

## WHY DO WE DO LIFE GROUPS



Dear Life Group Leaders,

I am so proud of you and thankful that you are taking the steps to be a Life Group leader this semester. Life Groups are a big part of who we are and what we do. One of the best ways for someone to establish intentional relationships that lead to spiritual growth is to join a Life Group. Life Groups are where the church's idea of community and family has the opportunity to be lived out. We're excited each time we launch a new semester of Life Groups because we know that lives will be changed for the better as a result.

As leaders you get to be a part of making all this happen. Your role begins with praying faithfully for your group members each week. Also, pray as you prepare and let Go guide you in planning. Prayer is the key to a great group. Good things ahead...

Much love,

John Hinkebein

God is in the business of changing lives in our community. That is why we make Life Groups involvement a priority at Riverside.

### ***TO BUILD DISCIPLES***

Something happens in circles, that just doesn't happen in rows. The primary goal of Life Groups is to walk out our discipleship in community. To put it simply, life change happens best in community.

### ***TO MOVE CLOSER TO JESUS***

We understand that everyone is at a different place in their own personal journey of faith. One person who may have been around church their whole life could be sitting next to someone who may be just testing the waters with Jesus. No matter where people are in their walk, we want them to grow personally and we want our Life Groups to help them all take their next steps.

### ***TO RECEIVE + GIVE CARE***

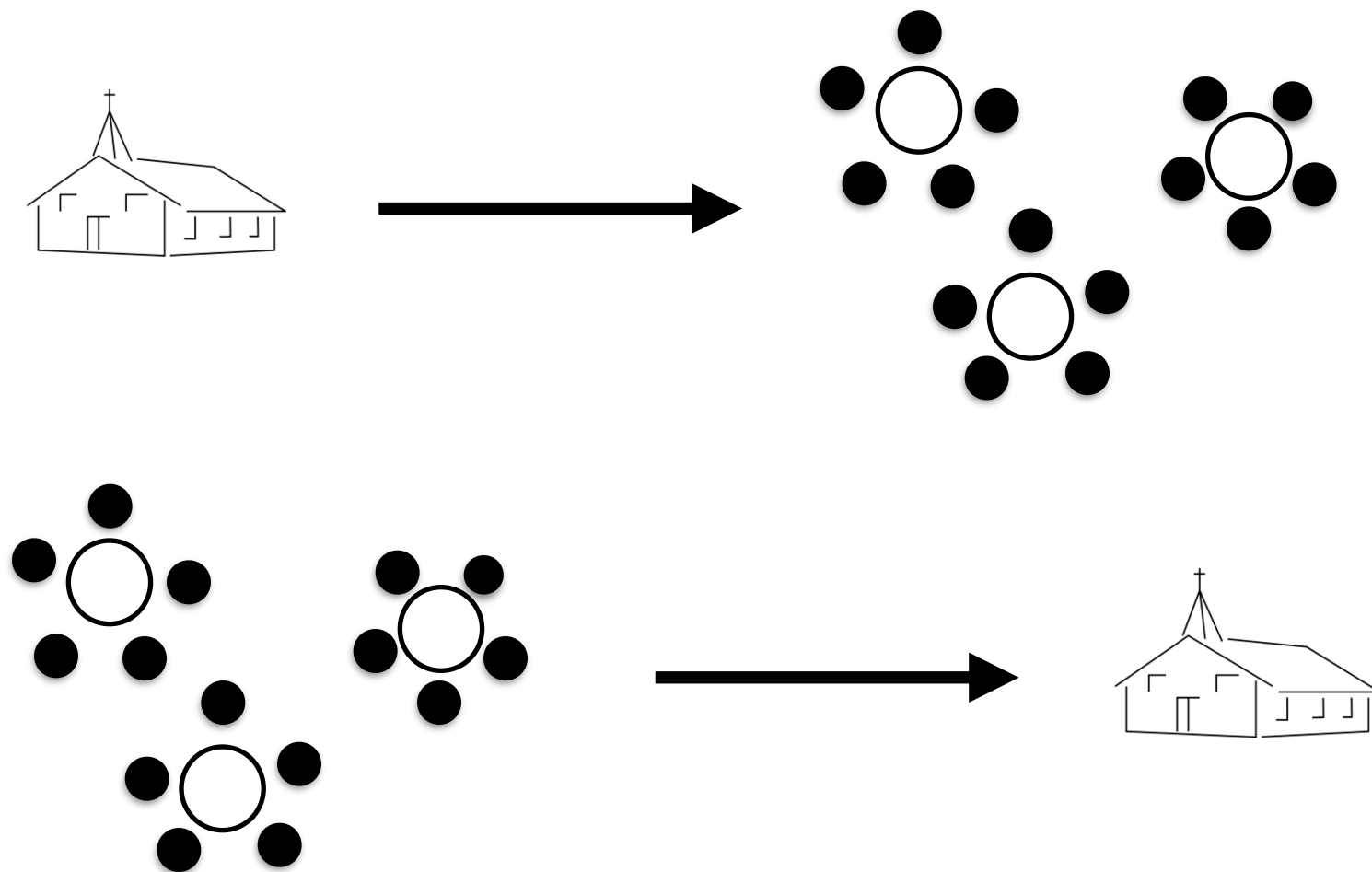
As we continue to grow and become a bigger church, we know that we also have to grow smaller. With the relational connections formed in Life Groups, we believe that this is where we can motivate one another to acts of love and good works (Hebrews 10:24-25)

