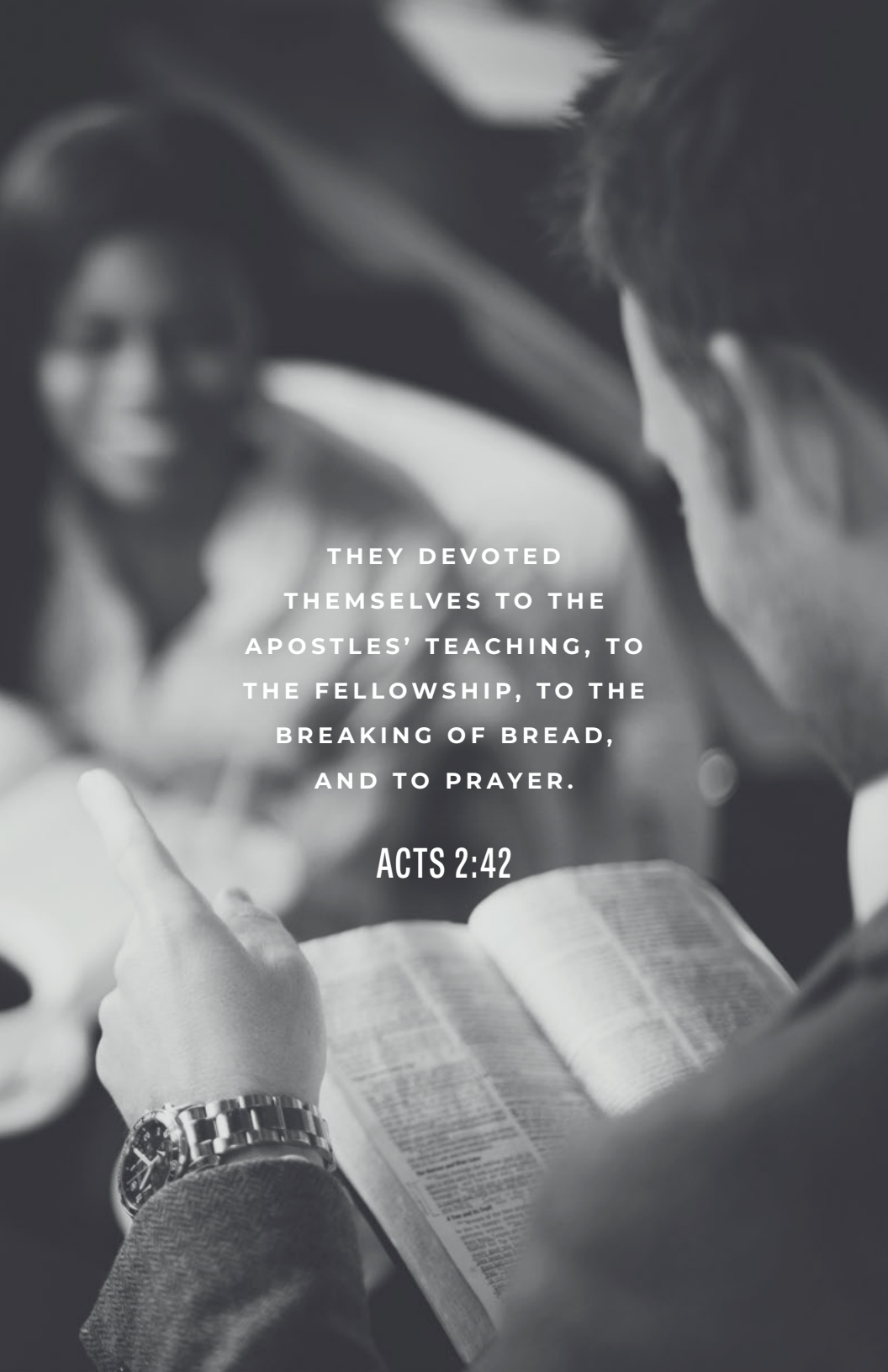




LIFE GROUP

STARTER GUIDE





THEY DEVOTED
THEMSELVES TO THE
APOSTLES' TEACHING, TO
THE FELLOWSHIP, TO THE
BREAKING OF BREAD,
AND TO PRAYER.

