



Why and
How
plus
sample
session
Breakfast
with Jesus



Living in Faith Together

gatherings to cultivate intergenerational community

LIFT Why and How plus Sample

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Introduction

GenOn Ministries puts the highest priority on growing **Christ-centered relationships**, affirming that nurturing people into an abundant life-giving relationship with God through Jesus Christ is the most important thing the church ever does. When generations mutually invest in one another, Christ-centered relationships grow and intergenerational ministry is born. As relationships among the generations deepen, the church is transformed from doing intergenerational programming to thriving as an intergenerational community. Christ-centered community draws us all closer to God.

Intergenerational ministry nurtures Christ-centered community by bringing together two or more generations in planned and purposeful settings, where all are mutually invested.

GenOn Ministries is committed to helping churches and people of all generations explore and grow Christ-centered intergenerational community through resources and in-person and online training.

LIFT (Living in Faith Together) is designed to foster intergenerational community by *bringing generations together* around tables for four activities: sharing food (Breaking Bread Together), enjoying fellowship (Playing Together), worshipping (Praying Together), and studying the Bible (Studying God's Word Together).

LIFT can be used in addition to or in place of other faith formation offerings. Sample settings for LIFT: Sunday School, before or after 5th Sunday worship, special gatherings, offsite events, midweek, summer, Advent, Lent, dinner time, at home, and VBS. Your church may have other opportunities to gather generations together for LIFT.

Getting Started

LIFT sessions include step-by-step instructions for preparing and leading each of the four activities. The information in this section describes best practices for using LIFT, and adaptations that can be made to suit your setting.

Calendar

Determine when LIFT will take place. Monthly? Weekly? Year-round? In the summer? Advent and/or Lent? LIFT works for all of these choices.

Determine the day and time that LIFT will take place, and put it on the church calendar. Will you meet on Sunday before or after worship? Wednesday evening? Another day?

Determine the start and end times for LIFT gatherings. LIFT is designed for 60 minutes when serving a meal and 45 minutes with a snack. For shorter sessions, serve a snack, do one Playing Together activity, and reduce the number of discussion topics for Studying God's Word Together.

Format

The format of each session is:

1. Goals and materials for the session,
2. Optional Gathering activities that allow for easy entry into the session,
3. Sharing of snack and/or meal around tables,
4. Reading a Bible story or Scripture followed by conversation using discussion topics,
5. Playing together with activities related to the Bible story,
6. Closing prayer, song, or responsive reading.

Adapt

- Change the order of activities.
- For the best experience of fostering relationships, include all four activities at each LIFT gathering.

Setting

Ideally, LIFT takes place in a setting where participants can be seated around tables and food can be served. It is helpful for the setting to be close to a kitchen area. Place enough chairs at each table to create a good small group, about 6-8 participants, with no more than 10.

Facilitator

One or two people serve as facilitators for the LIFT experience. These leaders make sure that each part of the schedule happens at the appropriate time, and that table groups have all the information and supplies they need for each activity. For example, for Breaking Bread Together, facilitators explain to the whole group the theme for the day, how to choose the server, when to start eating and when to clean up, and they lead the blessing.

Adapt

- If there is more than one facilitator, have facilitators meet beforehand to plan the LIFT experience.

Table Groups

LIFT is dependent on intergenerational table groups. To create these groups, try one of these methods:

- Create groups before the event if participants have pre-registered. Have a plan for those who come without registering.
- Have one or two leaders assign participants to tables as they arrive.
- Assign a color to each generation. Cut squares of paper in the chosen colors. As participants arrive, invite them to choose a square based on their generation. Participants can then sit anywhere, with the goal of having all (or most) colors at every table.

Adapt

- Use a different method to form intergenerational table groups.
- Each LIFT gathering may have the same table groups or you may create new table groups each time.
- Individual table groups may choose one person to help their group stay on task.

Gathering Together

It is likely that all participants will not arrive on time and at the same time. Because of this, optional gathering activities are included for participants to join in as they arrive. Gathering activities may be replaced or supplemented with activities that are more appropriate for your group.

Whether gathering activities are used or not, it is important to start LIFT at the appointed time, rather than waiting for everyone to arrive before starting.

Breaking Bread Together



The goal of Breaking Bread Together is to build relationships around the meal and table.

So, a key component of LIFT is eating together around tables.

First, determine whether a meal or a snack will be served. Suggested menus are included in each session, but you may prefer something else. Consider time constraints, preparation and serving options, and food preferences and allergies when choosing food for each session.

To help grow intergenerational relationships, serve the snack/meals family style, where food is passed around each table, rather than served from a buffet line. Dishes for serving food family style – bowls, platters, trays, pitchers – will be needed for each table so that everything can be passed around the table.

