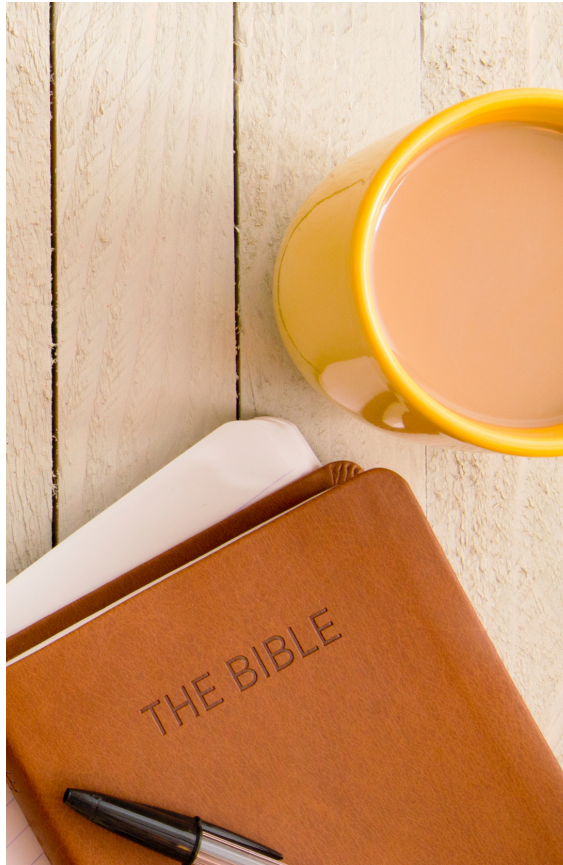


LIFE GROUP LEADER TRAINING GUIDE

THANK YOU . . .

FOR LEADING A LIFE GROUP AT CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY CHURCH!
THE FOLLOWING PAGES INCLUDE TOPICS AND TIPS WE HOPE WILL
HELP YOU AS YOU LEAD YOUR GROUP.



YOUR ROLE AS A LIFE GROUP LEADER

As a Life Group Leader, you are inviting people to follow you as you follow Jesus. We see this type of leadership modeled in 1 Corinthians 11:1 where Paul says, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” As you lead those in your group, you are pointing them toward Jesus, and the hope is that they would grow in their relationship with Christ and look more like Him. Your main responsibilities include preparing for the group, leading group meetings, praying for your group and helping group members to connect. You don’t have to have all the answers – you simply have to be growing in your own followership of Christ.

LEADER CARE & TRAINING

We want to make sure our leaders are well cared for, so every leader will have a Community Life Pastor that will reach out periodically to check in, pray with you, and help you troubleshoot any issues that arise. Please know our pastoral team is available whenever you need us and we want to support you as you lead your group. Periodically throughout the year, we host leader gatherings and events that you’ll be invited to. You’ll also receive a monthly Life Group Leader e-newsletter to encourage and equip you.

"WE CAN TEACH WHAT WE KNOW, BUT ULTIMATELY, WE WILL REPRODUCE WHAT WE ARE." – WAYNE CORDEIRO

OPEN GROUPS

We highly value open Life Groups, meaning we always want to have space for new men and women to join a group. The good news of Jesus is available to all, and we want our groups to be available and open to all. The decision to lead an open Life Group is a missional commitment. You will not only be creating space for more and more people to be discipled, but you will also be teaching those in your group the importance of welcoming the stranger.

In order to keep welcoming more people into Life Groups, it is our hope for more leaders to start groups. Pay attention to people in your group that could lead their own group one day, and consider inviting them into leadership with you or giving them a chance to lead the group discussion. Then talk with one of our Community Life Pastors about what it would look like to invite that person to start a group.

HOW TO INVITE PEOPLE TO YOUR LIFE GROUP

The best way to get people to join your Life Group is to invite them! Here are a few tips for inviting people to your Life Group.

- Pray and ask God who you can invite to join your Life Group. Pray for people to join your group. Ask God for divine conversation at church, work, in your neighborhood, etc.
- Make a list of people you can invite to your Life Group. Maybe they go to CA, or maybe they are neighbors, coworkers or people investigating faith.
- Invite people. Call, text, email or talk in-person and invite people to your group. Give them time to think and pray about the invitation, and then follow up. Post about your group on social media as a way of inviting people to join as well.
- Invite group members to invite others to the group. As people say yes to your invitation, encourage them to think and pray about friends they can invite. Not only will this help build your group, but it will begin to teach people that welcoming and inviting others is important to you and the group.