ACTS 2:42

WE BELIEVE THAT LIFE CHANGE HAPPENS BEST IN CIRCLES, NOT ROWS.

In his book *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam claimed that the greatest epidemic in American life is not a disease, but loneliness. Despite technology making communication easier, true connection is rarer. No matter who you are, everyone has a craving for true, meaningful relationships.

This is because God created us for community—both with Himself and with each other. Life Groups exist to help foster each of these connections. Our aim is to not provide just any type of community but the life-changing community that we see clearly in the Bible. An all-inclusive community centered on Christ that allows His Spirit to move mightily in and through us.

At Long Hollow, we define **Life Groups as life-changing communities where you can belong, believe, and become.**

- **Belong:** A place where you can meet Jesus in a group where you are welcomed and accepted.
- **Believe:** A place where you can know Jesus through His Word and His people.
- **Become:** A place where you can follow Jesus as you become who God designed you to be.

This booklet will unpack this definition and prepare you to lead your own Life Group with your friends. As you read, answer the questions at the bottom of each page so that we can discuss the booklet with you. Also, the podcast episodes provide practical insights to help you put these principles into practice.

WHAT MOST EXCITES YOU ABOUT CREATING A COMMUNITY LIKE THE ONE ABOVE?



LEARN MORE

Group Leader Podcast: Season 1

- *Why We Need Both Groups*
- *How to Lead a Healthy Life Group*
- *How to Lead a Healthy D-Group*

KEY COMPONENTS OF A LIFE-CHANGING COMMUNITY

In Acts 2:42-47, we see a snapshot of the life-changing community that our Life Groups foster.

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. 44 Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. 45 They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42-47

LIFE GROUPS ENGAGE WITH THE BIBLE, PRAYER, AND ONE ANOTHER

In verse 42, Luke describes how the Early Church was engaged in the apostle's teaching, fellowship, and prayer. These three things guide our Life Groups today. In all our discussions, we focus around biblical passages. Though we may reference other books or use other speakers to help further our discussion, the biblical text always is our focal point.

Though we study the Bible in Life Groups, it is more than a Bible study. We take the fellowship part (and the breaking of bread) of Acts 2:42 seriously. The Greek word for fellowship (*koinonia*) means something deeper than a friendly association. It describes people who gather under a common idea or purpose. Though they may differ in wealth, social status, ethnicity, interests, and maturity, they are unified by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It's the unity of the whole, despite its diversity, that makes Gospel fellowship (*koinonia*) so powerful. Also, once a month, we have a Hangout Night where there is no set agenda, but to connect with one another "and invite new people in."

INWARD AND OUTWARD FOCUS

As the early church committed to the Word, fellowship, and prayer, God did something in them (inward) and through them (outward). Starting in Acts 2 and continuing throughout the book (6:7, 9:31, 16:5), Luke describes the church's two-fold impact: the strength of the community and the advancement of the mission. The Church grew both in depth (discipleship, or maturing believers) and in breadth (evangelism, or new believers).

It is our hope that Life Groups would feel like a group of close friends or family, and that they would reflect the kind of unity the Acts 2 Church had. We will approach this kind of unity by living out the "one anothers" of the faith. In doing so, we put Christ on display and share the Gospel with each other through every selfless act.

In verse 47, Luke describes not just the impact the Early Church had with each other, but outside the church. It says that they had favor with "all people" and that the "Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

When our Life Groups function as Acts 2 fellowships, we will provide a life-changing community where non-believers, new believers, and mature believers can belong, believe, and become.

WHO IN YOUR LIFE (2-8 PEOPLE) WOULD BE INTERESTED IN STARTING THIS LIFE GROUP WITH YOU?



RECOMMENDED LISTENING

S05:E01

3 MOMENTS THAT HAPPEN IN LIFE-CHANGING COMMUNITY



A WELCOMING AND ACCEPTING PLACE

If you look at the life of Jesus, He spent time with tax collectors, prostitutes, and Gentiles. He always met people where they were and never required people to clean up their lives before He loved them. Just as Jesus did, we strive to create an environment where everyone feels like they belong.