To increase the specialness of each session, each session is theme-related with menu and decoration suggestions. Using festive decorations for each table helps to create a welcoming and engaging setting, which is important for growing intergenerational relationships. One item frequently listed for table decorations is butcher paper, which is any type of paper that can cover most of the table, in a white or off-white color. Other common names are bulletin board paper, easel paper, and newsprint.

One person in each table group will be the server and theme-based suggestions for choosing the server are included. The server retrieves food for their table from the kitchen or food prep area, brings it to the table to be passed around, and, at the end of the meal/snack, returns

plates, platters, bowls, etc. to the kitchen or food prep area. To be respectful of the server, everyone at the table waits until their server has taken the first bite before they begin eating. Each session includes a blessing for the food. To continue faith conversations at home, the prayer could be printed on cards for participants' use at home throughout the week.

Breaking Bread Together may be the first activity (after the Gathering Together activity) or you may choose to have your meal or snack later in the session.

Studying God's Word Together



Themes in LIFT will connect each session to a Bible story or key Scripture. The Scripture will be shared at each table or with the whole group in a variety of styles, like one strong reader reading aloud, taking turns around tables, sharing the Scripture or story through a skit, or reading a modern interpretation of the Word.

Suggested questions/topics for discussion are included. Provide a print version for each table group or post on a screen or easel page for all to see.

At the beginning of each session, choose one person in each group to be the discussion facilitator. Tell this person what time the discussion segment will end. Discussion facilitators can choose the questions/topics for their group. It is not important or mandatory for groups to discuss every topic. What is important is good conversation.

Look for ways for pre-readers to contribute. Maybe they have a special line or phrase they repeat as you read together. Maybe they turn pages or are responsible for bringing Bibles to their table as this part starts. Paper and crayons can be provided for those who need an activity while discussion is taking place.

Topics are intended for all ages to contribute ideas. However, if a particular topic seems too difficult for children to answer, reword the topic in simpler language.

Discussion facilitators at each table should make sure every voice is invited to speak, and is heard and respected. Some adults may, naturally, take on a "teacher" role, asking the children to answer questions. Here are some alternatives to that model:

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1. Invite the children to share the topics. Non-readers can choose the participant who will respond first.
2. Occasionally, group adults together, youth together, and children together for the discussion segment. Then, move back into intergenerational groups.
3. Invite groups to have a different participant read each topic.

As a leader of a LIFT session, it is important for you to study the Scripture and topics in each session before you present to the group. Read the Scripture in different translations and study what is going on biblically before and after the selected Scripture. This may require you to do some outside research. Spend time in God's Word before you lead others.

Each session includes a Bible or Bible storybook in the materials list. Choose a Bible translation or Bible storybook that is appropriate for your church. Some Bible storybooks do not include all Scriptures. If choosing a new Bible storybook, GenOn Ministries recommends “The Children’s Bible in 365 Stories” by Mary Batchelor, published by David C. Cook. Some LIFT sessions give the coordinating story from this children’s Bible.

Playing Together



The goal of Playing Together is to foster relationship building through play.

Each session of LIFT includes two or three suggestions for Playing Together, like games, crafts, outreach projects and more.

A good rule of thumb is to create a non-competitive environment. Competition can sometimes get in the way of growing relationships.

If you are planning multiple sessions of LIFT for consecutive weeks, consider choosing a wide variety of activities across sessions, rather than playing a game in every session. This will help to reach the interests of all people.

The activities included in each session are suggestions. Feel free to choose your own activities. In making choices, consider the people in your faith community. Maybe there is someone in your church who does woodworking or is a painter and could share their gift at one of the sessions as part of Playing Together.

Praying Together



The goal of Praying Together is to praise and worship God through prayer. Prayers in LIFT may include singing, praying aloud, a call with responses, praying through art, and many more. It is intended as a time for the entire group to focus and center their attention on Christ.

The prayer activities included in each session are suggestions. Feel free to choose other worshipful activities that may be a better fit for your group.

Where Praying Together includes a song, instructions indicate providing the means for accompaniment. Options are to play a recording of the music or invite instrumentalists to play.

Create a worshipful space in the front or center of your room. Consider using battery-operated candles, an opened Bible, or other items that may be seen in your regular worship space. Participants may move to the worship space or remain at their tables and turn to face the worship space.

Breakfast with Jesus

John 21:1-15

Before you begin: Be sure to read the *Introduction* and *Getting Started*.

