



How Effective is Living Free?

A Study of Perception of Participants Summer 2021

Need

Living Free, since its inception in 1988, has ministered to over 2 million people in seeking God and His Word for help in dealing with life problems. The effectiveness of this ministry has been evident from a variety of indicators, including outcomes research studies that have been conducted since 2011 for the following purposes:

- Programmatic improvement and refinement.
- Identification of future curricular/topical needs.
- Stewardship of resources.
- Accountability to supporters, stakeholders, and constituents.

Sample

The current study undertaken Summer 2021 consisted of a sample of 135 individuals in 21 different groups from the following venues:

1. Church
 - Missouri: 8 groups, 83 participants
 - Tennessee: 1 group, 6 participants
- 2a Community
 - Kentucky: 1 group, 6 participants
 - Indiana: 2 groups, 4 participants
- 2b. Prison
 - North Dakota: 3 groups, 23 participants
3. Online
 - Virginia: 3 groups, 11 participants

Method

A survey was undertaken, using a questionnaire consisting of five items, to which the respondent was asked to indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement with each item (Appendix). Additionally, the participant was asked to write in answers to two questions. Hence, the instrument gathered both 1) quantitative data to provide a broad view of responses aggregated by item, and 2) qualitative data to provide a deeper perspective through write-in answers.

The questionnaires were distributed at the end of the final session of the group series. The forms were then returned to the Living Free headquarters for compilation and analysis. Using a 4-point Likert scale, each item was scored as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 = Strongly Disagree | 3 = Agree |
| 2 = Disagree | 4 = Strongly Agree |

From the questionnaire responses, percentages were calculated for the following:

- Each item for each group.
- Each group as an entity.
- Each item for the composite groups.
- Composite groups for each venue (church, community/prison, online).
- Composite groups for curriculum topic.
- Composite for the number of courses attended, i.e., 1st course or have taken 2 or more courses.
- All items/all groups composite.

For the qualitative data, all write-in responses were recorded, noted, and examined for recurrent themes and patterns, which were then collapsed into appropriate categories.

Findings The findings reveal remarkable consistency. Table 1 shows the composite responses for each of the questions. The “Personal Growth Index” was derived by the combined percentage of “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” for each question. Eliciting the highest Personal Growth Index were Questions 1 and 2, with 99% each. Both Questions also have the lowest percentage of “Disagree.” Questions 3 and 4, both of which garnered the highest “Disagree” response, assess actual behavioral changes. Table 1 and Figure 1 both depict the same data.

Table 1. Composite Responses of All Groups.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Personal Growth Index
1. This group has helped me become more honest with myself, God, and others.	0	2 (1%)	48 (36%)	85 (63%)	133 (99%)
2. My thoughts, attitudes, and actions reflect a positive change as a result of this group.	0	1 (1%)	57 (42%)	77 (57%)	134 (99%)
3. I now take greater responsibility for myself and my behavior than when I first began this group.	0	5 (4%)	56 (41%)	74 (55%)	130 (96%)
4. I am now relating in more healthy ways with my family and others as a result of the group(s).	0	5 (4%)	60 (44%)	70 (52%)	130 (96%)
5. Because of this group, I am better able to make wiser choices in my daily life.	0	3 (2%)	57 (42%)	75 (56%)	132 (98%)

Note: The number in each box refers to the number of respondents selecting that choice, and the percentage in parenthesis refers to the percentage of respondents.

Figure 1. Percentage of response in each category for each question.