OPEN GROUPS

Life Groups create a place where people come just as they are, and meet Jesus just as He is. Our groups are open to anyone at any time, and we create an environment where everyone is welcomed and accepted. When this happens, people are able to experience Christ through the life-changing power of Biblical Community. Todd Engstrom described it this way:

“The most persuasive argument for the Christian faith is the Christian community. The majority of conversations throughout church history have come not through argumentation, but through belonging to a meaningful community before belief is ever required.”

INTENTIONALLY INVITING

We want every member of our Life Group to ask, “Who in my life would benefit from a group like this?” And for this person, we want the members of our group to pray for that person, invest in that relationship, and invite them to join the group. Once a month, we create easy opportunities to invite our friends by hosting a Hangout Night (see pg. 10).

To help our Life Group members be intentional on inviting new people into their group, we ask each member: “Who’s Your One?” Take a moment and identify who in your life would benefit from a group like this and how you can pray for and invest in that relationship.



RECOMMENDED LISTENING

S05:E02

HELPING PEOPLE BELONG IN YOUR LIFE GROUP

WHO'S YOUR ONE?

At Long Hollow, we want every believer to identify ONE person in their life who is far from God and intentionally pursue that person with the hope of the gospel by praying, investing, and inviting. Take a moment and identify one person in your life who either doesn't have a relationship with Jesus or is disengaged with the local church. This person should be someone you see on a regular basis (Example: Choose your friend in Sumner County over your friend in Seattle). Consider your family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, classmates, etc. Once you identify this person, write their name down on the card below.

who's your
ONE?

(FIRST NAME ONLY)

PRAY DAILY
INVEST WEEKLY
INVITE TO THE NEXT RIGHT THING

After you identify who this person is, we want to commit to doing three things:

PRAY - ***I will pray daily for my ONE.*** I will ask God to make my ONE aware of Christ's love and their need for Him (2 Cor. 4:4; Matt. 13:15) and to give them the faith to repent and believe (Acts 20:21; Romans 10:9-10). I will also ask that God allows me to share the Gospel with them.

INVEST - ***I will create ways to invest weekly in my ONE.*** My hope is to build a relationship where I can share Christ's love with my ONE (1 Cor. 9:19-23). Simple investments like text messages, phone calls, and acts of kindness are easy, but impactful ways to invest in the relationship, thus building trust which creates more opportunities to share the Gospel.

INVITE - ***As I pray and invest, I will invite my ONE to the next right thing.*** The ideal would be to share your faith and invite your ONE to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. When he or she isn't there yet, I will invite them to an intentional environment where they can belong before they believe. I will do this by inviting them to events like Life Group, a Hangout Night, a church outreach event, or a Sunday morning service, either online or in person.

ENCOUNTERING JESUS THROUGH HIS WORD AND PEOPLE

Along with creating a welcoming and accepting place where you can meet Jesus personally, our Life Groups provide a place where you can know Jesus through His Word and His people. When you meet weekly, you will facilitate group discussion where people can encounter Jesus and experience life change. Here are five key elements of life-changing discussion:

WORD-CENTERED: Life-changing discussion starts and ends with God's living and active Word. We believe that the Bible is sufficient and relevant for all issues of our life (Heb. 4:12).

CONVERSATIONAL: Life-changing discussion focuses on facilitating a conversation, not teaching a Bible lesson. Better learning and connection are accomplished when people are able to ask questions and share their personal insights and experiences.

AUTHENTIC: Life-changing discussion happens when people are real with themselves, with God, and with others. We foster this authenticity by providing a safe environment where people can be honest and transparent.

APPLICATION-FOCUSED: Life-changing discussion focuses on application because the measure of maturity is not information, but obedience. Healthy Bible discussion doesn't just answer the question "What does the Bible say?" but it also helps people answer, "How does this personally impact my life today?" That is why we end each discussion by helping people identify a personal, relevant, and practical step they can take to grow in their faith.

NEWCOMER-FRIENDLY: Life-changing discussion should always consider the person who is joining for the first time. We want to eliminate any barriers that would prevent new people from participating.