In addition to personal invitations, all open Life Groups will be posted on our CA website so that people looking for a group can find them. If you receive email inquiries about your Life Group, please reply to those who are interested within 48 hours as a way of welcoming them and helping them connect with your group. Please note: a lot of people inquire about joining a group but not all of them will end up coming, so just know that's normal!

TIPS FOR LEADING & STRUCTURING YOUR LIFE GROUP

PREPARE

Write out a plan for each meeting. Have an outline of how you want the meeting to go, including icebreaker questions, discussion questions and prayer ideas. The more prepared you are, the better you'll feel about leading the group. One way to reduce your prep time is to use the LG Leader Sermon Guides that are prepared weekly for your use. But you'll still want to prepare by watching the sermon, reading through the guide and making any edits as you see fit. A sample group meeting plan is included on page 12.

BE CONSISTENT WITH MEETING DAY, TIME & LOCATION

As much as possible, try to stick to your scheduled meeting time and rhythm. Sometimes an emergency will arise and will require a last minute cancellation of group, but this occurrence should be rare. People value consistency and knowing what to expect. Similarly, decide how long your group will last (90 minutes is ideal), and try to start and end on time as a way to respect peoples' time. Keep your meeting location consistent as well rather than switching locations each week.

PUT OUT SNACKS

Consider providing snacks and/or coffee, tea or water at group meetings. You can also set up a snack rotation so people in the group take turns bringing food, or ask someone in the group to oversee this. Please do not provide alcoholic beverages during your regular group meetings. This is a helpful guideline to respect others in your group who may have struggles or different convictions regarding alcohol.

USE DIRECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Oftentimes as leaders, we want to lead by consensus and we want to please everyone in the group. But especially in the first six months of leading your group, it's best to use directive leadership. This means that you, as the leader, are making decisions about the group and determining how the group will work (ie what time/day you'll meet, how long you'll meet, what your group will study, etc.). Remember the mission and purpose for your Life Group and keep calling people to that mission. It's helpful to remind your group of the mission/purpose regularly.

DETERMINE HOW TO DIVIDE CO-LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

If you are leading with someone else, it's best to determine which role you'll each play before your group starts meeting. Talk through roles and responsibilities - for instance, will you take turns leading each meeting or will one of you lead the discussion and one of you will lead the prayer time, etc. Talk through your expectations and ideas for how the group will work so that you're in agreement when you start leading together. Have a regular time to connect as leaders, and be sure to give each other positive affirmation as well as honest feedback.

COMMUNICATE REGULARLY WITH YOUR LIFE GROUP

We encourage you to try to communicate with the group weekly - ie email, text, Facebook group, etc. It can be helpful to remind them when your group is meeting or on break. You can also use this communication to encourage and disciple the group by reminding them about what you've been discussing from God's Word. If you send out prayer requests, be sure to tell the group in advance you'll be sharing this or ask permission for confidentiality purposes. You might also consider delegating this role and asking a trusted group member to communicate with the group.

SHARE STORIES

When your group first starts, it can be helpful to take time during the first group meeting(s) to share life stories as a way of getting to know one another. You can have everyone share briefly during the first meeting, or you can assign someone to share for a bit longer each week. Some sample ideas for how to share stories are included on page 10.

READ GOD'S WORD AND PRAY

Two of the things we want every Life Group to do together are read the Bible and pray. However you structure your group, be sure to include a time where you're opening God's Word together and then praying together. Consider mixing up how you pray - for instance, you can break into prayer partners, pray together as a large group, etc.

As the leader you'll want to be sensitive to those in your group and understand that not everyone will be comfortable praying out loud, not everyone in your group may yet be a Christ follower, etc. There is of course freedom for people to choose not to pray aloud, but there is also great opportunity for you as the leader to disciple and teach people how to pray. We encourage you to give people a safe space to practice praying out loud.

Some suggestions for how to pray in a Life Group are included on page 11.

TIPS FOR LEADING GROUP DISCUSSION

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

As the leader, you will set the tone for how deep or vulnerable people are in the group. It can be helpful to choose a question that you'll answer first as the leader so that you can model how vulnerable to be. Remember, as the leader you don't have to have all the answers or have everything figured out - share honestly and authentically from your own life and journey with Jesus. Try to share how you are living out or practicing the things you're discussing in group. You can also model how much time to take answering questions.

