

# GROUP LEADER PLAYBOOK



A NEW COVENANT RESOURCE



We are excited and thankful that you have joined us to lead a community group at New Covenant Church! This playbook is designed to equip you as a leader and a disciple maker. Community Groups are the main channel for discipleship and care at New Covenant. We believe that discipleship isn't an event, it's a lifestyle. Groups are committed to building Christ centered relationships within the context of mutual ministry which is founded on the "one another's" in Scripture. Groups provide the vital opportunity to grow in your walk with Jesus and are a place where you experience genuine community which applies the truths of God's Word into every area of your life. Being committed and connected to a group are essential elements because we were not meant to do life alone.

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# INTRODUCTION

## WHY COMMUNITY GROUPS?

New Covenant exists to glorify God by making disciples. We believe that the single most effective way to make disciples is by creating highly relational, increasingly transparent, unreservedly loving, and Bible-saturated community groups. And then, we consistently multiply those groups to make more and more disciples.

## SIX REASONS WHY WE ARE COMMITTED TO COMMUNITY GROUPS

1. Because they are biblical. (Acts 2; 5:42)
2. Because they are the only way to shepherd the whole flock. (Ephesians 4:11,12)
3. Because they encourage the use of spiritual gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:14-27)
4. Because they multiply competent ministers. (2 Timothy 2:2)
5. Because they foster biblical love. (John 13:35)
6. Because they promote unity and fellowship. (1 John 1:3,6-7)

## WHO SHOULD BE A COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER?

Community Group Leaders do not come in just one shape or size. That being said, there are certain commitments someone must have if they desire to be an effective community group leader at New Covenant. Previous experience is not required; in fact, sometimes prior experience is a hindrance because our expectations of community group leaders are not the same as other churches!

## COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER MUST...

- Love God with increasing passion
- Be teachable at heart
- Love people deeply
- Be a growing disciple
- Willing send out their best members to become future community group leaders

# WHAT DOES A COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER DO?

*SO, YOU'RE INTERESTED IN BEING A COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER. GREAT! BUT, WHAT DOES NEW COVENANT EXPECT OF COMMUNITY GROUP LEADERS? WE'RE GLAD YOU ASKED. AT NEW COVENANT, COMMUNITY GROUP LEADERS...*

## **CHAMPION THE MISSION OF NEW COVENANT TO GLORIFY GOD BY MAKING DISCIPLES**

- Quality community group leaders are about the greater Body of believers within New Covenant. We've got prayer night coming up?
- You're urging your people to go. We're emphasizing community group sign ups? You're making extra effort to help someone get plugged into a community group

## **MINISTER TO A GROUP OF PEOPLE TO PROMOTE A PASSIONATE PURSUIT OF JESUS CHRIST**

- It's not just about community group nights for you! Interact on Sundays when possible, reach out during the week to your people
- Be the first line of defense for counsel and ministry when group members need it

## **COMMIT TO LEAD**

- Prepare ahead of time, facilitate genuine conversation, promote deep relationships with one another

## **ENCOURAGE GROUP MEMBERS TOWARD MEMBERSHIP IN NEW COVENANT**

- Consistently encourage people (if they haven't) to attend "The Party," and Discover NC Class to be committed and connected with the church family. These can create next steps for people in their walk with Christ.

## **KEEP AN EYE ON THE FUTURE OF THE GROUP**

- Prayerfully plan to multiply, make it a clear goal of the group, and help people catch the vision of why this is so important
- Pray for your future Leader in Training even before you know their names! Your group will grow, God will raise them up, and you will send them out.

## **MODEL SERVANT-LEADERSHIP FOR THE BODY**

- Regularly encourage group members to be involved in serving in some tangible way at New Covenant: Sunday morning responsibilities, serving in children's ministry, using musical talent to God's glory on the worship team, and more

## **CREATE AND MAINTAIN A CULTURE OF INVITATION**

- Your group is always open, and you make sure your members know there's always room for someone else. You're regularly asking people if they're in a group, and if not then you're speaking highly about the ministry and encouraging people to join.