By focusing on application, it allows non, new, and mature believers to engage in conversation together.

When our Life Groups function as Acts 2 fellowships, we will provide a life-changing community where both non-believers, new believers, and mature believers can belong, believe, and become.

WEEKLY CURRICULUM: Whether your group watches the sermon online together or you discuss it later in the week, we will provide questions each week to help you facilitate discussion. We will email the curriculum in our weekly Group Leader Update.

CURRICULUM INCLUDES FIVE SECTIONS

- 1 **ICEBREAKER:** Starting your time off with something light-hearted helps you get to know one another more and gets people talking.
- 2 **CONTEXT:** This quick summary will give you the context of the passage and help you best understand what the author's intention is.
- 3 **PASSAGE:** We will include a primary passage for your group to read together.
- 4 **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** These questions will help you understand the passage and its importance in your life today.
- 5 **NEXT STEP:** These final 1-2 questions will help each person identify how they personally should respond to what they have read and discussed.

HOW COMFORTABLE DO YOU FEEL FACILITATING A GROUP DISCUSSION WITH THE RESOURCES MENTIONED?



**RECOMMENDED LISTENING
S05:E03**

**5 ELEMENTS OF LIFE-CHANGING
GROUP DISCUSSION**

BECOMING WHO GOD DESIGNED YOU TO BE

Lastly, our Life Groups provide a place where you can follow Jesus as you become who God designed you to be. One of the best ways to do this is to encourage your group members to not just attend Life Group, but to participate. Encourage people to share their perspective in the discussions and consider how they might contribute their time, talent, and resources to serve the group. On page 12-13, we provide multiple opportunities that help people participate in the group.

The primary way that we help people become who God designed them to be is through Discipleship Groups (D-Groups). As relationships form in the group and people become faithful, a natural next step for members is to start or join a D-Group where they can enter a season of accelerated spiritual transformation. These gender-specific groups of 3-5 men or women help your people deepen their relationship with God and one another. These groups focus on spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading and journaling, Scripture memory, accountability, and prayer.

Ideally, all faithful Life Group members will eventually join a D-Group. As these members participate in a D-Group for 12-18 months, these groups eventually will multiply and start new Life Groups and/or D-Groups. The graph on the next page helps identify the differences between Life Group and D-Group and why both are important.

HOW DO YOU SEE D-GROUPS ENHANCING YOUR LIFE GROUP EXPERIENCE?



RECOMMENDED LISTENING S05:E04

HELPING PEOPLE BECOME WHO GOD
DESIGNED THEM TO BE

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A LIFE GROUP AND A D-GROUP

	LIFE GROUP	D-GROUP
DESCRIPTION	A life-changing community where you can belong, believe, and become.	A time-stamped, gender-specific, closed group that meets weekly for accelerated spiritual transformation.
PRIMARY PURPOSE	Connect people into life-changing community	Grow people as disciplemakers of Jesus Christ
MODEL	Open group	Closed group
MAKE-UP	Non, new, and mature believers	Composed of believers
SIZE	Varies, but usually 10-20 people	3-5 people maximum
DYNAMIC	Co-ed or gender-specific	Gender-specific
CURRICULUM	Sermon-aligned	Reading Plan (F260/NT260)
NEXT STEPS	Members move into D-Groups and/or lead more Life Groups	Members multiply and lead their own group.

RECOMMENDED MEETING RHYTHMS

Our groups have a simple, dynamic rhythm:

- **MEET WEEKLY**
- **PARTY MONTHLY**
- **SERVE QUARTERLY**

This simple framework helps our groups provide a life-changing community where you can belong, believe, and become.

MEET WEEKLY

Our Life Groups meet every week because consistency builds community. We want our groups to become part of the weekly rhythms of our people's lives. Whenever you schedule Life Groups less frequently, it can be difficult to gain traction and if someone misses, they will go a month without seeing the group members. By meeting weekly, you make the group a priority on your calendar and community forms quickly.