ALLOW FOR SILENCE

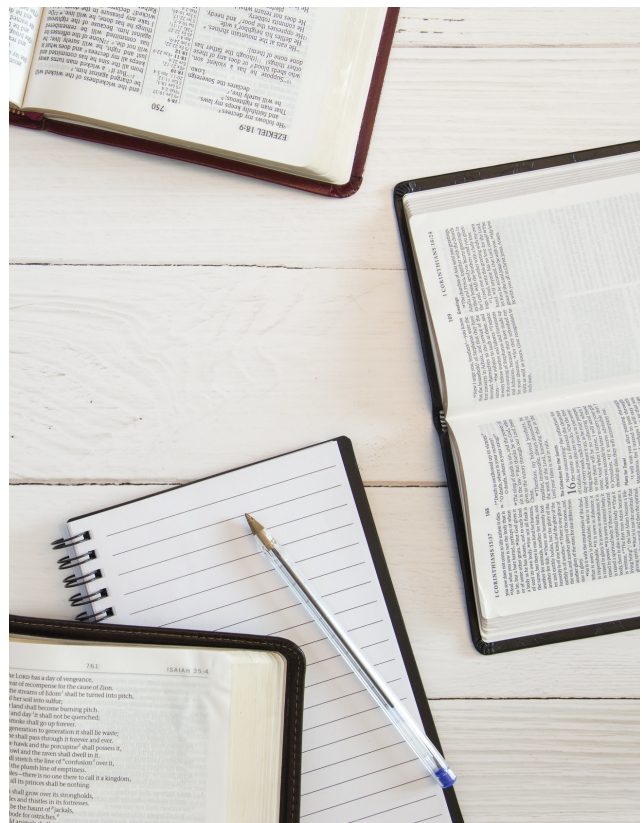
Silence in a group setting can feel awkward especially as the leader. If there's silence after you ask a question, it might make you nervous or wonder why people aren't answering. But remember that silence can be a good thing. Some personalities need time to process a question before answering. Some personalities just need quiet space in order to feel like they can jump in and share. Allow for silence in your group. There may be times where silence is caused by a question that just doesn't make sense, so you can try saying something like, "Did that question make sense? Let me rephrase it..." If you find yourself uncomfortable with silence in the group, ask yourself why and challenge yourself to sit in the silence longer than you might like.

CREATE SPACE FOR EVERYONE TO SHARE

As a leader, it's helpful to pay attention to how often people share, which people tend to share last or talk the least, etc. Not every person needs to share in a group and some may not be comfortable opening up, but there are things we can do as leaders to draw people out and create space for everyone to share. For instance, consider breaking into partners or small groups for certain questions - if you're meeting via Zoom, you can use the Breakout Rooms function to break into smaller groups. Or consider calling on specific people to share - please note that you'll need to use discernment to know whether or not someone will appreciate being called on. If you feel that a few people are dominating the conversation, you can call out the others by saying something like, "We've heard a lot from some of you, but for those of you that haven't shared yet - I want to hear from you, what do you think?" One of the best ways to create space for people to share is by asking good questions.

Sometimes there is a person(s) in group who talks too much or is really negative, etc. and these are things that, if left unchecked, will affect the overall health of the group.

Sometimes as a leader we have to set boundaries for specific people in the group if what they are doing is negatively affecting the group or making people feel that it's not safe to share. For instance, if someone constantly overtalks and dominates the conversation, it will eventually lead others in the group to feel frustrated and may make them stop sharing openly. There is an article on pages 13-15 with some tips to lead specific types of people in a group, including the overtalker, undertalker, problem solver, etc. If you encounter a difficult personality in group, please talk with your Community Life Pastor and they can help you navigate the situation. There are specific things you can try doing in the group setting, and oftentimes an honest, one-on-one conversation is needed with the person.



USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Don't assume that everyone in your group is a Christ follower. If you assume at least one person in your group doesn't know Jesus, it will change the way you lead. Don't assume everyone knows the Bible, and when you're reading the Bible, don't assume everyone knows where a specific book or verse is in the Bible. Even when it comes to praying, don't assume everyone is comfortable with prayer, but share what prayer is and how to pray. Give opportunities in your group for people to share if they've given their life to Jesus. Share the gospel and give opportunities for people to make a first-time commitment to Christ. If someone in your group gives their life to Jesus or makes a recommitment, please let your Community Life Pastor know so that he or she can follow up with you.

