All throughout Scripture God points us to be together, Scripture is our baseline example.



“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the

Day approaching.”

Hebrews 10:24-25, NIV

In his book *Made For People*, Justin Whitmel Earley wrote:

“It is crucial to see that our capacity to be lonely with God is not a sign of God’s insufficiency or lack. It is a sign of His unfathomable generosity: God designed us to need people. You cannot experience God the way you were made to until you experience Him alongside others. Our fullest spirituality is only possible with others.”

Our spirituality is enhanced when we circle up with others; it is vital that we cross from superficial relationships into relationships that are raw and real. We must make intentional steps to move from a group to a healthy family.

THE GOALS

The goals of groups are two-fold:

- 1 To engage and grow spiritually—in Jesus through intentional time with Him
- 2 To engage and grow relationally—with each other through fellowship, study, and quality time together

THE GOAL IS NOT TO GET THROUGH A BOOK, TO ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS, OR TO SOLVE SOMEONE’S PROBLEM.

PREPARATION + AWARENESS ARE FUNDAMENTAL

In order to meet the goals above, three things are required from the leader: preparation, awareness, and effort. Leading requires more involvement than just attending and facilitating the group. Involvement and leadership require effort, preparation, awareness, and direction from the Holy Spirit.

KEEP THE END IN MIND AND HAVE A LOOSE PLAN ON HOW TO GET THERE.

As you prepare, keep the end in mind and have a loose plan of how to get there, remaining attentive to the Holy Spirit's guidance. Below are a few questions to ask at the start of your preparation:

- *Do I need to lead my group through every single question? Why or why not?*
- *Do I need to add additional questions that are more personal to my group?*
- *Which questions will we focus on most? Why?*
- *How long will we spend on each question?*
- *Who do we need to hear from? (Just a few people or everyone?) Why?*
- *What kind of questions can be asked in order to draw people out? Or, how can follow up questions be intentional and unearth things in conversation?*
- *How can I relate this to my story to exemplify vulnerability?*

PREPARATION

- 1 Find a quiet place to study and prepare for the upcoming lesson, even if you don't have the actual lesson content; prepare your heart to lead. In the end, it is not the actual preparation, but the posture of your heart.
- 2 If you are studying the sermon, listen to the sermon. If you are reading a book, read the book.
- 3 Relate and apply answers and responses to yourself first. Speak in regards to how God is speaking to you. As you are spending time preparing, write down thoughts, questions, other examples, or additional questions for the group to respond to. (Hint: This is a great way to tailor studies and questions to your group specifically).
- 4 Your group will be as vulnerable and open as you invite them to be—you are creating the example and the bedrock that your group runs on.

5

Eliminate questions that do not fit the personality of your group or refine questions.

6

Connect with leaders, co-leaders, and hosts prior to the gathering. Make a plan together; stack hands and set clear boundaries on expectations and individual roles.

AWARENESS

As leaders, we must be aware of what is really going with those in our group. We cannot force a vulnerable environment, but we can lead by example and help bridge the gap from sharing to vulnerability.

- Sharing is what we do when we—
 - tell life updates.
 - tell what is happening to us.
- Vulnerability is what we do when we—
 - let people into our lives.
 - tell what is happening in us.

SHARING EXAMPLES

Our marriage isn't great right now.

I'm so busy and stressed at work.

My spiritual life is lacking right now.

I am just grumpy and tired.

VULNERABILITY EXAMPLES

Our yelling woke the kids up last night and one of us left the house angry.

I'm drinking a few glasses of wine/taking sleeping pills every night to help me settle down.

I don't read my Bible or pray because it's not working for me right now. I don't know if God hears me or cares.

My initial response is anger and I can't figure out the root of it.

TOOLS FOR THE GROUP LEADER TOOLBOX

These are ideas and tools for the “group leader” toolbox; use them or tweak them as you see fit.

1

START SMALL

Start by answering the question in pairs before sharing with the whole group.

- Helps people process through their responses before talking in front of more people, especially helpful for introverts.
- Helps people intentionally think through their responses, rather than just filling space.
- Ensures 100% group participation.

2

GET CREATIVE

Mix up how the questions are asked because it will speak to people differently.

- Anyone Answers: Extroverts jump first, introverts are often left out.
- Go Around the Circle: Ensures everyone participates. Don't always land here; but use it as a back up. Good for icebreakers or more “softball questions”.
- Direct at One Person: If it is a tougher question, choose someone you know can and will respond appropriately then go from there.
- Piggy Back Questions: Base responses or additional questions off what someone else said that would bring a good point.

3

INVOLVE EVERYONE, EVERYTIME YOU MEET

Throughout the group, make sure everyone is talking, but remember that talking comes in various forms:

- Responding to questions in the large group or in smaller groupings or pairs
- Read verses
- Prayer

4

KEEP AN EYE ON THE CLOCK

Be aware of how long discussion around each question lasts; be aware how much each person is talking.

- Create mental time limits for questions and responses—this helps keep dominators in line, which is the #1 problem!

5

WAIT IT OUT

Be comfortable sitting in silence. Remember this acronym and ask:

W — why

A — am

I — I

T — talking?

- 1–3 Seconds: People typically jump into conversation out of reaction and expectation, especially in small group settings.
- 3–6 Seconds: Studies show that between 3-6 seconds of “wait time”, more meaningful thoughts happen which leads to more meaningful conversation.
- On more thoughtful, challenging, or higher risk questions, have the mentality of “waiting your group out”.

TWO TYPES OF QUESTIONS

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Could create unnecessary tension or could cause people to lie to make an answer to fit in or to impress.

EXAMPLES:

Why weren't you at church on Sunday? What is your favorite type of pizza? What National Parks have you been to? How can I help you?

CLOSE-ENDED QUESTIONS

A simple yes or no—that is it! These types of questions allow space for explanation. If someone's answer is one word, ask them to expound.

EXAMPLES:

Did you go to church on Sunday? Do you like pizza? Have you been to the Grand Canyon? Do you need help?

LET THE CONVERSATION “WARM UP”

Group discussions and intentional conversations can be compared to taking a shower—

1. First, you turn on the water.
2. Then, you let the water warm up.
3. And then, once the water is warm, you get in!

Just like a shower, conversations take time to warm up—people take time to warm up. Below are some levels of questions that are helpful in navigating conversation. We must understand and be aware of the questions that are being asked, and each time we meet with people (one-on-one or within a group setting), we should start at low risk and then move intentionally down the line.

LEVEL 1: LOW RISK

These are more “surfacy”, “get-to-know-you”, and light-hearted questions, but these questions build trust. These questions are casual, fun, and easy to engage with—no matter what. They mostly contain:

- personal facts,
- hobbies,
- pastimes,
- or give history.

These questions happen at the beginning of a group and relationships and they should never disappear from conversation. These Level 1/Low Risk questions include ice breakers or all play questions in a group setting—these light-hearted questions open the door to meaningful relationships.

- *Level 1/Low Risk questions should be at the front end of every group conversation and more frequent at the start of a group or session. Although they should taper off, they should never completely disappear! They help people feel more confident and will open the front door for people to share more meaningful things down the road. Studies show that it is more likely for people to be vulnerable after sharing something “easy”.*

LEVEL 2: MEDIUM RISK

These questions are informative and are building blocks to

relationships. They move into:

- personal opinions,
- beliefs,
- or interpretations of situations.

These questions also give insight on what was found, felt, or thought. These are more personal and take conversation a layer past the surface.

LEVEL 3: HIGH RISK

These are questions that meet individuals in personal growth areas or points of weakness. They open the door to:

- confession,
- application,
- accountability,
- encouragement,
- or share requests and desires of the heart.



Leader Tip: Just because someone isn't talking, does not mean they don't have anything to say. Ask them or make a note to follow up with them individually. Remember what people share (the good, the bad, and the ugly) and follow up with them.

THE 24 HOUR RULE

If something is shared or discussed during the group that is vulnerable, out of the ordinary, or has deeper meaning—follow up and reach out within 24 hours.

When you talk to them, ask yourself—“What do they need?”

- **Guarding:** “I know what you shared was hard, we heard you and we are with you—how can I pray for you?” (and then pray with them)
- **Affirmation:** “Thanks so much for inviting us into that part of your life; it is an honor to walk beside you.” Or, “I am so glad you are in this group.”
- **Acknowledgement:** “I noticed that you were quiet during group, is everything okay?” Or, “Thanks for leading the icebreakers, you did a great job.”

GROUPS ARE EQUALLY A PLACE FOR SOCIAL CONNECTION AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

EXPECTATIONS + GROWTH

Groups should be social, enjoyable, and fun! Building a foundation of enjoyment and friendship will then move the group's relationships towards depth and richness. Growth comes from intentionally moving from Level 1/Low Risk questions into Level 2 and Level 3 types of questions and conversations. Groups are equally a place for social connection and spiritual growth.

PRAYER

Prayer is the glue that holds groups together. Always have a time set aside for intentional prayer—even if it is only a social time. This is vital to individual and group growth. It provides a space to celebrate what God is doing, reflect on His goodness, bring hard things into the light, and to seek His voice together.

Closing in prayer is different from linking arms and praying for and with each other. Prayer is intended to be relational with us and God and with us and others.

The "Idea Box" on the next page will unfold and apply differently in each ministry; contextualize specifically to the ministry you lead or speak with your ministry team about other ideas.



IDEA BOX

Create a time and space to share prayer requests and praises—every time you meet. It is helpful to have a secretary to write down notes on prayers and then share those with the group.

STOP + PRAY

If a need arises during group, stop in the middle and pray! Follow the Holy Spirit's guidance.

PRAY AS A GROUP

Pray together as a large group.

PRAY IN PAIRS

Split into pairs for prayer and have each person be intentional about following up with their partner the upcoming week.

SEPARATE MEN + WOMEN

Dividing genders breaks down many unspoken barriers. In this space, women and men can share, connect, and pray differently and more intentionally than in a larger group.

PRAY WITH SMALLER GROUPS

Separate into smaller groups of 3 or 4 people.

PRAY FOR WHO'S ON THE RIGHT

Have everyone share and then have each person pray for the person on their right (or left).

FOLLOW UP IN BETWEEN

In between meetings, follow up. This is as easy as a text thread—texts help keep us connected when we are apart and they can be intentional touch points throughout the week.



3

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

MAKE YOUR FIRST MEETING GREAT

IMPACTS OF FIRST IMPRESSIONS

1

7 SECONDS

Studies show it takes about 7 seconds to set expectations and solidify first impressions. First impressions create an atmosphere and a feel. Create an environment that is enjoyable, warm, welcoming, and thoughtful. Be mindful of the people who may feel like an outsider.



