



**CITY** CHURCH

**Community Groups: On Purpose**

# So what is Community Groups: On Purpose?

Community Groups are a vital component of who we are and what we do at City Church. As such what we do in our groups fits within our mission and vision for our church as a whole. Simply put:

City Church exists to...

*Multiply Gospel Change  
For Broken People  
On Purpose*

This 6-week study was designed to clarify the mission and vision for our groups. The hope is that it will define a common language for us within each group and across every group at City Church. Furthermore we hope it will refine the pathway for discipleship and evangelism within our church. Our prayer is that through our community groups we will see glimpses of spiritual renewal, fervent care for one another, and a gospel awakening in our community that will affect Murfreesboro and beyond.

## How to use this resource

You'll notice that at the bottom of each page there is a posting of our mission statement for our Community Groups. But just stating these words on every page is simply not enough. These words have meaning because they are birthed out of a biblical framework for understanding community and how that relates to mission. So, after you have found your Community Group to maximize the benefit this study should seek to utilize it in both of the following ways.

Take some time over 2-3 days each week leading up to your group meeting to read through these passages. Perhaps also take notes using a [HEAR journal](#) as you do so.

Additionally you may even want to formulate responses to the discussion questions ahead of your Community Group gathering. Write down questions you have, thoughts, and prayerful responses.

Pray that God would stir up a passion to be devoted to one another and to declare and demonstrate the gospel together to a specific network of people. Pray even for people who are not believers that you may invite to come to your group.

Be ready to listen, ask questions, and engage in talking through these things each week with your group. These conversations may happen during your group time primarily. Be encouraged to continue these talks at other times throughout the week as well.

A community of Christians **devoted** to one another in order to **declare** the gospel to a specific network of people and **demonstrate** it tangibly.



## Community Groups: On Purpose

### Week 1- Gospel Identity

#### *Ephesians 2*

Who am I? What am I supposed to do? These two questions tend to be a constant refrain rumbling around in our heads and hearts. It has even been said that we “do” who we “are.” For us as believers, our identities are fixed firmly in the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is good news because through faith in Christ we find forgiveness, love, and adoption into the family of God. We are a broken people because of our sin. But Christ has freely redeemed us in his death and resurrection. This is who we are in Christ. Therefore what we do is because of who we are. We can pursue good works (Eph. 2:10) not because we are trying to earn God’s approval but precisely because we already have it. What a beautiful identity!

Each of us in may have very different stories of how we came to believe the wonderful good news of Christ; stories of how we’ve run away from God through religion or rebellion, stories of redemption, and stories of how God continues to make us new day by day. And though each of us is telling a unique version of that story we are also telling a story together as Christians, as a church, and as a Community Group.

Our culture might look at us and say it is weird that we hang out and care for each other. But though we may be different outwardly, we share a wonderful identity together in Christ. Our vision as a Community Group begins with understanding that we were first a people separated from God but through Christ we’ve been redeemed and brought together with God and one another. We may be different in our backgrounds, experiences, or even our racial diversity. But what unites us is the most important thing: Jesus and his gospel!

We live in a countercultural way not for the sake of novelty but out of humble reverence of Jesus. We ought not find our identity in the counterfeit identities of status, relationships, children, jobs, or anything else. Rather we find our truest identity, both individually and as a group, in who God is and what he’s done for us through Jesus. Our lives should be about telling the story of what God has done for us. Let’s be about multiplying gospel change, together as a group of broken people, on purpose.

# Week 1 Discussion Questions

1. Would you say that your life is telling a clear story about what Jesus has done in you and is continuing to do? How so?
2. What counterfeit identities do you find yourself dwelling upon?
3. In what ways do you need people in your life right now to remind you of the gospel story for your life?
4. How does Ephesians 2 give you a picture of the story that God might want to tell through this group?
5. What do you hope will be the story our group tells?
6. Whom do you know that is not seeing their life as part of the gospel story? How can we pray for them and for you to share the good news with them? Would you be willing to invite them to this group?



