

LIFE GROUP STUDY ENCOUNTER FORMAT

1. The leader is a facilitator, NOT a teacher.
2. Always start the group on time. People will come earlier if they know you consistently begin on time, regardless of the number there.
3. Always end the group on time. Keep the sessions at 90 minutes so people know when they will be home.
4. A general schedule to work from would be: 20 minutes for refreshments and visiting, 20 minutes for icebreakers, 20 minutes for personal lesson time, 20 minutes for sharing and application of the lesson and 10 minutes for prayer. However, keep the time very informal.
5. Set a target date to complete this group. (8 weeks, 10 weeks or 12 weeks.) This is important the groups need to divide and grow. Some people may sign up for the same group but it needs to be restarted each time as if it's the first.
6. At the first session, always explain the goals of the group. (spiritual growth, deeper relationship with God and with one another, a support group for us to encourage one another in our faith and a place for developing new believers.)
7. As the group nears completion, look for at least 1 leader who will begin a new group. The leader should be developing that future leader by helping them develop and lead during the course of that small group. The other members will hopefully be enlisted in one of the two groups. Take 2 or 3 weeks off, then begin again. Enroll new people during the period between groups.
8. During share time, never let 1 person dominate the conversation. Always keep the ideas moving. Be ready to share your ideas when there is a lull in the conversation. Don't lecture, share. And always, listen, listen, listen!
9. Pray for your group during the week. Also, encourage your group to pray for one another. Shepherd one another because you are a family within the family of God.

ICEBREAKERS

An icebreaker is an important tool for small groups. They are tools for understanding the personalities of the people involved in the group. They provide a source of entertainment with a purpose. Each week open with an icebreaker, followed by refreshments and then the Encounter Bible Study. In these particular icebreakers, everyone fills out the information and then passes their sheet of paper in to the leader. The leader reads each paper and the people try to guess whose paper is being read. It adds humor while providing insight into each person. Here are some examples:

1. What type of personalities do you like to be around? Which personality types do you avoid?
2. You have been given your dream vacation. Describe it.
3. You have found a magic lamp. The genie granted you three wishes. What are they?
4. If you could work anywhere in the world, where would it be and why?
5. What was the craziest moment in your life?
6. You and one other person are shipwrecked on a desert island. You were only able to save four items from the ship. Who was with you and what did you save?
7. You have been told you have one year to live. What will you do in that year?
8. If you could write one law to add to the constitution, what would it be?
9. What do you like about yourself? What would you change?
10. You are starting your own country. Describe the new world as if you were advertising people to move there.

Another idea is to pass out butcher block paper and divide into two or three groups. Give them crayons and have them draw a picture to portray each of the following concepts:

1. The Church
2. The Family
3. Forgiveness
4. Arrogance
5. Contentment
6. True Friendship
7. Compassion

CURRICULUM

1. 73 CD lessons for Life Groups by Harley Ihm
2. www.yes2god.org at the Peak University link under Life Groups. You can also download the study guides for the Bible Community lessons for well over 2 years worth of material if you want deeper studies.
3. www.yes2god.org and use the Sermon Link and click on GOING DEEPER. Your group can listen to a previous sermon and then complete the “Further Up the Peak” lesson that accompanies it.
4. www.zondervan.com – small group curriculum
5. <http://www.willowcreek.com/resources>
6. <http://store.centralchristian.com/Small-Group-Curriculum-C12.aspx>

CORE VALUES FOR LIFE GROUPS (taken from Donahue’s book)

1. **MANDATE: Spiritual Transformation** – Jesus Christ, as Head of the church, intends for His followers to become like Him.
2. **METHOD: Small Group Communities** – A small group provides the optimal environment for the life change Jesus Christ intends for EVERY believer.
3. **MOBILIZE: Strategic Leaders** – The most strategic person in the life-change process of the church is the small group leader.
4. **MULTIPLY: Span of Care** – Groups must expand and multiply so that eventually every believer can be connected to others.
5. **MEANS: Seek and Celebrate** – Effective ministry happens in an atmosphere of prayer and celebration.