

May 19, 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.*

## **"Small Group Problem Solving: How to respond when people act up, act out, and ask tough questions."**

Any time you bring together a group of people with different backgrounds, histories, and personalities, conflict and problems are almost inevitable. As a leader, you will need to deal with these issues both before and after they occur. This training is based on actual situations and personality types observed in small group ministry.

### **Dealing with Criticism**

The proper way to deal with criticism, backstabbing, or gossip, is clearly spelled out in Matthew 18:15–17. Let's look at how this Scripture can be used to deal with a common problem: criticism of the church and its leaders. As leader, you must deal with this problem before it gets out of hand. Use these talking points:

- \* Acknowledge the person's problem or conflict with the church. However, as the group leader, express your total support of the vision and pastors of our church. Encourage the person to share their concerns with church leadership.
- \* If an individual has a problem with a specific leader, you should be prepared to invoke Matthew 18:15–17 by asking the question, "Have you talked to him or her about this issue? I would love to talk to you about this but Matthew 18 says you are to talk to them first before I can even discuss it with you."
- \* If the person has followed Matthew 18 and gone directly to the person but nothing was resolved, then you're to take two or three others with you for the next conversation. However, even at this point this is still not now or ever an open discussion for the group meeting.
- \* The same procedure applies when the criticism is of other people in the church or in the group.

### **Types of Disruptive Behavior**

Disruptive people are those who, for a variety of reasons, want to make themselves the center of attention. These types can include:

- \* **The single person who has a history of dating the wrong people.** These people will use the group as their personal counseling session each week, and there is always a new issue or problem. There will also be people who are coming to the group to learn how to change so they can make better choices in the future. These people are worth the group's time.
- \* **The person who is very lonely or completely alone.** These people are usually great people. The problem is that the group is often the only thing they have in their lives, so they use it to talk about how unhappy they are. You may have to take this person aside and help them understand the impact they are having on the group. This can be a great time of personal and spiritual growth for this person. The group must stay positive and full of hope so lives can be changed.
- \* **The people who just like to hear themselves speak.** These people will overwhelm anyone who wants to talk and always have to top every story with one of their own. If you're not careful this person will be the only one talking every single week. People will grow weary of this and leave.
- \* **The person who shows no respect for the rest of the group.** This is the person who shows up late every week and disrupts the proceedings. This is selfish behavior and must be addressed. This is not a person whose schedule makes them late each week and comes in quietly and joins the group. Nor is this someone who is regularly on time but occasionally has disruptions come up.
- \* **The parents that allows their kids to run wild through the group.** Each group must have some sort of childcare arrangement. Even with childcare, a child will come in from time to time, so make sure each parent knows that if this happens, they are to quietly take the child away so the group can continue.
- \* **The person who will stay around for hours after everyone else leaves.** Have a starting and ending time. Hold your ground and tell everyone from day one that you need their cooperation.

God loves people and so should we. However, if these issues are not addressed and solved then the selfish or even legitimate needs of one person will destroy the needs of the rest of the group.

## How to Confront Disruptive Behavior

These issues must be confronted for the benefit of the entire group. Most people don't want a confrontation so when issues like this aren't dealt with, they just leave and look for another group. Keep these points in mind:

- \* How a message is delivered sometimes can be more important than the content. A message delivered in love can help someone change. A message delivered in judgment will always be rejected.
- \* Confronting someone on an issue that is hurting your group is not easy. However, for the health of the group, and to grow your leadership, you must do it.
- \* People cannot change until they recognize that they need to.
- \* People will not change unless they want to. If the message is valid and delivered in love then how they respond to it is not your responsibility.
- \* Successful groups are those that work together as a team. They support each other, love each other and, many times, have to confront each other.

## Answering Tough Questions

One of the greatest fears any new small group leader has is being asked tough questions that they don't know the answers to. When that happens, remember:

- \* No one has all the answers.
- \* Saying, "I don't know" is okay. But follow with, "I'll do my best to find that out for next week." You will find that your people will respect you for that honesty.
- \* Don't give an answer if you don't know the answer especially when it comes to the Bible. Giving the wrong answer is much worse than saying you don't know.
- \* Often leaders make honest mistakes and give a wrong answer. Be humble and admit you made a mistake. People will respect your humility and honesty.
- \* When you get a tough question and don't know the answer, research it yourself and see if you can find the answer. This process will grow you as a leader. If you are struggling, then consult your coach or pastor.
- \* When you come up with the answer make sure you discuss it in the group so everyone can grow from the exercise. Talk about the process of finding the answer.