IDEA BOX

- Draw people in from the outside so they know where to go—have balloons out, make a sign, turn all the lights on
- Be warm and welcoming with a smile and a hello
- Have name tags
- Offer snacks or drinks
- Have a spot to put jackets and purses

IF YOU MEET IN A HOME, CONSIDER:

- Playing soft background music
- Light some candles
- Baking something that smells good
- Put animals away

INTENTIONAL DISCUSSION

- Intentionally think through the plan of your first time together and layout your first discussion.
- This first meeting will set a tone and standard for following times together.
- Have group members share about themselves—why they are here, what their hopes and expectations are for group, etc.
- Address talking time limits before they become a problem—Say something like:
 - *“Our hope is that everyone here is going to talk, every time we are together.”*



IDEA BOX

- Set group expectations (logistical and otherwise) through conversation—the more input your group members have, the more they will be bought in and have ownership in the group
- Keep study time focused and intentional
- Discuss the marks of a healthy group (connecting relationally, growing spiritually) and keep coming back to that
- Lay a foundation of topics that are fair game:
 - God’s Word, encouragement, personal sharing, etc.
- Lay a foundation for topics that are off the table:
 - politics, direct counseling, gossip, bunny trails, etc.

SUPPORT + FOUNDATION THROUGH COMMITMENT FORMS

Each ministry has their own version of a Commitment Form

- A Commitment Form helps lay a strong foundation for a healthy group; they can also help redirect or reset the direction of the group. All groups are highly encouraged to start here on the first meeting!
 - *Each ministry has its own version of a Commitment Form.*
- Walking through this form can be informal or formal, but use it to set expectations and lay a strong foundation.
- If/When things go sideways—go back to the foundation of the Commitment Form.

3

ALL CONVERSATION IS IMPORTANT CONVERSATION

Conversations that happen over food, before the group begins, or after the group is over are equally as important as the formal study and meeting discussion.

The “Idea Box” on the next page will give some ideas on how to navigate your first few meetings through setting clear expectations.



IDEA BOX

Set people up for a win; let them know what is coming.

FIRST

Intentionally welcome everyone as they enter. Provide (or have people bring) food, snacks, drinks. During a social, people will engage more if they have a drink in their hand and food on their plates!

SECOND

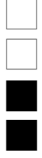
Give a 5 minute warning before you officially start: explain what to expect, what is coming next, where the bathroom is, where they can refill their drinks. This gives people a chance to prepare themselves. Say something like—

- *“Hey everyone, in about 5 minutes, we are going to gather in the living room and get going. Grab coffee, go to the bathroom, or whatever, then we’ll get started.”*

THIRD

Jump in, starting with some “organized fun”. Have icebreaker questions and/or mixers ready. This “organized fun” is important for the flow of the meeting; it provides a launching pad into more intentional time together. Lead/facilitate the discussion, but intentionally invite the people in the group into it.

**Be aware + respectful of people’s time (start + stop on time).*



4

CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT

**YOUR MEETING PLACE
IS HOLY GROUND**

REGARDLESS OF WHERE YOU MEET, CREATE A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE WANT TO BE.

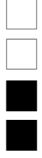
TEAMWORK

Leaders, co-leaders, and hosts are a team—if you don't have these people around you, find them! We cannot do it alone and the team that you surround yourself with is vital. They will highlight strengths and cover weaknesses; together, you can make your meeting time the best it can be. Be intentional with your team and give reflective feedback. When conversation falls flat, jump in and help each other keep the conversation going.

ACTUAL SPACE

The ministry you serve in will determine the space you meet in. However, naturally and instinctively, people gravitate towards homes. When you walk through the front door of someone's house, unspoken walls are brought down. Connecting relationally and growing spiritually will happen regularly, regardless of the actual space you meet in, but pursue meeting in a home in some capacity, whether that is for study, discussion, or social gatherings in between.

Launching and creating a healthy group begins with creating a desirable and welcoming environment that encourages relational connection and spiritual growth. Healthy spaces foster healthy individuals, which leads to healthy groups. Compiled are some ideas on how to create environments that will set you and your group up for success.



ENVIRONMENTS TO CREATE

BE PREDICTABLE

→Be consistent in the timing
+ flow of each meeting

KNOW NAMES

→Use name tags if necessary

CREATE A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT: INSIDE + OUTSIDE

→Attract from the outside
with lights, balloons, signs, etc.
People should know exactly
where to go!

→Be thoughtful and prepared
inside—pick up, have space
available to sit down + set
items, be hospitable, light a
candle, put away animals

ENOUGH SEATING IN A CIRCLE

→Circles are important so
everybody feels included +
nobody is on the outskirts

REFRESHMENTS OR POTLUCK STYLE

→Each time you meet, offer
something, even if it's small—
food + drinks

MEET NEEDS PRACTICALLY IN THE GROUP

→Help moving, bring meals,
make visits, meet up in-
between, pick up groceries,
etc.

VULNERABILITY BY EXAMPLE

→The people in your group
will only be as vulnerable +
open as leaders are

PITFALLS TO AVOID

CLEANING FOR SHOW OR APPROVAL

→ Remember, people live in their homes—give yourself + others grace

PHONES + ELECTRONICS

Have clear expectations + conversation around this

→ Minimize distractions, silence mode, leave them in the car, have a box for them at group

KIDS

Have clear expectations + conversation around this

→ Kids are great, but can also be a big distraction—adult connection must be a priority; this sets an example to kids that godly, significant relationships are vital

ANIMALS + PETS

→ Just like phones + kids, they are great, but also a distraction; put animals away for group time
(Also, be aware of pet allergies)

ALCOHOL

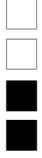
*1 Corinthians 8:9-13
We come alongside our brothers in Christ + love them regardless of our preferences or opinions*

→ Nope, not during formal group gatherings

→ Know the people relationally in your group—what is their past? Is this a struggle? Could it be a struggle?

POLITICS

→ Nope, not during formal group gatherings



5

EMBRACE CHALLENGES

**LEAD WITH HEART
+
BACKBONE**

THE HONOR OF STEPPING INTO LEADERSHIP IS WALKING ALONGSIDE OTHERS. IT IS NOT OUR JOB TO FIX THEM, IT IS OUR JOB TO LOVE THEM.

THE CHALLENGE: DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

People are difficult and we are those people. People are broken; broken people are sharp and must be handled with care. Stepping into leadership, we know that people will be constant and that people will be hard—but we adjust our leadership to accommodate, come alongside, and give clear boundaries in order for spiritual growth and relational connection to happen.

“

“Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean, but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox.”

Proverbs 14:4, ESV

“

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”

James 1:2-5, NIV

“

“And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone.”

1 Thessalonians 5:14, NIV

DIFFERENT TYPES OF DIFFICULT PEOPLE

Below are a few different types of difficult people you may encounter in your group.

- THE DOMINATOR**→ *Always has something to say, quick to jump in, talks more than anyone (more on this later)–*
- Thank them for their input, ask others to answer, say “I want to hear from someone else”, pursue a one-on-one conversation*
- THE DISAGREE-ER**→ *Consistently defensive, picks fights, enjoys arguments, standoffish–*
- Have a one-on-one conversation before/after group*
- THE RABBIT HOLE-ER**→ *Derails productive discussion, has ulterior motives, off topic, sees a “trail” and runs–*
- Redirect conversation, ask direct + on topic questions, have a one-on-one conversation saying that off topic conversations happen before/after group*
- THE DISTRACTOR**→ *Has side conversations, uses phone, disengaged, distracting others, side talk–*
- Give them a job or task, restate the purpose of time as a group, have a one-on-one conversation*
- THE INTERRUPTER**→ *Cuts others off, talks over people, slow to listen, jumps in on pauses–*
- Say things like: “Let’s hear so-and-so out,” “We will come back to you after others answer,” “Who would you like to hear from?”*
- THE FAKER**→ *Bragg, gives the “right” church answer, smooth talker, surface level–*
- Push for authenticity, guide them to uncover vulnerability, lead by example, ask hard questions*

THE AVOIDER→

Avoids hard or serious conversation, joking, always has a story—

- *Ask direct + follow up questions, pursue one-on-one conversation to see if something deeper is going on*

THE DO-GOOD-ER→

Knows the Bible, healthy participation, a go-to person, respectable + like-able, growing in God + connecting relationally with others in group—

- *Be intentional, pursue as an apprentice, train them up to lead*

THE CHALLENGE: SOLVING PROBLEMS

When people are involved, problems will arise. It is our response to the problems that will shape and lead those around us. By walking through the “Four Questions” below, it will uncover where to begin and give insight on how to move forward.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

In a relational and one-on-one context, lean into these questions together:

1

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN DEALING WITH THIS?

This uncovers the duration of the issue which will give insight into how deeply rooted the issue is.

2

WHO ELSE KNOWS?

This shows the involvement of others which will give clarity on who has heard about and/or spoken into the issue.

3

HAVE YOU RECEIVED ANY ADVICE OR COUNSEL ON HOW TO DEAL WITH THIS?

This reveals the pursuit of help. Has there been professional counseling, are you the first to know about this information, or does the whole town know?

4

DO YOU HAVE ANY PLANS FOR THE NEXT STEP?

This shows the motivation level for movement forward/growth. Do they desire to change and grow or do they want to talk about it?

From gathering these responses, information is given and you are empowered to prayerfully lead! You do not need to counsel, decide, or give specific advice, but you can lead. Limit your actual responses and allow them to respond.



Leader Tip: With the information from the Four Questions, decide what the next action step is. Ask—*“Who goes to follow up and follow through?”*

● **I GO**

I (as the leader) will handle it and go alone—keep the ministry team apprised.

● **YOU GO**

You (the ministry lead or staff person) will handle it and go alone—ministry lead will be in communication.

● **WE GO**

We (as the leader and the ministry lead/staff person) will handle it and go together.

THE CHALLENGE: LIVING IN COMMUNITY

All groups will have challenges. Living in community puts people and their baggage into one place. Problems can be boiled into 3 different categories:

- 1 **LIFE CRISIS**
Death, Tragedy, Unexpected Event
- 2 **SIN ISSUE**
Addiction, Pride, Insecurity, Etc.
- 3 **GROUP DYNAMIC ISSUE**
Dominators, Group Size, Meeting Flow, Expectations, Communication, Commitment

THE CHALLENGE: RELATING + RESPONDING

Relate, listen, and prayerfully respond. Keep these tips in mind:

- Watch for clues that something deeper is going on. People will throw big things out! Step in and be proactive through following up intentionally.
 - *Refer back to the “24 Hour Rule”*
- If it is a big or heavy issue, respond slowly (go back to the Four Questions) and pursue one-on-one conversation rather than digging in with the whole group.
- Redirect conversation when necessary—you are the leader and you have the authority to redirect.
- Keep your eyes on the whole group. The group shouldn't suffer because of one. During group meetings, be flock focused rather than lamb focused. Tend to and care for the lamb individually, but set boundaries within the group.
- Make use of the people and support system around you. Call your ministry team and decide next steps together.