# WHAT MAKES OUR COMMUNITY GROUPS DIFFERENT?

*NEW COVENANT COMMUNITY GROUPS ARE ...*

## **A BIBLE STUDY BUT MORE**

Want to study the Bible and apply it to your life? We do that. Community groups seek to absorb more and more of the Bible so that we grow more and more into the image of Jesus Christ together.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY GROUPS BUT MORE**

Know you need to share openly with people you can trust about your sin, faulty beliefs, and ways you are struggling? Community groups spend time in groups of men and women confessing to one another, encouraging and challenging each other, and exhorting each other to pursue Christ wholeheartedly.

## **FELLOWSHIP BUT MORE**

Need to feel a sense of community that goes beyond football games or binge-watching Netflix shows together? Community groups give you an opportunity to invest in other people for their greatest good. And you will be invested in by people who treasure Jesus and desire for you to do so more and more.

## **PRAYER GROUPS BUT MORE**

Tired of ho-hum prayer times with little pursuit of God? We say down with weak, pithy times of prayer, and we say up with heart-invested, mind-stir-ring, total surrender prayer that both prays for needs as well as seeks God's glory and his will in everything.

# WHAT SHOULD A NEW COVENANT COMMUNITY GROUP NIGHT LOOK LIKE?

## OPENING TIME (10-15 MINUTES)

Goal: Connect with one another and with the Lord

- Greet one another as people come in
- Introduce yourselves in a unique way - Share something you love to do, or a favorite memory or place you've visited, or a passion that many people don't know about you.
- Consider opening in a song or 2 of worship
- Open in prayer

## DISCUSSION TIME (40-50 MINUTES)

Goal: Discover what the text means and how it applies to my life. How is my life in regard to these truths?

- Read the text together and have a time of open sharing about how people understand it
- Use Sermon Questions to guide the group through the main point(s) of the text and how it applies to our lives following Jesus
- *Key: Community Group Leaders are NOT monologue teachers during this time! The purpose is to facilitate discussion, give people the opportunity to share, and learn together. A Community Group Leader may teach at times, but this is not a platform for long teaching sessions.*

## MUTUAL MINISTRY (30-40 MINUTES)

Goal: To apply God's Truth to specific areas of my life to minister to one another

- This is the key element of an effective Community group
- Men with men, women with women to promote transparency
- Encourage those who are struggling or weak in their faith
- Ask good questions that promote honest sharing and accountability
- Pray together and follow up outside of group time as well as in following Community group meetings

## FELLOWSHIP TIME (10-15 MINUTES)

Goal: Building meaningful relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ

- Informal time to interact personally in Community groups
- Share food or drink together to encourage people to linger if they can

# DISCUSS GOD'S WORD

## *THE EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER*

A Community Group is not a class. Nor is a Community Group Leader a teacher in the traditional sense. Rather, a Community Group Leader is one who facilitates a discussion in a meaningful direction through the use of questions

### **GOD'S WORD IS AUTHORITATIVE**

**I MUST SUBMIT TO/OBEY WHAT IT SAYS**

### **GOD'S WORD IS EFFECTIVE**

**THROUGH ITS APPLICATION TO MY LIFE GOD CHANGES ME**

### **GOD'S WORD IS SUFFICIENT**

**GOD'S WORD IS ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH THE PURPOSE IN MY LIFE FOR WHICH IT WAS GIVEN**

### **GOOD QUESTIONS GENERATE DISCUSSION AND LEAD TO LIFE APPLICATION**

- Pre-select questions to guide the discussion in a purposeful direction.
- Start with an engaging question to introduce the study to generate interest in the topic.
- Balance the types of questions you ask - understanding questions, open-ended questions, and application questions.
- Direct questions toward specific individuals to draw people into the discussion.
- Healthy discussion involves interaction with all members of the group not just with the leader.
- Seek to incorporate application throughout your discussion - don't just wait until the end.
- Good questions generate discussion and lead to life application



