



FALL 2025 WEEK 1 | September 13-14, 2025

**LEADER NOTES****GETTING READY FOR YOUR FIRST MEETING**

Each week in this section you'll find the most important information for your group.

□ GOALS OF THE FIRST MEETING

- Re-connect with existing members and meet new members
- **Cast vision for the quarter with your group**
- **Clarify your group's direction/expectations/commitments using the Life Group Commitment Form**
- Briefly discuss the sermon topic (if there is time)
- Pray for the building of relationships and the spiritual growth of the group

□ Items Needed for the First Meeting

- **Life Group Commitment Form**- Review this with your group. This was mailed to you last week in your leader packet, and can also be found online here: lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/life-group-covenants/
- Nametags for in-person groups (print or write them out ahead of time).

□ Contact Your Group in Advance

- Contact all members before the first meeting to welcome them to the group. You can check your roster online to see all the members of your group and their contact information. Simply login to your account and look for Groups on the bottom right of the screen.

<https://my.northcoastchurch.com>

- **IN-PERSON GROUPS** - Inform members of the location and time of your group and how you're handling food.
- **ONLINE GROUPS** - Make sure you send the link to your meeting well in advance and preferably again on the day you meet.

PRO-TIPS TO MAXIMIZE THE ONLINE GROUPS EXPERIENCE

1) Shorten meetings to 75 minutes or less.

2) Use break-out rooms to personalize conversation. (If possible, try to do this at least 5-10 minutes every meeting.)

3) Coach people on how to engage and speak up online. (Practicing this can really help.)

* More how-to's at this link: [Pro-Tips & Facilitation Tips to maximize your Online Experience.](#)

ABOUT POLITICS IN LIFE GROUP - We believe it is important for Jesus followers to think through and process how they are going to vote and engage in politics. But due to the polarizing nature of our current political climate, we want to keep our Life Group meetings free of politics and focused on relationships with each other and God's Word.

Presenting the Good News of Jesus' saving grace to all, and the unity we have as believers is vitally important to us. In light of this, remember to keep politics completely out of your Life Group discussions. We exist to minister to everyone who wants to know Jesus. Every election cycle we have Christians who become divided over issues and can be deeply

offended by comments, jokes, and even prayer requests. We do not want to send the message that people who vote a certain way or have differing political views are not welcome. If someone in your group starts to take things in a political direction (be it with humor, a rant or even a “prayer request” for a specific outcome), gently remind them that the body of Christ (and North Coast Church) is made up of followers of Jesus - some of whom are Republicans, Independents, Democrats, etc.

AGENDA FOR YOUR FIRST MEETING

Looking for more guidance on your first meeting? You can find the “First Night Agenda” on how to make your first night great on the Leader Tools page of our website. (lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/make-your-first-night-great/)

HOW WE MEASURE OUR SUCCESS WEEK TO WEEK: Hearing from everyone at every meeting and keeping God’s Word at the center.

Make sure you leave plenty of time to go over the Life Group Commitment Form with your group.

- **Welcome & Eat** - Potluck is a great option. Online groups can try a virtual dinner option if they would like.
- **Group Sharing–Discussion Priority: Because you will spend extra time getting to know each other and reconnecting, make sure you have enough time to spend on Warm Up #2 and then transition to the Purpose of Life Groups and Life Group Commitment Guide.**
- **KNOW, SHARE, LIVE IT** Sections (optional - only if you have time)
- **Go over the Life Group Commitment Form** - Use question #2 in the Warmup section to go over Purpose of Life Groups and Life Group Commitment Form.
- Close in prayer.
- Mingle afterward.

- ◇ **Need help?** Reach out to your Life Group Pastor any time!
- ◇ **You don’t have to answer every question.** Pick the ones that fit your group best.
- ◇ **Encourage everyone to share.** Set time limits if needed.
- ◇ **Use the audio guide for more insights:** [Leader Tools](#)
- ◇ **Finalizing social and service projects?** Check out:
 - [Service project ideas](#)
 - [Social ideas](#)



ATTENDANCE & ONLINE GROUPS

- ◇ **Submit attendance:** [Post attendance](#)
- ◇ **Online Groups:** Get [tips and tutorials!](#)



UPCOMING EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ◇ **North Coast Men’s Conference - October 24-25**
Join us Friday evening, October 24 & Saturday morning, October 25, for the fourth North Coast Men’s Conference held at the Vista Campus! Come ready to recharge and refocus on God’s call for us with teaching led by pastors Chris Brown and James Griffin, along with worship, activities, and tours! Register at northcoastchurch.com/mens-conference/.

LEADER DISCUSSION GUIDE

WARM UP



Your first meeting is designed for getting acquainted, connecting and enjoying a meal together, and discussing how to make your Life Group meetings great! The questions have been shortened this week to allow ample time for this.

