



Exploring Your SHAPE

A Guide For Life Groups

I. Time of Sharing and Prayer – 10-15 Minutes

Icebreaker: *Share something you did this summer that you found enjoyable and life-changing.*

After everyone has shared, go around the group, and for those who are willing, simply thank or praise God in a sentence for one thing that has been a blessing or encouragement to them this week.

II. Welcome to the Life Group Journey – 10-15 Minutes

If this is your first meeting of the season, take a few minutes to celebrate this new beginning! We encourage you to do this by reviewing two documents that are attached:

- 1) "A Sample Order For A 90-Minute Life Group Meeting",
- 2) Our Life Group Covenant.

III. Bible Study – 30-40 Minutes

This summer as part of our yearlong study of "discipleship" (or how we grow as Christians), we looked at the theme of how to grow in fruitfulness. God created each of us with a call to increase his goodness on the earth.

"Trust in the Lord and do good." – Psalm 37:3

"[Christ] gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works." – Titus 2:14

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." – Ephesians 2:10

Believing that God has "shaped" us to serve him, we unpacked the SHAPE model to help us learn more about ourselves, and how we are each uniquely called to ministry.

Our discussion time for this session is very simple. It's a get-to-know-you session, as we ask each person to take 3-5 minutes to share with the group what you learned about your SHAPE this summer.

For those who are new to this topic, or for those who could use a bit of review, here is each section broken out. You may want to take a couple minutes right now to fill in some thoughts.

S = Spiritual Gifts

What do you believe are two or three of your spiritual gifts? (For a reminder of some of the gifts, skim Romans 12:4-8 or 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 27-31).

H = Heart (things you are passionate about)

Jot down one or two things that stir your heart.

A = Abilities

An ability may not be something you go nuts about, but it's still something that you can do, and help others with. Every person has – believe it or not – several hundred abilities! What are two or three of yours?

P = Personality

We are each wired with different personalities, and none is better than another. In a sentence, how would you describe your personality?

E = Experiences

We've all gone through very unique experiences in our lives – some good, or bad, or inspirational, or painful – and God can use them all to help others. Using the categories of Spiritual Experiences, Ministry Experiences, Educational Experiences, Painful Experiences, or Vocational Experiences, write down one life-shaping experience you've been through that you might use to encourage others.

After everyone has had a chance to share, take a moment of reflection and write down one sentence that answers this question:

Based on how God has “shaped” me, what is one way where I believe the Lord is calling me to serve him?

Take turns sharing what you wrote down.

IV. Praying For Each Other – 15 Minutes.

Write down requests below, then remember to pray for and check in with each other during the week.

V. Group Schedule, Ideas, Notes, etc.

Write down in this space anything practical related to your life group upcoming get-togethers and connections.

Sample Order For A 90 Minute Life Group Meeting

Time parameters are approximate. Use them as guides to keep the meeting flowing.

7:00-7:10 – Welcome and Settling In

While we strongly encourage group members to honor “time covenants” (i.e. be on time!), it’s always good at the beginning to ease people into the meeting.

7:10-7:15 – Icebreaker Question Or Review Of Your “I Will” Statement From The Week Before

An icebreaker is an essential element of a small group meeting. (Icebreaker questions can be easily found online.) It creates a safe and fun opportunity for everyone to feel comfortable sharing. And it’s a great way to start learning more about each other. On the other hand, “I will” statements reflect what you shared you would work on after the prior Life’s Group’s Bible study.

7:15-7:20 – Conversational Prayer

Go around the group, and for those who are willing, simply ask people to thank or praise God in a sentence for one thing that has been a blessing or encouragement to them during the week.

7:20-7:55 – Study/Lesson

A Life Group is *not* a Bible study. Learning is just one facet of the meeting. You do not have to get through each of the questions to have a successful study. Be sensitive to how the discussion is unfolding, and trust God to bring out the themes and ideas that he wants shared.

7:55-8:20 – Sharing and Prayer

Take 5-10 minutes to share short requests with each other, then pray for one another. Here are some tips to make this time rich:

- If your name is Tommy Talkative, show self-awareness of times when you might be doing a disproportionate amount of sharing. If your name is Silent Sally, take baby steps forward in speaking up in the group.
- Pray over themes brought up in the study.
- Try to stay away from asking prayer for someone or something that is not really connected to the group (e.g. a third cousin’s neighbor’s mother-in-law with strep throat.) Share things that are truly touching the lives of group members.
- Keep prayers short and conversational. Otherwise that person who has never prayed aloud won’t dare do so, because they’ll be too intimidated by the “professionals”.
- Sometimes group members will bring in a need that is truly earth-shattering for them. It would be appropriate to give special attention to them in prayer. Ways to do this without necessarily adding to the length of the meeting might include: 1. Making the need known to the group early in the meeting, then substituting the ‘conversational prayer’ time with dedicated prayer for them. 2. Letting that be the first request shared at the ending prayer time, then pausing to pray for them right then and there before continuing the sharing time. 3. Shortening the study.

8:20-8:30 – Open discussion, refreshments, group business

LIFE GROUP COVENANT

Our LIFE group gives us the opportunity to develop the relationships and fellowship necessary to grow within the Body of Christ. To assist us as group members in achieving our goals of discipleship, learning, caregiving, and accountability to God, as brothers and sisters in Christ we agree to abide by the following promises:

1. THE PROMISE OF AFFIRMATION AND ACCEPTANCE: I pledge to accept you. I may not agree with your every attitude or action, but I will attempt to love you as God's child and do all I can to express God's affirming love. I need you; we need each other.
2. THE PROMISE OF AVAILABILITY: My resources – time, energy, insight, possessions – are at your disposal if you need them. As part of this availability, I pledge to meet with you in this group on a regular basis and to do my very best to honor our 'time covenants' (i.e. be on time!)
3. THE PROMISE OF PRAYER: I promise to pray for you regularly.
4. THE PROMISE OF HONESTY: I agree to strive to become a more open and honest person, to share my true opinions, feelings, struggles, joys, and hurts as well as I am able. I trust you with my hopes, dreams and struggles.
5. THE PROMISE OF FEEDBACK: I pledge to mirror back to you what I am hearing you say and what you are feeling. If this means risking pain for either of us, I trust our relationship enough to take the risk, realizing it is in "speaking the truth in love" that we will grow in Christ (Ephesians 4:15).
6. THE PROMISE OF CONFIDENTIALITY: Except in the rarest of circumstances, I promise never to divulge anything shared within this group in confidence outside this group. I vow not to push you to share things about yourself that you would prefer to keep undisclosed.
7. THE PROMISE OF THE 'OPEN CHAIR': I promise along with the other members of my group to keep the door open to others in our church (unconnected and unchurched people) who need what we have.
8. THE PROMISE OF ACCOUNTABILITY: I promise to uphold the principles and direction of the LIFE group ministry, and the mission and vision of Bridgeway Community Church.

Signature

Date

Keep this covenant for your own records as a reminder of the qualities of a healthy LIFE group.