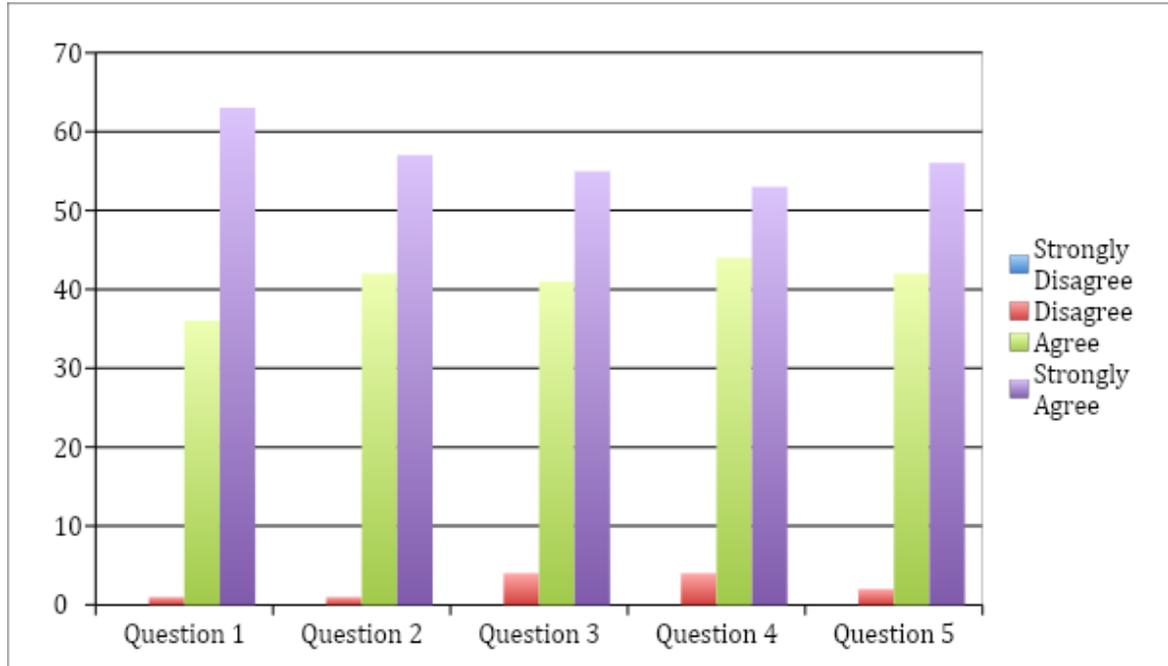
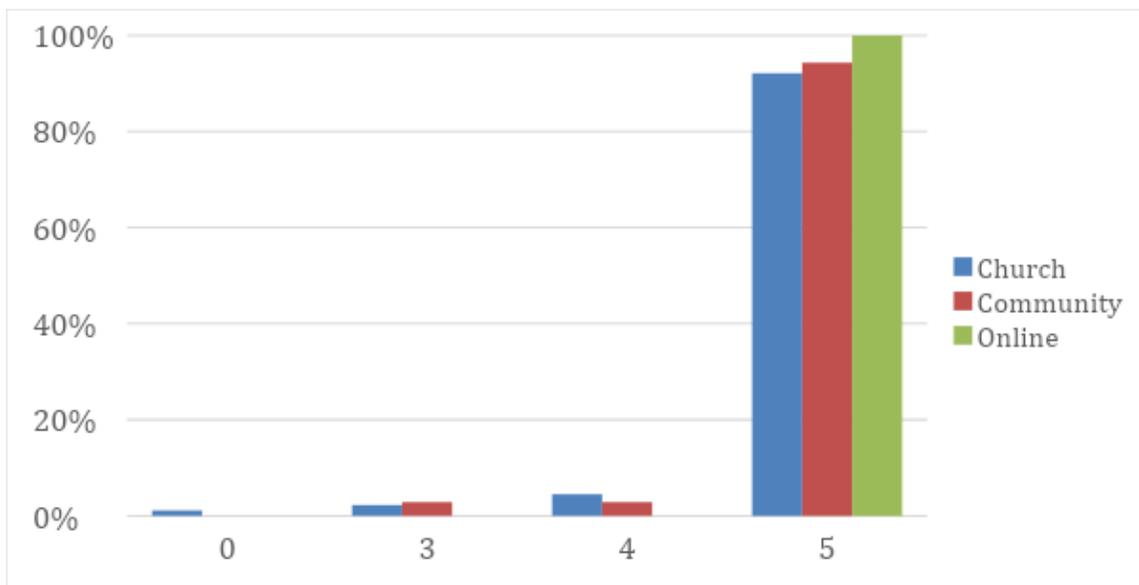