Each week, “Warm Up” questions help us break the ice, get to know each other, get the conversation started, and/or share our initial impressions from the weekend’s message.

1. What was a highlight of your summer?

- **Additional Thought:** This first question is intentionally light to get people talking. Answers might range from trips, to moments of rest or personal milestones.
- **Additional Question:** What made that moment a highlight for you?
- **Additional Scripture:** Ecclesiastes 3:13 – “Also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God’s gift to man.”
- **Conversation Caution:** Some people may have had a hard summer so be mindful of that.
- **Group Dynamic Tip:** Use a go-around format to make sure everyone gets to share briefly and feel heard on day one.

2. What are some reasons you’re in a Life Group, and what are you looking forward to in group this quarter?

- **Additional Question:** What do you hope God does in you or through you this quarter?
- **Additional Scripture:** Acts 2:42 – “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”
- **Conversation Caution:** Be mindful that some might feel uncertain or nervous. Normalize that and affirm that everyone belongs.
- **Group Dynamic Tip:** Consider writing these answers down (or saving them) and revisiting them at the end of the quarter to reflect on what God did.

KNOW IT



Each week, “Know It” questions help us understand or further unpack the Scripture from the message.

Chris explained this weekend how Matthew is writing this entire chapter with a purpose in mind. Looking back on all the stories in Matthew 8, we see Jesus interacting with a leper, a soldier, Peter’s mother-in-law, teachers of the law, His disciples, and the demon-possessed. How would you put in your own words the purpose Matthew is trying to convey in chapter 8?

- **Additional Thought:** The thread through Matthew 8 shows that Jesus’ authority and compassion extend to outsiders, insiders, skeptics, and sufferers. He moves toward people.
- **Additional Question:** What do all of these stories reveal about who Jesus is and how He uses His power?
- **Additional Scripture:** Matthew 8:17 – “This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: ‘He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.’”
- **Conversation Caution:** Avoid reducing this to moralism (i.e., “Jesus helps those who help themselves”). It’s about *Jesus’ initiative* and grace.

SHARE IT



Each week, “Share It” questions help us reflect and share our personal life experiences about the topic at hand, considering how it works or has worked out in our lives.

If you’ve been following along in our series in the book of Matthew throughout the summer, we’ve been walking through Matthew’s story of how Jesus changed his life and those He encountered. If you feel comfortable sharing, when did Jesus become more than just a name to you?

- **Additional Thought:** This is a powerful question that allows for personal testimony. It’s okay if someone’s story is still unfolding.
- **Additional Question:** What did that shift in your understanding of Jesus change in your life?
- **Additional Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 5:17 – *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”*
- **Conversation Caution:** For newer believers or seekers, this may feel intimidating. Let them know there’s no pressure to have it all figured out.
- **Group Dynamic Tip:** Break into groups of 2–3 for deeper sharing, especially in larger groups or new groups. This is totally optional

LIVE IT



Each week, “Live It” questions help us think through how we can apply the topic or put it into action in our lives.

We’ve been told multiple times already in this series how Matthew shared Jesus with his friends, simply known as the “tax collectors and sinners.” When Jesus changes our lives, it often overflows to those around us. What relationships in your life (family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, etc.) have been impacted by that change—or what relationships do you hope will be?

- **Additional Thought:** Real transformation leads to relational overflow. This is a chance to name those you’re burdened for or celebrate where God is working.
- **Additional Question:** What would it look like to be more intentional with one of those people this week?
- **Additional Scripture:** Matthew 9:10–13 – *“And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples.”*
- **Conversation Caution:** Be careful not to guilt people into evangelism. Focus on compassion and overflow, not pressure.
- **Group Dynamic Tip:** End with a prayer time in groups of 2–3, lifting up the names of people each person hopes to impact.

LEADER'S GUIDE to LIFE GROUP COMMITMENT

- Download this and other Commitments: lifegroups.northcoastchurch.com/life-group-covenants
- When discussing, use the proactive leadership style - clear direction, yet flexible

Small groups thrive on participation! The purpose of this commitment is to help you to discuss and clarify your group's goals, expectations and commitments.

LIFE GROUPS: THEIR PURPOSE

Life Groups exist to promote spiritual maturity and personal growth through meaningful Christian relationships and the study of God's Word (Romans 8:29 & Hebrews 10:24-25). We'll do this by focusing on four primary activities:

SHARE

Each week we'll take time to share what is happening in our lives. At first this sharing will include planned "sharing questions," but after the first few weeks, it will become more informal and personal as we feel more comfortable.

STUDY

Each week we'll study a section from God's Word that relates to the previous weekend's sermon or an appropriate personal growth topic. Our goal is to learn how to live out our Christianity in everyday life.

⇒ Our goal is to interact interpersonally on the topic and how we can practically follow Christ, not to answer all the questions.

