

### Introduction

You will notice that this Life Group Guide is not in the usual format. This is because this simple guide is to help you lead over the next six weeks, rather than just the coming week.

Starting this Sunday – 8<sup>th</sup> January – we are embarking on a six-week series entitled Vision and Values. Don't panic, it is not a "New Year, New You" series. Nor is it a complete change of direction for us as Everyday Church. Rather, it is an opportunity for us to review and refresh ourselves together as a covenant community on who we are in God and our calling as image bearers and Kingdom bringers. We will be building on, not abandoning, what has gone before and hopefully allowing the Holy Spirit to inspire us to keep pressing into God and pressing on together to bring the love of God into every area of our lives.

The six weeks of teaching will be built around 7 words and our aim is to unpack those words in their biblical context. Each week we will unpack one or two of those words. We will start this week with God the **Son**, then look at God the **Father** and God the **Spirit**. We will examine how we connect with God as individuals and as a community because of the **Grace** of God. We will remind ourselves of the centrality of **Community**, the calling of God's **Kingdom** and the essential nature of God's agape **Love** in helping us work together despite all our imperfections.

### Life Groups

Life Groups are vital to the health of Everyday Church. I am so thankful for your commitment to leading your group in this season.

As I will say in the first devotion of this series it is likely that first century preaching was much more interactive than we experience today. It is likely that there would have been much more participation through Q&A and discussion. Although at times we might try and replicate this on a Sunday, it is hard to do that well in a larger crowd. However, we can, and do, have this opportunity within our Life Groups. This is going to be especially important over the next six weeks. Although our Sunday preachers will seek to bring practical application into their sermons, it is through the weekly devotions and in our Life Groups that we will have opportunity to unpack the Sunday teaching and bring both application and accountability into one another's lives.

To that end, rather than producing an additional and separate Life Group Guide each week, I would like you to use the devotional videos/written devotions to shape the Bible study and discussion in your groups each week. You can access this devotional material through the Everyday App, on the Media section of the website <https://www.everyday.org.uk/> and on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/@Everyday.Church>

You may even find it helpful to watch the video devotions as a group as part of your life group meeting. I recognise that not everyone comes to the Life Group meeting having heard or watched the sermon because of serving on a Sunday or work and family commitments. Watching the short devotional video (6-9 minutes) together might be a good way of getting everyone in the same space to then discuss that week's subject.

Each week the written version of the devotion will include scripture references and discussion questions to help your group unpack and apply the sermon from that week.

### **Meeting Structure**

Please forgive me as I realise you all know exactly how to run an evening – but if you could humour me for a moment 😊.

I would like to encourage you to make space in this season for worship and prayer as a key part of your meeting together. I have led Life Groups (small groups) for the last 30 years and I know that we love to open the Bible together and discuss our thoughts. This is a key part of gathering as a Life Group, but I am aware from my own personal experience that we often run out of time to spend time listening to God and praying for others (especially those who are far from God). If this can be your experience as a group can I encourage you to start your meetings with a time of worship - you can always find songs on the devotions playlist on Spotify:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3iv2VVWKPmZcu1q17nzJpZ?si=a46b8a8a087c48d0>

or use the Psalms for a time of meditation and stillness before God that can prompt prayers of praise. I have also found it helpful to pray for those we would love to be saved/impacted by the love of God at the front end of a Life Group evening. Alpha is starting whilst we are going through our Vision and Values series and it would be wonderful for all our Life Groups to be regularly praying for the lost. To spend the first 30 minutes of our time together focusing on God and on mission can often make our time opening the scriptures together even more fruitful.

So a simple structure would look like this:

- Time of worship and prayer for Alpha and those not yet saved (30 mins)
- Discussion and application of the word – possibly including the devotional video (50 mins)
- Praying for one another – pastoral and praying in application of the discussion (20 mins)

I realise this is probably exactly what you are already doing – but hopefully you find this reminder helpful.

Once again, thank you so much for all your investment as Life Group Leader. The work you do in leading and caring for people week by week is a vital part of who we are as a church.

Many blessings

Simon