



H.O.S.T.

Information Booklet

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Welcome!

Thank you for considering being a Life Group H.O.S.T. Serving in this way can be a significant part of your spiritual journey as a disciple at St. John's as we CONNECT, GROW, SHARE!

This booklet provides you with basic information about what it means to be a H.O.S.T. of a St. John's Life Group and gives some practical steps in getting started.

At St. John's, we are committed to GROW together in the Word through LIFE GROUPS. Your participation in this important part of our discipleship process is central to our work as a church. I know that God will work in and through you for His honor and you will become stronger in your faith and help others to do the same!

In Christ,

-Pastor Michael Hayes

What is a Life Group?

Life Groups offer a place to form strong friendships, grow in God's Word and positively impact the world.

- Who:** Couples, men's, women's, singles, life stage and blended groups.
When: Groups meet on different nights and days of the week.
Where: Usually in homes but also restaurants, coffee shops, church, etc....
Duration: 6 weeks to start. Many groups keep meeting and stay together for years.
Size: Usually a Life Group has anywhere from 4-12 people.

Why We Have Life Groups

Our discipleship process at St. John's is:

- CONNECT** To God and His People In Worship
GROW Together in God's Word Through Life Groups
SHARE Christ With Our Words, Service and Resources

Life Groups are the next step after CONNECT in our discipleship process. Spiritual growth is stunted when Christians think that the Christian life only consists of one hour of Worship on Sunday morning. Spiritual growth happens in the context of community. Life Groups are focused on developing a strong network of friends that help and challenge us to become more like Jesus Christ. Life groups offer a balance of fellowship, Bible study, prayer, encouragement and mission in an informal environment.

What Makes a Healthy Life Group?

Essentials of Life Groups:

We GROW in Life Groups. Four key ingredients should be a part of every Life Group:

1. **The Word of God:** Whether we study straight from the Bible or study the Bible through devotional books/guides, we are committed to growing from the Word of God in Christ.
2. **Growth:** We are here because we want to grow and see our lives transformed to be more like Christ. As part of this growth we commit to pray for each other. We seek to encourage each other and hold each other accountable in the steps of our discipleship process: CONNECT-GROW-SHARE.
3. **Acceptance:** As members of this Life Group we seek to accept each other unconditionally as Christ does each of us, seeking to build strong friendships rooted in Christ.
4. **Confidentiality:** Everything shared in this group stays with this group. Gossip and slander are unacceptable. Like Christ we seek the best for each other.

What Does it Mean to H.O.S.T. a Life Group?

Being a HOST is a great way to start a Life Group without having to worry about being a teacher or a Bible scholar. See the Position Guide Below.

POSITION GUIDE for Life Group H.O.S.T.

***Therefore encourage one another and build each other up....
1 Thessalonians 5:11***

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- **H.O.S.T** responsibilities
 - **H**ave a Heart for people and pray for those in your Life Group
 - **O**pen your home (or other place to meet), providing a welcoming environment
 - **S**erve them something to drink
 - **T**urn on the DVD/Video player and facilitate discussion with provided questions based on the video teachings
- Communicate meeting times, places, and any cancellations in a timely manner

QUALIFICATIONS:

Be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ, giving of your time, talents and treasures in a regular and faithful way. Be committed to St. John's discipleship process: CONNECT – GROW – SHARE.

TRAINING:

- Read through *this packet*.
- Interview with the Minister to Adult Ministry
- All questions and concerns can be directed to the office of Adult Ministry throughout the campaign.

COMMITMENT:

- 1 ½ hour per life group meeting plus any needed preparation time
- Duration of study (6 weeks to start, can continue)

BENEFITS:

Becoming and helping others become strong disciples of Jesus who GROW together in the Word. Many Life Groups develop life-long friendships and SHARE Christ together in powerful ways!

Steps to take once you have decided to

H.O.S.T. a Life Group

If your group is in a home:

1. Commit to being a HOST (sign the application form on the last page of the packet or go on-line).
2. Decide on the logistics of your study (day, time, if childcare is needed or offered, and location of your study).
3. Pray about who the Lord is leading to your group.
4. Ask people to join or welcome those that signed up and need a group to join. (We will place them in groups best suited for them based on location, type, etc.)
5. Meet with the Minister to Adults
6. Make contact with your group members at least one week before your first meeting via phone or e-mail.
7. Meet for six weeks to start.

If your group is on campus:

1. Follow same steps above. On step 2 please contact Christina to find a room on campus for you to meet.

Curriculum:

We have an assortment of curriculum here on campus in our library. Please see links on website for curriculum choices.

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Overcoming Common Fears

It has been said that courage is not the absence of fear, but moving forward in the face of fear. Stepping out to lead a group can feel risky. Let's address some of the fears that are common to us all:

What if no one shows up?

We have found that personal invitations are the best way to encourage people to attend your group. An email invitation and a follow up phone call to let people know you are looking forward to seeing them at your group are best. Make these contacts...then leave the results up to God.