## Group Conflict

Your group should look and feel like a community. Communities have all kinds of people from different backgrounds and personalities. When you bring a group like this together, you will eventually have some relational conflict. Here are ways to keep these tough issues from harming the group:

- \* **Disagreements about biblical issues.** Try to understand where someone comes from and why they feel the way they do about the issue. This may be one of those times when you have to say, "Let's get back to this next week" so you can be better prepared to address what the Bible says about the issue. Remember that if biblical scholars disagree on many issues, then people in your group will disagree from time to time as well. Trying to prove who is right is a waste of the group's time. In these situations, change the focus to what we all agree on: the basic message of salvation through Jesus.
- \* **Disagreements about what the group should be.** Remember that you are called to lead this group. For you to be happy leading the group it must reflect who you are. If someone doesn't like the group as it is, then lovingly help them find a group that fits them better.
- \* **Dealing with tough family problems and issues.** Deal with these issues with love and care but be careful not to try to become a family counselor. Difficult issues usually require professional help. The group does not exist to counsel people through tough issues, it exists to love and support them while they're getting the professional help they need.
- \* **Dealing with relational issues in the group.** Conflict in the group must be resolved in the group. Let tempers settle down, talk about it before the next group, then come back and discuss it openly in the next meeting. There are times when the conflict isn't resolved and people have to agree to disagree on the issue while remaining friends. Sometimes it's better to find resolution outside the group, then come to the group and talk about the resolution.

As leaders, the best thing you can do is to establish healthy boundaries from the beginning. Make sure people do not come with an attitude of, "what can the group do for me." Instead, instill the principle that people are to come looking for what they can give to the group.

—Adapted from the training manual of Bay Area Fellowship Church in Corpus Christi, Texas. Used with permission.

# THE VOW, WEEK 4



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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:

How does discussing sex in a spiritual or church setting make you feel? Do you feel that same way discussing sex in other social settings? Why do you think there’s a difference, especially when the Bible speaks so much about sex?

**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.*

Take a look at the Vows from the past three weeks of this series:

- #1 I vow that God will be my first priority and my spouse will be my second
- #2 I vow our marriage will be more about WE and less about ME
- #3 I vow to never stop pursuing you

Which of these vows do you find the most intriguing? Challenging?

Before this past weeks message, how would you have finished the following sentence: Sex is \_\_\_\_\_ .

### Read Gen 2:24, Song of Songs 7:7-12, 1 Corinthians 7:3-6.

What sticks out to you about God’s design for sex in those passages?

What do you think God would write in the following blank: Sex is \_\_\_\_\_ .

Why do you think our culture is obsessed with sex? Has more and more public discussion of sex been a good thing or bad thing? Is sex something we’ve made more important than it was intended to be?

How is the following vow from week 4 a game changer for marriages? “I vow to be selfless with sex.”

What action steps do you and your spouse need to work through, talk about and apply to work towards oneness through the God-given gift of sex?

How can the group help you continue to work on the vows you have made in this series in the weeks and months to come?

## Questions for husbands and wives to discuss on their own:

*\*Answer the following questions individually and then find a time to share your answers with one another.*

1. Do you tend to minimize or over-emphasize the importance of sex? Why?
2. Is there anything in your life that could be having a negative impact on your sex life, e.g., sexual abuse, pornography or not taking care of your body? What next step do you need to take to begin to address this?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 7:3-5. Are there ways you have withheld your body from your spouse? Are there ways you have been demanding or selfish of your spouse's body? Pray for God's help in doing your part to move your sex life to the place God intends.
4. Ask your spouse how they feel about your sexual intimacy. Ask what they feel are the biggest barriers to intimacy and what you can do to address them. Don't be defensive. Simply try to understand and focus on what you can do to serve your spouse.

## WHAT'S AHEAD:

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**Discussion Guides On the Web:** You can now 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 through the summer.

Next week we jump back into our James Series. Here is the schedule for the rest of James:

- May 26 / James 4:1-12
- June 2 / James 4:13-17
- June 9 / James 5:7-12
- June 16 / James 5:13-20

**\*We will begin our "At the Movies" series on June 23rd.**