## Community Groups: On Purpose

### Week 2- Devoted

*Acts 2:42-47; 1 John 1:3*

This passage in Acts 2 gives us a behind the scenes peek into the nature of the early church. As we begin this new season as a Community Group let's begin by understanding what community looked like in the early church.

These first Christians expressed their devotion to God and toward one another in ways that were very normal in their culture. They did so by spending time learning and hearing together, albeit from the gospel teaching of the apostles. They gathered in public as well as in private to encourage one another, pray for one another, and to eat with one another. They also helped care for one another's physical needs and were generous to do so.

And though there are many cultural and technological differences between the 1st and 21st Centuries, many of these things are very normal practices for us as Christians. Simply put, we devote ourselves to one another. What does that mean? It means we submit ourselves under the Christ-centered teaching of the bible to a specific group of people called a church. It also means we express our love and gratitude toward one another through sharing meals, prayers, and time with one another.

Because of our fellowship with God through Jesus Christ we can celebrate our fellowship with one another (1 John 1:3). Some basic ways this could play out in our group might be: by gathering together as friends outside of our group gatherings, encouraging and challenging one another with the gospel, and caring for one another's needs. Let's commit together to enjoy one another, encourage one another, and care for one another well to match the incredible grace we've received from the Father in Jesus.

## Week 2 Discussion Questions

1. What do you think it would look like for us to be devoted to one another?
2. How does our gospel identity affect the way we ought to view one another in this group?
3. How do you envision seeing how 1 John 1:3 proclaiming the gospel to one another?
4. To truly care for one another we must be willing to let each other in on what's really going on in our lives. For example, to share with one another freely, we have to know what we each need. Are there any needs (physical, financial, emotional, or spiritual) that you'd like to let our group know about?
5. Would someone like to share either how devoted community has changed you or how you hope that it will change you? How can we pray about that either with gratitude or with hopeful hearts?
6. We want our devotion to one another to mirror how Christ has devoted himself to us. Do you know any believers at City Church who are not connected to a group? Or do you know someone who is not a follower of Jesus who we can pray for as you share the gospel with him and invite them into this group?



## Community Groups: On Purpose

### Week 3- Declare

*1 Thessalonians 2:1-13; Romans 1:16; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8*

In 1 Thessalonians Paul is writing to the church in the city of Thessalonica. And this is not just a generic letter. Paul is writing with the passion he has not only for sharing the gospel but also for this group of people in particular. Notice how many times he mentions the gospel. This group of people had placed their faith in Jesus as their Savior because of Paul's preaching and teaching (see Acts 17:1-8). Paul is writing back to this group of believers to remind them that his message was good news despite the consequences it brought in having him drive from the city.

But here is the thing to remember: Paul declared a message about Jesus and his gospel not about behavior modification or the pursuit of personal comforts. He proclaimed good news to people who were in their sin but also invited them to place their faith in Christ's death and resurrection to pay for those sins. This is what it means to declare the gospel. Paul invested his life so deeply with these people that he desired to continue seeing their growth and faithfulness in the Lord (1 Thess. 2:8). It was clear that one aspect of Paul's declaration of the gospel was for believers to continue hearing the dynamite power of God (Rom. 1:16).

We hope that this group will on one hand be an environment where we may declare the gospel to each other because we are so quick to forget it. We need to be reminded of our gospel identities often. We should aspire to gospel fluent conversations that build one another up in Christ.

On the other hand we also want to be a group of people who commit to declaring the gospel to the people in our networks of relationships. Jesus has commissioned and empowered us to make known this Good News to all people. God has deliberately placed you in your family, your job, and your relationships to make the gospel known to specific people in your life (see Acts 17:26-27). This group can be an environment where we can not only pray for these people by name but also personally invite them into this group to hear and see the gospel lived out.

