

Groups are the primary means by which active discipleship, fellowship, and community take place within Community Church's model of ministry.

Group Categories at Community Church

- Community Groups (primary group category)
- Celebrate Recovery (Christ centered recovery program)
- Specialty Groups (Alpha, Grief, Financial Peace, Parenting, etc.)

Community Groups I Characteristics of our Primary Group Category:

Discipleship Focused

- **Discipleship is helping people discover a relationship with Jesus Christ and moving them toward spiritual maturity.** This is the primary purpose of every group and the responsibility of every leader. Helping make disciples who, in turn, are able to make disciples. We have tools that can help you on the journey.
- **Community Groups exist as Disciple Making Communities.** "Real Life Discipleship" is the model we use to train up disciple makers. This allows leaders to assess where their group members are on the spiritual maturity wheel and put into practice methods of bible study and tools for evangelism to equip their members to be disciples who make disciples.
- Groups have a regular focus on reaching those who are far from God. **Intentionally praying for those who do not know Jesus, training people how to effectively engage and have a spiritual conversation about the gospel, and celebrating those who invite people into a discovery bible study.**
- Groups have a habit of helping people take next steps in their discipleship journey. At the end of meetings, leaders ask participants to make an **'I Will' Statement**. An 'I Will' Statement is where group members respond to what they learned by making a simple commitment to an action they can complete in the next few days or before the next meeting. It's not just a statement of belief or good will. It is a deliberate commitment to practically obey the Word of God in their everyday life that week.

Three Dimensional: Up / In / Out

- Community Groups balance their energies between an UP-ward movement towards God, an IN-ward movement towards the group as a place of identity, and an OUT-ward movement to represent Christ to their missional contexts.
 - **UP:** deep and connected relationship to his Father and attentiveness to the leading of the Holy Spirit
 - **IN:** constant investment and spiritual development in the relationships that exist within the Community Group
 - **OUT:** entering the brokenness of the world, looking for responses individually (people coming into relationship with Jesus) and systemically (seeing our world being transformed by Christ)
- When they gather this is expressed in creative ways that are appropriate to their context. There is diversity between groups in how this looks, with a variety of faces and voices being given room to step forward and contribute. The only rule is that they do not try to do a miniature version of a Sunday church service!

Community Groups continued:

Sunday Morning Engaged

- Every group should be engaged with the larger Community Church family by checking in on the sermon on Sunday. This can be a full discussion that takes up the learning portion of a group meeting or a brief conversation before focusing on another designated topic.
- Resources and group questions are provided by the pastoral teaching team to help groups go further in discussion. These typically follow a format of providing Head (information), Heart (meaning), and Hands (application) questions to engage the group.
- Group members should feel part of what is happening and being taught during the Sunday morning gathering which creates alignment for all groups.

Missional

- Every group should have a missional focus, a regular outward expression that intentionally allows the gospel to saturate our community and world.
- Some groups may have a regular missional focus they commit to. Others may take on new opportunities as they are made available.
- Mission is also be lived out with an intentional focus on praying for and reaching the lost with the gospel.

Multiplication Oriented

- We highly encourage open groups, that means they are available for new people to join. Even groups that feel full should have an open chair philosophy, ready to welcome at least one more.
- People may join groups by personal invitation, connection through the church, or after going through a Discovery Bible Study with a particular group member.
- Healthy groups grow... and consequently, multiply. Be on the lookout for group members who may have the gifts required to lead a group and train them to lead.

Sample schedule of a Community Group meeting:

- Guests arrive. A snack and a beverage is made available to people who want them.
- Ask everyone to be seated. **Do an ice breaker.** Make it fun! Get to know each other.
- **Check in on Prayer Calendar.** This is an essential habit for your group. If your group is new, you may need to do some training on this. As your group develops this habit, begin to cultivate a focus on intentional discipleship. Conversation quadrants, storytelling, and celebration are fundamental.
- **Check in on 'I Will' statements** from your last meeting. How did everyone do following through? This is where obedience and accountability come into play.
- **Start a discussion using the Group Leader Questions.** These are available in the sermon section on our website. Not all questions need to be used. Remember - you are a facilitator not a teacher! Just get the conversation started and keep it moving. At the end of the discussion, ask each member to make an "I Will" statement, a commitment to action based on what they just learned.
- **Ask each person how the group can be praying for them during the next week.** Take notes. You should plan to be the one to pray out loud for the group at the first meeting. Find out the comfort level of praying out loud before asking someone to do it.