PARTY MONTHLY

Once a month, our groups host a Hangout Night, which is when the group intentionally creates a warm and welcoming place to invite new people to experience their life-changing community. These nights provide strategic invite opportunities for each person's ONE that they are praying for and investing in.

Jeff's story is a great example of this. Jeff was walking through a tragic season of life and needed help when one of his friends invited him to come to a grill out with his Life Group. While Jeff was there, he got to meet several new people, including one of the leaders, Steven, who had recently walked through the exact same situation. As they shared their stories with each other, they shared phone numbers, and Jeff returned to Life Group the following week and participated in the Bible discussion. Over the next four weeks, Jeff said yes to following Jesus.

When the group asked him why he joined, without knowing it, he explained the vision of Hangout Nights: "You invited me to a grill out, which sounded fun. Had you invited me to a Life Group meeting, I would have been too intimidated, because I didn't think anyone struggled with what I did...but then I met Steven."

SERVE QUARTERLY

Along with your weekly and monthly rhythm, we want groups to choose one way that your group can reach your neighborhood, city, or world. One of the ways you can do this is by joining something Long Hollow is doing. Throughout the year, the church hosts multiple events each year focused on serving the city and the world and we want your group to join us in these efforts.

Another way that you can serve together is to adopt a local school or gathering of people to partner with through service projects. Paint hallways, trim hedges, mend fences. Dream up a local outreach that you would want to lead. Periodically, we provide groups with the money to fund events like big neighborhood block parties. As you serve together, it is amazing the memories you will make as a group and what God will begin to stir in the hearts of your members.

“ WE WANT OUR GROUPS
TO BECOME PART OF THE
WEEKLY RHYTHMS OF OUR
PEOPLE’S LIVES.”

WHAT DAY OF THE WEEK DO YOU PLAN TO
HOST YOUR GROUP?

HOW DO YOU SEE HANGOUT NIGHTS
ENHANCING YOUR LIFE GROUP EXPERIENCE?

“LIFE GROUP IS NOT A GROUP OF PEOPLE WITH A GIFTED LEADER, BUT A LEADER WITH A GROUP OF GIFTED PEOPLE.”

A good leader shares responsibility; they don't hoard it. Hosting and leading Life Group should be a team approach. For the sake of the leader's health, we don't want any individual to have all the responsibility, but instead to share it with other capable members. When you are able to not just give, but receive from the group, leadership becomes a blessing, not a burden.

Secondly, we share leadership for the sake of our people. Life Groups are not a group of people with a gifted leader, but a leader with a group of gifted people. A good

leader creates opportunities for people to use their gifts to contribute to the group. However big or small the contribution may be, we encourage people to not just think about what they can receive from the group, but what they can give.

Below are four different roles that we recommend for our groups. This is not an exact science, but an art. Certain individuals may lead in two roles or multiple people can help facilitate the discussion weekly. We just don't want one person doing all four roles.

FACILITATOR

The Facilitator leads the group discussion weekly. This role may be done by one person or by a couple. The important part of this role is that the leader facilitates a discussion rather than preaching a message. We want as many people to participate in the discussion as possible. As people contribute to the discussion it creates a sense of belonging and it helps them better process what they are hearing.

HOST

The Host opens up their home for the group to meet. They also think through their living spaces and design them in a way that accommodates the group and helps foster connection. For example, the host may reorganize their living room to create one big circle so that it better facilitates discussion.

COORDINATOR

The Coordinator focuses on organizing and communicating with the group. If your group has a snack list, the coordinator organizes whose week it is and sends reminders. They also communicate with the whole group about what is coming up this week. If the group meets online, the coordinator can set up and send out the link each week. Lastly, if your group does childcare, this person will coordinate with the babysitter and the group.

HANGOUT NIGHT LEADER

The Hangout Night Leader helps the whole group get involved in your monthly Hangout. This includes planning activities that are welcoming to new people and encouraging current group members to invite their ONE. The Hangout Night Leader should be familiar with the Hangout Night overview found on our Group Leader Resource Page.

D-GROUP LEADER

One of the most important ways that people can help lead the group is to lead a D-Group with people in the Life Group. Hopefully, each Life Group has multiple D-Group leaders within the Life Group. When people start leading their D-Group, they can use the D-Group Starter Guide to help them launch their group!