SUPPORT

Each week we'll learn how to take care of one another as Christ commanded (John 15:9-13). This care can take many forms, such as prayer, encouragement, listening, challenging one another and meeting real needs.

SERVE

Spiritual growth is fostered not only by what we gain through the support and input of others, but also through service to others. The role each of us fills is important to the health of the church and for us to be the hands and feet of Jesus to our community (Ephesians 4:11-16). Throughout the quarter, it is our hope you can find and/or be affirmed in the ways God has designed you to serve and make a difference in God's Kingdom.

FIVE MARKS OF A HEALTHY GROUP

For our group to be healthy, we need to...

1. Make spiritual growth our number one priority (Romans 8:29).
⇒ Tangents - they are okay sometimes, but sometimes we need to be refocused. We'll need to keep spiritual growth our focus and stay on topic.
2. Accept one another (Romans 15:7).
⇒ We will have different preferences.
3. Take care of one another (John 13:34).
⇒ When crisis happens, we're there to help with support, prayer, encouragement, listening, meals etc.
4. Treat each other with respect (Ephesians 4:25-5:2).

- ⇒ Listening to one another, if one's talking let's all listen, nothing worse than two conversations going on at once.
- ⇒ Our goal is to listen, not give advice. (Advice is given when asked for) We are not here to judge or fix - unless someone asks. An example of giving advice is by saying, "Well this is what I think you should do." On the other hand, that doesn't mean we can't question what is said or what someone is doing.
- ⇒ Some of us have the gift of gab, also known as a dominator - be careful, I as a leader might have to help you.
- ⇒ Be careful of gossip prayers. For example, "we need to pray for (person's name) because they are doing this ..."
- ⇒ No put-downs.
- ⇒ What is said here, stays here - of course we never promise confidentiality if something shared would be harmful to yourself or someone else and/or if I, as the leader, need to seek counsel on how to respond to an issue in the group.

5. Keep our commitments to the group (Psalm 15:1-2, 4b).
 - ⇒ Please give us a call if you can't make it to Life Group so we know what's going on and how to pray for you.

GUIDELINES & COMMITMENT

1. **Dates** We'll meet on _____ nights for ____ weeks. Our final meeting of this quarter will be on _____. *Fill in blanks*
2. **Time** We'll arrive between _____ & _____ and begin the meeting at _____. We'll spend approximately _____ minutes in singing (optional), _____ minutes in study/discussion and _____ minutes in prayer/sharing. *Fill in blanks*
3. **Children** Group members are responsible to arrange childcare for their children. Nursing newborns are welcome provided they are not a distraction to the group.
4. **Study** Our studies will focus on the same topic covered in the previous weekend's sermon or an appropriate personal growth topic. Our goal is to hear from everyone every night and keep God's Word at the center.
 - ⇒ *Not to answer every question.*
5. **Prayer** Praying for one another.
 - ⇒ *You'll go over tips on topical prayer the second week of group. Remember - being forced to pray in a group or just the idea of it can cause people to not want to come to your group. If you have new people in your group, you might want to say something like this: "It's exciting to see how God works in our lives through prayer. We also realize prayer in groups is something many have never done. Know that you will never be forced to pray." Let them know you'll talk more in the weeks to come on how we do group prayer and that we break a lot of the stereotypes of what it means to pray.*
6. **Questions & Attendance** Joining a Life Group requires a commitment to attend each week and do the *discussion questions* ahead of time. Obviously, allowances are made for sickness, work conflicts and other special events—but not much more!
 - ⇒ *This commitment is the key to a healthy group.*
 - If we cannot come to a meeting, we will call or text _____.
 - ⇒ *Emphasize the importance of the commitment to attendance and preparation. (A good group starts with good preparation)*
 - ⇒ *Make sure that everyone is with you. (Do we agree? Is this what we want? Make eye contact, etc.)*

⇒ Most weeks require 20-30 minutes of homework to prepare for the group study and discussion.

7. **Dessert**

Have everyone sign up for a night to do dessert.

8. **Social & Service Projects**

Emphasize the importance of a quarterly social and service project. As a leader and host, have 2 or 3 suggestions ready and 2 or 3 potential dates. Choose a date or ask the group to bring their calendars next week. New groups are preferred to have their social by mid-quarter.

We agree to honor this commitment throughout the quarter.

(To be decided by each person on or before the third week.)



What Is Wrong With The World?

A dark story in dark times:

Matthew 8:28-34

Note: It is impossible to get a story more **UNGODLY** and **EVIL** than this in **JEWISH** culture.

Matthew's answer that everyone needs to understand:

Matthew 8-9, James 1:19-20, Ephesians 4:26, Proverbs 29:11, Romans 12:17-21

There is one God over all creation who has incomprehensible **POWER** and **AUTHORITY**.

This God comes wrapped in unimaginable **GRACE** and **MERCY**.

His purpose is to **FORGIVE SINS** and **FREE PEOPLE** from darkness.