



How Effective is Living Free?

A Study of Perception of Participants

April-May 2012

Need

Living Free, since its inception, has ministered to over a million people in seeking God and His Word for answers to dealing with life's issues. Bible-based curricula on various topics have been designed for weekly study groups, using the small group model. The effectiveness of this program was evident from the research conducted in Spring 2011 for the following purposes:

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

Whereas the previous study involved Living Free participants in only one church, the current study was undertaken to obtain a broader sample by including participants in a prison facility, in the community, and in two different churches during April and May 2012.

Sample

The sample consisted of 180 individuals obtained from three different venues involving 22 groups with 2 to 18 members per group in five different sites as follows:

1. Church
 - Missouri: 71 participants 8 groups
 - Oklahoma: 22 participants in 5 groups
2. Community: Lifeline Connection (LC)
 - Tennessee: 12 participants in 2 groups
 - Kentucky: 8 participants in 1 group
3. Prison: Family Integrity Training (FIT)
 - Florida: 67 participants in 6 groups

Method

A survey was undertaken, using the same instrument as was used in 2011 (Appendix A). However, for the Lifeline Connection groups (LC), a different instrument with slightly altered questions geared toward the LC experience was used (Appendix B). Both questionnaires consisted of five items, to which the respondent was asked to indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement with each item. Additionally, the participant was asked to respond to two write-in questions. Hence, the instrument gathered both 1) quantitative data to provide a broad view of responses aggregated by item and by each Living Free group, and also 2) qualitative data to provide a deeper perspective of the respondent's perception through write-in answers.

The questionnaires were distributed at the end of the final session of the group series. The group facilitator asked the members to participate anonymously in the survey for the purpose of improving the program. 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
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Agree
- 4 = Strongly Agree

Mean scores were calculated for 1) each item for each group, 2) each group as an entity, 3) each item for the composite groups, and 4) all items/all groups composite. Additionally, an ANOVA was computed to ascertain any significant differences between and within the groups.

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 revealed a remarkable consistency among the group means. Eliciting the highest mean of all -- 3.74 out of a possible 4.00 -- was Lifeline Connection, revealing that nearly every item yielded a "4" (Strongly Agree) response (Table 1). The specific LC group yielding the highest group mean of 3.88 was the Kentucky LC Insight group. Of the five questionnaire statements, the one with the highest mean (3.85) was "Lifeline Connection has helped me become more honest with myself, God, and others." The church and FIT groups elicited an overall mean of 3.60 (Table 2). A statistical analysis, an ANOVA, found no statistically significant difference among the groups.

The two write-in responses yielded considerable depth and richness. Nearly every respondent answered the first question: "What specific changes have you made in your life as a result of the Living Free group(s)?" Forming the cluster of the top four categories by frequency were the following:

1. Deeper relationship with God, including greater trust, more time spent in Bible study and prayer.
2. Development of insight and identification of issues.
3. Improved relationships and communication.
4. Specific behavioral changes, e.g., stopped drugs, alcohol, pornography, unhealthy relationships.

Of the above four categories, the first one was by far the largest cluster, with 67 responses.

Evidencing the application of principles learned, the respondents were very specific in their write-in's:

- "Being able to use the Word of God to help my anger, I have been able to use anger correctly."
- "Realizing that it begins with me and not my spouse changing. . . ."
- "I have been delivered from a struggle and have understood more about past life controlling problems."
- "More time in God's Word, open about my sin."

The second write-in item asked for completion of the sentence, "The least helpful part of the Living Free Group(s) has been. . ." The majority of the respondents left this item blank, and the majority of those who did answer the item responded with positive statements, such as, "Honestly, I can't think of anything that hasn't been helpful in this group. This group teaches about Jesus, and everything about Him is helpful" (LC group member). A prison inmate wrote "It's all good. Glory to God!" Only 34 participants responded with feedback intended by this item. Fourteen responses dealt with time constraints, and the remaining responses dealt with 1) format or logistics of the group, such as too large

a group size or conflicting time with prayer meeting; 2) desire for more concrete help in transitioning from prison to community; and 3) issues of group process such as monopolization of discussion and need for greater application of Scripture to life.

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 absence of complete demographic data. Although the form asked for age, sex, and marital status, some of the groups used forms from last year, which did not ask for demographics, thereby rendering an incomplete picture of the sample. Such data would have been useful to determine the relationship of such data with the degree of satisfaction with the experience and the reported growth as a result of this group experience.

A third limitation is the use of different group facilitators. Because the groups are conducted around the world, uniformity of leadership is impossible. However, the curriculum is highly structured and the facilitator's manuals are meticulously detailed that a high degree of standardization can be assumed.

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

Recommendations

Based upon the findings, the following recommendations are advanced:

1. Use of new forms. For consistency all groups should use the new forms so that demographic data could be analyzed for any relationship between age, sex, and marital status, and the responses to the items. In other words, would a person's age, sex, or marital status show a statistically significant difference in his/her response to the questionnaire items? The findings may affect leadership style or future development of curricula if targeted to an age-, sex-, or marital-specific audience.
2. Further training in group leadership. In the facilitator training sessions, additional instruction in dealing with group behavior issues would be useful.

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 mean of 3.74 for Lifeline Connection and an overall mean of 3.60 for the churches and prison.

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. Among the most frequently reported changes included a deeper relationship with God, development of insight, improved relationships and communication, and specific behavioral changes. 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 provide compelling affirmation for the powerful model of the Living Free program.