THE CHALLENGE: OWNERSHIP

Leadership is not equivalent to independence; leadership steps out and empowers others to serve and have ownership within the happenings of the group. Share the load, ask for help, loop people in. Below are some simple ways to create buy-in and ownership.

FIND COMMON GROUND

- Common ground is imperative
- Make sure everyone knows and owns the mission, vision, and goal of the group: to connect relationally and grow spiritually

GROUPS HAVE MOVING PIECES—SHARE THE PIECES

- If you meet at a house, rotate host homes
- Have a co-leader; if you don't have one, get one in your group—see leadership potential and pursue it
- Pass out roles—everyone wants to be involved and be needed. When people are depended on, they are more committed.

- Here are some simple roles to pass out:
 - Bring a snack to share
 - Lead the icebreaker/mixer
 - Write down the prayer requests and praises
 - Plan a social gathering
- Intentionally pursue an apprentice.
 - An APPRENTICE is someone you see leadership or facilitator qualities in. After a conversation with ministry staff, intentionally train others up to share the leadership load—or to send the apprentice out to start their own group.

THE CHALLENGE: POLITICS

During official group meetings, political discussions are completely off the table. If a conversation must be had, meet outside of the group to talk about it one-on-one. Of course, pray for local and federal leaders and government, but be alert and strong when redirection is necessary. Politics are divisive—focus on the commonalities found in Jesus.

POLITICS ARE DIVISIVE—FOCUS ON THE COMMONALITIES FOUND IN JESUS.

THE CHALLENGE: DOMINATORS

Dominators are individuals who monopolize, take over, overpower, or dominate conversation.

- Dominators are the #1 problem in groups!
- Address dominators before they become an issue (through the Commitment Form)
- Watch how people respond to dominators within your group—they will often respond with rolling eyes, crossed arms, disengagement, etc.
- If you do not know who the dominator is...it's probably you.

- Address dominators one-on-one and case-by-case, never in front of the whole group
 - Keep the conversation direct, speak the truth in love and in conversational way.



“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.”

James 1:19-20, NIV



IDEA BOX

Dealing with a dominator depends on the level and persistence of the person. Addressing a dominator is not a one-size-fits-all—it is case-by-case and should always be confronted in the context of relationship.

MILD CASE OF A DOMINATOR

Here are some confrontational conversation starters:

- *“As a leader, I am trying to get every person to talk, every time we meet. Could you help me with that? This means each person gets a little bit of time to talk rather than one person getting a lot of time to talk.”*
- *“I am noticing that you are talking a lot more than others in the group. As you prepare for the group, choose 1-2 questions to respond to, and then we will hear from more people.”*

EXTREME CASE OF A DOMINATOR

If dominating still persists, go back to square one and set up clear boundaries one-on-one with this person; after each week, re-connect and talk through what happened and what is expected next time:

- WEEK 1 + 2: The dominator cannot talk during the study time
- WEEK 3 + 4: The dominator can choose 1 question to respond to
- WEEK 5: The dominator can choose 1-3 questions to respond to



What makes someone enjoyable to talk to?

THE CHALLENGE: CREATING GOOD CONVERSATION

SHARE FROM THE HEART

- Before diving into deep end of the conversational pool, spend time in the shallow end with Level 1/Low Risk Questions
- Touch on surface topics like sports, the weather, or TV, but have the intention to go beyond those topics. Get into the realm of opinions, thoughts, and feelings with Level 2/Medium Risk Questions.
- Avoid gossip
- Spend less time convincing and arguing and more time encouraging and connecting. It is not about forcing a change in someone, but instead, sharing experiences.
- Be honest and transparent
- How something is said is just as important as what is said. Be aware of volume, tone of voice, and body language.
- Sharing is necessary, but lead through vulnerability

LISTEN ACTIVELY

- Be genuinely interested in what others are saying
- Give signals that say “I’m listening” like eye contact and nodding your head
- Focus on who is speaking, not on your response or personal experiences
- After they have finished a statement, rephrase what you have heard back to them to make sure you understood them
- Be aware of non-verbal cues—folded arms could mean the other person is upset or not interested, tone of voice can say everything from sadness, to anger, to sarcasm

ASK GOOD QUESTIONS

- Limit questions with yes, no, or maybe answers—or ask them to expound on their answer
- Start with questions that build rapport, connection and togetherness
- Ask questions that uncover commonalities—build on those
- Embrace differences and seek to understand the other’s perspective
- Find enjoyment in getting to know others, rather than being driven by a goal or ulterior motives



“Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone.”

Colossians 4:6, NLT

6

LET GOD GROW YOU

LEADING FOR THE LONG HAUL

LEAD FROM STRENGTHS AND GROW IN WEAKNESSES.

NOBLE GROWTH PURSUITS

COMPETENCY: PURSUE EFFICIENCY

- Competency in your leadership role is important, but it is not the most important. What is valued is how you are growing spiritually and who you are connecting with relationally.
- Be intentional about inviting feedback—have open hands and a posture that invites growth and refinement.
- Pursue excellence, but remember that excellence is not perfection.

CHARACTER: OUR INTERNAL STRUCTURE

- Invite the Holy Spirit to change and grow you.
- Seek to be a person of deeply rooted, Godly character.

CHEMISTRY: COMMUNION WITH GOD + CHEMISTRY WITH OTHERS

- Pursue unity and brotherly love with God and others.
- This time together should add to your intimacy with God, not hinder it.
- You help to create the atmosphere of the group—it can be a Mary group (a group striving to be with Jesus) or it can be a Martha group (a group striving to do or complete a checklist).



“As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said.

But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Luke 10:38-41, NIV

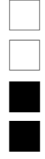
THE KEY IS VALUING AND PURSUING THE ACTUAL RELATIONSHIP, JUST LIKE JESUS.

LEADER REFLECTION

As a leader, you will need to be introspective and open to feedback. Invite feedback from those in your group, ministry leads, and co-leaders or hosts.

- How might God grow you through this experience of leading a group?
- What are current strengths you can lead from
- What are areas within leadership that you can grow in?

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CONCLUSION

**CLOSING STATEMENTS
+
MINISTRY BREAKOUTS**

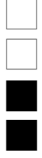


“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Acts 2:42-47, NIV

MINISTRY BREAKOUTS

Ministries Represented Alphabetically:
Life Groups, Men's, Recovery, Women's



LIFE GROUPS

Ministry Breakout

MAKE THE MOST OF RESOURCES AND RELATIONSHIPS

SUPPORT + STRUCTURE

There is a team created to support you no matter what phase of leadership you are in. This support system is foundational—lean into it for big and small matters.

STAFF: THE LIFE GROUPS TEAM

- Through the Staff on the Life Groups Team, you have one main contact person. This staff member is available for phone calls, emails, texts, etc.—for big and small questions.

Heights can outsource counseling which is available for you or those in your group when necessary.

LAY: COACHING PAIRS

- Being paired with a lay leader for mentorship, discipleship, and coaching is available and recommended.

IN YOUR GROUP: LEADER, CO-LEADER, HOST, MEMBER HELPERS

Rely heavily on the people in your group and lean into their giftings! If you are leading alone, or do not have these people in place, actively pursue and call on them. These people will add to the longevity, health, and the ownership within the group. We need to call on one another and lean into each other's strengths, which will cover one another's weaknesses.

- Leader's Role: Facilitate the conversation of the group, provide direction, make decisions, and protect the group as a whole
- Co-Leader's Role: Direct support to the leader in group facilitation, model healthy communication and responses, step in when leader is absent

- Host's Role: Opens their home as a meeting space, is inviting and has enough space to accommodate the group
- Member's Role: All group members need a role to feel a part of and have ownership—
 - See chapter 5 “Embrace Challenges” and look at “The Challenge: Creating Ownership”

APPRENTICESHIP

- Prayerfully and intentionally train someone up with the intent for them to co-lead, lead in your absence, or launch their own group.
- Future Life Group leaders are based solely on relationships and referrals from existing leaders. The Ministry of Life Groups expands through your faithfulness and boldness in training others up!

QUALITIES TO LOOK FOR IN AN APPRENTICE OR POTENTIAL LEADER

ARE THEY GOOD WITH PEOPLE?

They are: easy to talk to, enjoyable, light-hearted, fun, others lean in when they speak, real and authentic, intentional, vulnerable, self- and others-aware

ARE THEY GROWING IN CHRIST?

They are: exuding the Fruit of the Spirit, open and honest, faithful and committed, centered in God's Word, prayerful, humble, healthy, helpful, honest

**MAKE THE ACTUAL RELATIONSHIP THE MAIN PRIORITY:
RELATIONSHIP BEFORE.
RELATIONSHIP DURING.
RELATIONSHIP AFTER.**

HOW TO INTENTIONALLY RAISE UP AN APPRENTICE OR POTENTIAL LEADER

The specific amount of time spent on each step will depend on the individual you are pursuing. The Life Groups Team is available for coaching. In between each of the active steps below, have a follow up conversation.

- **CONNECT RELATIONALLY**: The foundation of apprenticeship is relationship—relationship comes before, during, and after apprenticeship
- **PRAY**: Cover the pursuit and training of an apprentice in prayer throughout the whole process—be attuned to the Holy Spirits' leading
- **LEARN**: Have them observe you leading by writing down specific things they like, things they would do differently, or things they have questions about
- **CO-LEAD**: Facilitate the group together, meeting beforehand to discuss the upcoming lesson and divvy out who is doing what
- **LEAD WITH YOU THERE**: Have them lead the group by themselves with you being there as a part of the group—follow up to coach
- **LEAD WHILE YOU'RE GONE**: Have them prepare and lead the group when you are not there—follow up to coach

GROUP MEMBERS

For this season, they are your flock, care for them well—within the group setting and on a one-on-one basis.

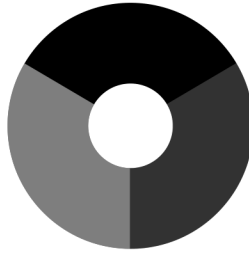
3 PILLARS: TO GATHER, TO GROW, + TO MOVE

Life Groups has 3 foundational pillars. Since each group is unique, these pillars will unfold differently.