# 10 WAYS TO TANK COMMUNITY GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Lecture group instead of facilitate a discussion with your group.
2. Follow notes like a script - insist on asking every question on your list.
3. Don't prepare for Community Group hoping "What were your thoughts on chapter 6?" will suffice.
4. Ask only 'yes' or 'no' questions.
5. The-run-on-sentence-question-that-is- really-more-of-a-statement-than-a-question- therefore-no-one-knows-how- to-respond-to- your-rambling-unfocused-pseudo-question.
6. Quickly answer your own questions.
7. Expect everyone to answer every question.
8. Focus only on the meaning of a passage or statements by an author and never get to personal application throughout the discussion.
9. Allow someone to dominate the discussion or hi-jack the direction.
10. Lose track of time and go on and on and on.

For more resources check out our resource page on your groups page.

# GENUINE CARE

**GENUINE CARE INVOLVES SHARING YOUR OWN SELVES WITH ONE ANOTHER - BOTH BY OPENING UP AND ENTERING INTO EACH OTHER'S LIVES.**

## OPENING UP TO EACH OTHER

1. Ask people to share their testimony of coming to faith in Christ
2. Be honest about the joys of your life and be transparent about struggles you have
3. Ask for prayer from others
4. As you discuss God's Word, commit to making it personal to how it challenges, encourages, and instructs you personally

## ENTERING INTO EACH OTHER'S LIVES

1. Ask questions and do all you can to hear from a person's heart
2. Be mindful of opportunities to serve group members outside of group time
3. Speak the truth in love
4. Follow up during the week to remind members you are praying for them

**A HEALTHY COMMUNITY GROUP ENCOURAGES MUTUAL MINISTRY WITH ITS MEMBERS THROUGH GIVING MINISTRY AND RECEIVING MINISTRY**

- TO COMFORT AND BE COMFORTED (2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4)
- TO COUNSEL AND BE COUNSELED (ROMANS 15:14)
- TO ENCOURAGE AND BE ENCOURAGED (1 THESS. 5:11)
- TO HELP AND BE HELPED (GAL. 5:13; PROVERBS 3:27-28)
- TO CORRECT AND BE CORRECTED (COLOSSIANS 3:16)

***"SO THEN, AS WE HAVE OPPORTUNITY, LET US DO GOOD TO EVERYONE, AND ESPECIALLY TO THOSE WHO ARE OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH."***

***- GALATIANS 6:10***

# AUTHENTIC ACCOUNTABILITY

***“WHOEVER ISOLATES HIMSELF SEEKS HIS OWN DESIRE; HE BREAKS OUT AGAINST ALL SOUND JUDGMENT.” - PROVERBS 18:1***

***“BUT EXHORT ONE ANOTHER EVERY DAY, AS LONG AS IT IS CALLED “TODAY,” THAT NONE OF YOU MAY BE HARDENED BY THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN.” - HEBREWS 3:13***

***“LET US HOLD FAST THE CONFESSION OF OUR HOPE WITHOUT WAVERING, FOR HE WHO PROMISED IS FAITHFUL. AND LET US CONSIDER HOW TO STIR UP ONE ANOTHER TO LOVE AND GOOD WORKS,” - HEBREWS 10:23-24***

***“RATHER, SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE, WE ARE TO GROW UP IN EVERY WAY INTO HIM WHO IS THE HEAD, INTO CHRIST.” - EPHESIANS 4:15***

## ***BIBLICAL ACCOUNTABILITY IS ...***

honestly engaging with those who love me, to compel me in keeping my commitment to Christ-likeness.

# LEVELS OF COMMUNICATION

## SURFACE

talk about the weather, sports,  
shopping, tv shows

## PERSONAL

Shares facts about yourself

## TRANSPARENT

share personal feelings, fears,  
failures

**To get to a level of transparency, there must be:**

- 1. Confidentiality—a sense of equal level of trust*
- 2. Mutuality—a sense of equal level of sharing*

***COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER: YOUR GROUP WILL ONLY GO TO THE DEPTHS YOU TAKE IT! YOU MUST LEAD IN TRANSPARENCY AND HONEST SHARING.***

For more help on communication go to your group resource

# AUTHENTIC ACCOUNTABILITY

## MAKE IT A PRIORITY

*Make it a priority and give it the time it deserves.*

- Make sure you manage your study/discussion time to reserve 30-40 minutes for breakout time. When you break out, guide that time to include meaningful sharing, not just surface conversations.

