

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, 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, January
24th, 2016

**My Heavenly Father will
care for me.**

Matthew 6:25-34

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. Spend some time in Life-giving prayer together. Praying short sentences, give God Glory, Honor, and Thanks. If you want, you can use one or more of the ideas below.

Idea: Use the passage from Sunday, Matthew 6:25-34 as a springboard to giving God Glory. What things in this passage amazes you about God?

Idea: Think about some things that you value in this world. Tell God that you choose him above these things, or that you surrender this thing or person to him.

Idea: Use the song we sang on Sunday, “Jerusalem” as a springboard to thank God for the things he has done through Christ alone (words are in your bulletin).

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. Last week's truth: Did you think about last week's Life-giving Truth *My treasure in heaven can never be taken away*? Was there a situation in your life this week when this Life-giving Truth was (or could have been) applicable?
2. Jesus said in Matthew 6:32 “The Gentiles seek after all these things....” Think about the culture around us. What are some common things people worry about? What does this tell us our culture values (seeks after)?
3. Author Jerry Bridges called worry a “Respectable sin” because our Christian society has accepted this sin as normal and really not all that bad. Why do you think worry is more acceptable for us than other sins?
4. Consider this definition of worry: “Worry is fearful thinking that in the future something you treasure will be taken from you.” How does this definition help you understand worrying? What do you think this definition misses?
5. Worrying betrays a belief hanging on inside of us that believes we need to care for ourselves because God won't care for us. We are acting like non-Christians who do not know and believe we have a Heavenly Father who cares for us. In Matthew 6:25-34, what reasons does Jesus give to help us understand that our Heavenly Father cares for us?
6. Read Matthew 13:22. This verse is in the “Parable of the Soils” Jesus taught. Our hearts are likened to different soils, and the truth of God's word is like seed put in our heart. The “cares of this world” (literally, the *worries* of this world) and “the deceitfulness of riches” are like thorns choking the belief out of our hearts. This unfruitfulness is devastating – no farmer would be happy that at least the seed started to grow. The farmer is only concerned with the fruitfulness. How does this image of worries, “choking” God's truth out of our heart, help you understand the seriousness of worrying?

7. Imagine your friend Jamie says, “I'm the one Jesus is talking about in verse 31 – I'm the one with little faith. Honestly, I don't think God is going to do what I want him to do. That's why I worry. I find it very hard to say 'Your will be done' because I'm afraid it won't be what I want and instead it will be hard and painful and awful.” Can you relate to what Jamie says? When you consider God's promise to care for you, what things are most hard for you to trust him in?

8. In your opinion, how is planning or thinking about something different than worrying? What are some signs that you are starting to worry instead of planning or thinking about something?

9. Read Psalms 36:1-4. The presence of worry and fear in our life does not mean we are not a Christian. It does mean there is a battle for our hearts. The kingdom of darkness seeks to pull us away from faith in God's promises, but God's Spirit is working in us to trust in our Father's care for us. How might the Life-giving Truth that “My Father will care for me” help you fight against worry and fear?

10. Read Philippians 4:6. Think about how worry is like an alarm going off in your head reminding you to “Pray! Pray! Pray!” How might our practice of Life-giving Prayer help you pray when you are worried?

Life-giving Relationships (about 5-10 min)

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?

Having reflected on worry, is your heart anxious about anything? Since God is always at work in our lives, do you think he is trying to teach you something through this trial? If a person shares something, anyone may pray for that person before the next person shares.

Life-giving Impact (about 10 min)

1. Does anyone have any Pray & Watch stories to share this week?
2. What is your plan to lean into someone on your Pray & Watch list this week?
3. Pray for the people on your Pray & Watch list.