TO GATHER

RELATIONSHIP PILLAR

Discipleship occurs best in the context of relationships. Significant relationships happens when we shoulder up and sit in a circle. Relationships are strengthened when we share experiences and actually “do life together”—the good and the hard.



TO MOVE

SERVICE PILLAR

Once we know God’s heart, the question becomes: “How can we NOT be the hands and feet of Jesus?” Service is a posture of the heart, not an item on a check list. Start by serving in the group and in your neighborhood—then expand from there.

TO GROW

STUDY PILLAR

Having the study of God’s Word and prayer built into relationship creates growth, intimacy, and connection. These things make relationships significant.

STUDIES

Studying is built into Life Groups on a weekly basis. In order to grow spiritually together, we have to be in God’s Word together. There are three different lanes to run in when it comes to studies:

- 1 Better Together | A Book Paired with a Weekly Leader’s Guide Podcast
- 2 Sermon-Based Questions (SBQ’s)
- 3 RightNow Media and Topical Studies

BETTER TOGETHER

—A BOOK PAIRED WITH A WEEKLY LEADER’S GUIDE PODCAST

Better Together is a recommended study for all Life Groups, especially new groups that are launching.

- The Book: Better Together is a book written by the Life Group’s Team, created to lay a solid foundation for why groups are vital in the life of the church. This book gives specific ideas on how to connect relationally and grow spiritually through the context of Scripture. This book is a guide to align individual expectations and lay a foundation of biblical, communal living which will lead to a healthy and strong Life Group.
- The Podcast: The Life Group’s Team also created a podcast that pairs weekly with Better Together in order to support leaders through the study. This leader’s guide walks through each chapter of the book—week-by-week. The podcast will guide leaders through planning each gathering as well as preparing for the study itself. This podcast is available on our website under Leader Resources.




Leader Tip: The podcast a leader’s guide, so it is only for leaders, not group members.

SERMON-BASED QUESTIONS (SBQ'S)

SBQ's + the Leader's Guide are only written while groups are in session based on the yearly calendar.

- The Purpose: SBQ's flesh out and dig deeper into weekly sermons. SBQ's help unity in the church body through topical sermon series.
- The Tension: SBQ's are written prior to the weekend's message. The questions composed are not a playback of the sermon, rather they are new or supportive perspectives (with additional scriptures) that will lead to richer, biblical dialogue.
- The Leader's Guide: Each week SBQ's are paired with a Leader's Guide. This guide is a resource that gives you more information and behind the scenes thoughts of SBQ's.



The "Announcements + Notes" Section of SBQ's
Regardless of if you study SBQ's or not, it is your responsibility as a leader to read the "Announcements + Notes" section each week. This is our weekly touch point with you! It includes: announcements, upcoming dates, and need-to-knows, leader tips, prayers, etc.

RIGHTNOW MEDIA + TOPICAL STUDIES

Sometimes, groups are in seasons of "need to know, need to grow". There are two options:

- RIGHTNOW MEDIA: RNM is an online platform for studies—it is considered to be "Netflix for Christians". As a gift, Heights Church provides free access to thousands of studies via RNM. If you do not have a RNM account, go to heightschurch.com, scroll down to "Right Now Media Free Access" and follow the prompts to create an account.
- TOPICAL BOOK STUDY: Your group may also choose to do a separate book study. If you choose this route, please get approval from the Life Groups Team prior to beginning the book study*. You and your group members will be responsible for purchasing these studies.

Please Note

All books, outside studies, and resources must be approved by the Life Groups Team prior to presenting to your group as a study option.

ANNUAL MINI SERIES FOR LIFE GROUPS

In January each year, Life Groups will come together and do a unified mini series as one body. It'll be within the Winter Session (beginning in January-ending in March) and will be about 4 weeks in length (groups will be able to choose when they do it within the first session). This mini series will be kicked off with a video from our Teaching Team and will be based around a topic or focus that we believe God is calling us deeper into.

LEADER RESOURCES—WEBSITE + APP NAVIGATION

Included in this book are Life Group leader resources. These resources are constantly up-to-date on the website and on the Heights App (under Life Group Leader Resources). You can view and print electronically.

**PLEASE DOWNLOAD AND
FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH
THE HEIGHTS APP**

Resources On The Following Pages

Each of the resources on the following pages are available on the Heights App + Website. The documents below can be used for reference, but keep in mind that the most up-to-date versions can be found online.

Life Group Leader Expectations

This one page wonder has the simple and laid out expectations for Life Group Leaders. This is a foundational document for Leaders + Heights Staff. It is the leadership version of the Commitment Form that we stack hands on prior to leadership. It provides clarity on expectations as well as provides a concrete document to come back to for accountability and encouragement.

LIFE GROUP LEADER EXPECTATIONS

QUALIFICATIONS FOR LIFE GROUP LEADERS/CO-LEADERS

- Committed to Christ for at least a year
 - Encouraged to be a Partner at Heights Church, involved in a Heights Life Group previously, or has gone through Growth Track
 - Committed to relational connection and spiritual growth
 - Strengths + Abilities:
 - Good with People—Have a track record of relating and connecting well with others
 - Growing in Christ—Through personal time and through evident fruits in their life
 - Leadership/Shepherding/Facilitating—Strength in one or more of these areas
-

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE LIFE GROUPS TEAM

- Ongoing support and care through face-to-face meetings and regular check-ins
 - Mass Communications—emails, texts
 - Up-to-date resources through the Heights App
 - A point person on the Life Group's Team for questions, connection, support, and troubleshooting
 - Annual training events—tools for the Leader's toolbox
-

EXPECTATIONS FOR LIFE GROUP LEADERS/CO-LEADERS

1. Prepare for and lead/facilitate the group meeting
 - Listen to the sermon + complete the work
 - Read the SBQ Leader's Guide "Announcements + Notes" section each week, even if your group is doing a different study. It's our weekly communication with you to keep you in the loop!
2. Care for Group Members
 - Keep tabs on and care for people relationally (personal problems, celebrations, and specific needs).
3. Contact New Members within 48 hours of Sign Up (You'll be notified via email when someone signs up.)
4. Partner with the Life Groups Team
 - Attend Life Group Events + Trainings
 - New Leader Training (one time only before your group launches)
 - Enrichment Event (Fall)
 - Celebration (Spring)
 - Read + respond (when necessary) to Life Group's communications (emails + texts)
5. Apprenticeship: Intentionally pursue someone/a couple to disciple and raise up in small group leadership
6. Navigate + Update the Database | Our Database is called Church Center which is where you will log in, upload a picture, and check your group's roster. Here is a quick how-to:
 - Watch this video for a step-by-step on how to set up your Church Center account. Copy and paste this link to view: [https://www.dropbox.com/s/ju1ebt4mbp5g0k0/LG Leader Intro to Church Center.mp4?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/ju1ebt4mbp5g0k0/LG%20Leader%20Intro%20to%20Church%20Center.mp4?dl=0)
 - Follow these steps to upload your picture for your Life Group:
 - Log into Church Center and click on "My Groups". Click on your Life Group.
 - Click on the "Actions" button in the top right and choose "Manage on Planning Center", then follow the log in prompts.
 - Once logged in, click "Settings" on the left side menu and change the picture
 - Upload a picture of your choosing! Just make sure it's good quality and your faces can be seen.

New Member Initial Contact

These 3 easy steps offer the best way to connect with a new member.

NEW MEMBER INITIAL CONTACT

1

WELCOME EMAIL INCLUDE ALL LOGISTICAL INFORMATION

Start the email with a short introduction that includes the leaders name, the group's stage of life, day, and time of gatherings and a simple "Welcome to the group!" Give a brief explanation of what to expect for the first meeting; this should include start time, meeting address, and what to bring. Lastly, ask them to respond!

2

FOLLOW UP TEXT SEND THIS TEXT MESSAGE

Hey! I'm _____, your Heights Life Group leader! I just sent an email with Life Group details. Let me know you get it, thanks! I'll give you a call in the next few days to chat!

3

FOLLOW UP PHONE CALL CALL AND CALL AGAIN

Even if there is a response to the text and/or email, pick up the phone and call—a personal touch of a phone call and kick of the relational connection. If you don't know them, make sure to leave a voicemail if they don't answer.

NEXT STEPS FROM GROUP MEMBER RESPONSES:

If they are...

Committed to Group: Continue as planned.

Not Going to Join Group: Let the Life Groups Team know.

Not Responding at all: Let the Life Groups Team know.

Commitment Forms

Provided are two versions of the Commitment Forms—one for leaders and one for group members. The leader version has notes, thoughts, and additional Scripture to use as a guide; the group member version does not. The Commitment Form should be completed and discussed on the first night of each session to (re)establish expectations and boundaries (happens 3 times a year).

- Use the Commitment Form as a guide, not as the “end all be all” document.

COMMITMENT FORM: LEADER'S GUIDE VERSION

LIFE GROUP COMMITMENT FORM

The purpose of Life Groups Ministry is To **Gather** by connecting relationally, To **Grow** by engaging spiritually, and To **Move** by serving local and global neighbor's faithfully.

Leader's Guide: Highlighted notes indicate additional information for leader's. The group member version does not have any highlighted parts. Remember, use this Commitment Form as a guide, or guardrails, to direct group conversation.

LIFE GROUPS: The Purpose, the Heart, and What to Expect

Life Groups exist to promote spiritual maturity and personal growth through significant Christian relationships. Discipleship relationships happen best through Life Groups. Life Groups has a foundation of 3 Pillars: To Gather, To Grow, and To Move. (Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:16-24, Hebrews 10:23-25, Acts 2:42-47)

Life Groups healthily thrive on participation and investment. The purpose of the Life Group Commitment Form is to help discuss and clarify the group's goals, expectations, and commitments. Start by reading the verses above together and praying. This Commitment Form lays groundwork for the future, whatever issues arise or otherwise.

TO GATHER | Connect Relationally

- **SHARE:** Each week, we will take time to share what is happening in our lives. There will be some get-to-know-you questions, intentional questions focused on personal and spiritual growth, and we will spend time reading Scripture and praying together.
 - The target for each time the group meets is to hear from everybody, every time you meet, and keep God's Word in the middle.
- **SUPPORT:** Each week, we will learn how to care for one another as Christ commands. This kind of care can take many forms such as: prayer, encouragement, listening, and challenging one another. (Scripture: John 15:9-13)
 - Read the verse above together.
 - Group Discussion Question: What other forms of caring for one another are there? How do you feel most cared for?