## Week 3 Discussion Questions

1. How would you characterize Paul's ministry of declaring the gospel? Was it easy? Was it rewarding?
2. How have you tested and seen the faithfulness of the Lord in sharing the gospel with others recently?
3. We all tend to fall into patterns of making our lives tell a competing story while forgetting the gospel and what Christ has done for us. What will it look like for us to challenge one another to remember the gospel well?
4. Read Matthew 28:18-20. We have a prestigious responsibility to declare the gospel to others. In what ways can we make this group an environment where we can invite our non-believing neighbors and friends?
5. Who do you know right now that does not believe in Jesus? How does Acts 17:26-27 encourage and challenge you to reach out to them? Let's pray for them that they might find Christ in their searching.





## Community Groups: On Purpose

### Week 4- Demonstrate

*Matthew 28:18-20; Matthew 25:35-40; James 2:14-17; Matthew 9:9-13; Philippians 2:5-11*

The people we imitate and what we imitate about them communicates a lot. If you played basketball as a kid you might have imitated Michael Jordan. If you play guitar maybe you've imitated Jimi Hendrix. If you want to be a business guru maybe you've looked to Oprah Winfrey.

But isn't it interesting that we highlight a few attributes of those we imitate while ignoring other traits. We may aspire to be a great basketball player like Jordan without his gambling addiction and self-centeredness. We may want to play guitar like Hendrix but without the drug problems. And we may esteem the business prowess of Oprah but disagree with her notions of 'spirituality.' There just doesn't seem to be any one person to whom we can fully pattern ourselves after.

That is, until we look to Christ. But even with Jesus we sometimes focus on just a few his attributes rather than his entire identity. Let's be clear, Jesus is not *just* a good example. He is our Savior and Lord. Even so, many of us by our actions view Jesus like we would Jordan, Hendrix, and Oprah. For example, we may honor Jesus' authority as a teacher to the degree that we highly value learning and teaching.

On the contrary, Jesus came to not only to preach a message of repentance and faith in him but also to demonstrate God's love for people. The Gospels are filled with stories of how Jesus performed signs and miracles to point people to God's coming Kingdom. Jesus spoke the Word of God but he also demonstrated it clearly and specifically by his actions.

We certainly have a responsibility to teach the gospel (Matt. 28:20) but also to live it out through our deeds. In fact Jesus promised that we would do even greater works than him (John 14:12). That almost sounds crazy. So as we discuss the passages above let's think through how we might want to demonstrate the gospel with our actions and to what specific network of people we can reach together.

## Week 4 Discussion Questions

1. What do you think it looks like for us to make disciples in Murfreesboro? How does that play out for us individually, as families, and as a group?
2. In reference to Matt. 25:35-40, can you think of anyone to whom we can provide physical needs?
3. How do we live out James 2:14-17 within our group? Are there ways we need to carry each other's burdens for physical needs or financial needs? How can we help without hurting?
4. What would it look like if our next Community Group gathering looked more like Matt. 9:9-13? What would we have to do in order for neighbors to react like the Pharisees in verse 11?
5. Are there any specific ways that we can empty ourselves as servants like Jesus (Phil. 2:5-11)? To what specific network(s) of people do you feel us drawn to reach with the gospel as a group? How can we partner together to reach the people in our spheres of influence?



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### Week 5- A Specific Network of People

*Matthew 4:18-22; 28:18-20*

Have you ever been in or seen a [tug-of-war](#) competition? It is excruciating when two opposing, equally matched teams face off against one another. The most powerful or even the most organized team tends to win.

Unknowingly I think that's how many of us would view community and mission in our groups. We see the battle for developing friendships and caring for one another as an opposing force to inviting non-believers into our groups and serving together.

In contrast, pulling a [dragnet](#) can look very similar, at least at first glance. You still see people pulling on opposite ends of a rope. But they are not pulling against one another but in the same direction toward the shore. So they pull in a great catch of fish as a team rather than competing as individuals on one side or another. Our hope is that our groups will look more like teams pulling dragnets (Matt. 4:19) than teams competing in a tug-of-war challenge.

