

Frequently Asked Questions about Being a Real Life Group Leader

Do I need to be a “Bible Expert” to become a Real Life Group Leader?

Definitely not! The most important things that you need are a desire to serve the members of your group and to grow in your own personal relationship with Jesus Christ. When you take this step of faith, through prayer, God's Holy Spirit will give you what you need to be an effective Leader. Your leader responsibility is to facilitate the discussion around the Sunday Sermon Study Guide.

What training is required to be a Real Life Group Leader?

We ask potential Real Life Group leaders to participate in our RLG Leadership Training, which is offered three times a year and is 1 ½ to 2 hours out of your day.

What are some of the requirements to be a Real Life Group Leader?

1. A leader must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
2. It is preferred that a leader has taken our Core 1 Class, Discovering BPC (membership not required), and the Core 2 Class, Gifts & Call.
3. A leader must complete Leader Training.

What studies are recommended and where can I get materials?

We encourage all Real Life Groups to use the Sermon Study Guide as your discussion tool. This guide can be downloaded from our website at www.bidwellpres.org and on the home page click on the Sermon Study Guide link.

Are all of the groups required to study the same material?

Yes. However, we do also encourage you to try something different occasionally, but always come back to the Sermon Study Guides. We do ask that you let us know what you will be studying if you are not using the Sermon Study Guides.

What if my group wants to continue and I can't continue to lead?

You can identify a new leader from within the group if there is someone that is qualified. We ask that you have the new leader contact us for training. If you do not have a candidate, we can help place your group with a new leader(s).

How can I get more people for our group?

You and the members of your group are welcome to invite unconnected people you meet at church, your friends, neighbors, coworkers and family to join the group. This is the best way to get new members in your group. Pray before you invite someone new. Ask God to soften his or her heart and then step out in faith and make the invitation. You may also contact our office to inquire for more members and we will do our best to match you up.

What do we do when we reach the end of the ten week term?

Have a party and celebrate the time you have shared together as a small group. Affirm those that leave and assure them of your prayers. Invite them to return to the group at any time. Schedule your next meeting with those that will be continuing, in conjunction with our Real Life Group calendar. Stay in contact with the members of your group during the break.

How should our group handle childcare?

First, make childcare a top priority in order to make it happen if that is a need in your group. If there are people who can't afford childcare, others need to step up to help out. Another thing is that you want to rally together. You might be able to get a sitter to watch the kids in one part of the house while the group meets in another room. If there's home nearby, one person can watch the kids there while the group meets in another house.

How do I raise up leaders?

This is a process where your group members can help and do small tasks and functions of your small group. Based on their giftedness, rotate leadership occasionally. They can lead when you are out of town and then they can be released to do their own group should they choose in the next RLG term. Encourage your potential leaders to attend our Leader Training so they can more effectively develop as leaders.

Do we use husband and wife leadership teams?

Yes, we do. We find it very beneficial to have both the husband and wife lead in couples small groups when possible. Each one brings different gifts to the leadership position. They each fill in and compliment the other.

Do you have women leading groups with men in them?

Yes we do. We have women leading groups based on the biblical principle that the Pastors have given them the authority, so they are under the covering of that authority to lead that group.

Do you suggest RLGs meet once per week?

The short answer is yes, we recommend once a week as the ideal frequency for a group to meet during the ten week term. But, we also acknowledge that groups that meet every other week or monthly can still be effective as long as they use other mediums to provide ongoing care, nurturing and leadership development of the group.

Are the four LIFE pillars of a Real Life Group (Learning & Living Out Scripture; Intentional Sharing, Prayer and Care; Fun & Family; and Externally Focused) carried out over the life of the group, and, not necessarily on a weekly basis?

That is correct. You want to take a snapshot of your group over a couple of ten week terms to see that there is health and a balance of the four pillars. So, a group need not do all four of the pillars at every group meeting. A key role of the leader is to see that the four pillars are balanced "over time" and to place emphasis on areas where the group needs to grow.

I'm an experienced small group leader, why do I need to go to Bidwell's RLG Leader Training?

We want every Real Life Group leader to understand the distinctive principles of our RLG groups. Those distinctive principles are covered in this Leader Training. Also, we believe that leaders are learners and we strive to provide training and growth opportunities for our leaders.

How do I get my established group to want to grow and multiply?

This starts with the vision, mission and strategy of your group being very clear to you and to the members of your group. Bidwell Presbyterian Church's Mission Statement; Our Purpose; and Core Values help RLG groups understand why their group exists:

- 1) Mission: "To fulfill Christ's command to make disciples. (Matthew 28:19)"
- 2) Purpose: Growing Deep, Growing Up, Growing Out
- 3) Core Values: Grace, Reaching Out, Authenticity, Celebration, and Extravagant Generosity.

How do people move from one group to another, or do they?

Yes, we have found over time that people do move from one group to another. It is important that you let people have the ability and the flexibility to move to another group. It's important that the leaders understand that meeting the members' needs is the primary concern, even if it means they find another group. We encourage leaders to remember that not all people grow at the same rate, or have the same needs over time. It is healthy for people to seek a group that meets their needs at the time.

When should my group meet?

Groups meet at the time, place, and day of the week that best ministers to the needs of the groups. Whether it's 5 a.m. on Fridays for a men's group, Sunday night for a couples group, or Tuesday night for a ladies group. If you are starting a new group, you should choose the time and place that is convenient to you the leader, then people who can meet your schedule will be attracted to your group.

How long should the average Real Life Group meeting last?

A typical RLG group meeting is one and a half to two hours. However, it is unique for each group, depending on the type of group, and should be worked out by agreement of the group members in the process of developing the RLG Group Covenant that covers what will be done and how it will be done in your small group.

What is the format for Real Life Groups?

People connect in new RLGs consisting of 6 to 12 people who provide love, support, friendship, connection and spiritual strength. The format is an informal and comfortable 1½-2 hour gathering at the home of a Host for ten weeks. Participants are comprised of people from our church, as well as friends, neighbors, relatives and coworkers who are invited to join in the adventure. Most groups are guided through the Sermon Study Guides provided by the pastor online each week.

What if I am involved in another ministry?

Real Life Groups is how we connect and grow in community. In order to serve in ministry, each of us needs to be growing in our spiritual walk and serving out of the overflow of what God is doing in our lives. RLGs give us a forum where we can support each other in building the Mission Statement, Purpose, Core Values and LIFE Pillars into our lives. Ministry is important and it is where we can express our shape for ministry to the body of Christ. Life can be very full and many are needed to serve the church in significant ways. Yet we know the spiritual power that is needed for service to the church will be gained in people's lives as they study in small groups together the things that are most important to God. Sometimes it is just a matter of priorities. We need to be connected and growing before we can be effective in the ministry God has for us. It may require you to set priorities for investment of your time and focus.

What is the definition of a Real Life Group?

In its simplest form, a Real Life Group is defined as a "gathering of people to grow spiritually". A Real Life Group is a subset of the church body that meets on the weekend. Real Life Groups meet in non-church locations such as homes, restaurants, coffee shops, businesses or any location that is convenient for the attendees. They meet morning, noon or night, any day of the week. This follows the pattern of the early church in Acts 5:42 *"Day after day, in the temple courts (weekend celebration) and from house to house (small group fellowships), they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ. [NIV].*

Do you have a question not answered here?

Please e-mail jmattson@bidwellpres.org for an answer within one working day.