TO GROW | Grow Spiritually

- **STUDY:** Each week, we will study a section from Scripture that relates to the weekly message or a topical study.
 - The weekly priority during the study is to keep God's Word at the center of our conversation.
 - The goal is to interact personally on the topic and discuss how we can practically follow Christ. This may be a good place to define "interacting personally." Encourage your group to be quick to listen; this creates a safe environment for people to share honestly. Do not give specific advice or ways to "fix it" unless specifically asked. Address dominators.
- **PRAY:** Each week, we will spend time praying with and for one another.
 - Prayer is the glue that holds groups together. Be intentional with prayer requests and praises.

TO MOVE | Neighbor Faithfully Through Service

- **SERVICE:** Being spiritually healthy is not a benefit for ourselves, but for others. Throughout the session, it is our hope that we can pursue service as a lifestyle—individually and as a group.
 - The Local Serve Board is available as a Life Group resource with simple step-in opportunities into service.
 - See needs and fill needs within your group and with each other—then move to neighbors, locally and globally.

COMMITMENT FORM: LEADER'S GUIDE VERSION CONTINUED

Informal Commitment Form Recommendation:

★ The discussion of the Commitment Form should happen in the context of relationship. As a leader, you should collect verbal commitments from each group member or should hypothetically "stack hands" on the Commitment Form. Rather than making them commit in front of everyone—give them time to process the Commitment Form and respond to it individually. However, it is important to collect some form of commitment. This will provide a foundation and reference point if/when issues arise in the future.

- **Hint:** Go through the Commitment Form step-by-step as a group, discussing each part and having your group speak into all aspects. Creating a group with ownership and buy in starts from the beginning!

The Marks of a Healthy Life Group

For this Life Group to be healthy and thrive, we commit to:

- Hearing from everybody, every time we meet, and keep God's Word in the middle.
- **Connect Relationally by:**
 - Accepting one another. (Scripture: Romans 15:7)
 - We all connect differently with different people; embrace people's differences.
 - Treating one another with respect. (Scripture: Ephesians 4:25-5:2)
 - Be quick to listen and slow to speak.
 - The goal is to listen, not to give specific advice or counsel. Advice is given only when it is asked for. We are not here to judge or fix, unless we are invited to share wisdom. On the other hand, that does not mean we can't question what someone said or what they are doing in love.
 - Some of us have the "gift of gab", also known as a dominator. Be careful. As the leader, I may have to help guide you or remind you to be slower to speak. (Address the dominators early on to support and combat any future issues.)
 - Be careful of gossip prayers. For example, "We need to pray for (someone's name) because they are doing...". The same rings true for political prayers.
- **Grow Spiritually by:**
 - Making spiritual growth a priority. (Scripture: 2 Peter 1:8)
 - Tangents are okay sometimes, but we may need to be refocused. We need to keep spiritual growth a focus and stay on topic with discussion.
- **Serving Neighbors Faithfully by:**
 - Taking care of one another. (Scripture: John 13:34, Acts 20:35)
 - When a crisis happens, we will commit to supporting, encouraging, listening, praying, bringing meals, etc.
 - Serving is an overflow of our hearts from being in relationship with Christ. Serving individually and as a group shouldn't be just an item on a checklist, but rather, a posture of our hearts. As a group, we can pursue service together and help keep each other accountable in being the hands and feet of Jesus to our neighbors.
 - Start serving and meeting needs in your group, then expand from there.

COMMITMENT + GUIDELINES

Leaders, we encourage you to have this portion mostly nailed down prior to going through it with your group. Some things, your group may need to weigh in on. Inviting your group members in to help make decisions will cause them to be more invested because they have a say and ownership; however, some things should already be decided on by you as the leader. Use your discretion.

1. Dates Fill in the blanks.

We will meet on _____ for _____ weeks. Our final meeting of this session will be on _____.

COMMITMENT FORM: LEADER'S GUIDE VERSION CONTINUED

2. **Time** Fill in the blanks.
We will arrive between _____ and _____ and officially begin at _____ and end at _____.
You can clarify to your group if it is okay for them to show up early or linger after the group ends; if you want that as a leader.
3. **Kids** Fill in the blanks.
Life Groups are for adults; group members are responsible to arrange child care for their children. Nursing newborns are welcome.
If you as the leader or your group come up with a different plan for childcare, discuss that here. Even though kids are great, boundaries must be created to prioritize adult connection; adults are the focus and priority.
4. **Study and Homework** Fill in the blanks.
We will study _____ and will do the required homework or reading ahead of time.
 - Emphasize the importance of preparation and having reading and homework done prior to meeting as a group.
 - Decide on studying Sermon-Based Questions, RightNow Media, or a topical study.
5. **Prayer**
We will pray for and with one another regularly.
Remember, being forced to pray in a group, or just the idea of it, can cause people anxiety or to not want to come. If you have new people in your group, you might want to say something like, "It's exciting to see how God works in our lives through prayer. Praying out loud can be new or intimidating. Know that you will never be forced to pray." Prayer should not be gossip or political. Prayer can happen at each gathering differently, but it should happen.
6. **Attendance** Fill in the blanks.
Joining a Life Group requires a commitment to attend each gathering. Obviously, life happens, but coming to group needs to be a priority and a commitment. If we cannot come to a meeting, we will let _____ know.
Commitment is key to a healthy group. Make sure everyone stacks hands on this because this creates ground to stand on down the road. Ask something like, "Is this what we want to pursue? Do we agree to being committed?"
7. **Food, Drinks, and Dessert**
Do not allow all the food, drinks, and desserts to fall on the leader or the host every time. Have people sign up to bring things to help out—people want to be involved.
8. **Service**
The Local Serve Board is a great place for simple service step-in opportunities. Emphasize the importance of serving individually and as a group, have some ideas as to how you can serve as a group, chat about how individuals are already serving. Remember, start with the folks in your group. Servanthood is always right in front of us.
9. **Safe Place and Confidentiality**
"What is said here, stays here."
Make that your motto! The group is a safe place, but also communicate to the group, "If something is shared that might be harmful to yourself or someone else, as the leader, I will seek counsel from Heights staff as to how to respond."

COMMITMENT FORM: GROUP MEMBER'S VERSION

LIFE GROUP COMMITMENT FORM

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LIFE GROUPS: The Purpose, the Heart, and What to Expect

Life Groups exist to promote spiritual maturity and personal growth through significant Christian relationships. Discipleship relationships happen best through Life Groups. Life Groups has a foundation of 3 Pillars: **To Gather**, **To Grow**, and **To Move**. (Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:16-24, Hebrews 10:23-25, Acts 2:42-47)

TO GATHER | Connect Relationally

- **SHARE:** Each week, we will take time to share what is happening in our lives. There will be some get-to-know-you questions, intentional questions focused on personal and spiritual growth, and we will spend time reading Scripture and praying together.
- **SUPPORT:** Each week, we will learn how to care for one another as Christ commands. This kind of care can take many forms such as: prayer, encouragement, listening, and challenging one another. (Scripture: John 15:9-13)

TO GROW | Grow Spiritually

- **STUDY:** Each week, we will study a section from Scripture that relates to the weekly message or a topical study.
- **PRAY:** Each week, we will spend time praying with and for one another.

TO MOVE | Neighbor Faithfully Through Service

- **SERVICE:** Being spiritually healthy is not a benefit for ourselves, but for others. Throughout the session, it is our hope that we can pursue service as a lifestyle—individually and as a group.

The Marks of a Healthy Life Group

For this Life Group to be healthy and thrive, we commit to:

- Hearing from everybody, every time we meet, and keep God's Word in the middle.
- Connect Relationally by:
 - Accepting one another. (Scripture: Romans 15:7)
 - Treating one another with respect. (Scripture: Ephesians 4:25-5:2)
- Grow Spiritually by:
 - Making spiritual growth a priority. (Scripture: 2 Peter 1:8)
- Serving Neighbors Faithfully by:
 - Taking care of one another. (Scripture: John 13:34, Acts 20:35)

COMMITMENT + GUIDELINES

1. **Dates**
We will meet on _____ for ____ weeks. Our final meeting of this session will be on _____.
2. **Time**
We will arrive between ____ and ____ and officially begin at ____ and end at ____.
3. **Kids**
Life Groups are for adults; group members are responsible to arrange child care for their children. Nursing newborns are welcome.
4. **Study and Homework**
We will study _____ and will do the required homework or reading ahead of time.
5. **Prayer**
We will pray for and with one another regularly.
6. **Attendance**
Joining a Life Group requires a commitment to attend each gathering. Obviously, life happens, but coming to group needs to be a priority and a commitment. If we cannot come to a meeting, we will let _____ know.
7. **Food, Drinks, and Dessert**
8. **Service**
9. **Safe Place and Confidentiality**
"What is said here, stays here."

Icebreakers + Mixers

Compiled on the following pages are some of the Life Groups Team's favorite go-to icebreaker questions, games, and mixers. Do not reinvent the wheel—use these resources that are available to you! The Resource Section of the Life Groups book, “Better Together”, also includes icebreakers, mixers, and games.

INDIVIDUAL QUESTION MIXER

Give each person a pen and a piece of paper, or have them use their phones for notes. Have each person talk to 3 different people and ask them a few questions. These questions can be silly or more in depth. Have everyone write down the name of the people they talked to and their responses. This should take anywhere between 15-20 minutes. When everyone comes back together, have the leader go to each person in the group and ask what was learned about that person; everyone who talked with that person shares what they learned.