### ***TO DEVELOP NEW LEADERS***

Our goal is to make sure that everyone who wants to join a Life Group has the opportunity to. This simply means that we are always expanding our groups by raising up new leaders.



Riverside is making an important shift when it comes to understanding what it means to be apart of the our community. The following models illustrate the shift that we are making as a community...



Simply put, we are not a church that does small groups we are a church that is made up of small groups.

### **WHY WOULD RIVERSIDE MAKE THIS SHIFT**

Matthew 28:19-20 - 19 says, *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Notice what Jesus doesn't say. Jesus doesn't say to go build bigger buildings, have great worship, wonderful teaching or even an amazing family ministry. Jesus says its about building disciples.

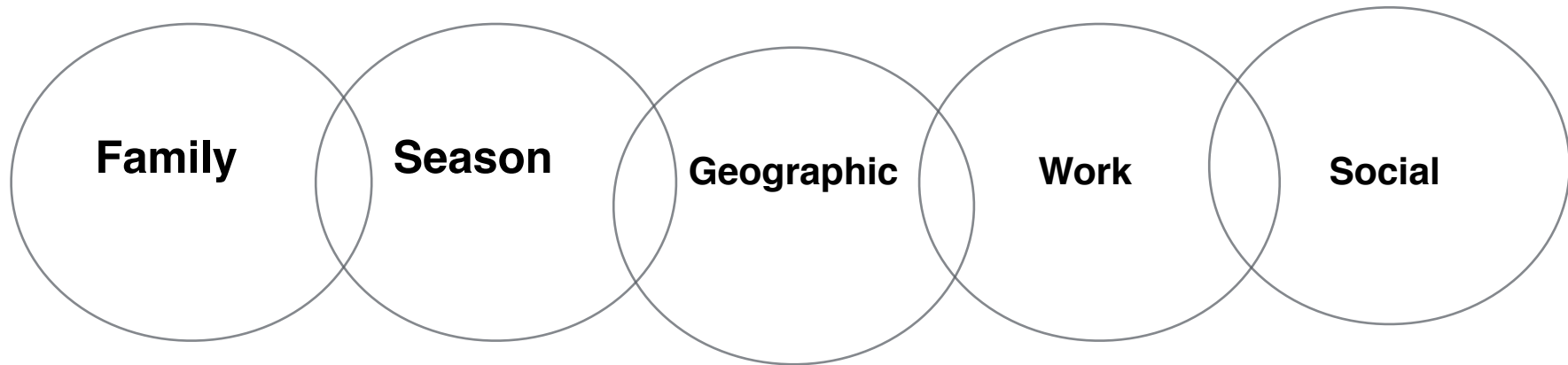
Riverside is making the shift because we believe that discipleship happens best in small pockets of community.

### **SO WHAT IS A DISCIPLE**

1. Someone who is in the process of looking like Jesus.
2. Someone who does not only looks like Jesus BUT also helps disciple others in the process. You can't be a disciple unless you are discipling others.

### **STARTING A LIFE GROUP**

When thinking about starting a Life Group often times God gives us clues about which people we should be reaching by looking at our spheres of influence.



Is your spheres of influence families with young kids? Than reach families with young kids. Is your sphere of influence empty nesters? Than reach empty nesters. Is your sphere of influence college age. Than reach college age.



## “ The DNA of healthy Life Group Leaders”

### YOU ARE:

- pursuing Jesus before any other ministry activity
- submitted to the Bible as an authority in your life
- taking your next steps in your relationship with Christ
- committed to Riverside' s vision and values
- available with your time, emotional capacity, and moral discernment to lead a group

### YOU WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

#### DIRECTION

1. Decide what day, time and location will best fit the vision of your group.
2. Decide what your group is going to be studying (**NOTE:** Riverside will be providing Life Group questions that follow along with the Sunday morning teachings and will be available to download at [connect2riverside.com](http://connect2riverside.com)).
3. Life Groups will run the duration of the school year (Aug - May) and take a break for the summer. Life Group leaders must be willing to commit to the duration of the school year in order to lead a group. Groups should meet at least twice a month.