Session goals:

1. To explore the story of Jesus meeting the disciples on the beach
2. To discover different ways Jesus provides for each person

Materials needed for each table group:

1. Gathering Together: tablecloths, placemats, napkins, place settings, table decorations
2. Breaking Bread Together: for table decorations – think like a host, set the tables like you would for a guest using nice decorations and place settings or nice placemats with fabric napkins, put an empty chair at each table, copies of conversation starters and blessing; for meal/snack – fish crackers, fish-shaped pancakes
3. Studying God’s Word Together: Bible or Bible storybook, copies of discussion topics
4. Playing Together: fishing rods, bait, other fishing supplies, variety of items that can be used to create homemade fish bait, a leader who is knowledgeable about making lures and bait, decks of cards
5. Praying Together: Bible, battery-operated candle, words and music for “Jesus Loves Me” (if needed)

Gathering Together

Materials: tablecloths, placemats, napkins, place settings, table decorations

As participants arrive, invite them to set their own tables, imagining that a very special guest is joining them for the meal.

Breaking Bread Together

Materials: for table decorations – think like a host, set the tables like you would for a guest using nice decorations and place settings or nice placemats with fabric napkins, put an empty chair at each table, copies of conversation starters and blessing; for meal/snack – fish crackers, fish-shaped pancakes



After welcoming participants, offer a blessing for your snack or meal. Invite participants to read the blessing in unison or line-by-line echo style:

Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest, just as you were the guest of Simon the Pharisee many years ago. Bless us with your presence, we ask in your holy name. Amen.

Picking the server. The server could be the person who has gone on the most fishing trips or the person who has caught the biggest fish.

During the meal. Some conversation starters could include the following:

1. Share together your favorite breakfast foods.
2. Share experiences of being at the beach.
3. Wonder together about why there is an empty seat at your table.

Studying God's Word Together



Materials: Bible or Bible storybook, copies of discussion topics

Introduce the Scripture. Our Scripture today is from the New Testament and tells the story of Jesus fixing breakfast for his disciples on the beach. As we read, think about what it would be like to share a meal with Jesus.

Read Scripture together. Read John 21:1-15 from the Bible or Bible storybook.

Talk about Scripture at your table. Invite table groups to share thoughts about the following discussion topics related to the Scripture just shared.

1. Wonder together about how disciples knew it was Jesus at the beach.
2. Wonder together about why Jesus met the disciples at the beach. Wonder together about what Jesus wanted to do for the disciples.
3. Wonder together about how Jesus provides for us.
4. Wonder again about the empty seat at your table. Wonder together about how the meal would be different if you imagined Jesus sitting there.

Playing Together



Activity 1: Go Fishing

Materials: fishing rods, bait, other fishing supplies

If your church is able, plan a fishing trip to a near-by fishing spot.

Activity 2: Make Bait

Materials: variety of items that can be used to create homemade fish bait, a leader who is knowledgeable about making lures and bait

Invite a leader to show examples of different types of fishing lures and bait. Invite participants to create different types of fishing bait that may or may not actually be used for fishing.

This site may be helpful: fishingfather.com/4-kid-friendly-fishing-lures-and-2-they-shouldnt-use/.

Activity 3: Play Go Fish

Materials: decks of cards

In table groups, play the card game Go Fish at each table.

Praying Together



Materials: Bible, battery-operated candle, words and music for “Jesus Loves Me” (if needed)

Beforehand, prepare the worship space by placing the Bible and battery-operated candle in the center of a small table. Light the candle.

In table groups, invite participants to share joys and concerns.

Invite participants to move to the worship space.

Sing “Jesus Loves Me” together.

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Who is GenOn Ministries?

GenOn Ministries is a non-profit organization that partners with churches to nurture, grow, and deepen intergenerational Christ-centered community. Our guiding principle is that nurturing an abundant life-giving relationship with God through Jesus Christ is the most important thing the church ever does.

What does GenOn Ministries do?

GenOn offers resources, experiences, training and support to help churches grow Christ-centered relationships and move toward forming deeper intergenerational community.

Topics			
ISBN	Title	Old Testament/New Testament	Sessions
9781791031374	Advent and Christmas	New Testament	12
9781791031381	Breaking Bread	Both	6
9781791031398	Faith Hope Love	Both	12
9781791031404	Family Stories from Genesis	Old Testament	12
9781791031411	Friends in Christ	Both	6
9781791031428	God Creates	Old Testament	12
9781791031435	Holy Week Stories for Lent	New Testament	12
9781791031442	Jesus Heals	New Testament	6
9781791031459	New Testament Letters	New Testament	12
9781791031466	Old Testament Faithful Leaders	Old Testament	12
9781791031473	Old Testament Prophets	Old Testament	12
9781791031480	Parables of Jesus	New Testament	6
9781791031497	Psalms	Old Testament	12
9781791031503	The Disciples' Ministry	New Testament	6
9781791031510	This Is Jesus	New Testament	12
9781791031527	Water Stories	Both	6

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