

Life Groupstories

By **Jim Gifford**
Discipleship Pastor



In his book *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam claimed that the greatest epidemic in American life is not a disease, but loneliness. New technology often makes communication easier, but connection more rare. It drives us to screens instead of to other people. It facilitates entertainment, but, at the same time, it can bring isolation and loneliness.

We are not designed to live in isolation. God created us for community—both with Himself and with each other. When we create true biblical community, we step into God's design for how we are to live, and for how He planned on spreading His name throughout the nations.

There are more than two billion people on the planet who claim to be Christians. This is an astounding fact, considering that Acts 1:15 tells us that the number of Jesus' disciples around the time of His ascension was about 120. These people who made up the early Church continued the movement that the Master started, which spread over the next 2,000 years to every continent on the Earth through true, life-changing community.

Biblical community is more than a Bible study or a hangout with friends; it's what happens when the people of God come together to be His Church. At Dawson, this life-changing biblical community is best found in a Life Group. We believe this so strongly that we have a Life Group for every person, from infants to 90+ year-olds. Life Groups are the place to make friends with fellow believers and people from all walks of life, experience God-guided transformation, and continue the work of Jesus' disciples in Matthew 28.

Reflecting upon how my story and God's story have intertwined through 60+ years, some of my most vivid memories of life transformation in biblical community happened in Sunday School.

In Mrs. Bader's preschool class, as we sang *Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so...* That's how I learned about God's love for me.

As a young boy in Reid McLellan's sixth grade class, I came to understand that Jesus was inviting me to trust and follow Him with my heart and my life. While on a mission trip to New York with some of my tenth grade Sunday School class members, I came to fully understand what being on mission for Jesus was all about. I was engaged in a Sunday Morning Bible Study discussion with a group of LSU students when God first planted the seed in my heart for vocational ministry. And it was during a College Sunday School class' Valentines progressive dinner that Dorinda and I were paired up for a game, and the rest is history!

Time and time again during our forty-two years of married life, living in seven different towns or cities, and serving in eight different ministries, it has been within a Life Group of adults where we have experienced biblical life-changing community. A community of believers that have become lifelong friends, cared for one another through seasons of joy and crisis, and have grown spiritually as we studied God's Word and pursued Jesus' mission together.

Our desire is that every person be connected in a Life Group. There are groups that meet on Sunday mornings and also on weekdays at the church and in the community. These groups meet virtually and in person, by life stage, gender, or by special interest. If you are not already involved in a Life Group, we invite you to explore the different options available. If you would like assistance in finding a Life Group that's right for you, please contact any of Dawson's Adult Discipleship Team or contact Liz Cuenin at lcuenin@dawsonchurch.org.



Jim Gifford serves as Dawson's Discipleship Pastor. His life verse is 2 Timothy 2:2, which reminds him to be steadfast in teaching and discipling others. He and Dorinda are parents to three adult children, and Pops and Dinda to Moses, Birdie, and Loxley.