## CAST THE VISION

*Cast the vision for transparency and confidentiality often.*

- Begin your accountability time with sharing your heart about lowering masks and being authentic, committing to accept and not judge one another, and reminding what is shared in the group stays in the group. To get to a deeper level of transparency there must be confidentiality (a sense of equal level of trust) and mutuality (a sense of equal level of sharing). The best way to get deeper transparency in your group is to model it yourself!

## GET SPECIFIC

*Get to specific evaluation (how are you doing with...) and action steps (what will you do this week with...).*

- Accountability is more than someone identifying some Spiritual Growth Points. Encourage people to move beyond vague generalities to where they're at with specific issues and commitments. Ask: "How can I pray for you specifically this week?" Most of the time people haven't thought through specific steps they need to take. And if they haven't thought it through, they will never take those steps. This is your role as a spiritual leader in your Community Group. If you're not pressing them (in love), who is?

## FOLLOW UP

*Faithfully follow up in prayer, through a phone call, and at the next group meeting.*

- Follow up by adding the request to your daily prayer list. Follow up with a phone call to cheer them on as you run alongside of them. Follow up by reviewing specific commitments and prayer requests from the previous week at the next Community Group time. After all, isn't this when accountability really begins? It's not just confessing sin or making a commitment, but accountability is ... well ... keeping someone accountable to what he said he would do.

## FOCUS ON GOSPEL REALITIES

*Whether someone is struggling with a physical trial, confessing sin in their heart or actions, or telling the group about their difficult marriage, point them back to the gospel.*

- Do not let the conversation stop with "Wow, that's tough" or "I'm sorry to hear that". Ask the group to pitch in and share the truths of the gospel with the person! We all need reminders of God's grace and power, whether that be strength to persevere, assurance of forgiveness, the need for repentance, or patience in a hard relationship. Make sure your group relentlessly focuses on the good news of Jesus in the midst of anything being talked about.

# WHAT IS MEANINGFUL PRAYER?

MEANINGFUL PRAYER IS PRAYER THAT UNIFIES A GROUP WITH:

- passion for God
- a dependence on God to change them into the image of Christ
- love for one another
- confidence in God's great power to answer

## PASSION FOR GOD

***"BECAUSE YOUR STEADFAST LOVE IS BETTER THAN LIFE, MY LIPS WILL PRAISE YOU"***

***PSALM 63:3***

Successful Community group prayer is instrumental in changing our hearts from lethargic, weak, and inconsistent towards whole-life devotion to God, joy in God, and praise for God.

## DEPENDENCE ON GOD

***"WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO, BUT OUR EYES ARE ON YOU"***

***2 CHRONICLES 20:12***

Community group prayer time is a time to stop talking and come before God in absolute dependence on him. We ask for more of his power, strength, love, grace, and truth to permeate us and in our time praying we declare our need for him to move.

## LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER

***"AND IT IS MY PRAYER THAT YOUR LOVE MAY ABOUND MORE AND MORE,  
WITH KNOWLEDGE AND DISCERNMENT..."***

***PHILIPPIANS 1:9***

Meaningful prayer fosters love amongst the group. We pray for circumstances in one another's life, but more than circumstances we also pray for change within us as we grow into the image of Jesus.

## CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S GREAT POWER TO ANSWER

***"CALL TO ME AND I WILL ANSWER YOU, AND WILL TELL YOU GREW AND HIDDEN THINGS  
THAT YOU HAVE NOT KNOWN."***

***JEREMIAH 33:3***

A Community group that prays in a meaningful way is anticipating God's answer, believing unreservedly that God not only hears but will answer us when we call to him.