My house is... (fill in the blank)! What will people think?

As long as your home is relatively clean and everyone has a comfortable place to sit, you'll be in good shape. The most important thing is that people feel welcomed.

What if they ask a biblical question that I can't answer?

We don't expect you to have all the answers, so just be honest. Remember that people grow the most when they take ownership of their own spiritual journey. Don't do all the work for them!

What if I'm not a great speaker?

You don't have to be a trained speaker, leader, or Bible scholar in order to facilitate a great group! You do have to love the Lord and love people. Relax and guide the conversation so that every person has the opportunity to connect with God and to experience positive life change.

What if my group is not connecting well?

Like any friendship, it takes time for people to get comfortable with one another and enjoy being together. Adding periodic social activities in addition to regular meetings can help build friendships. Also, if any interpersonal issues arise, remember that you are not alone. Contact the Minister to Adults with any concerns, challenges, or needs you might have as you HOST.

First Meeting

The first meeting should be a time of getting to know one another, as well as discussing and agreeing on logistics of the meeting. Some things to cover would include:

- How often the group will meet; where & when.
- Basic ground-rules such as mutual respect, confidentiality, and freedom to share diverse ideas without judgment. Read the *Life Group Essentials*.
- Discuss childcare arrangements as needed.
- Take time to share what brought you to the group and how you hope God will continue to shape you through the group.

Have some fun as well! An ice-breaker can be a good way to melt people's defenses and create camaraderie.

Share the Responsibility

Everyone in the group has a responsibility to be an active participant. As a HOST, your role is to facilitate meaningful discussions and to encourage others to use their gifts within the group. Here are some of the roles for people to fill:

Communications: This person is a good organizer and a "people-person" who is available to call or email group members in regard to schedule changes. They can also coordinate snacks, potlucks, birthdays, or activities.

Service Projects (optional): Find someone who loves to serve and let them come up with ideas for how your group can serve together. This is a great way to show the love of Jesus and to grow closer as a group.

Prayer: This person is someone passionate about prayer who can email the groups prayer requests, keep a prayer journal and find creative ways for the group to engage in prayer.

Facilitate discussion by using ACTS:

Acknowledge everyone who speaks during a discussion--recognizing participants will reinforce their contribution and encourage quiet speakers.

Clarify what is being said--restating in someone else's words is a good way to make sure you are listening well to the speaker.

Turn it back to the group as a means to generate discussion and build consensus--ask what others think rather than providing answers.

Summarize what has been said--this will help clarify the overall topic and increase learning.

Life Group H.O.S.T. Tips

H.O.S.T.'s must Pray, Prepare, Guide and Care

- Pray: for wisdom, each member, at the meeting and between meetings.
- Prepare: location, setting, resources – focus, format – interaction with Scripture.
- Guide: Begin and end on time, keep discussion moving, back on track, involve many, limit over talkers, open-ended questions, and group dynamics.
- Care: concern for each member should be felt from the HOST. Also Confidentiality: Be sure that the group knows that all things shared in the group remain in the group.

How Not to H.O.S.T. a group:

- Too Talkative – need to encourage healthy amount of talking by all.
- Insecure – Don't be afraid to lead but don't be a dictator either.
- Unprepared – don't be late, try not to wing it, know names, and know the content.
- Inflexible – sometimes you need to go off on a tangent to address needs of the people but don't go too far. This is to say don't follow the agenda like the Military but still follow it.
- Readers – Ask for volunteers to read. Don't make someone read. Some people can't read out loud. We don't want to embarrass them.

Life Group H.O.S.T. Tips (cont'd)

How to Start and Keep a Discussion Going:

- Encourage people to verbalize views and feelings – this may put forth some interesting ideas but allows for you to know what is going on “out there” and hopefully you can address those items at some point during the study in a loving way.
- Be grateful for every answer – even the “stupid” ones.
- Don’t always be satisfied with the first answer you get.
- Keeps the discussion moving forward.
- Be alert to individuals in group – some may need prodding and encouragement. Some may need discouragement to stop talking too much.
- Don’t be afraid of some silence – let a question linger a bit.
- Turn questions to you back to the group .
- Be prepared to learn from the group!

Different Personalities in Groups:

- *The Talker* – Talks all the time. May need to let lead a bit but if too domineering may have to ask them outside the meeting to help you spread the discussion around. Helpful to have this person sit next to you.
- *The Thinker* – Shy but has a lot to say. Try to have this person sit across from you. Occasionally ask them a direct question.
- *The life-long Church Member* – grew up in the church and has all the right answers. Try to push them beyond church language, ask why, and even encourage them to lead a session or two, or groom for leading the Life Group that branches off of yours!
- *The Debater* – always challenging every point, devil’s advocate. May need to talk to outside of group and have them help you direct the discussion positively.
- *The Crisis Producer* – this person brings their many problems to the forefront always and at inappropriate times during the study. Encourage problems to be talked about at prayer time and a long term goal is to help them see beyond their problems to the needs of others.