WHAT ROLE(S) WOULD YOUR FRIENDS BE INTERESTED IN HELPING WITH?



RECOMMENDED LISTENING S05:E05

**HOW TO SHARE RESPONSIBILITY
IN YOUR LIFE GROUP**

30 DAY STARTUP



Use this week-by-week guide to help you launch your group.
You can access leader and participant versions at
longhollow.com/groupresources.

BEFORE WEEK 1

- **Invite Your Friends:** *Personally reach out to your friends that you listed on p.3 and ask them to help you start a group with you.*
- **Register Your Life Group:** *Let us know the details about your group so we can support you as you lead and let others know about your group. Go to longhollow.com/register.*



RECOMMENDED LISTENING

S05:E06-9

YOUR FIRST 4 WEEKS OF LIFE GROUP

WEEK 1 - STRONG BEGINNINGS

- **Week 1 Discussion** *The Facilitator will use this curriculum to accomplish two things. One, you will want to spend 30-45 minutes to **get to know one another** . Secondly, you will **set expectations** for the group as you share the three B's and the group's meeting rhythm.*
 - **Setup a Group Chat:** *It's important to stay in touch with your members outside of your meeting time. Have the Coordinator choose a platform that works best for the group and get everyone on it.*
-

WEEK 2 - DISCUSSION

- **Week 2 Discussion** *In this discussion, the group will discuss Acts 2 and how it gives us the model for our Life Group. For the application, your group will focus on the inward impact that we can experience through Life Groups and D-Groups as it helps us believe and become who God designed us to be.*
-

WEEK 3 - THE IMPACT LIFE GROUP WILL HAVE ON OTHERS (OUTWARD IMPACT)

- **Week 3 Discussion:** *The group will discuss Matthew 9 and the outward impact that your Life Group will have as it provides a place for people to belong before they believe.*
 - **Handout ONE Cards:** *As an application to the discussion, pass out the ONE cards and have each person take it home and bring it back the next week.*
-

WEEK 4 - PLANNING YOUR HANGOUT NIGHT

- **Share About Your ONE:** *Have each person share briefly about who they are praying for and how they hope to regularly invest in that person.*
- **Plan Your Hangout Night:** *The group will discuss the vision of Hangout Nights and begin to plan their first one for the following week.*

RESOURCES:

GROUP LEADER PODCAST



Subscribe to get practical advice for you as a Group Leader. In 15-20 minute episodes, we tackle FAQs like:

- *How to lead a healthy group*
- *How to grow your Life Group*
- *How to handle commitment issues*

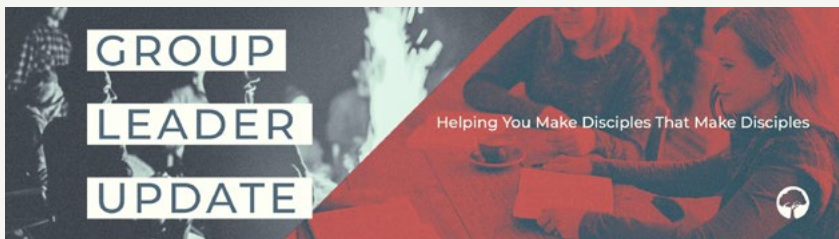
LH GROUPS RESOURCE PAGE:

Access Group Resources like the ones below at anytime at LONGHOLLOW.COM/GROUPRESOURCES.

- **Weekly Life Group Curriculum**
- **Hangout Night Resource**
- **Who's Your ONE?**

WEEKLY UPDATE

Each Friday, we send out a Group Leader email. In this email, we will share with you one or two things that are important to focus on in the upcoming week!



FACEBOOK

If you haven't joined Long Hollow Groups yet, check it out this week. This is a group for leaders and members. In this group, you will hear encouraging stories from fellow groups, connect with other group leaders, and more.

If there is anything else that we can ever provide, please don't hesitate to reach out to our team GROUPS@LONGHOLLOW.COM





LONG HOLLOW
BAPTIST CHURCH