Table 1. Item* and Group Means for Lifeline Connections

Name of Group	Participants	*Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Group Mean
Tennessee Insight	7	3.85	3.57	3.71	3.71	3.71	3.71
Tennessee Stepping into Freedom	5	3.60	3.40	3.40	3.60	3.60	3.52
Kentucky Insight	8	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.75	3.63	3.88
Item Mean	20	3.85	3.67	3.75	3.70	3.65	<u>3.74</u>

* Questionnaire Items for Lifeline Connections:

1. My thoughts, attitudes, and actions reflect a positive change because I have greater freedom in Christ through the Living Free group(s).
2. I can identify at least one self-defeating behavior/defense that I am now working on as I seek greater emotional and spiritual health.
3. Living Free has helped me become more honest with myself, God, and others.
4. I have seen positive changes in the way I relate to my family and others as a result of the Living Free group(s).
5. Because of Living Free, I am becoming more compassionate towards those who are struggling with life issues.

Table 2. Item and Group Means**

Name of Group	Participants	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Group Mean
Oklahoma Insight	5	3.60	4.00	3.80	3.60	3.60	3.72
Oklahoma Peacemaking	5	3.50	3.80	3.60	3.60	3.80	3.67
Oklahoma Restoring Families	6	3.00	3.17	3.33	3.33	3.50	3.25
Oklahoma Crossroads	3	3.67	3.67	3.67	3.33	3.33	3.56
Oklahoma Depression	3	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Oklahoma Item Mean	22	3.54	3.73	3.68	3.55	3.65	<u>3.63</u>
Missouri Stepping into Freedom	5	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.40	3.60	3.70
Missouri Peacemaking	3	4.00	3.00	3.33	3.67	3.33	3.47
Missouri Committed Couples 1	16	3.62	3.56	3.62	3.44	3.56	3.56
Missouri Committed Couples 2	14	3.57	3.64	3.36	3.63	3.64	3.57
Missouri Completely Free 1	10	3.80	3.50	3.60	3.70	3.60	3.64
Missouri Completely Free 2	9	3.44	3.22	3.38	3.33	3.33	3.54
Missouri Free to Grow	10	3.50	3.70	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.54
Missouri Depression	2	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.50	3.80
Missouri Item Mean	71	3.64	3.55	3.59	3.46	3.54	<u>3.56</u>
Florida (FIT) Godly Parenting 1	8	3.75	3.38	3.75	3.75	3.63	3.65
Florida (FIT) Godly Parenting 2	10	3.60	3.50	3.50	3.40	3.60	3.52
Florida (FIT) Anger 1	5	3.60	3.20	3.40	3.60	3.80	3.52
Florida (FIT) Anger 2	14	3.54	3.86	3.50	3.50	3.64	3.61
Florida (FIT) Anger 3	12	3.67	3.75	3.83	3.67	3.58	3.70
Florida (FIT) Anger 4	18	3.67	3.78	3.50	3.61	3.72	3.66
Florida (FIT) Item Mean	67	3.64	3.66	3.58	3.58	3.66	<u>3.62</u>
Overall Item Mean		3.61	3.61	3.59	3.53	3.60	<u>3.60</u>

** Questionnaire Items for churches and prison groups:

1. My thoughts, attitudes, and actions reflect a positive change because I have greater freedom in Christ through the Living Free group(s).
2. I can identify at least one self-defeating behavior/defense that I am now working on as I seek greater emotional and spiritual health.
3. Living Free has helped me become more honest with myself, God, and others.
4. I have seen positive changes in the way I relate to my family and others as a result of the Living Free group(s).
5. Because of Living Free, I am becoming more compassionate towards those who are struggling with life issues.



Appendix A

Living Free Questionnaire

Please take a few minutes to help us improve the Living Free program by completing this anonymous questionnaire. Thank you for your help!

Please mark an "X" in the box that best reflects your experience in the Living Free group(s).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My thoughts, attitudes and actions reflect a positive change because I have greater freedom in Christ through the Living Free group(s).				
2. I can identify at least one self-defeating behavior/defense that I am now working on as I seek greater emotional and spiritual health.				
3. Living Free has helped me become more honest with myself, God, and others.				
4. I have seen positive change in the way I relate to my family and others as a result of the Living Free group(s)				
5. Because of Living Free, I am becoming more compassionate towards those who are struggling with life issues.				

Please complete the following statements:

1. What specific changes have you made in your life as a result of the Living Free group(s)?

2. The least helpful part of the Living Free Group(s) has been _____

This is my first Living Free group. Yes _____ No, I have completed _____ (how many?) groups.

Please name the group(s) you have completed:



(Appendix B) Lifeline Connection Questionnaire

Please take a few minutes to help us improve Lifeline Connection by completing this anonymous questionnaire. Thank you for your help!

Name of Lifeline Connection Group just completed: _____

Please mark an "X" in the box that best reflects your experience in the Lifeline Connection group(s).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Lifeline Connection 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 the Lifeline Connection group(s).				
3. I now take greater responsibility for myself and my behavior than when I first began Lifeline Connection.				
4. I am now relating in more healthy ways with my family and others as a result of the group(s).				
5. Because of Lifeline Connection, 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 Lifeline Connection are

2. The least helpful part of the Lifeline Connection 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 LLC group. Yes _____ No _____

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

11/30/11