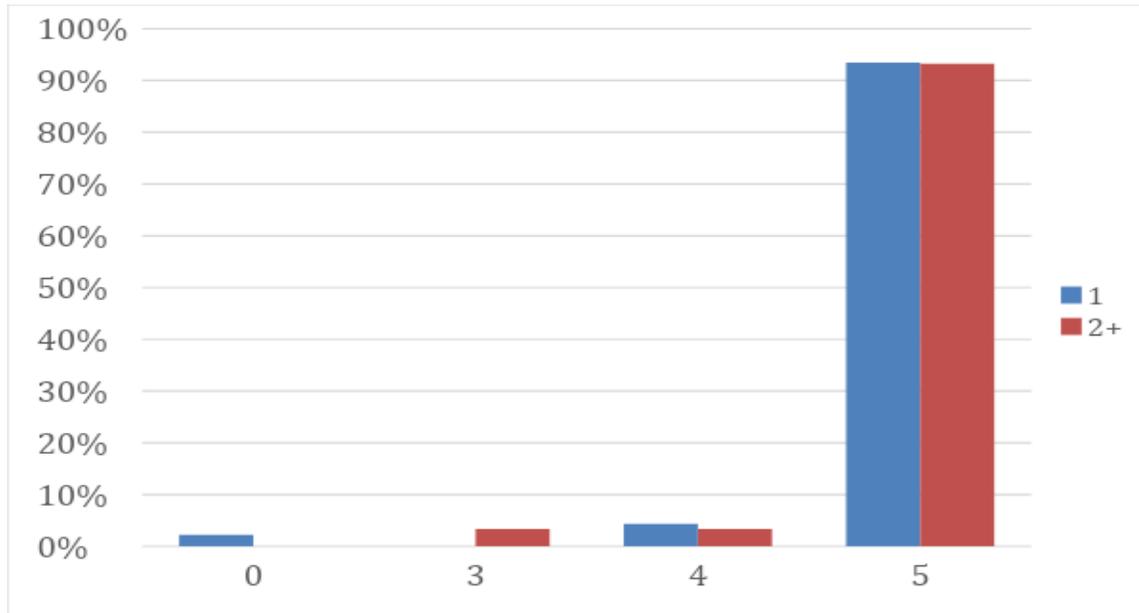
Figure 2 shows comparisons of satisfaction among the three venues – church, community/prison, and online. Although again showing consistency, the small size of the online group – (11 out of a total of 135) should be taken into consideration in making any interpretation.

Figure 2. Personal Growth Index by venue: Church, community, or online.



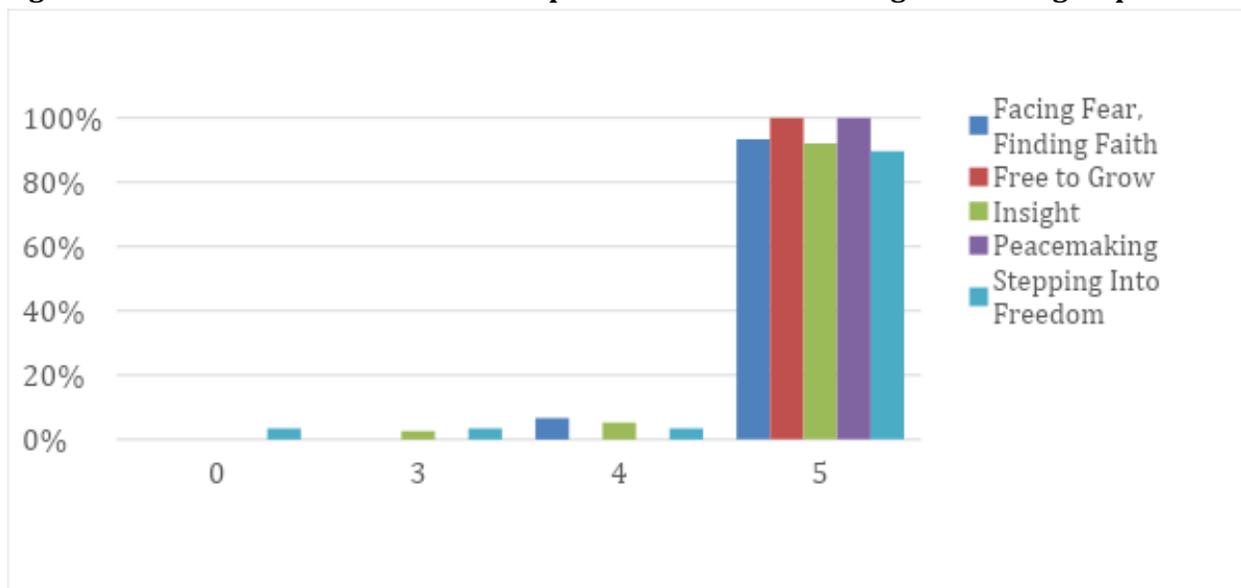
Another comparison was made regarding the number of curricular offerings the respondent had participated in, including the current one. The findings again were surprisingly consistent, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Personal Growth Index based upon the number of curricular offerings attended: first course or two or more courses.



And finally, comparisons were calculated upon the particular curriculum (such as Insight, Free to Grow, Peacemaking) used by the group in which the respondent was currently participating. Figure 4 shows once again, that satisfaction levels were high regardless of the curriculum.

Figure 4. Personal Growth Index based upon the curricular offering of current group.



