**Community Group Explainer**

**Why CG’s?**

When the church first started we see that these new Jesus centered communities were focused on things like spiritual growth (prayer and teaching), fellowship, service, and outreach. There are a lot of different forms that these types of things happen in. For example, in our Sunday gatherings we focus on prayer, worship, and teaching (spiritual growth) and can do these things fairly well. What we can’t do as well in our Sunday gatherings are things like fostering deeper fellowship or service.

Smaller groups (aka Community Groups) can however go deeper in some of these areas, just by the fact that they are smaller and more personal. Because of this we believe that CG’s are an important expression of our church, allowing us to go deeper in areas that we can’t on Sunday morning. They aren’t meant to be *the* be-all end-all but along with other ministries and events they help us to be a balanced and holistic church.

**Primary Goals of CG’s**

Depending on the makeup of a particular group and the natural gifting’s and passions of the leaders, each group will have a bit of its own feel and focus. However in saying that, each group should have four primary goals to keeps at the forefront of their gatherings.

**1. Fellowship**

We only get a certain type of fellowship from big group gatherings but CG’s **start** with and are centered on fellowship! Fellowship is relationship that has a common bond – in this case our faith.

 **Outcomes:**

* Authentic Relationships
* As a leader/facilitator people have to give you permission to be a part of their life and regular fellowship (not just in your CG) enables this to happen.

**2. Spiritual Growth**
Spiritual Growth happens in CG’s in similar ways that it happens in bigger groups through worship, prayer, and studying God’s word. But because of the setting, there are opportunities to go deeper in your CG in ways that are nearly impossible on Sunday morning.

**Outcomes:**

* **Discipleship** – out of the relationships that are being built members are growing in their understanding and practice of God’s word and challenging each other toward Christlikeness.
* **Understanding where are people at -** Through questions and honest conversations members can grapple with spiritual truth in a nurturing environment.
* **Accountability –** while regular CG gatherings create space for spiritual growth and fellowship, members are encouraged to be in relationship with each other throughout the week as they challenge each other to love and good deeds. (ex. Coffee meetups, prayer, etc.)
* **Tailored Biblical content:** As group leaders see the spiritual needs in their CG they have latitude to decide the Biblical content that should be discussed, learned, and explored for the people in their particular group. This content does need to be approved by the Pastor or other leader ahead of time.

**3. Service**There is always an application of our faith, or it’s probably dead. Service happens in a variety of ways, but in the context of a CG, it could look like a group project to bless someone in need or an ongoing commitment to give of yourselves in some tangible way either inside or outside the church.

**Outcomes:**

* Application of our faith
* When we pour out (serve, give) God pours in and our faith grows

**4. Community Outreach**

Often times outreach incorporates service, but where service can be to people inside or outside the church, outreach is specifically for people who don’t know Jesus. This may be a bit of an artificial distinction but it’s important to have as it helps keep groups from being to inwardly focused.

 **Outcomes:**

* + People come to know Jesus
	+ Your group sees it can ‘do’ evangelism

**Big Picture**

While each CG is encouraged to keep these four areas a focus of their group, we also recognize there are going to be things that one group is more passionate about or able to do easier than others. For example, a group made up of people with no children can easily have an hour-long Bible study while a group with a lot of young kids might find it easy fellowship but be lucky to have a 15-minute prayer and discussion.

Ultimately what makes CG’s beneficial is the Christ centered relationships. Keep the focus on loving Jesus and the people in your group and good things will happen!