# HOW DO I GROW MY COMMUNITY GROUP?

YOU'RE A NC COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER. GREAT! BUT SHOULD YOUR GROUP GROW? YES, YOUR GROUP SHOULD GROW. BUT WHY DOES NC WANT YOUR GROUP TO GROW, AND HOW DO YOU DO IT?

## WHY YOUR GROUP WILL GROW:

1. New Covenant Church exists to glorify God by making disciples. As a Community group leader, you are both a disciple maker and a disciple sender.
2. New Covenant Church expects to see lost people saved, saved people mature, and mature people multiply.
3. Every NC Community Group has DNA, and inside the DNA of every Community group is a commitment to multiply into new Community groups.
4. Your Community group will be awesome! People will be excited to grow there, and as they grow in depth, it will grow in number. As your awesome Community group grows, it multiplies.

## HOW YOUR COMMUNITY GROUP WILL GROW:

1. You need to stress a "Culture of Invitation" within your Community group. Regularly communicate to your group that it does not exist as a static entity, never to change. It exists to make disciples out of them and others.
2. On Sundays, you need to play the role of Community group "champion". When you meet someone new and sense that they are committing to NC, direct the conversation toward Community groups in general and invite them to your Community group specifically.
3. People sign up for Community groups on Sundays or online at [ncgreenwood.org](http://ncgreenwood.org). If they indicate your day, and your area, they may be placed in your group.
4. Regularly speak of the goal of multiplication to your group. As the group makes multiplication a priority, people will be inclined to invite others to participate, grow, and be sent out.

# THE SCIENCE AND ART OF LEADING LARGE GROUP DISCUSSIONS

THE "SCIENCE" IS THE IMPORTANT METHODOLOGICAL, PLANNED, FOLLOW-THE-PROGRAM PART OF LEADING WELL.  
THE "ART" IS THE IMPORTANT INTUITIVE, SENSITIVE, SPUR-OF-THE-MOMENT ASPECT OF LEADING WELL.

The Science of leading large group discussions includes...

Ask the questions!

Studying ahead of time and have something to say.

Moving along at a reasonable pace.

Bring the group back to the main question(s) after about 2 minutes of trailing off.

Striving to achieve an even distribution of sharing as much as possible.

The Art of leading large group discussions includes...

Knowing when to stop on a question longer than you originally intended.

Correct erroneous statements but avoid saying "I was actually looking for..." as if your precise terminology is the only good way to describe or answer something.

Discern the difference between good and bad silence.

Knowing when you should not answer a question right away, even when you know the answer.

Develop the prayer time of the group so that all maturity levels feel free to participate.

Learn how to rephrase a question so your particular group engages with it the best

Learn how to facilitate discussion from the Community group questions without feeling bound to ask EVERY question

Bringing Science and Art together...

If you're an excellent artist... don't just rely on your interpersonal skills or your "wing it in the moment" abilities. Develop the science, study ahead of time, keep to a schedule.

If you're a serious scientist... don't be rigid in your approach or resistant to the night going differently than you expect.

Increase your art skills by going with the flow when necessary. EVERY Community group leader must rely on the Holy Spirit and submit everything in their Community group to the Lord.

***The point is not to declare a winner between science and art, but to strive to grow in both areas.***



# COMMON CHALLENGES FACED IN LEADING LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION TIMES:

## GOING DOWN RABBIT TRAILS

*What to do?*

Kindly interrupt them as early as possible. If you have good rapport with the individual, make it light hearted and tell them we're staying on track (with the question, or text). If you don't know them well, interrupt them with a question.

uThanks for speaking into that. Can I ask, how have you overcome that, or what did you learn in that experience?"

## DEALING WITH SILENCE

*What to do?*

Every so often, make clear that silence is OK as long as people are engaged and thinking. Also occasionally, make a joke of it so everyone knows silence is OK... uwell, it appears no one struggles with this since no one is saying anything, let's move on... " Do not constantly fill in answers after 3 seconds of silence, as that sends the signal that you are insecure with people not being talkative.

