

# Life Group Leader Guide

## *Experiencing Christ – Week #1*

(Suggested Format and Discussion Questions)

**Fellowship and Food (15 minutes)** – Name Tags are great for groups with new members.

**Welcome (30 minutes)** – This section will be longer than normal as you help people feel comfortable through introductions.

- Welcome everyone and open the meeting in prayer.
- If your group is new or you have new group members, take some time to introduce everyone. To add some energy to the introductions have members share something out of the ordinary (e.g. highlight of the summer, craziest job, hobby, etc.)
- Remind everyone of the Life Group schedule. Most groups will have 9 meetings over the next 10 weeks, and most will take off the week of Oct 15. See Experiencing Christ Study Guide for more details on schedule.
- Pass out roster, making sure you have everyone's correct email and phone numbers. Ask if someone can bring copies of the contact info for everyone next week. Pass out a sign-up sheet for snacks and ask for someone to be in charge of coordinating this item. Pass out a sign-up sheet for hosting, if you will not be meeting at the same place each time.

**Bible Study (60 minutes)** – Recognize you might not have time to hit every question. Because of this make sure you don't miss the opportunity to have everyone share on Question #3 and to review the Life Group Agreement (see below for Life Group Agreement) tied to Question #4.

Read Col. 1:1-14, and then review the main points of the sermon outline.

1. **(Introduce yourself)** Read Col. 1:1-2. In addition to your parents, what in your personal background has influenced your journey with God? In considering the factors that influenced your journey with God, how do they compare with the first two verses of Colossians?

Leader Notes: Use this question to help break the ice on getting to know each other. The "journey with God" language does not assume the new group member is a Christian.

2. **(Give thanks to God)** Read Col. 1:3-6a with a focus on faith, hope and love. Which of these three virtues has been the most important to this point in your life? Explain.
 

Leader Notes: This question is a softball to provide a grip for just about anyone. For a group that has been together a while, you might ask, “Which of the three needs the most improvement during the Experiencing Christ study?”
  
3. **(Gospel’s transforming power)** Question from *Experiencing Christ Study Guide*, page 14, My Response: “What are your spiritual goals for the Experiencing Christ studies? Write down three things you desire from your 10-week commitment to experience Christ in your study of Colossians.” Please share what you have written in response to that question.
 

Leader Notes: This question puts the Study Guide on center stage and lets the group know that using the Study Guide is something that we are going to overtly encourage. It would certainly help if your own Study Guide looks like it has seen some wear. ☺ This is a good question to encourage everyone to answer.
  
4. **(To know his truth)** Most of Colossians is still ahead of us. Since it is unlikely we will please God unless we know what he wants of us, what steps can we take as a group and as individuals to make sure we learn what Colossians has to teach us?
 

Leader Notes: This question leads to setting group expectations. Review Life Group Agreement (see below for Life Group Agreement) as a group after Discussion Question #4. Take a few minutes to review these healthy group guidelines and add any other values. A little bit of time on this today could save you from unmet expectations over the next several weeks.
  
5. **(To please him in every way)** Take the following four concepts and divide them randomly among the group: 1) do good works, 2) deepen in knowing God, 3) be strengthened in God’s power to endure, 4) give thanks joyfully. Then let each “team” explain why their assigned concept is ‘the most important one’ (for pleasing God!) compared to the other three. Have fun with that!
 

Leader Notes: This question is for fun. Obviously, none of these elements is more important than the others, but a little mock-competition will make it funny. Be the lead ham!
  
6. **(God has qualified you)** If you won a prize, you would feel good. If you had two tickets to the Super Bowl, a smile might break out. What about an

invitation to the White House to have lunch with the President? Well, Jesus has qualified you to live in heaven with him forever! And it does not depend on whether you feel worthy. What might you say to express your thanks to the Lord?

Leader Notes: Questions #6 & #7 are very similar, and if time pressure forces a choice, go for the last one since it brings out several aspects of salvation

7. **(God has rescued, redeemed and forgiven you)** Consider that Jesus rescued you from eternal death. Remember that he did so by giving his own life to redeem yours. Think about how Jesus forgives you for the sins you have done and those yet to come. How does it feel to live in "the kingdom of the Son he loves" (Col. 1:13)?

**Share and Prayer (15 minutes)** - break up into subgroups of 3-4 people.

- A central component of the Experiencing Christ journey is the daily study in Colossians using the *Experiencing Christ Study Guide*. In order to remain faithful, sometimes we need a little encouragement and friendly accountability. Take a moment to share in the subgroup how your time went this past week and how God used it in your life.
- Pray for what God is teaching you and for your goals in Experiencing Christ. If someone has never prayed out loud in a group, encourage them to just say a simple prayer "Thank you Lord for what you have done for me. Help me to know you more." That's all they need to say.

Close Meeting with the following encouragement:

Start fresh each week with the daily studies in the Experiencing Christ Study Guide. This means they begin Week 2 this week, even if they have uncompleted days from Week 1. This will keep members from feeling so far behind that they quit using the study guide all together and it also keeps them working with the Scripture Bruce will be preaching on.

# Life Group Agreement

Cultivating Fulfillment, Faithfulness, and Fruit for Members

**Purpose of Life Groups** – Life Groups are about life-change – helping people grow in the three commands: loving God, loving each other, and loving our neighbor.

**Plan of Life Groups** – Life Groups provide a consistent place for people to experience spiritual growth and care by meeting for Bible study, fellowship and prayer. Beyond these times, groups gather for fellowship, service projects, outreach, etc.

## Practices of a Life Group Member

1. Prepare Spiritually – complete spiritual growth assignments (For this Fall Season this means completing the daily studies in the *Experiencing Christ Study Guide*).
2. Focus on Life Change – be proactive in using the group to grow personally and to encourage others in this process.
3. Extend Grace – provide confidentiality by not sharing issues discussed within the group outside of the group.
4. Cultivate Relationships – give energy to relationships by getting to know each other, supporting each other, and enjoying each other.
5. Uphold God's Word – make God's Word the authority in discussions and in life seeking to understand and apply God's Word.
6. Get Involved – participate in sharing and in serving within the group.
7. Multiply Your Group – work with other group members to multiply your group by encouraging others to join your Life Group and by raising an Apprentice Leader.

If any additional group practices are desired by the group, please place them here:

**Period of Commitment** – Life Group members commit to participating in the group through this Season (This Fall Season is the 10 week journey of Experiencing Christ). Group participants will have the opportunity to either recommit to their current group or change groups in January when we begin the Winter Season of Life Groups the week of January 28<sup>th</sup>.

I (we) covenant with other Life Group members with the above purpose, plan, practices, and period to grow spiritually and build our local church accomplishing the Great Commission for the glory of God.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Signature(s) \_\_\_\_\_