SPLIT THE ROOM MIXER

Divide the room into two: one half is **NO WAY** and the other half is **NO PROBLEM**. Read some of the statements below, or come up with your own then have people move to the side that best describes them. Ask a few people individually why they chose that side. Here are some statements to start with:

- *I would like to travel internationally.*
 - *I'm happy with the vehicle I drive.*
 - *I enjoy eating strange, exotic foods.*
 - *I am comfortable in any situation.*
 - *I have been to Europe.*
 - *I have had more than 1 car accident.*
 - *I would never break the law.*
 - *I would hold a snake.*
 - *I love spicy foods.*
 - *I am a “Lord of the Rings” fan.*
 - *I have been arrested before.*
 - *I have peed in a pool before.*
 - *I have clogged the toilet at someone else's home.*
 - *I have to go to a party where I don't know anyone.*
 - *I want to go skydiving.*
 - *I have passed gas in public and not said anything or blamed it on someone else.*
 - *I had/have the best parents in the world.*
 - *I have broken a bone before.*
 - *I would do a zip-line.*
 - *I have said a bad word in the last week.*
 - *I must deal with a conflict at work.*
 - *You are asked to live alone.*
-

THE QUESTION GAME

Everyone starts with a piece of paper. On that paper, everyone writes down one question. Pass all the papers around the circle until everyone has answered all the questions. From there, read questions and answers aloud and guess what answer belongs to who. Here is a list of some questions to get you started, or you can make up your own:

- *What is your most embarrassing moment?*
- *If you could have any super hero power, which one would you pick?*
- *What is your favorite movie?*
- *What is something that you resent paying for?*
- *What was your favorite vacation?*
- *What was your worst injury?*
- *What is the best practical joke you've ever seen or been a part of?*
- *What movie can you watch over and over without getting tired of?*
- *Who would be your celebrity crush?*
- *What is your best cure for hiccups?*
- *What was the worst date you've ever been on?*
- *What was cool when you were growing up, but is not now?*
- *What is one thing that you would like to change about yourself?*
- *Who is your biggest hero? Why?*
- *What is the greatest way you've seen God move in your life?*
- *What is your biggest worry for kids growing up in today's age?*
- *Would you consider adopting or fostering a child? Why or why not?*
- *How often do you read your Bible?*
- *What is your proudest accomplishment?*
- *What is your biggest regret in life?*
- *Have you been in a Life Group before? If so, what was it like?*
- *If you could talk to one person in the Bible, who would it be and what would you talk about?*
- *What are your hopes for this group?*
- *How can this group help you?*
- *If you had to describe yourself in one word, what would you say?*

THE NEWLYWED GAME

Use the questions below, or create your own, and have each couple record their responses separately. Split the wives and husbands into different spaces while they respond to the questions. Then, take turns having each couple be in the hot seat. Ask each question to the couples and compare their recorded responses. If the answer's match, they get a point!

- *Where was your first date?*
- *Who is more likely to deal with a spider?*
- *If you could toss one article of his clothing, what would it be? Hers?*
- *What is her guilty pleasure in spending? His?*
- *What was the first movie you saw together?*
- *What is your most frequent disagreement?*
- *When and where was your first kiss?*
- *What is her dream date?*
- *Who hogs the bed? The covers?*

THREE ON A COUCH GAME

Designate one person to be the leader; this person will host the game.
Follow the steps below to host the game:

1. Pass out a small piece of paper, or note card, and a pen to everyone.
2. Have everyone write down their first and last name and their most embarrassing moment on the paper. Give the paper to the host.
3. The host will quietly and independently read through the papers and choose the best embarrassing moment.
4. The host will then choose 3 people to sit on the couch; one of those people must be the real story teller whose name is on the card; the two others are chosen at random.
5. The host reads the embarrassing moment aloud to the room.
6. All 3 people on the couch must act like the embarrassing moment is their story to tell. They must give information and details to support the embarrassing moment to make it believable. Obviously, only one person is telling the truth.
7. The host, and everyone, asks the 3 on the couch specific questions regarding the embarrassing moment and all 3 must answer each question.
8. After enough information is gathered, have everyone vote on who they think the real story teller is.
9. To end the game, the host asks, "Will the real story teller please stand up?"

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS

Use these topics and questions to start conversation. Every conversation has the potential to be great, to inspire us into action, to build significant relationships, and to connect us to each other.

- In your opinion, what are the 7 wonders of the world?
- If you could appear on any reality TV show, what would you choose?
- What pets have you had in your life?
- If you could be any athlete for a single game, who would you choose?
- What do you love most about your hometown?
- When you're down, what makes you feel better?
- How will life be different in the next 50 years?
- What is the worst job you've ever had?
- What are the most important qualities in friends?
- If you owned a boat, what would you name it and why?
- If you could have a front row seat to any concert, what would it be?
- What fashion trend did you follow that was cool, but is ridiculous now?
- What do you miss about childhood?
- Which is more important: intelligence or common sense? Why?
- What have you lost that you would like to find?
- What makes a house a home?

- Who was your favorite teacher? Why?
- Would you rather visit a big city or the countryside?
- In what era would you have liked to grow up in?
- Who is the most optimistic person you know?
- What book(s) are you currently reading?
- What is your favorite quote? Why?
- In what activity would you like to learn from an expert?
- What is your favorite part of Thanksgiving dinner?
- What would you love to find at a yard sale?
- What is something on your bucket list?
- Which event in the past, present, or future would you like to witness in person?
- What do you complain about more than anything else?
- If you had to change your name, what name would you choose?
- What do you admire most about your parents?
- What remains undone that you have wanted to get done for a while?
- If you could donate one million dollars to a charity, what would you choose? Why?
- Have you ever purchased anything from a TV infomercial? If so, what?
- Who would you like to trade places with for a month?
- Would you rather live by the beach or in the mountains?
- How do you define success?
- If you could master one instrument, what would it be?
- Who taught you how to ride a bike?
- Do you tend to live in the past, present, or future?
- Would you stop eating junk food to live longer?
- If you had to get a tattoo, what would you get and where would you put it?
- What has been the best TV sitcom ever?
- What takes up too much of your time?
- Have you ever performed in a talent show? If so, what was your act?
- What is your favorite smell?
- What is your favorite personality test? Why?
- What would you choose to sing at Karaoke night?
- Do you like or dislike surprises? Explain.
- What is the most unusual thing you have ever eaten?
- If you had a warning label, what would yours say?
- Who knows you the best? Why would you pick that person?
- Do you regift things? If so, what have you regifted?
- Did you ever cheat in school?
- If cars or planes didn't exist, what would be your preferred means of transportation? Why?
- What is your favorite thing about your career?
- What is your favorite sport to watch and play?
- Describe your perfect Saturday.
- What has been the most memorable celebration you've been a part of?
- Would you notify the police if your child committed a crime?
- Would you write a reference letter for someone who you feel is poorly qualified?
- Have you ever pretended you were sick to get out of something?
- If you could have any view from your back porch, what would it be?
- Who do you think is the most inspirational person alive today?

End of Session Feedback Form

This feedback form is emailed out electronically at the end of each session—a total of 3 times each calendar year. It provides a platform to celebrate strengths and evaluate and refine needs improvements within the Life Group Ministry. This feedback form is confidential and will only be seen by Heights Staff—not leaders or group members.

End of Session Feedback Form

Online Form Submission Only

The purpose of Life Groups Ministry is To Gather by connecting relationally, To Grow by engaging spiritually, and To Move by serving local and global neighbor's faithfully.

We are constantly working to improve the Life Groups Ministry and we need your feedback. The information you provide through this Feedback Form is important as we continue to refine Life Groups Ministry. Please answer candidly so we can evaluate both strengths and needs improvements.

Note: This feedback form is confidential and will only be seen by Heights staff, not leaders or other group members.

-
- First and Last Name
 - Email Address
 - Phone Number
 - Who is your Life Group leader?

GROUP FEEDBACK

On a scale of 1-5, please rate the following. Add additional comments if necessary. (1 is poor, 5 is outstanding, include an "additional comments" for each question)

1. Overall, how was your Life Group this session?
2. How would you rate the relational connections you made in your group?
3. How has your spiritual growth been impacted through your group?

GROUP SPECIFICS

4. Did you use Sermon-Based Questions?
 - YES
 - How would you rate the study questions and discussion from SBQ's?
 - Explain
 - NO
5. Did you use Right Now Media (RNM) this session? (Individually, with your spouse or family, or with your Life Group)
 - YES
 - How would you rate the overall usability and function of RNM?
 - What specific studies did you use on RNM? How often did you use RNM?
 - NO

Please answer accordingly and check all that apply.

6. Have you used or viewed the monthly Local Serve Board? (Each month, Heights Local + the Life Groups Team post a monthly Local Serve Board, which provides practical step in options to love others and serve the community.)
 - YES
 - How would you rate the overall usability, function, and layout of the Serve Board?
 - Please share briefly about your experience with the Serve Board.
 - Are there any service celebrations you can share from your experience with the monthly Serve Board?
 - NO
 - I DID NOT KNOW ABOUT THE SERVE BOARD.
7. Please include any additional comments, questions, concerns, or feedback for the Life Groups Team.

 *Yearly Calendar (Handout)*

Our calendar is in accordance with the public school system calendar; operating yearly from August to late May/early June. We release an updated yearly calendar each year in early summer and keep you in the loop through the “Announcements + Notes” section in Leader’s Guide SBQ’s.

 *“Weekly” Attendance*

Although we do not keep formal attendance in Life Groups, we are charging you as the leader with the responsibility of keeping track of the people in your group. Be aware of who is showing up consistently, who is missing a lot and why, who is talking, who is pulling back, etc. When people are connected in community, it is that community that steps in during hardships, celebrations, and everything in between. Life Groups are the first round of defense and support when all variables of life hit.

 *Local Serve Board*

The Serve Board is a collaboration between Life Groups + Heights Local; it is an easy access tool for you, your family, your Life Group, or anyone else! It is a regularly updated document that encourages faithful service through a staff-written devotional, simple step-in opportunities to love your neighbors and serve the community. Hard copies are available at Heights locations and can be found on the Heights App and Website.

MEN'S

Ministry Breakout

CULTIVATING THE SOIL OF MEN'S HEARTS

MISSION OF MEN'S MINISTRY

Men's Ministry exists to see men engage deeper in their relationship with Jesus, becoming imitators of God through intentional time in God's Word and environments that allow for solid friendships.

FOUNDATION: HOW GOD'S WORD + GODLY RELATIONSHIPS WILL CULTIVATE THE SOIL OF MEN'S HEARTS



“Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.”

Mark 4:15-20, NIV

- It is God's Word that produces tremendous fruit in the life of a person whose heart accepts it, therefore God's Word must be the focal point of our studies.
- The enemy employs many ways to steal the Word from our lives.
- He steals it immediately through distraction, ill-will, or ignorance.
- He steals it later through persecution as a result of following God, or later through the cares of this world lying to us that what he has is better than what God has for us.



“So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness, where your ancestors tested and tried me, though for forty years they saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation; I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.’ So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’ ” See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.”

Hebrews 3:7-13, NIV

-
- In our personal relationship with Jesus Christ, we have all been subject to hard hearts. We need each other speaking the truth of God's Word, in love, into each other's lives to soften our hearts.
 - We must work together, in relationship, to care for each other, develop trust with each other, spur one another on, and admonish one another with God's Word so that we can grow to be conformed to the image of Christ.

PRACTICAL WAYS TO GET TO THE HEART

Keeping Mark 4 and Hebrews 3 in mind, we center our hearts and our relationships around Jesus and His Word.

