

*April 28, 2019*

# LIFEGROUP

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*GROUPS GUIDE*

T H E

V O W

*WE HELP PEOPLE FIND & FOLLOW JESUS*

# Leadership Moment:

*\*For the next few weeks, the Leadership Moment will be articles that address common "Group Issues" that Leaders must help navigate their group through.*

## "Three Levels of Small-Group Problems" by Heather Zempel

My husband and I purchased a house recently, and it got me thinking: Do you ever wish you could just put your small group on the market and let some new leader deal with the problems? If you've never felt this way, then you probably haven't been leading for very long.

If you lead a small group, you *will* encounter problems. There's no way around it. When you deal with people, it gets messy. These problems can range from the fairly benign (people won't talk in my group) to the very serious (someone has threatened suicide). That isn't to scare you—it's to equip you.

When faced with a problem, it's important to identify the type and severity of the problem, and then determine the next course of action. Different levels of problems require different strategies.

### Level 1 Problems

Level 1 problems will be encountered in every small group at some point. Examples include:

- People won't engage in discussion
- People shy away from praying out loud
- Someone repeatedly skips down rabbit trails and takes the whole group on the journey
- Prayer requests are shallow
- Extra Grace Required (EGR) people who are a bit more needy than the average group member

These are typical small-group issues, and you'll face them at some point if you haven't already. Here are some steps for addressing these Level 1 small-group problems:

**Pray.** Don't use prayer as a last resort; stay on offense with prayer.

**Address the issue with the person individually.** Seek to understand the person's perspective. Make observations instead of accusations. For instance, "I've noticed that you don't comment much in the discussion. Is there something we can do to make it easier for you to engage the topic?"

**Be creative.** This is especially helpful for the person skipping down rabbit trails. Come up with a time limit, a hand signal, or some other means to help the person stay on track. Make it fun rather than burdensome.

**Be patient.** None of these problems will kill your group, and taking the time to allow them to be solved naturally will create a culture where community can emerge.

### Level 2 Problems

Level 2 problems will occur in your group if you stay together long enough to allow real community to emerge. Here are some examples:

- Someone in the group monopolizes the conversation or takes on an authoritative or self-righteous tone
- Someone in the group constantly causes division or makes divisive comments
- "Discussions" (read: fights, arguments, conflict) erupt in your group
- Conversations and relationships remain shallow and surface-level
- Gossip runs rampant
- You have chronic complainers, or negative talk and attitudes emerge
- Someone in your group needs to be confronted about a sin

These problems require a little more skill and a bit of confidence to handle effectively. Here are some ideas:

**Pray.** Again, get out of the defensive posture and attack from an offensive position.

**Don't ignore the issue.** You know there's a problem, and it's likely that everyone else in the group knows, too. Ignoring problems never makes them go away.

**If the problem lies primarily with one individual, approach that person first.** Again, make observations instead of accusations. Seek to understand the person's perspective. Pray together about the situation.

**Get help when needed.** If the individual is unresponsive or unrepentant, implement the biblical method for conflict resolution found in Matthew 18:15–20. Get a co-leader, coach, or pastor involved in the process.

**If something happens in your group, process it as a group.** Don't ignore the fact that the tension exists. Address the issue within the group setting.

**Protect the group.** If a problem persists, it may be necessary to ask a person to leave the group (See "When You Need to Remove a Group Member" for wisdom).

## Level 3 Problems

Some unfortunate leaders encounter Level 3 problems during their first week of leadership. Others lead for years before encountering one. These are problems that you're not equipped or expected to handle on your own—they're outside the scope of small-group leader responsibilities. Examples include the following:

- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Repeated offensive activity in the group
- Inappropriate relational and/or sexual behavior between group members
- Repeated divisiveness
- Suicidal tendencies and/or threats
- Eating disorders
- Divorce
- Mental and emotional instability

Here are the action steps:

**Prayer.** Pray for the situation, but also be sure to get others (fellow group leaders, accountability partners, pastors, etc.) to pray for you.

