

# Best Practices - how to encourage commitment and ownership in your Life Community

*Collected from fellow leaders at the LC Leader Brunch, January 30, 2015*

## Leadership

- The leader invests in each person by inviting them out to coffee/food.
- Rotate the facilitator for each meeting. People who prepare the study get much more out of it than when they are just participants. (There are limits to this, as not everyone will want to facilitate or have sufficient skills to facilitate.)
- Observe what people naturally do well and intentionally ask them to serve.
- Leaders need to set the example by being transparent, vulnerable, passionate, excited, and setting appropriate boundaries.
- Ask “what would a great leader do in my situation?”
- Focus on discipleship, recognizing it is about heart as well as mind, actions as well as words.
- Send personal emails to members who are wary of committing, inviting them to speak or meet privately.
- Announce roles that need to be filled and invite people to speak offline about them.
- Ask different members to sign up to bring part of the meal, so that everyone has a reason to come to the meeting.
- Create more roles so that everyone can have one. Be creative!
- Have everyone teach a [parable, story, chapter] of their choice.
- Rotate hosting if possible (or at least helping the host/hostess).

## Expectations

- Discuss what “culture” people want the group to have.
- Culture can take time to change. Leaders should set expectations, e.g., talk regularly about commitment or impact projects. Eventually it will sink in. Don’t give up quickly.
- Set a ground rule: speak in “I” and “me” language, and not in “you” and “they” language. “Speak what’s on our minds and hearts.”
- No one should be afraid to ask for help, and to receive help. Reduce self-reliant attitude.
- If you can’t make it, call or email the leader.
- Stop fretting about getting everyone to come. People who can’t always come aren’t made to feel guilty.
- Have a group covenant.
- Set group goals for the year. “By June, our group will be like... and have done...” Review it throughout the year and note progress.
- Make a diligent effort in responding to questions. Take time to really discuss what’s on people’s minds.

## Newcomers/Stragglers

- Welcome new people with open arms. Pay attention to them, ask them questions, make sure they are comfortable and included. Create a welcoming culture.
- Get to know their gifts and struggles, quickly find ways for them to plug in so they don't spectate for very long. Ok for them to observe for a while.

## Prayer/Sharing/Caring

- Prayer time can often be superficially focused on work, health, etc. Turn it into a "reflection time" where people share what God's doing in their lives, where their souls are at.
- Recognize that people go through seasons of life. Stick with them, don't judge them.
- Check in with one another during the week, following up on prayer requests.
- Each session, have one person share their life story or spiritual autobiography.
- Have each person volunteer to pray for a specific person throughout the week.
- Divide into small groups during prayer. Dividing by gender works well.
- Do life together by sticking with one another through the good and the bad. Share transformation experiences.
- Give lots of hugs! Be a hugging group. (Since there are some non-huggers out there, be respectful.)

## Planning and Communication

- Send out reminders a few days before each meeting, reminding everyone of their roles and prayer requests.
- Send out summaries after each meeting so those who didn't attend know what they missed. Highlight some memorable moments.
- Use online AND paper sign-ups for different roles. People who miss a meeting can still email in to volunteer for something at the next meeting.
- Have email conversations or use social networks to facilitate "off-meeting" communication.
- Don't forget older members like "snail mail" and everyone appreciates handwritten greetings cards, etc.

## Community

- Dinners, with assigned responsibilities for everyone, and have sharing time during dinner.
- Have a game night.
- Become friends outside of the regular meetings. Doesn't have to always involve the whole group.
- Have special events such as socials or service projects as "on ramps" for people who don't come frequently.
- Quarterly "no strings attached" social events (Christmas party, soup and salad, BBQ).
- Meet at unusual venues, such as Starbucks.
- Girls' night out. Guys' night out.

## Impact and Service

- Have a social event or service project every month (or quarterly) outside of regular meeting time.
- Serve the needs of members in the group (e.g. clean and cook for those recovering from surgery, rake yards). Specifically ask people where help is needed. (babysitting, etc.)
- Commit to consistently serving something/somewhere in the community.
- Have service projects at the same scheduled time as regular meetings, so everyone would be able to come. Make sure they are “kid-friendly”. Builds great memories.
- Focus on being a SERVING Life Community. Make it the core of the group’s identity. Projects are not “special” but part of the fabric of the group.