



lifegroups

An introduction to
participating in community
at Holy Cross

INTRODUCTION

Life Groups are an imperfect impression of the future perfect community of Jesus-followers. They give us a unique context and opportunity to live out our church's mission to *magnify God's glory, live as God's people, and engage in God's mission*. We believe that no matter how you are wired--introverted, extroverted, or socially awkward--something in your soul longs for meaningful relationship with God and others.

Sunday worship is simply not enough

While we don't need to defend the idea that gathering for weekly worship is necessary and good, we recognize that Sunday worship rarely allows space to the sharing of our struggles, sins, and unbeliefs with one another. Nor do we get the chance to speak gospel truth into those struggles.

Here is our hope for our community

That our communal devotion to teaching, fellowship, meals, and prayer will produce a reality in our lives which manifests genuine transformation brought on by the gospel.

THE BIBLICAL STORY OF COMMUNITY

God created us for community. Before any sort of human community existed, there was God--dwelling in perfect, loving community in his three-fold being. In Genesis God says, “*Let us make man in our image*”. We are meant to reflect his likeness in community.

If meaningful community is something we are created for,
then what makes it so hard to attain?

{Pause and discuss before you move on}

We exist in broken community. Though made in God’s image, we have fallen from our original glory. We have developed something less than what we were created for. There is something selfish and self-absorbed about us that prevents us from reflecting God the way we were designed to. Sin warps our relationships with others.

But, this is where the good news
of the gospel meets us.

We are redeemed for community. God graciously calls us into relationship with himself on the basis of Jesus' perfect sacrifice. We are called his children and adopted into his family. His work of redemption restores our capacity for healthy community. He has made us able to live, love, and make known his good news to people in our life. We are redeemed, in part, to enjoy fellowship with him and with one another.

Finally...

We are transformed in community. It is God's desire that we build and enjoy healthy community. Being transformed requires a continual application of the gospel to our hearts everyday. It requires intentional focus. It means identifying the areas of struggle and unbelief in our hearts that hinder our ability to love and serve others.

The context for our spiritual growth is the gospel community. It is the laboratory in which we learn to rely on God's grace and experience the gospel's transformation.

WHAT IS OUR MISSION?

Each Life Group may vary in form and feel, but we are unified in our function and mission. We know our Life Group is being faithful when we are increasingly growing in our mission to...

Magnify God's glory

We will make our time together about Jesus and knowing him better. We will make sure that the Word of God is the content for our conversations and not merely a group of people sharing stories about our struggles with no real direction or sense of fulfillment in the gospel.

Live as God's people

We will live out a relationship with one another in our groups that are marked by commitment, unity, and service. We will encourage participation, celebration, and genuine concern for one another.

Engage in God's mission

We will act like missionaries. We will use our time, talent, and treasure as a group to get specific with plans to bless our church and our city.

WHAT IS OUR VISION?

The vision of Life Group is...

***To radically re-orient our lives
around the gospel as a
community.***

Discuss as a group

Read through the individual features of the vision on the next page.

Which feature stands out most to you?

Radical...

We hope to raise the bar for what happens when we gather. Being an active participant within the church means being committed to our own spiritual health, and the health of others.

Re-orient...

We are prone to lose our way. We are prone to be shaped by the various cultural narratives of our time. Life Groups are a way to remember, re-tell, and re-orient our lives around the gospel story.

Lives...

Life Groups are not merely about following a curriculum and transferring information. It is about realigning the big and even seemingly mundane details of our lives around the reality of Jesus' redemptive work for us.

Gospel...

The gathering point is not our affinity (age, life-stage, gender, etc) or our experiences, but the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The main motivation of our community with one another is our union with Jesus.

Community...

We are made to do this with others. Our Christian community is a critical expression of our Christian identity.

God's Word describes the church in this way...

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation." **1 Peter 2:9-12**

In this passage, where do you see:

The radical nature of our identity?

Its attempt to re-orient?

Its alignment with all of life?

The proclamation of the gospel?

The community of believers?

WHAT HABITS DO WE DESIRE TO FORM?

Life Groups are not only for re-aligning our hearts but for creating habits that stick. What would our Life Group look like if it were truly thriving? Consider the following everyday habits, following the acronym B.L.E.S.S.

Bless. We bless God, our family, and those within our group in tangible ways.

Listen. We listen actively and empathetically to others. We listen to God as we study and reflect on his Word.

Eat. We share meals together, seeing it as an opportunity for profound fellowship.

Speak. We speak with gospel intentionality in our conversations. We speak to God in prayer.

Sabbath. We take time to rest, celebrate life, and have fun together as a group.

The above habits make the difference between a lived out of autonomy and self-sufficiency and a life lived in community.

“Life Groups are much more than getting together for events in which we exchange data, share social activities, or even to give one another temporary emotional support. Life Groups are life-together. It is bringing the gospel to bear on all of life with other believers.”

