

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, February 7th, 2016

My Heavenly Father is hears me when I pray.

Matthew 7:7-11

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. Consider focusing on honoring prayer. When we honor someone, we are recognizing their worth and/or position over us. With God, we honor him by choosing to surrender to him, to trust him, to follow him, to want him. You could begin your time by reading these statements:
 - God, I choose to see you as the only one who is truly good.
 - I choose to accept that I can’t ever be truly good apart from you.
 - I admit that I am broken and need your work in my heart.
 - I know that I can’t produce holiness in myself no matter how hard I try.
 - I surrender to your ongoing process in my life.
 - God, I surrender my pride and the need I have to be seen as right, respected, successful, or impressive.
 - I surrender my need to be good enough to earn your favor.
 - I surrender my stubborn determination to remove conflict, confusion and hardship from my life.
 - I choose to see pain as something you will use to grow my faith and make me more like you.
 - I choose your grace, and surrender my tendency to try harder.
 - God, I surrender to the truth that you need nothing from me.

Now, try practicing your own honoring prayer. For starters, fill in the blank to one of the sentences below:

God I surrender _____ to you. (Things I feel the need to control)

God I choose you over _____. (Things and people I love the most)

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 Heavenly Father is merciful to me?* Was there a situation in your life this week when this Life-giving Truth was (or could have been) applicable?**
2. **Has anyone been an example to you in your prayer life?** Did someone teach you how to pray? What were some of the things you learned from them?
3. In Matthew 7:7 Jesus “seek, and you shall find”. Yet Jesus already told us not to be like the “Gentiles who seek after all these things.” Instead he said to “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness” (verse 33). The commands Jesus has given in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) describe what this kingdom living is about. **So, as you look at what happened so far in Matthew 5-6, what are the kinds of things we should be praying for?**
4. Consider this quote from the late Pastor John Stott: *“Thoughtful Christians look round them and see lots of people getting on fine without prayer...[but] we need to distinguish between the gifts of God as Creator and his gifts as Father, or between his creation-gifts and his redemption-gifts... It is not material blessings that he is referring to here, but spiritual blessings – daily forgiveness, deliverance from evil, peace, the increase of faith, hope and love, in fact the indwelling work of the ‘the Holy Spirit’ as the comprehensive blessing of God, which is how Luke renders ‘good things’[Luke 11:13]”.* **Brainstorm some more “redemption-gifts’ and “spiritual blessings” that you haven’t already thought about from Jesus’ commands in Matthew 5-7.**

5. Jesus is continually making the case that our Heavenly Father is perfect, merciful, good, and caring. But our earthly fathers probably have been much different. **In what ways do you think you wrongly view your Heavenly Father because of your experiences with your earthly father?**
6. When we don't pray for the good gifts the Father has told us he will give us, it reveals a distrust in our hearts. We are struggling to believe that God really is good and we need not fear how he would answer our prayer. **Do you ever not pray for something because you are afraid God will take something away from you or do something in your life that would be really hard?** What are some examples you can think of?
7. You are getting to know a young man named Nick, a student at Metro. He seems to understand the Gospel, and he does go to a church. One day he says, “So I heard a teacher says that sometimes God says 'yes' to our prayers, sometimes 'no', and sometimes he says 'wait.' The teacher's point was that each was an answer. But that seem like too much of an 'easy out' for God. I thought God was eager to answer our prayers positively. You know, like ‘ask, and it will be given to you’.” **How do you respond to Nick?**
8. Jesus is encouraging us to pray for good gifts from the Father because he will listen to us. **What is one of the 'biggest' prayers you are bringing to the Father right now?**
9. **Is there another verse or passage of Scripture that builds your confidence that the Father hears your prayers?**

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?

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.