

# Life Groups Stories

By Kira Aaron

Oliver and I moved to Birmingham from Troy, Alabama, in the summer of 2013. With a toddler and preschooler at home and less than two months until the arrival of our third child, finding a church home where we would have a community in our new city became our top priority. We began visiting churches in the area but had not yet found the place for us. Then a sweet friend from our church in Troy connected me with Maile Gowing, who promptly invited us to visit Dawson.

On September 8, we visited the brand new Knight-Woodruff Life Group and met lots of new people. That night, our third baby was born. The class we had literally just attended that very morning set up a meal schedule for our family for the next six weeks! They not only welcomed us to Birmingham but embraced us wholeheartedly as part of their community. They graciously embodied the commandment to love God and love others, and their faithful acts of service were the Lord's prompting that Dawson was the place for our family to call home.

Being a part of a Life Group provided a built-in community of Bible-believing, Jesus-loving people who encouraged us in our marriage, parenting, careers, and knowledge of the Lord. Hebrews 10:24-25 says, "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." The fellowship with a Life Group of our peers led to our increased engagement in church activities and involvement in service to our community.

When Brooke Gibson, Dawson's Minister to Preschoolers, asked us to teach a preschool class, we knew it was our turn to serve in the same way that we had been served by others since arriving here. Mrs. Brooke and her team provided everything we needed to lead preschoolers in an hour of fun, fellowship, and forging foundations in the Word of God. We served with a variety of people who became dear to us and showed us so much about how to love God and others.

There were college students who sacrificed sleeping in on Sunday mornings to spend time with 4-year-olds; Marilyn Henry and Katherine Newman faithfully taught and encouraged the children and us; and Tiffany Pierce and Mary Austin Jones kept the children laughing and learning with lots of motions, costumes, and excitement to each lesson. By participating in a Life Group as leaders, our focus was on what the children were learning, but we also learned so much ourselves from the Bible while preparing for each lesson.

Recently, Oliver and I went back to an adult Life Group class. Charlie and Beverly Douthit, Tom and Ginger Lewis, and Tim and Beth Kaiser lead our lively bunch of 30-40 somethings in a weekly study of Scripture. Studying the Bible with other believers always illuminates things I haven't noticed on my own. 1 John 1:3-4 says, "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete."

Just as promised, we leave our Life Group each week overflowing with joy because our fellowship with the Father is amplified by our fellowship with one another. Being active in a Life Group keeps us anchored in the Gospel, depending upon God in His unfathomable self-sufficiency, and continually seeking after a closer walk with Him.

In the book *None Like Him*, author Jen Wilkin says, "God is able to bring eternal results from our time-bound efforts... This side of heaven, the only investments with eternal significance are people. Living this day well means prioritizing relationships."

From our perspective and firsthand experience, Life Groups are where relationships in the local church truly begin.



Clockwise from top left: Oliver, Kira, Elizabeth Anne (11), Charlie (9) and Lolly (8).



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