

LIFE GROUP LEADERS GUIDE
The Joy of Being God #7 – “The Joy of Diversity”

Tips for Leaders

When was the last time you pray for your Life Group? When was the last time you prayed for each of its members by name? This won't come as a surprise to you, but prayer really works! So, as you approach your Life Group meeting this week why not set aside some time to specifically pray for each member of your Life Group? Pray for their blessing, pray into their situations. Perhaps you might like to pray these verses over your group: Colossians 1:9-14. Try to make space to hear from God too. He may want to say specific things to you for members of your group.

CONNECT IN with one another & CONNECT UP with God

- Last Sunday we talked about God's joy in the diversity of creation. Phil talked about snowflakes/fingerprints/beetles/etc. What other examples do you see of God's joy in diversity?
- How about in our Life Group? In what ways do we reflect God's glory in our diversity?
- **Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27**. Use this as the launchpad for a time of **sung worship**, praising God for his joy in the diversity of his creation. *[Leaders note: After a while, return to your discussion...]*
- We have talked about the ways in which we reflect God's glory in our diversity. Now let's be honest about the way in which we *don't* reflect it. How much do you feel that you can really be you at our church meetings and at Life Group? In what way do you feel a pressure towards uniformity, rather than a celebration of our diversity? *[Leaders note: This is a massively important question, because uniformity is the Devil's counterfeit of God-given unity. How do people from different sexes, different races, different social backgrounds etc feel unable to express who they really are? NB Your conversation may well touch on the bad experiences of the LGBT community with church. You can be confident about the Bible's teaching on this (joy comes from embracing the way who God has created us to be, not by fighting against it), but we've got a long way to go in welcoming LGBT people as they are so that we can help them find out who God says they are.]*
- **Read Galatians 3:26-29**. How does the Gospel release people to be the diverse people God has created them to be, without needing to pretend to be someone else? *[Leaders note: These verses teach equality in our diversity, torpedoing any sense of superiority or inferiority. Paul still addresses men/women, Jews/Gentiles etc differently, but he insists that they are all of equal value in their diversity.]*

CONNECT OUT with the people exploring faith around you

- **Read Revelation 7:9-12**. Our diversity won't be obliterated in the age to come. It will be preserved as one of the big reasons for us to worship God throughout eternity. In what ways, therefore, is that eternal community more diverse than we are right now? How can we pray and act to remedy that fact for the glory of God? *[Leaders note: The lack of diversity may be racial. It may be to do with age. It may be to do with education, social background or disposable income. We're really happy with the diversity of our Life Groups (some are all-age, some are for older or younger people, some are for just men or just women), but we believe that every Life Group should display God's joy in diversity in their own way. A women-only group can be incredibly diverse. An older-people group can be incredibly diverse too.]*
- How could we begin to tackle this lack of diversity by what we do within the church? *[Leaders note: Our Sunday services are very diverse in terms of race, age, social background etc. Since about half of our Sunday attenders aren't in any Life Group, your desire for diversity might be achieved very simply by befriending and inviting different types of people into your Life Group community. Who therefore is missing from your group?]*
- How could we then go further by reaching out to diverse people outside the church? *[Leaders note: Our Sunday services don't fully reflect the diversity of our community. How therefore could you reach out as a Life Group to people who are not present among us as a church? How might you connect as a group with a particular ethnic group, a particular housing estate, a particular age group, or an under-represented sub-section of your community?]*
- Move into a time of **prayer** together. Remember, God is more excited about making your Life Group and your church more united in diversity than you are. You are pushing on an open door!