So how do we do this? Oikos. But not the brand of greek yogurt. This is a greek word that gets translated as "household" in english. This word shows up numerous times directly in our translations of the Bible. But in greek the idea of oikos meant something much broader than simply a nuclear family or what we might think of as a home. It included family, even extended family members, but also neighbors, coworkers, business partners, and friends. Basically our oikos is the specific network of people in which we find ourselves.

Let's see some of the examples from the bible of how the gospel has been advanced through oikos.

Mark 2:11    Luke 8:39    John 4:53    Acts 10:2    Acts 10:24    Acts 18:8

The Bible shows us something so simple yet so amazing through this. It was not through the apostles or professional evangelists that the gospel spread so effectively. Regular folks just like us can be about the work of spreading the gospel right where God already has us- in our families, our jobs, our schools, and neighborhoods. You see, Community and Mission are not competing programs to force into your schedule. They are rhythms that our identities in Christ should reflect and as groups we should embrace. God has gifted us, resourced us, and blessed us in various ways so that we can accomplish this task together as a community.

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## Week 5 Discussion Questions

1. In what ways have you felt tension between deepening community and pursuing mission?
2. Can you think of times when a common mission has actually deepened relationships rather than pulling you away from them?
3. What connections do you see with our group as being an extension of Jesus' purpose as disciples as in Matthew 4:19? What connections do you see with our efforts in evangelism now with the rich heritage of Christianity over the last two centuries?
4. How would we describe our collective oikos as a group? What specific networks of people might God have us reach?
5. How should we pray, plan, and invite folks into our lives and into our group?
6. What do we need to do differently as a group and as individuals to help us reach a specific network of people on purpose.



## Community Groups: On Purpose

### Week 6- Empower and Multiply

*Exodus 18:13-23; Numbers 11; Matthew 9:35-38; 2 Timothy 2:2*

During Israel's early wanderings in the wilderness after leaving Egypt, Moses was given a lesson in leadership by his father-in law (See Ex. 18:13-23). The work of ministry was beginning to crush him. But Jethro stepped in with some timely advice. Essentially he told Moses to empower other leaders to take some of the load he was carrying by himself. Moses did. Problem solved. But in Numbers 11, Moses seems to be back to square one. This time Moses complained directly to God as he felt his burden was too great from serving the people. God graciously answered by providing Moses with leaders yet again.

Fast forward to the New Testament. In Matthew 9 Jesus goes on a healing spree. He raised a girl from the dead, healed a woman's long-term illness with blood, restored the sight of not one, but two men, and restores a man's ability to speak. He was nailing it left and right.

But at the end of the chapter he prays an interesting, even Moses-like prayer for more leaders. Seeing the crowds he was filled with compassion. But rather than continuing to exhaust his human self by meeting their needs he asked God to send help. He prayed specifically that God would send workers for the harvest- people who would meet these needs. Unlike Moses, Jesus prayed because he was burdened *for* the people not because he was burdened *by* them.

You see leadership development is a continuous process. In Jesus we see the ultimate in humble, empowering leadership. He prayed for more laborers for the harvest while he raised some up personally through the disciples. And this is what we see Paul doing later on (2 Tim. 2:2). He entrusts and empowers Timothy to do what Jesus himself did- empower and multiply gospel ministry.

## Week 6 Discussion Questions

1. Do your personal burdens revolve more around having compassion for people or comfort for yourself?
2. What would it look like if the leader of this group entrusted each of person in this group to minister to people?
3. Do any of you sense God's leading to be an answer to Jesus' prayer in Matthew 9:38? How so?
4. Our August 2016 Fighter Verse was Isaiah 6:8. Will you answer as Isaiah did? Who is open leading or planting a Community Group in the next 6-12 months?
5. How will we hold one another accountable for making sure that ministry within and through our group does not burden any one particular person or few people?
6. Matthew 28:18-20 is Christ's authorization to us to make disciples. What are some good rhythms we can incorporate into our group to keep us focused on the Great Commission?