

GROUP LIFE: Leader Guidebook

(Revised Fall 2025)

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RCF's VISION:

Courageously Living for Jesus, Inspiring Others to do the same!

GROUP LIFE OVERVIEW

Jesus said, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (Jn 13:35). Later, Jesus prayed for us to have unity as a group (Jn 17). None of these can be completed without being in relationship with other Christians. To say it more strongly, we were created to be in community with one another. This is how we live out our discipleship.

Yet often, we experience tension in our lives when it comes to getting involved in a group. On one hand, we want the benefit of group life and connection with others, yet we aren’t willing to navigate the messy difficulty of being vulnerable and close to others. We so often let our busyness, insecurity, past bad experiences, fear, or exhaustion get in the way of what God’s best is for us. And that is to be involved in community with others. It’s a risk worth taking.

One of the last things Jesus said was recorded in Matthew 28:18-20. It is the mission statement for our church and out of it comes our vision to be a people Courageously Living for Jesus and Inspiring Others to do the same. Group Life is the heartbeat of our church’s response to Jesus’ command to “make disciples” of all people.

WHY we do Group Life:

- **DISCIPLESHIP!**
 - We learn the ways and practices of Jesus in their fullness by being in relationship with others.
 - We take personal ownership of our relationship with Jesus, and we know that living it out among others is vital.
 - Through intentional time with others through Group Life, we learn to be in relationship with the unique people of God’s church, and it is here that we learn to love, listen, and have capacity in ways we wouldn’t otherwise.

WHERE we do Group Life (Types of Groups):

- Community Groups: These are the heartbeat of our Group Life structure. Weekly gatherings to discuss the sermon, dig into scripture, and share life with others.
- Small Groups: These are other groups that embrace our group life philosophy, but do not follow sermon-based content. Examples: Women in the Word, Rooted, Book Studies, Mom Life, Widows, etc.
- Seasonal Groups: These are groups going through educational or season of life content that are rooted in scripture. Examples are: Financial Peace University, Grief Share, etc.
- Summer Groups: These are short-term, recreational and activity-based groups that are focused on growing in connection with others. These leaders DO sign a Serve Team Agreement just like every other leader, but they do not follow or require the same amount of equipping and training in order to serve.

WHAT we do as Group Life leaders:

- **We Ask Questions**
 - Jesus asked great questions. Group Life leaders grow at asking questions. They are curious about their members. They learn how to ask good follow up questions, extension questions, challenge questions, and support questions. They know that by asking questions more, they are facilitating discussions that help people think, discuss, and express their processing.
- **We Exhort**
 - Jesus exhorted. Group Life leaders exhort their groups members to live at a different standard than the surrounding culture, developing candor

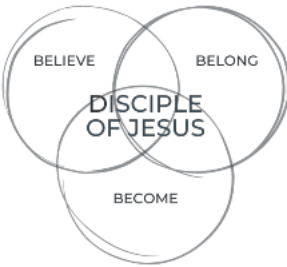
and direct communication for areas of growth and maturity. They live in the intersection of grace and truth, knowing that “it is His kindness that leads us to repentance.” We start with Grace as we encourage others to continue learning the ways of Jesus. They exhort their members to take steps in their walk with God towards all He has called us to be.

- **We Show Up**

- Jesus was present for those he served. Group Life leaders are present to their members. They listen well. They connect with them intentionally outside of the group, helping the members feel seen and known. They follow up on things shared in their group. They do what they can to be a part of their members’ lives outside of just one meeting a week. And they celebrate when steps are being taken! (Examples of possible steps below) We are always growing as disciples and there are always steps to take and retake as we follow Jesus.

HOW this shows up (**Discipleship Defined**):

A disciple is a learner of the way of Jesus. We talk about, practice, and learn the ways of Jesus. Disciples move beyond just understanding to obedience of all Jesus commanded. To do this, disciples prioritize a relational life with others that results in a deepening Christ-like love and transformation. A disciple maker is also one who helps others identify and take their next step.



- **Believe**
 - Group Life leaders are providing space and discussion for their members to be a continual learner of God's Word
 - And you don't have to have all the answers!
- **Belong**
 - Group Life leaders are modeling for their members how to embrace life with others; the good, the bad, the messy.
 - They are willing to do this through tough conversations and not avoiding it. Clear, kind, direct.
- **Become**
 - Group Life leaders see their members growing more outwardly focused. Taking what they are learning personally and giving it feet as they live on mission and start thinking of others (and ways to serve) more than themselves.