## PEOPLE WHO OVER CONTRIBUTE...AKA DOMINATE THE CONVERSATION

*What to do?*

Call out specific individuals for insight or answers before the over-talker has a chance to take over. Interrupt the over-talker with a thankful tone -u ... Awesome, thanks for sharing that. Person X, what do you think?" As needed (and it may very well be needed!), connect with the person after or outside of group time, and share your concern with them. Do it in kindness, not anger!

## DEALING WITH SOMEONE WHO IS "OFF" IN WHAT THEY ARE SAYING

*What to do?*

Remain gracious and thankful that they are sharing. Restate what they said, particularly the part that is in error (unbiblical, accidentally heretical, or just incomplete). Keep focused on the main points, not the finer details. Do not become the theology vocabulary and grammar police!

# COMMON CHALLENGES IN LEADING LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION TIMES:

KNOWING WHEN TO DRAW SOMEONE OUT TO GET THEM TO SPEAK  
VS. LETTING A QUIET PERSON BE QUIET

*What to do?*

Get to know your people! Do not isolate a new person who isn't quick to share with the group and force him or her to contribute. Know someone well enough to know if they feel loved and included by being called by named, or if they feel threatened and intimidated by a group all listening to them. Bottom line: be a good shepherd that knows your flock.

NOT HAVING EVERYONE IN THE ROOM LOOK ONLY AT THE LEADER AS THEY SPEAK.

*What to do?*

Deflect attention from yourself whenever possible. If someone asks a good impromptu question and clearly expects you to answer... don't answer right away! "Good question, does anyone have a thought on that?" or "Does anyone know where to go in Scripture to address that issue?" When all else fails, remind the group that it's not a classroom with you as the teacher, but a group we're all participating in.

DEALING WITH PEOPLE WHO ONLY EXPRESS OPINIONS INSTEAD OF GIVING TRUTH FROM  
SCRIPTURE

*What to do?*

Ask them where that is found in the Bible. If they don't know, lovingly ask them to research it and find out. Take the moment to focus on Scripture as our highest authority for life, knowledge of God, and that our opinions are nowhere near as important as God's truth.

SUCCESSFULLY GETTING TO THE HEART OF A MATTER VS. STAYING ON THE SURFACE

*What to do?*

Ask questions like "What makes this command so hard to obey?" or "What's an example of this in real life?" or "Does anyone struggle to really believe this promise? Why?" Do not settle for mere facts and right answers.

# THE ACCOUNTABILITY TIME

## ACCOUNTABILITY ISN'T

- An extension of the Bible study period of the Community group
- The same thing as “sharing prayer requests”
- Primarily for discussing the needs of friends or family outside the group
- Hanging out and catching up

## ACCOUNTABILITY IS

- A time to get personal with one another
- An opportunity to share from your heart about your life
- The time to take the Scriptures and discussion further
- A time to pray...for one another
- The best chance to lovingly confront someone for the sake of the gospel belief and obedience
- The place for confidentiality (equal trust) and mutuality (equal sharing) to be deepened

## SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING YOUR ACCOUNTABILITY TIME

-Take a few minutes to share the vision and purpose for accountability time

-Do your best to model exactly what you're aiming for with real vulnerability

-Pray consistently for this time in your group and for group members to engage with this time for their own growth

-Get specific with the group. " How are you doing with..." How can I pray for you specifically this week?"  
"In light of what you just said, how can we pray?"

-Stay Gospel focused

- Come back to how the gospel impacts the situation, what the Spirit of God in them can empower them to do, how the gospel motivates obedience.

# IDEAS FOR MAXIMIZING ACCOUNTABILITY TIME:

-DO EVERYTHING YOU CAN TO MAKE THE TIME A SPIDER WEB, NOT A WAGON WHEEL

Wagon wheel groups are connected only to you - everyone talks to you and waits for you to answer. Spider webs are interconnected, mutually dependent groups where everyone contributes

- CONSIDER ELIMINATING "PRAYER REQUESTS" DURING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR 3 WEEKS STRAIGHT.

Challenge the group to share from the heart regarding what sins they are wrestling with, stay gospel-centered, then just get to prayer together based on what was said.

-ALWAYS PRESS FOR HOW THE GOSPEL SHOULD IMPACT US OR INFORM OUR THINKING/BEHAVIOR.

