

## what life groups are all about

Life Groups are our main strategy for encouraging a life of following Jesus. These groups will be focused on learning four life-giving practices. These practices form the pattern of each group, and we will be sharing stories from our week of how these practices are growing in our lives:

- **Life-giving Prayer:** Prayer for the purpose of being with God rather than getting something from God. This kind of prayer is focused on God (The King) and what he is doing (building his Kingdom) rather than on what I want him to do for me. We often use the words “glory, honor, and thanks” from Rev. 4:9 to structure our time.
- **Life-giving Truth:** This is the practice of telling ourselves God’s truth over and over again so that it sinks into our hearts and changes us from the inside out. Practically, this means we will think through the truth which we learned in the Sunday Sermon. We will help each other process the truth of God’s Word together.
- **Life-giving Relationships:** This is an invitation to authenticity, being honest with yourself and others about what’s really going on in our hearts, clinging to the hope that God himself is able and willing to heal our brokenness as we seek him together. This is where learning the truths of grace and humility really will manifest itself. Being real is better than being perfect. Practically this means we will seek to pray for heart issues, not surface issues. For example, someone might want prayer for a job – he might be laid off. We want to know how we can pray for his heart – maybe he realizes that he is struggling with trusting God to care for him. And so we would pray God’s will in this area.
- **Life-giving Impact:** Prayer is the work! We use the pattern of “Pray & Watch” – where we pray for those all around us and then watch for how God is working in their lives. When we see the Lord working, then we both rejoice and respond.

Life Groups are what we do during the week—we don’t have other programs. So if you want to be involved beyond Sunday morning, this is for you! We have men’s, women’s, teen’s, and couples’ groups meeting. And if you want to learn more about these Four Life-giving practices and how they work, tell us you are interested in being part of our 4 week “Getting to know LEFC” where we share about these practices, our mission, and our values.



For the week starting Sunday,  
Sept 4th, 2016

## God is Merciful to Me

Luke 15:11-32

### Life-giving Prayer (about 10 min)

1. Do you have any stories to share this week about worshiping God in the everyday stuff of life?

2. Try using the simple sentences below, filling in the blank. You could spend a bit of time on “glory”, people completing the sample sentence as many times as they want. Then move onto “Honor” and then “Thanks”.

Glory: God, it’s amazing that you \_\_\_\_\_.

Honor: God, I choose (or want or surrender) \_\_\_\_\_ to you.

Thanks: God, thank you for \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Look at the bulletin from Sunday. Go through the Scripture or a song and see if you can pick out statements that give God glory, honor, or thanks.

## **Life-giving Truth (about 45-55 min)**

*There are a lot of questions here. Your Life Group Coach will pick out a few below that are best suited for your Life Group to help process this week's Life-giving Truth. Don't try to answer every question – just think through a few together.*

1. Did you think about last week's truth *God calls me to pray for justice* last week? As you look back on the week, how did or might have this truth changed your perspective?
2. What was one thing you learned from the sermon on Sunday?
3. What was one question you have from the sermon on Sunday?
4. Read through Luke 15:11-32. If you were to identify more with the Prodigal Son or the Pharisee Son, which would it be?
5. John Piper, in his sermon on this text said, "**One of the greatest tests of whether you love mercy is whether you feel mercy towards sinners. You can tell if you have the heart of a Pharisee by whether you have a heart to move towards sinners and rescue sinners or whether you are disgusted by sinners...period.**" How do you think you would know if you are "disgusted by sinners...period"?
6. The Younger Son didn't feel "worthy" to be the son any longer (Luke 15:19 & 21). Do you identify with this feeling? Why do you think we humans want to be "worthy" of being accepted by God?
7. The Elder Son really just wanted a party (Luke 15:29). He wanted what the Younger Son had experienced, although he was repulsed by him. Do you see any of this "desire for the world" in your own life? Are there things that, if you could get away with it, you really would want to do?
8. The Elder Son had a relationship with his Father, but he really wanted to be with his friends (Luke 15:29). He didn't love who his Father was. He was disgusted by how he acted. Most of us wouldn't want to say something about God disgusts us, but we do often choose other things than being with God. What are the things in your life that you find yourself doing rather than being with God?

9. Brandon, a Christian friend of yours, feels addicted to watching violent videos. He feels horrible and wants to be free from this sin. When he tells you that he's messed up once again, it's usually weeks after the sin. He says, "After I watch that stuff I feel absolutely awful and broken. I am totally ashamed to talk to God. Instead, I resolve to not to sin like this again. And then, after a few days of not sinning like that, I feel like I can ask God for forgiveness. But my pastor says I'm not handling this right. He says by my waiting, I'm trying to prove I am sorry before I go to God for forgiveness. It's like I'm doing penance. He told me to repent and thank God for forgiveness the second I realize I've messed up again. But I feel like that just will make me take advantage of God's grace. Don't I need to show my sincerity by being sorry and trying hard not to sin for a while?" What do you think?

10. Do you think you feel more loved by God because of your actions, or because of your position in Christ as a son or daughter of God?
11. Do you find yourself feeling "better" than others? In what areas are you prone to feel better than others? Consider spending some time in healing prayer for each other as you identify some areas.

## **Life-giving Relationships (about 5-10 min)**

If we have prayed for you in the past weeks, have you seen any way, small or large, that God is healing you?

Does anyone want healing prayer this week? Remember, this is praying for the heart of you, the person, not the circumstances you are going through or other people in your life. Is there anything churning in your heart that we can pray for?

## **Life-giving Impact (about 10 min)**

1. Does anyone have any Pray & Watch stories from this week? Did you make a plan and follow through with getting together with anyone on your Pray & Watch list?
2. Get your Pray & Watch list. Let's spend our last minute or two together praying over all these names together.