

DiscipleShift FAQ

What does it look like to co-lead?

The co-leader is a very important part of the team. That is why at Blackhawk, we don't allow new groups to begin without having a co-leader in place. Co-leaders are basically LIFE Group leaders in training. They have the same tasks and qualifications for a leader that are outlined on pages 12-13 of our LIFE Group leadership manual, all while being coached and disciplined by the leader.

Do we have pre approved “topical resources” that can be used?

We do! We have a list of resources on blackhawkministries.org/discipleshift that can be checked out by calling our church office at 260.493.7400. We make an amazing resource called RightNow Media available to all of our leaders that includes a digital library of over 8000 bible studies completely free for you to use on the go by streaming online!

How do you get people to join your group?

Ask! Jesus said to make disciples as you are going. Every day we should build relationships with people we meet and interact with. It is not always easy and it takes time but don't give up. There are people out there that need to be in your group. Pray regularly that God will bring people into your life to disciple and be intentional about building relationships with those He sends. Things like announcements, print and digital media, or large group invitations often seem to be the “go-to” strategy, but we have found that the most effective way to grow a group by far is personal relationships and invitations. Consider who you can invite. You have a unique circle of relationships and so do the others in your group. Leverage that influence and be bold enough to make the “ask.”

Can people join my group if they are not in church or go to a different church?

Absolutely! As you make disciples “as you go,” you will encounter people that aren't connected to Blackhawk or any church at all. We want our groups to be open to all people, especially those not in church. So, always feel free invite anyone and everyone that God has uniquely placed in your circle of relationships to your LIFE Group at Blackhawk. We have people of all kinds of personal and religious backgrounds at our church, and we love that being the case!

Does our group have to look like the model we experienced exactly? Can it be modified?

We believe that the storying model you experienced is a great, highly effective, and inclusive vehicle to help you on your journey to making disciples, but it is just a vehicle. Everyone's group will look a little different, take on different personalities, and have different needs. The most important things to ask yourself: Does my group include all three of our promised consistency items: Biblical Truth, Relational Authenticity, and Missional Living?

What are the expectations for group participants? What should I be prepared for if I'm going to join a LIFE Group?

The expectation for anyone joining a LIFE Group is to find a place of community, a group in which you feel you can grow as a Jesus-follower, and be committed to that group with an open heart to allow God to work in your life. As a group participant, you should be prepared to abide by our group guidelines to help us protect the safe environment we desire for all our groups to be and be ready to grow as a disciple. That's it!

Should Deacons/Shepherds be leading a LIFE Group?

For those serving in the role of deacon/shepherd, our expectation is simply that you are IN a LIFE Group, but not necessarily that you are leading one. We know everyone's situation is different, but our general rule would be that if you are shepherding multiple group leaders, we don't want to burn you out so being in a group that you are not leading is the ideal scenario for our shepherds.

What is the process for "Branching" a LIFE Group that has grown?

Branching can be a challenging process, but it is so rewarding and Kingdom-building. There are five main steps to branching a group:

- ***Maintain consistent vision casting*** – Tell your group every week that we plan to grow and one day we will branch. See page 15 of your manual for a script to help with this.
- ***Have your co-leader ready to lead and recruit new co-leaders*** – Once the group grows and it is time to branch, both the leader and the co-leader will need to recruit new co-leaders. These people can come from within the group or be someone outside the group that wants to lead.
- ***Find a time and location for the new group*** – The group's co-leader would typically become the leader of the new group and you will need to determine when and where that new group will meet and share that with the group.
- ***Recruit enough people willing to shift to the new group*** – The group's leader and co-leader should discuss how many people should shift over to the new group to keep the groups as even as possible and then agree on who might be recruited to join the co-leader in the new group. Now it's time to ask them. Depending on whether the new group will meet on the same day as the original group, it may be appropriate to poll the group as to whose schedules would allow for the various days chosen.
- ***Choose a start date and follow through!***

Your Shepherd is readily available to help walk you through these steps and assist however they can. Remember there is a relational and missional tension to branching groups. Both tensions are good and necessary but don't allow the uncomfortable nature of branching keep you from creating spaces for those in your circle that need to find community like you have found. We refuse to be "community-hoarders" at Blackhawk!

Are all LIFE Groups the same, using the same curriculum?

No two groups will ever be the same, because every group is full of people and we are all different. Our guarantee at Blackhawk is that no matter what group you land in, you will experience Biblical Truth, Relational Authenticity, and Missional Living. Periodically (typically every other year or so), our church will go through a season where all LIFE Groups will use the same curriculum, but LIFE Group leaders are given the task of choosing the best curriculum to fit the group's needs. We use a three-fold curriculum track at Blackhawk: Storying, Sermon-Based, and Topical. As you go from group to group, you will generally find that groups are all doing different studies.

How do I step down from leading a group if I feel the need to do so?

Talk to your Shepherd. If it is time to step down from leading or you just need a break for a season, your shepherd is more than capable, willing, and ready to walk through that with you. We generally ask for one year commitments from our leaders so it's always natural to revisit your role each year at Blackhawk. We don't like burning people out! If you need to step down, just let your Shepherd and co-leader know and together map out a plan so your group can continue to flourish.

How does our discipleship strategy relate to our elder/deacon training?

Our strategy for making disciples at Blackhawk is the heart of who we are. It is not just something we do in LIFE Groups but the goal in each ministry we have at our church. That is why it is essential that all our leadership teams (elders, deacons, staff, ministry leaders, etc.) are exposed to and well versed in our strategy. We work hard to make sure that is the case. You could say that our discipleship training is the leadership training for any/all of our leadership teams at Blackhawk.