BIBLE STUDIES

GOD'S WORD + GOOD RELATIONSHIPS

Men's Bible Studies are the primary way Heights men fulfill the overall mission of Heights, helping to engage individuals deeper in their relationship with Jesus and each other. In the context of Men's Ministry, Bible Studies differ from Life Groups. Bible Studies operate for a fixed amount of time throughout the year, specifically emphasizing the study of the Word, while still allowing for relationship and service, and vary in who attends. On the other hand, a Life Group is an ongoing group—equally balancing the study of Scripture, fellowship, and service with the same group of people over time.

BIBLE STUDY LAYOUT

- 1 Welcome and Opening Prayer Requests
- 2 Bible Teaching with Open Discussion
- 3 Final Q + R—Focused on Application of God's Word
- 4 Next Steps Time (visitor follow-up cards, announcements, ministry opportunities)

KEYS TO DEVELOPING GOOD RELATIONSHIPS AS A MEN'S LEADER

INTERACT HUMBLY

Ask men their names, offer to pray for them, offer to follow up one-on-one with needs they might have. Gently direct

difficult conversations to a later time, say things like:

“That’s a great question. Why don’t we chat more about that one after so everyone can talk. I can give you and that answer the full attention it deserves.”

GOOD FOLLOW UP

Connect men with other men if they are new, help men discover the next step in their faith or ministry at Heights, if men need follow up after a Bible Study or Men’s Activity, actually follow up (through a call, text, or email, depending on the relationship).

SEND ENCOURAGEMENT GENEROUSLY

Offer to help men with something at home, give verbal praise and encouragement, text or email men encouraging Scripture or thoughts, check in on them regularly asking them below the surface questions like, “How are you doing for real?” or “We talked last time about (fill in the blank), how is that going since we prayed about it last?”

SEE A NEED, FILL A NEED

Be empowered to step in. Help set up paperwork at tables or adjust the lighting if it's too dark; in other words, if you see a need, fill a need! Help explain elements of the program or Bible Study to new men who may not understand what’s going on.

MEN’S LEADERSHIP TEAM

As a Serve Team Member, be intentional in making use of the support system that surrounds you.

Men’s Serve Team Members have one main contact person. That person is readily and easily available for communication through phone calls, emails, texts, etc. This contact person is available for big questions and small questions alike.

The Men’s Leadership Team is sectioned into two main categories: Men’s Bible Studies and Men’s Activities.

OVERVIEW OF MEN'S BIBLE STUDIES

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES, OFFERED MORNING + EVENING

- Bible Studies are a mixture of teaching and discussion.
- Bible Studies occur on campus multiple times throughout the week.
- Men can choose which Bible Study is most conducive to their schedule, as content is the same at each of the weekly studies.
- Content of the Bible Studies is written by Men's Leadership.

OVERVIEW OF MEN'S ACTIVITIES

BREAKFASTS

A quarterly gathering for men on Heights campus that includes breakfast, a brief devotional or testimony, and time to interact around tables in connection and discussion.

HEIGHTS HANDYMEN

A ministry serving needs in our church family and community requiring fix-it or build-it projects.

PRAYER GATHERING

A gathering for men to pray for their families, their church, their community, and their world.

ADVENTURES

Outdoor fellowship-building activities including shooting events, off-roading, fishing, and mountain biking.

MEN'S SERVE TEAM ROLES

BREAKFAST TABLE LEADER

Table leaders facilitate table discussions at quarterly Men's Breakfasts, care for a consistent group of men, and connect them with their next step. Discussion questions are provided for table leaders at each breakfast.

BIBLE TEACHERS

Teach, as needed, at one of the weekly Men's Bible Studies. Teaching material is provided by the Men's Ministry Team. The Men's Ministry Lead will equip teachers on how to prepare and deliver lessons using the provided curriculum.

HANDYMEN

Serve with a team of handymen for fix-it or build-it projects for those in need in our church and community, so that God's men grow spiritually and in character together. In the past, projects have included building decks, fences, plumbing and electrical fixes, repairing appliances and automobiles, etc.

ADVENTURE LEAD

Provide logistical support for periodic outdoor activities including shooting, mountain biking, off-roading, etc. Communicate about upcoming events, provide directions, help men learn how to do the activity, pray for, and follow up with new men visiting the event.

FACILITIES

Provide setup and teardown support for Men's Bible Studies on campus, cooking help for Men's Breakfasts, or cleanup at Men's Breakfasts.

ONE-ON-ONE CARE

Meet one-on-one with men who need personalized care or discipleship. Help resource them to professional counseling in conjunction with Heights if needed.

MEN'S SERVE TEAM MEMBERS (STM) LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

COMMITMENT OF SERVE TEAM MEMBERS TO HEIGHTS STAFF LEADERSHIP

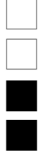
- We desire STM's to have an active, growing relationship with Jesus Christ.
- We desire STM's to be honest individually, with the Lord, and with the leadership team about any areas of sinful struggle that may be impacting personal ability to lead other men.

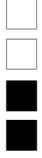
- We desire STM's to commit to their Serve Team Role for a one-year time frame (January-December).
- We desire STM's to engage graciously with other men at any Men's Bible Study or Men's Activities.
- We expect STM's to follow-up with guys at the table who have needs or questions—including directing them to the proper people or staff who might be of help.
- We expect STM's to be prayerful.

COMMITMENT OF HEIGHTS STAFF AND LEADERSHIP TEAM TO SERVE TEAM MEMBERS

- We will be praying for you.
- We will be available for you, personally or with ministry needs. See your ministry team lead for direction.
- We will support and encourage you.
- We will communicate well with you weekly through written devotionals, emails, and periodic communication from your team leader.

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RECOVERY

Ministry Breakout

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF RESOURCES

THE THREE E'S OF HEIGHTS + RECOVERY MINISTRY

ENCOUNTERING JESUS

Elements, which happens weekly, is an outreach for Recovery houses and individuals throughout the Quad-city area.

ENGAGING IN OUR FAITH

Through Elements and ongoing Life Groups, Recovery leadership is active in building personal relationships with individuals with a foundation of vulnerability, honesty, and intentionality to disciple.

EMPOWERING TO SERVE

Recovery leadership pursues building and expanding the Kingdom of God through intentional service and individualized discipleship.

MAIN SESSION RECAP WITH A RECOVERY FOCUS

ENVIRONMENT

Create and facilitate an open, safe, and judgment-free environment.

- We want to create an inclusive group environment where we come across in such a way to promote intentional life-giving relationships that connect relationally and grow spiritually.
- We do not care about where someone has been or their history; we accept them for where they are today. Our focus is on where they are going and how they are growing spiritually.

For additional information on creating an environment, see sections three and four in the Content Guide titled "First Impressions" and "Creating the Environment" respectively.

LEADER REFLECTION

As a leader, you will need to be introspective and open to feedback. Invite feedback from those in your group and ministry leads.

- What would you consider to be a safe, loving, and judgment-free environment?
- Would that look like to create practically?
- How can you be intentional to create that for your group?

ANSWER + RESPOND

Leaders should not seek to fix problems, but instead point to Scripture.

- The Recovery Ministry is not meant to fix, judge, or condemn anyone, but rather be a partner in helping redirect individuals to God, His Word, and the Holy Spirit who leads to truth.
 - *Real Life Example: Many individuals have been met through the Recovery Ministry and were intentionally loved and disciplined through weekly groups, outreach, and relational connection. Several of these individuals are now on Heights Staff or pursuing ministry in other avenues. This is the power of God's love and transformation at work.*

DOMINATORS

Limit time of sharing so everyone gets a chance to speak.

For additional information on dealing with dominators, see sections two and five in the Content Guide titled Design Your Time and Embrace Challenges.

- A successful group meeting is where everybody shares, every time you meet, and God's word is at the center.
- This is a recovery meeting for all involved. Create an opportunity for everyone to share—whether that is asking more reserved members to share or minimizing extrovert's responses.
- Groups should not be looked at as an opportunity for a leader to teach, but an opportunity to create a setting that makes people feel a part of, included in, and provides open conversation about what God has to say about certain life topics.

PREPARE

Adequately know and understand the lesson prior to the start of the meeting.

For additional information on preparation, see section two in the Content Guide titled "Design Your Time".

- Lessons will be emailed out weekly—a minimum of 24 hours prior to meeting.
- Review the lesson in advance. This lesson is to be a guideline for your group to create easy, open conversation, not feeling forced or pressured to get through each question. Going over the lesson thoroughly in advance prior to the meeting, aids in creating avenues to make it personal and, in turn, will help the group relate. As you prepare, if other questions or thoughts come up on how a personal experience can be tied into the lesson, this is the time to figure that out.
- Set time apart to review lessons with the co-leader prior to every meeting to designate roles and assign questions accordingly.

RECOVERY TEAM SUPPORT + REPORTING STRUCTURE

WE DO NOT WANT BURNOUT!

Be intentional in leaning into the support system that surrounds you.

RECOVERY TEAM

- On the Recovery Ministry Team, you have one main contact person. That person is available for phone calls, emails, texts, etc. for big and small questions.
- Heights outsources counseling, which is available for you or your group members when necessary.

LEADER AND CO-LEADER

Rely heavily on the people in your group and lean into their giftings! If you are leading alone, or do not have these people in place, actively pursue and call on them. These people will add to the longevity, health, and the ownership within the group. We need to call on one another and lean into each other's strengths.

- Leader's Role: Facilitate the conversation of the group, provide direction, make decisions, and protect the group as a whole
- Co-Leader's Role: Direct support to the leader in group facilitation, model healthy communication and responses, step in when leader is absent

APPRENTICESHIP

- Prayerfully and intentionally train someone up with the intent for them to co-lead, lead in your absence, or launch their own group.
- Future Life Group leaders are based solely on relationships and referrals from existing leaders. The Ministry of Life Groups expands through your faithfulness and boldness in training others up!

QUALITIES TO LOOK FOR IN AN APPRENTICE OR POTENTIAL LEADER

ARE THEY GOOD WITH PEOPLE?

They are: easy to talk to, enjoyable, light-hearted, fun, others lean in when they speak, real and authentic, intentional, vulnerable, self- and others-aware

ARE THEY GROWING IN CHRIST?

They are: exuding the Fruit of the Spirit, open and honest, faithful and committed, centered in God's Word, prayerful, humble, healthy, helpful, honest

HOW TO INTENTIONALLY RAISE UP AN APPRENTICE OR POTENTIAL LEADER

The specific amount of time spent on each step will depend on the individual you are pursuing. The Life Groups Team is available for coaching. In between each of the active steps below, have a follow up conversation.