THINK OF DIFFERENT PERSONALITY TYPES

Remember that your group is full of different personalities - extroverts and introverts, quiet and loud talkers, external and internal processors. As you lead group, be aware of these different personalities and try to mix up how you ask questions. For instance, you might ask a few questions to the group and the external processors (who process by talking out loud) will respond first - but for the internal processors (who need time to process alone before sharing aloud) you can consider asking a question and giving silent space to process by saying something like, "I'm going to give all of us 60 seconds to think about our answer and then after 60 seconds, we'll have a chance to share."

SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE

One of our roles as leaders and Christ followers is to speak the truth in love. If there is someone in your group who shares about a habitual sin or is making an unwise decision, consider meeting up with them one-on-one to ask questions and point them toward Jesus and what God's Word says.

If something Biblically inaccurate is shared, it's important to address it and help your group understand what God's Word says. A helpful way to respond when someone shares something that isn't biblically accurate is to point them back to God's Word; you can say something like, "Thanks for sharing. Where do you see that in the Bible passage we just read?" There will also be times where you as the leader need to respond by explaining what a Bible verse or passage means, so you can say something like, "Thanks for sharing, but here's what I think this verse/passage is saying."

If someone shares that they are not yet a Christ follower, pray for them and initiate meeting up with them outside of group to get to know them, share the gospel, and see how you can support them as they investigate faith in Jesus.

If something is shared in group that you don't feel equipped or comfortable to address, please reach out to your Community Life Pastor and we'd love to chat with you.

BE WILLING TO SET ASIDE THE PLAN IF/WHEREVER GOD LEADS

There might be a week where you have discussion questions planned, but when you get to group you just sense there is someone who needs prayer and care or you sense the group needs to go in a different direction, and that's ok. That's part of the art of leadership. Of course we don't want one person's needs dominating group every week, but if you discern the group needs to do something different periodically then feel free. We encourage you to be willing to set aside your plan if/wherever God leads.

ONLINE GROUPS

ONLINE GROUP MEETING TIPS

If your group is meeting online, we recommend that you take a few moments at your first meeting to give people some tips and best practices for participating in an online group. The tips below are specifically related to Zoom, but if you are hosting on another platform consider what similar tips might be helpful.

- Mute: It's helpful if everyone stays on mute for the group unless you are sharing. That way, we don't hear background noise.
- Chat: There's an option to private message someone or do a group message to everyone. Feel free to use this function, but encourage your group to limit how much they use it as it can be distracting.
- Name: It's important for people to know each other's names and who is sharing. You can ask that everyone add their correct name in their account by clicking on the three blue dots in the corner of their video screen and clicking "Rename".

MISCELLANEOUS

BIBLES

If there is someone in your group who does not have a Bible, we'd be happy to mail them one for free. Please email your Community Life Pastor with their name and address.

COUNSELING OR PASTORAL CARE

If you have a group member you feel would benefit from counseling, we suggest that you refer them to The Relationship Center at Christian Assembly for counseling. To get more info or set up an appointment, visit: www.cachurch.com/trc

If you think someone in your group would benefit from meeting with one of our pastors, please reach out to your Community Life Pastor.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, SUICIDE, ETC.

If someone in your group reports domestic violence, elderly abuse, harm to a child, etc., you need to share that immediately with your Community Life Pastor so we can discern the appropriate next steps and any required channels of reporting such abuse.

If someone in your group shares that they are suicidal and you believe their life is in danger and they are actively considering suicide, meaning they have an immediate intent on harming themselves, you need to call 911 immediately. The alternative to 911 is escorting them, or enlisting a family member to escort them, to an emergency room that has a psychiatric unit, like Huntington Hospital or Adventist Hospital. If someone shares they are suicidal, please also contact your Community Life Pastor immediately.



STORY TELLING IDEAS

THREE QUESTIONS

Create three questions that you will ask as a way of getting to know people. Give them the questions in advance, and have them come ready to share.

Some sample questions include:

1. Tell us about your spiritual journey. (ie how you came to know Christ or, if you're investigating faith, what that journey has been like)
2. What are three experiences from your life that have defined or shaped you? (i.e. breakup, death of loved one, retirement, graduating college, landing your dream job, getting married, having kids, etc.)
3. What has God been teaching you in the past 6 months?

PHOTOGRAPHS

Invite group members to bring a significant photo and then have them share about it.

Variations: (1) Bring 3-5 photos taken at least 5 years apart that tell your story; (2) Ask for a specific type of photo – baby, vacation, school, family, friend, etc.; (3) Ask: what's a photo you don't have but you wish you did? (for example: a picture with a significant friend or relative who has passed away, a photo of the moment you got engaged; a photo of your first car, etc.).