In addition, the questionnaire asked participants for write-in answers to two questions. Nearly every participant answered the question, “What specific changes have you made in your life as a result of the Living Free group(s)?” Rich data from the write-in responses clustered around the following top categories by frequency, with many covering more than one of the following 4 categories:

1. Deeper relationship with God, e.g., greater trust in God, more time spent in Bible study and prayer (56 response).
2. Specific behavioral changes, e.g., stopping addictions, changing attitudes, and (44 responses).
3. Improved communication and relationships, e.g., improving communication with wife, spending more time with family (16 responses).
4. Development of insight and identification of issues, e.g., recognizing own role in conflicts with others, realizing own relationship addictions (15 responses)

The responses evidenced the application of principles learned from the groups, as noted in the following examples:

- *“I don’t have as many panic attacks, and when they come, they don’t last as long. When I first began 2 years ago, they lasted 7 months, now it’s only a day or two!”* (65+-year-old widowed female).
- *“I am no longer being controlled by my strongholds in life. I have been able to walk a life free from sin with God’s divine power. I was on my way to ending my marriage, but Living Free helped me get my life back on track before making a big mistake. I am living for the Lord and not frustrated with my walk with Christ.”* (36-50-year-old married male).
- *“Realizing who I am and being honest with myself so I can learn and grow as a person.”* He further wrote in response to the least helpful part of the Living Free Group, *“Myself getting in my own way. The Group is AMAZING.”* (36-50-year-old single male,).

The other write-in item, “The least helpful part of this group has been,” was left blank by the majority of the respondents, and those who did respond wrote primarily positive statements such as, *“NA. Everything has been helpful. I appreciate the workbooks and love the discussion and discovery time. Love the Scripture base curriculum.”* (65+-year-old married female).

The remaining responses dealt with the format or logistics of the group, such as too much material for the allotted group time, multiple groups in one room, making it difficult to hear; or conflicting time with a prayer meeting. Unlike previous surveys, issues dealing with group leadership, such as allowing certain participants to dominate the discussion, were notably absent in this survey.

Limitations

Inherent in any study is the limitation of bias when the findings are based upon participants’ self-report. Yet in this type of group experience, one of the goals is self-awareness, and thus it may be argued that the respondents would exhibit greater self-awareness and thereby report with greater accuracy.

Another limitation is the use of different group facilitators. Because the groups are conducted in various countries and cultures around the world, uniformity of leadership is impossible. However, the curriculum is highly structured and the facilitator’s manuals are meticulously detailed, but nonetheless,

wide variations exist among the facilitator's personality, leadership style, experience, as well as group composition and character.

Despite these limitations, the data nevertheless remain valuable in providing a reasonable form of feedback of participants' perception of their growth as a result of their Living Free experience.

Conclusions

Based upon both the quantitative and qualitative data, the respondents reported the experience to be highly valuable because of perceived personal and spiritual growth as suggested by an overall Growth Index of 98%.

The write-in portion of the instrument yielded insight into the areas in which the respondents reported personal growth as a result of their group experience. The most frequently reported changes included a deeper relationship with God, specific behavioral changes, improved relationships and communication, and the development of insight and identification of issues.

The paucity of responses to the question asking for the least helpful part of the group and the unsolicited positive feedback in response to this question, as well as the emotional and spiritual growth reported, suggest an extremely valuable experience. That such transformative changes are possible within such a short time frame with varying demographics in various venues provides compelling affirmation of the powerful model of the Living Free program.



Appendix - Living Free Questionnaire

Please take a few minutes to help us improve Living Free (LF) by completing this anonymous questionnaire. Please do not put your name on this page. Thank you for your help!

Name of most recent group completed or current group: _____

Please mark an "X" in the box that best reflects your experience in this LF group.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. This group has helped me become more honest with myself, God, and others.				
2. My thoughts, attitudes, and actions reflect a positive change as a result of attending this group(s).				
3. I now take greater responsibility for myself and my behavior than when I first began this group.				
4. I am now relating in more healthy ways with my family and others as a result of this group.				
5. Because of this group, I am better able to make wiser choices in my daily life.				

Please complete the following statements:

1. Positive changes I have made in my life as a result of this group are: _____

2. The least helpful part of this group has been: _____

Please check appropriate box:

- Age: Under 18 18-35 36-50
 51-65 Over 65 Gender: Male Female
 Marital Status: Single Married
 Divorced Widowed

This is my first LFC group. Yes _____ No _____

Please name the LF group(s) you have completed:

_____ 5/28/21