

# ABF Life Group Ministry – Planting A Group

By Michael Talley

When we talk about life group ministry, we often use plant metaphors. For instance, we don't start new groups; we **plant** new groups. We anticipate that a healthy life group will **grow** and produce **fruit**. Even the term *life group* implies that it is a living organism. (This type of imagery is all over the Bible. Psalm 1, John 15, Mark 4, and 1 Peter 1:23-25 are just a few examples).

This metaphor is particularly helpful in the first few months of a life group's existence. A sapling needs a different kind of care than an established oak. A group needs time and intentional care to establish a healthy root system. Here are a few ideas to help your group thrive. If you take a few months to focus on **building relationships** and **setting the vision**, you will do well. Even if you do this with one or two other families, this is a good place to start!

**Build relationships.** This might not happen immediately, but be patient and stay committed to the process. A sapling needs to be watered daily. A new life group needs lots of contact & encouragement. Here are a few ideas to help develop relationships in the first few months:

- Eat meals together. Nothing binds us together like food. Potlucks are convenient and it allows you to talk about other people's recipes.
- Encourage people to meet in smaller groups, even one on one, throughout the week.
- Take a few nights of your LG to share testimonies. This allows everyone the chance to share.

**Set the vision.** If you do not set the vision of the life group, someone will. Everyone is coming into the group with an idea of what to expect. The first few gatherings are essential to setting the right course. This does not have to happen in one night – in fact, please don't try that. You can slowly work through this in the first few months. You might need to prepare a presentation the first night, but you can set the vision through conversations, and by simply modeling the group dynamics. Here is an example of a 4-month calendar. These are just suggestions, but you might find some of them helpful.

## Possible Calendar for the first 3-4 months:

Week 1	Enjoy dinner. Share a 15-20 minute presentation over dessert to outline the goals of the group.
Week 2	Enjoy dinner. Begin sharing testimonies.
Week 3	Enjoy dinner. Complete testimonies.
Week 4	Enjoy dinner. Talk about Goal 1 – <i>A Growing Love for the Lord</i> . Find out where they are in their journey with the Bible. Talk about the vision of sermon based discussions.
Week 5	Enjoy dinner. Have a brief discussion about the sermon and spend some time praying.
Week 6	Worship night. Discuss the sermon and sing a few songs together.
Week 7	Enjoy dinner. Talk about Goal 2 – <i>A Growing Love for the Church</i> . Ask questions about spiritual gifts. Ask about their history in community. Set a vision for what you hope the group can accomplish.
Week 8	Enjoy dinner. Talk about the sermon and pray for one another.
Week 9	Enjoy dinner. Talk about Goal 3 – <i>A Growing Love for the Lost</i> . Ask about their experience with evangelism. Outline a few basic steps you'd like to take as a group. Talk about the empty chair.
Week 10	Prayer night. Spend an extended time in prayer for the lost. Ask that God would give your group the vision to evangelize and see people baptized.
Week 11	Enjoy dinner. Talk about the sermon and pray for one another.
Week 12	Enjoy dinner. Talk about Goal 4 – <i>Multiplication</i> . Ask the group to pray about ways that they can bless others in our church. Talk about shared ownership. Explain the various roles within the group.
Week 13	Worship night. Discuss the sermon and sing a few songs together.
Week 14	Enjoy dinner. Discuss the sermon and pray for one another.
Week 15	Enjoy dinner. Discuss the sermon and pray for the lost.
Week 16	Take some time to fill out the annual group plan.