**Notify your coach and/or pastor immediately.** Be sensitive about who you tell. If it's a big problem, you may need to send it all the way up the chain to a member of the pastoral team immediately.

**Be honest.** If the group member thinks he or she has told you something in confidence, inform him or her that you are obligated, as a leader within your church, to let a member of the pastoral team know about the issue.

**Follow up.** Your coach or pastor will work with you to develop an appropriate plan of action and care.

If you're a small-group leader, don't submit your letter of resignation yet! Working with people is tough because people are broken. John Ortberg has said, "People who love authentic community always prefer the pain of temporary chaos to the peace of permanent superficiality." Ortberg is right on. As leaders who believe in the power of life-changing community, we must be willing to deal with the temporary chaos of these issues so we can move past superficial community.

—Heather Zempel is Pastor of Discipleship at National Community Church in Washington, D.C., and author of [Community Is Messy](http://threadsmedia.com/store/studies/sacred-roads/)<http://threadsmedia.com/store/studies/sacred-roads/>. Copyright 2007 by Heather Zempel and National Community Church; used with permission.

## Application Questions:

1. Take a moment to evaluate what, if any "problems" your group is currently experiencing?
2. Rather than ignore problems and hope that they go away, great leaders act. Reread this article in light of the problems you have identified in question 1 and ask the Lord to give you insight and wisdom on how to handle this situation.
3. Pray...then take the appropriate action step to help get your group on the right track.
4. Reach out to Daniel if you additional help.

# THE VOW, WEEK 1



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## Series overview for “The Vow.”

Wedding vows are more than a declaration of love—they hold the keys to a strong, lasting marriage. Whether you hope to get married someday or you’ve already tied the knot, discover what The Vow and specifically the vows of Priority, Pursuit, Partnership and Purity can mean for the future.

### Icebreaker Question:

What’s your favorite wedding movie and why?

**LifeGroup Discussion Questions:** *\*Don’t feel like you have to get through all the questions below. We create and give you more than you need to ensure that you have all that you need. Feel free to add / takeaway based on the needs of your group.*

### Read Genesis 1:26-27, 2:18-25, 3:4-21

What do you learn about God’s design for marriage from these passages?

Rob’s big idea for this series is that *“The way we view marriage is the way we do marriage.”* What is Rob communicating to us through that statement?

How has culture shaped your idea of marriage?

Rob submitted that the three purposes of marriage from part one of this series were:

1. To help you experience God fully
2. To help you promote Christ clearly
3. To help you change culture broadly

How does marriage help you experience God more fully, promote Christ more clearly and change culture more broadly?

How does the famous line “you complete me” from the movie Jerry McGuire contrast from the the following line from this weeks message: “Your deepest needs are met through your Maker not your mate”?

Rob continued by saying, “A spouse that is idolized will ultimately be demonized.” Why do you think that happens?

What stories can you share of how prioritizing your relationship with your Heavenly Father enhanced your relationship with your spouse (or any relationship for that matter)?

What are your priorities specific to marriage? What can you do to protect them?

What is your biggest takeaway and or question from The Vow part 1?

### **Action Item:**

Pray your guts out a prayer like the following over and over this week:

“Heavenly Father, forgive us for placing our friends, relationships, and other things before You. Give us strength to place You first in every part of our lives. Help us have patience while we work to create a strong marriage centered around You. Amen.”

## WHAT'S AHEAD:

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**All LifeGroup Leaders Gathering & Dinner:** We will see all those who RSVP'ed for our “**fancy, celebratory and FREE**” dinner this **Monday night , April 29th at 7pm.**

**Discussion Guides On the Web:** Starting this week, you will be able to access the Sermon Content for your group on the NMC webpage. To access, click on the “Watch Messages” tab on the home page and under each message will be a button to click for Discussion Guides. These guides will be published to webpage by Tuesday after the message was taught.

**Sermon Series Schedule:** So you can plan ahead as to what content best fits your group, here is a heads up as to the sermon content schedule from now until the summer.

- After The Vow series, we will be back in James until mid-June.
- In late June, we will begin our “At the Movies” summer series.