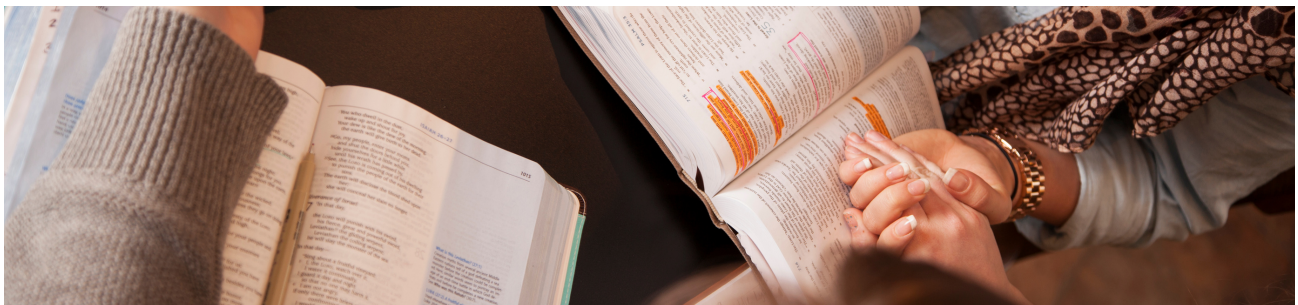
HEROES, HIGH POINTS, HARD TIMES, HOPES

Ask group members to prepare this in advance of group, or give them 3-5 minutes to do this in group. Ask them to draw a time-line of their life, and ask them to include 2-3 heroes (people who have had great influence on their life), 2-3 high points (great moments that have shaped them), 2-3 low-points (struggles that have also shaped them) and 1-2 hopes for the future. Be sure to set a time limit for each person to share. You might give them 10 minutes to share and 5 minutes for the group to ask questions.

PRAYER IDEAS

We want your group to be praying together each week, but depending on the size and content of your group, there isn't always time for extended sharing of prayer requests. Consider some different ways to pray, including:

- Share prayer requests and assign each person to pray for the person on their left. Pray together aloud at the same time, or commit to praying for that person for the week.
- If you are meeting in person, write prayer requests on an index card, mix them up, and have each person take a card and commit to praying for that person in the coming week.
- Ask a specific prayer request related to your study, have each person share their answer, and say a prayer covering all those requests.
- Ask the group to prepare and quiet their hearts before God. Allow them to pray as they feel led.
- Ask the group to share what's on their hearts, and then lead in a time of silence and prayer and invite each person to pray silently for their own needs or the person on their left or right.
- Set aside one whole night just for prayer and worship.
- Pray for people who are not part of your Life Group, for the city and the world around us.
- Pray for individuals within your sphere of influence (ie family, friends, coworkers, spouse).
- Pray for current events and political leaders around the world.
- Pray for specific unreached countries and people groups, the persecuted church, CA's local and international leaders, etc. For suggestions of what to pray for, use the 14-day CA Kingdom Prayer Guide which can be found on our website at www.cachurch.com/kingdom.
- Ask the group to share names of friends, family or coworkers who don't know Jesus and pray for those people. Pray that they would come to know Jesus.



SAMPLE LIFE GROUP LEADER GUIDE

7:15pm Group starts

7:30pm

Welcome

- If there is anyone new present, be sure to welcome them and give them a moment to share their name and a little about themselves.
- Icebreaker question: If you were a superhero, what would your super power be and why?

Vision & Values Reminder

- Remind group of the purpose, why we meet
- Remind group of our values – like confidentiality, openness and welcome, etc.

7:45pm Pray/Worship

8:00pm Discussion: Sermon-Based Leader Guide

Bible Questions:

Read aloud 1 John 4:7-12. Give the group a few minutes to sit with the passage and make any observations, and then ask the group to share what stands out to them.

Application Questions:

1. What do you think makes it difficult for you to love others?
2. Tom shared that we love across our differences by initiating relationships with one another, forgiving, praying, carrying one another's burdens, and delighting.
 - a. Share an example of how someone has loved you recently by doing one of those things.
 - b. Which of those things Tom shared is most difficult for you to do and why?
3. Is there someone in your life you're finding it difficult to love? What step can you take toward loving them the way Christ loves us?
4. How can you grow in being a person who lives out Jesus' command to love one another?

8:45pm Closing & Prayer

Break into partners or small groups and pray for one another. Pray that God would help us to love one another as Christ has loved us. Pray for unity in the Church.

9:00pm Done!