#### SHEPHERD -

1. Commit to praying for your group on a weekly basis.
2. Prepare and study for your Life Group's meeting time. You don't have to be an expert but please come ready to engage and guide.
3. Be proactive in responding to group dynamics. Remember, often times the depth of your Life Group discussion is only as rich as the depth of your relationships.

### **COMMUNICATION -**

1. From the time they sign up until the end of the semester, you will need to be regularly communicating with your group.
2. Once someone signs up for your group, they should receive a welcome email or text within 24 hours.
3. Prior to your group starting, you should contact each member with specific details about your group's start time, location and any other helpful information.
4. Send out either a weekly text or email with details about the upcoming meeting. (prayer request, food list, childcare plan etc.).
- 5.

### **DEVELOP -**

1. Identify potential new leaders in your group.
2. Develop an apprentice from within the group.

### **ENGAGE -**

1. Read bi-monthly emails.
2. Attend Life Group Leader meetings (Fall, Spring, and Summer).
3. Communicate with the Life Group Pastor (John) about any group issues that need pastoral support.

### **YOU CAN EXPECT -**

1. the Life Group pastor to care for, develop, walk with, and pray for you as you lead
2. a personal meeting once a term with the Life Group pastor
3. Riverside to assist and assimilate all interested people into your Life Group in a timely manner BUT please remember its not Riversides role to fill your group with people.
4. Riverside to advertise and promote your group in our gatherings, on the website, and anywhere else that seems appropriate

# Sample Schedule

7pm-720pm - Social time

720pm - 725 - Welcome and short vision cast

725m - 8pm - Group Discussion

8pm - 810pm - Ministry time

810pm - 815pm - Recap and upcoming schedule

## FACILITATING YOUR GROUP

While all Life Groups will have their own personalities and group dynamics we have found that Life Groups that have these 6 key element will help your group be healthy.

**1. Fellowship.** Don't over look the importance of fellowship when leading your group. We must understand that that people will never embrace discipleship without first experiencing real community.

**2. Vision.** Early and often make sure that you are communicating to your group what your groups focus and target is. Speak out the vision that God has given your group so that others are clear the direction the group is heading.

**3. Discussion.** Notice that it doesn't say teach. Remember, we are not about just information transfer we are about helping people discover God's word for themselves. The Goal of the discussion time is to get people into God's word.

**4. Ministry Time.** Make sure you leave time at the end of the night to pray for one another, share what you heard the Lord say tonight and what next steps you will be taking.

**5. Kids.** Not ever group will have kids but for those that do you MUST plan ahead. What will be your groups strategy for the kids. Some groups may want to hire one of our students to watch them or another group might create a group rotation where everyone takes a turn. The key is to plan early!

**6. Administration.** Come up with roles and responsibilities for everything. Don't wait until you are burned out to ask for your group to help. Create a sign up list for everything from childcare, to host homes and meal coordinator.

## Meeting Options

Option 1 - Weekly meetings.

Option 2 - Every other week

Option 3 - Every week modified

- Week 1 - whole group
- Week 2 - just the men
- Week 3 - whole group
- Week 4 - just the women

## SAMPLE SEMESTER SCHEDULE

- Week 1 - Regular meeting
- Week 2 - Regular meeting
- Week 3 - Regular meeting
- Week 4 - Social event
- Week 5 - Regular meeting
- Week 6 - Regular meeting
- Week 7 - Regular meeting
- Week 8 - Service event
- Week 9 - Regular meeting
- Week 10 - Regular meeting

**Social Events** - Fun social events are a great way to deepen and develop meaningful relationship. Plan on at least one group social a semester and target a night that most of your group can attend.

**Service Events** - Serving together is a powerful way for your group to share a common mission together. Each semester plan one service event.



## What About Multiplication

Our heart is to be a community that prioritizes new people and starting new groups. There are lots of different models and understandings of how to start new groups. We don't think that one size fits all but rather that all of our Life Group leaders would have an intentional mindset to multiply groups. The following three models we feel work best within the context of our community.

### **Multiplication options:**

- 1. GROW AND DIVIDE** - This is the process in which a Life Group leader is mentoring another newer Life Group leader within the group. When the group outgrows the current meeting location the group divides sending half the group with the new Life Group leader to start another group.
- 2. PLANTING** - This is the process in which a few members of the current group are sent out to start a new group from scratch while leaving the majority of the group.
- 3. REBIRTH** - This is the process in which the end of the semester comes to an close and the group decides to stop meeting. The group then purposefully relaunches with each member of the old group launching new groups.

Multiplication can be a potential difficult thing to navigate but it doesn't have to be. We find it best to be clear and up front from the start of the group. Make sure that you are casting the vision early and often with your group that multiplication is not only a good thing but a sign of health from the group.