Examples of steps in these categories that people might take are listed below. What are some others you can add to this list?

BELIEVE

- Salvation
- Asking questions about their faith, the Bible, etc.
- Attending Starting Point
- Buying a Bible or asking for one
- Doing a SOAP study
- Sharing an application from their Bible
- _____
- _____

BELONG

- Baptism
- Joining a group
- Attending Sunday worship
- Sharing their testimony
- Asking to do coffee with you (the leader)
- Offering to host at their house
- _____
- _____

BECOME

- Practicing spiritual disciplines
- Tithing
- First serve
- Behavioral choices changing
- _____
- _____

Group Life Dynamics 101

We have defined a “disciple” as a learner of the way of Jesus. The way of Jesus is a lifestyle that fully embraces Jesus’ values. This means we take his words in scripture seriously and center our values and life priorities there. Better than an “I know it,” it is an “I live it” thing. A disciple maker helps others identify and take their next step. Small group leaders have the opportunity to be disciple makers by a few intentional actions.

As disciples and disciple-makers, having a framework to process life issues is helpful as we let scripture speak into our lives. This is where “believe, belong, become” begins to deeply shape our thinking personally, one-on-one, and in group conversations. It takes practice.

Here are a few common topics that may come up in conversation. Often, you will have to name it more clearly as someone expresses a hurt, confusion, or challenge. Notice, this isn’t “slap a verse on it to feel better.” This is a chance to have a conversation because we both want to be transformed by God’s Word as disciples(learners) of the way of living like Jesus. We all need Jesus’ wisdom and grace.

Examples of Believe, Belong, Become Conversations:

Potential struggles that arise for people:

Anxiety/Worry: Matthew 6:25-34, Romans 8:31-39

Forgiveness: Colossians 3:12-15, Luke 23:33-34, 1 John 1:8-10, James 5:16

Guilt/self-doubt: Luke 15:11-32

Lack of confidence (identity): Genesis 1:26-27, Psalm 139, John 15:5-8

Sin: Galatians 6:1-2

Trust: Proverbs 3:5-6

Financial Giving: Matthew 6:2-4, Acts 4:33-35, 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

Grudges/Judgmental: Matthew 7:1-6

Gender/Sexuality: Genesis 1:26-28

Salvation: John 3:16, Romans 10:9, Ephesians 2:8-9

Questions and Conversation Starters

Use these when discussing challenges members are facing (these are great self-reflection questions as well!)

Belong Questions

- How does this struggle show up in relationships?
- What am I feeling and not saying?
- What story am I telling myself about this person/situation?

Believe Questions

- What story/lie have I told myself about this topic?
- What does the bible say?
- How does this passage confirm or contradict my narrative?
- What do I need to repent of? I believed _____ but actually

Become Questions

- What is holding me back from living this out?
- What is under my control? Not in my control?
- How can I help you take a step?

Checklist for Leaders to Learn:

- Church Center App [HERE](#)
 - Familiarize yourself with the app, find your group, upload a photo, personalize it, etc
- How to Take Attendance [HERE](#)
- How to Cancel a Meeting [HERE](#)
 - Cancel a meeting through the app when you don't plan on meeting **INSTEAD OF** recording attendance as zero
- How to Send a Message [HERE](#)

Benevolence Disbursement to Group Members

Part of leading a group is knowing what is going on in group members' lives and caring deeply in ways that show up practically. Examples include meals when sick or after surgery, celebrating a child's birth, picking up someone from the airport, or walking through grief after the loss of a loved one.

At RCF, we serve one another because Jesus served us first and gave us an example to follow. Practically, this shows up in the life of RCF by us asking that needs first be met by the group someone is in. This often works out as a blessing in the life of the group and individual. However, there are situations that arise that go beyond reasonable financial support for a single group. In those situations, we encourage you as the group leader to either reach out or assist the one in need to reach out for help from our Benevolence Team.

Here are a few general items to know:

- Requesting benevolence does not guarantee financial assistance.
- Application: there is a review process before distribution that includes financial questions.
- Cash is not given, but certain bills are paid within parameters.
- Help is available beyond paid bills. Several RCF attendees are professionally and financially trained and have offered to meet with individuals for help with budgeting and other skills.

Childcare Availability

Childcare is paid for and provided by Reno Christian Fellowship when it is on campus at the church. These workers have been vetted thoroughly, and have gone through an entire onboarding process to make sure they uphold high standards for watching children. Group Life groups that want childcare must meet at the church and on nights childcare is provided to uphold consistent standards across the board.