- **CONNECT RELATIONALLY**: The foundation of apprenticeship is relationship—relationship comes before, during, and after apprenticeship
- **PRAY**: Cover the pursuit and training of an apprentice in prayer throughout the whole process—be attuned to the Holy Spirits' leading
- **LEARN**: Have them observe you leading by writing down specific things they like, things they would do differently, or things they have questions about
- **CO-LEAD**: Facilitate the group together, meeting beforehand to discuss the upcoming lesson and divvy out who is doing what
- **LEAD WITH YOU THERE**: Have them lead the group by themselves with you being there as a part of the group—follow up to coach
- **LEAD IN YOU GONE**: Have them prepare and lead the group when you are not there—follow up to coach

GROUP MEMBERS

For this season, they are your flock, care for them well—within the group setting and on a one-on-one basis.

RECOVERY SERVE TEAM

OPPORTUNITIES IN LEADERSHIP BY STAFF

We are always looking to expand our resources and serve team members, if you have an idea please bring it to us for discussion and prayer.

- Leaders and Co-Leaders: Facilitators of the lesson who can lovingly lead and encounter others with a relatable personality.
- Host: A home that is safe and can accommodate the size of the group.
- Hospitality: A person who can provide meals for the group at the ministry's expense.
- Drivers: A person who can provide rides for those who cannot attend otherwise.

OPPORTUNITIES ASSIGNED BY LEADERSHIP

Recovery is an amazing ministry filled with service opportunities. Seek to involve many and grow potential leaders by their willingness to serve in other areas.

- Set Up and Clean Up: Group meetings take group effort to pull off before and after the actual meeting itself.
- Ice Breaker: Leader or co-leader may assign someone who they feel will bring a fun personality to the group before the lesson starts through a provided ice breaker.
- Prayer Requests: An individual to write down all the requests for the group and text or email to group leaders.

*All people in all roles should be supported, encouraged, and empowered to do their job well.
We all have something to offer to the group as God has given us all different giftings.*

DURING THE GROUP MEETING

- Provide Food: Providing a meal shows we care and it meets a basic need. It is attractive to those who attend, but it is not the focus. Food provides an opportunity to meet new people and intentionally seek out those we do not know during this time of fellowship to make all feel welcome and cared for.

- Seating Arrangement: Circles include everyone; no one should be sitting on the outskirts of the circle. This seating arrangement provides the ability to hear and see everyone at all times. The Recovery Ministry will provide extra seating if needed. The leader and co-leader should be sitting opposite each other to create equality and balance in the group.
- Ice Breaker: This may not seem significant, but it is. Many might not be comfortable to share deep personal or spiritual things, but they can answer a fun question and get involved socially. These lighthearted interactions will open the group up to more people feeling comfortable to share at any point during the meeting. This is intentional in proceeding the lesson.
- Lesson Intro: We do not want to miss an opportunity to save a life so we choose to open the group meeting time with “burning desires”. This opportunity is for things that are life or death such as, relapse type of responses. Be adaptable and willing to shift things on the fly, especially if there is a specific need—adjust accordingly.
 - *Example: “Is there anything anyone needs to share before we start the lesson?”*
- Lesson: Lessons for each week are designed for practical ways to incorporate Scripture into daily living. Our hope is to instill a new way of thinking and responding that is Scripture-based.
- Prayer: Regardless of where you are in the study, always make time at the end of the lesson for prayer requests. This is vital because it makes things real. Write prayer requests down and share with group leaders who commit to pray specifically for these requests over the week. This gives opportunity to instill hope as members come back with a testimony of what God is doing. If there is a major need, stop and pray immediately or pray privately after the group; this shows you see them and their specific needs.

INVITING OTHERS IN

The Recovery Ministry is open to all and not solely based on chemically dependency. This is an open group for a reason. We desire all to participate and belong. Being inclusive and aware will open us up to how God is moving and to receive far more than we ever expected. The Recovery Ministry exists because of the powerful testimony of Jesus Christ in all of our lives. We desire all of us to be spiritually fit and earnestly take care of ourselves so we may, in turn, disciple and care for others.



WOMEN'S

Ministry Breakout

MAKE THE MOST OF RESOURCES

WOMEN'S MINISTRY + HEIGHTS VISION

Women's Ministry is committed to reflecting Heights mission, vision, and values by intentionally providing opportunities to equip and encourage women in their spiritual growth. Our heart is to see women experience transformation as they come to know Jesus as their Savior and grow as His disciples. We provide opportunities for women to encounter Jesus, engage in their faith, and be empowered to serve the Lord in the Body of Christ and our community.

SERVE TEAMS

Women's Ministry is committed to growing and equipping Serve Team Members (volunteers) and leaders through ongoing and project-based service opportunities for women to utilize their gifts. It is the goal of the Women's Ministry Serve Teams to provide a forum for women to serve based on their gifting. We believe God has equipped each woman with skills and talents, each one as a valuable part of the Body of Christ. The hope is each woman who desires to serve will find an opportunity to match their gifting and availability.


BIBLE STUDY

Our Bible Studies are for women to encounter Jesus, engage in their faith, and be empowered to serve. The purpose of Bible Study is to help women grow in intimate relationships with Jesus Christ through daily Bible Study and life application of Scripture, prayer, worship, and building relationships through small group fellowship around tables.

VITAL MOMS

Vital Moms is designed for women to encounter Jesus and begin to engage in their faith. We recognize mothers of young children have unique needs for relationship, practical instruction, personal and spiritual development, and quality care for their children during meetings. Vital Moms is not a Bible Study, but the hope is that each woman (whether she knows Jesus or has not yet trusted Him as Savior) will make progress in some or all of six areas:

- *Know God better*
- *Trust Him more*
- *Experience the hope and freedom of finding identity in Christ*
- *Gain a desire to read and learn God's Word*
- *Obediently live by faith*
- *Reflect Jesus by serving those around her*



Vital Moms is NOT intended to provide a substitute for attending Bible Study, counseling for serious issues or circumstances, business networking, financial resources, or babysitting resources.

CONNECTION, EVENTS, + CONFERENCES

Connection, events, and conferences are opportunities for women to encounter and engage with Jesus. Heights is a large church, which can be a challenge for women as they try to meet and connect with other women. Through connection ministries like the Women's Monthly Luncheon, Teacups (Widows Ministry), and other activities, women are able to meet and get to know other women in smaller settings. Women's Ministry is committed to offering at least one conference or major event each year to encourage and equip women spiritually.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS IN WOMEN'S MINISTRY

BE WELCOMING

- **Smile**: A smile is the light in your window that tells others you are approachable.
- **Be Welcoming and Inclusive**: Make sure every woman feels welcome, accepted, and valued by greeting them, recognizing the inherent worth of each woman, and treating them without partiality. Seek to sit by a different woman each week. Encourage each woman to wear a name tag and help them connect with each other.
- **Notice**: Seize every opportunity to affirm what a woman is doing well. Show compassion for her circumstances and appreciate her strengths.
- **Be Sensitive**: Please respect the diversity that exists at your table. Pursue bringing balance into your conversations by encouraging the table to intentionally give space for each woman to share. We value everyone's journey and opinions. Encourage the table to remember the "whole," meaning we may not always agree on everything. We can love and represent Christ even through differing opinions.

BE APPROACHABLE

- **Be Authentic**: The most attractive spiritual life is one that makes mistakes, laughs, cries, and expresses fears and uncertainties—all while serving God.
- **Listen**: Give your whole attention with eye contact and body language. Listen and be aware of what is beneath the words for possible discouragement, fear, needs, or faulty thinking about God and/or Christianity.
- **Practice Humility**: Keep the attention on the ladies at the table and their issues, not your own. We are not leaders to give advice, but to partner with women in their journey. Create a judgment-free place that is safe for all. Unless specifically asked, it is best to refrain from imposing your values and opinions in regards to: eating habits, dieting, exercise, housekeeping, politics, and cultural "norms".

BE ENCOURAGING

- **Be Alert:** Be aware of any woman who may be hurting or discouraged; offer to talk and pray with her or for her.
- **Use Questions:** Asking questions can help reveal underlying issues as well as aid a woman in gaining perspective—of herself, of God, of others, and of her situation.
 - *Examples: Is there a safety issue? Do you have friends, family, or others who are walking with you? Are there practical resources you need? What is true of God and His character that you can anchor into in this situation?*
- **Be Ready:** If/when the time is right, be ready to share your story of how Jesus met you in a time of need or weakness, how He answered prayer, refined your character, or changed your life!

SPECIAL + INTENTIONAL CARE

Be alert to any woman who is chronically sick, consistently depressed, especially fatigued, or possibly abusing a substance. Be alert to any signs of verbal or nonverbal abuse that may be taking place at home. Take note of anything a woman says that may indicate she would consider harming herself or taking her own life.

- *If you suspect any of these issues, please see Women's Ministry Leadership immediately; we are here to help you!*

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

From the Garden, the enemy has lied and twisted the truth to try to get us to question God and His goodness. Spiritual warfare is the spiritual war that is happening constantly in the unseen spiritual realm. It is a reality that we, as ministry leaders, can't ignore. As a leader, the enemy does not want you to grow in your faith, nor does he want you to help other women grow in their relationships with Jesus Christ. This is not something to be fearful of, but rather an opportunity to grow in understanding and have tools so you can fight spiritually. If you or a woman at your table is experiencing spiritual warfare and would like additional resources and prayer, please contact Women's Ministry Leadership for help, support, and guidance.

TAKE NOTE

Please keep in mind these simple “do’s” and “don’ts” as you step into Women’s Ministry. The two charts provided give insight into the main parts of Women’s Ministry: Women’s Programs and Women’s Tables.

WOMEN’S PROGRAMS

ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR:

- Studying God’s Word and applying it to everyday issues of life
- Meeting and getting acquainted with other women who are seeking God
- Developing friendships with other women in a relationship with Jesus Christ
- Encouragement in their relationship with God

ARE NOT INTENDED TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR:

- Counseling for serious issues or circumstances
 - Business networking
 - Financial resources
 - Babysitting resources
-

WOMEN’S TABLES

WALKING WITH A WOMAN AT YOUR TABLE MAY INCLUDE:

- Encouraging her to trust God to meet her needs
- Praying for her+ with her
- Sharing encouragement from Scripture or your own journey
- Since each table serves as a small group, you may choose to help provide meals during times of special need (after a surgery, delivery, adoption, death in the family, etc.)

WALKING WITH A WOMAN AT YOUR TABLE SHOULDN'T INCLUDE:

- Giving gifts or financial resources
 - Attending “Tupperware”-like parties, buying from home-based businesses, or other events
-