TYPES OF PEOPLE IN A GROUP

Our groups draw and attract a variety of people. Our goal is to welcome everyone into our community, while maintaining a safe setting for people to experience connection and growth. Below are some typical types of people who might be in one of our groups. By no means is this an exhaustive list, nor is this list meant for us to typecast people. Our hope is that as we grow in leading groups, we will know how to encourage, love and interact with different types of people.

OVERTALKERS have an answer for every question and every answer seems to go on forever. They are usually very knowledgeable and kind-hearted. They just don't always have the skills needed to help you keep things on track. Some overtalkers are able to talk for a long time without taking a break. You need to have the courage to help them wrap things up.

What a group leader can do: The secret to dealing with overtalkers is to remember that the group is usually desperate for the leader to do something. You can begin by working to draw others out. Look for a quick breath, no matter how short, to jump in and allow others to contribute. Overtalkers aren't the enemy. In fact, they will bring profound points to the conversation. Turn overtalkers into allies by talking to them privately after the group. Compliment their openness, explain the goals for drawing everyone into the discussion, and ask them to help by being an active listener and creating space for others to share.

UNDERTALKERS can be easy to miss because they never bother the other group members. In fact, they've become experts at hiding under the radar screen. Undertalkers need very gentle coaching and encouragement to share.

What a group leader can do: Some undertalkers feel afraid of speaking in front of groups, so help them break the ice by asking them for feedback on a specific question. Give them the option to “pass” but gently welcome their sharing. Remind the group often that it needs everyone's contribution to grow. Consider talking with them privately outside of group just to let them know you value them and you'd love to hear from them in group.

CRITICS have the greatest potential to negatively impact a group. Criticism is contagious and it can paralyze a leader. The secret to dealing with critics is to remember that their bark is always worse than their bite. Some critics are in such a habit of being negative that they criticize things they actually enjoy. Remember that the complaints of critics are usually more about their own perceptions and hurts than the events they're criticizing. Don't ever let a critic derail an activity, and don't take the complaints personally.

What a group leader can do: Humor is a great tool for reaching critics because it diffuses the power of their complaints. For example, if a critic complains that he or she is sick of reading material or watching a video series, a leader might say something like, "This is the format and focus of the group. We would love your continued involvement in our group." With consistent care and nudging, a critic can actually become an excited and motivated group participant. If the criticism is extreme, have an honest one-on-one conversation with the person outside of group to help him or her see the effects of the negative comments and how they interrupt your efforts for the group.

REVEALERS have a tough time knowing how much information is too much information. Revealers often bring details to their stories that leave group members unsure of how they should respond.

What a group leader can do: The secret to leading with revealers is to help them find the proper context for the things they'd like to share. You could respond to a revealer's disclosure by saying something like, "That must have been very painful for you. I would be happy to talk to you more about that situation after our group." Revealers work best with leaders who are very direct and very gentle at the same time.

PROBLEM SOLVERS have a tough time seeing others in pain or confusion. With great intentions, the problem solver tries to fix other group members, often offering pat answers and solutions. Remind your group that each person is in a process of growth and feeling and needs time to work out his or her questions. Remember that there is a need in group to speak the truth in love, but pay attention to how often advice is being given and if there are any unhealthy ways it's being given. Sometimes the best thing we can do after someone shares is express empathy without adding any advice.

What a group leader can do: If a problem solver gives a pat answer that's received as judgmental or insensitive by a group member, don't panic. Quickly respond by showing empathy for the person with the problem or question. You might say, "I'm sorry you're going through that. Keep sharing and struggling forward. We'll do our best to support you along the way." You might also consider connecting with the person who shared their problem or question outside of group.

If a problem solver doesn't seem to catch your hints and redirection, talk to him or her after the group. Tell the problem solver that you appreciate his or her wisdom. Then remind the problem solver that you want everyone to have the freedom to talk, discover, and even struggle through things. Help them grow in being someone who speaks the truth in love.

As you train yourself to identify and respond to these personality types your group will flow better and accomplish their ultimate goal: drawing people closer to Jesus and to each other.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

We have some additional resources on our website, including a set of Life Group Leader Training videos and our weekly Life Group Leader Sermon Guides. For additional resources, please visit our website at:

www.cachurch.com/lgleaderresources

**THANKS AGAIN FOR LEADING A LIFE GROUP AT
CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY CHURCH. WE ARE SO GRATEFUL
FOR YOU AND EXCITED FOR ALL THAT GOD WILL DO IN
AND THROUGH YOUR GROUP!**