Questions like "What does the gospel have to say about this situation?" "In light of who you are in Christ (adopted, forgiven, redeemed, loved, new creation, Spirit-empowered, etc.), how do you need to change your believing/behavior?" "What is the •sin beneath the sin' that is really going on in your heart? Let's get to the root and ask God to transform you there"

-IF YOU FEEL THE GROUP'S ACCOUNTABILITY TIME IS OFF TRACK AND INEFFECTIVE, CHANCES ARE THE MEMBERS OF YOUR GROUP DO ALSO. OWN THE RESPONSIBILITY AS THE LEADER, CAST A VISION FOR HOW DEEP AND RICH IT CAN BE, AND ASK FOR THEIR HELP IN MAKING IT BETTER.

-HERE ARE 3 COMMON PERSONALITY TYPES TO BE AWARE OF THAT COULD NEGATIVELY IMPACT THE GROUP:

1. -The "gabber" type: dominates the time, says a lot without saying anything, staying on the surface instead of getting to a point.
2. -The "live in the past" type: Almost everything they say is something God taught them 5-10 years ago, with little to no current spiritual vitality or sharing from their heart.
3. -The "relater" type: immediately wants to do prayer requests for everyone's friends and family, instead of focusing on growing as a disciple themselves.

-HERE ARE 3 WAYS TO SHEPHERD THESE 3 COMMON PERSONALITIES:

1. Regularly clarify your role of helping hear from everyone, and be willing to enforce time restrictions on the gabber.
2. Take the "live in the past type" to the present day, how they're doing now, what they're reading and learning now. Do not discredit the past, but emphasize current and future growth.
3. Remind the relater (possibly 1 on 1 away from group) of what the mutual accountability time is for. Emphasize how much their growth in Christ matters to you, which is why you're focusing on them and the group, not outside prayer requests as often.

- PAY ATTENTION TO THE PERSON WHO REALLY DIVES IN DURING THIS TIME. ENCOURAGE THEM, PRAY ABOUT MAKING THEM YOUR LEADER IN TRAINING, AND ASK THAT THEY HELP YOU MAKE THE MOST OUT OF THE TIME.

- ASK ONE PERSON EACH WEEK TO SHARE THEIR STORY FOR 10-12 MINUTES. ASK THEM AHEAD OF TIME, AND REQUEST THAT THEY PARTICULARLY FOCUS ON THEIR LIFE PRIOR TO CHRIST, CONVERSION STORY, AND GROWTH IN CHRIST.

# BEST PRACTICES FOR WELCOMING NEW PEOPLE

1. Think through your "theology of hospitality". Why do you need to welcome people to your group? What is your motivation for doing so?(Romans 15:5-7)
2. If you know a new person is coming ahead of time, attempt to contact them through phone or email to let them know you're glad they're coming.
3. If someone tells you on a Sunday that they'll be visiting your group, but don't know anyone in your group, do your best to introduce them to at least 2 other people in your group immediately.
4. Always give a brief "what you can expect tonight" introduction if there is even 1 new person in your group.
5. When welcoming a new person, state one of your favorite aspects of the Community group establish a clear "God is at work here" mentality in the group and for the new person.
6. Regularly cast vision to your group about being an open group. "We've always got room for a new person... and when we don't we'll celebrate and multiply."
7. Do your best not to assume anything of the new person... that they want to talk, that they are a Christian, that they know they're Bible, etc.
8. Commit to following up with the new person before the next Community group meeting. Get a phone or email and ask how they thought it went. Feedback is crucial to growth!
9. Try to consider what might stand out as odd or awkward to a new person. This is especially important the longer you've been a leader. You're comfortable... they may not be.
10. On a night with no new people, talk about inviting and welcoming new people. The leader has to cast the vision, be excited about the vision, and model it.
11. Do not ask the new person to divulge details about themselves on their first night unless you either know them well already or they clearly want to divulge personal details.
12. Don't do all of this by yourself! Others in your group may have a desire and gifting in hospitality, welcoming, doing follow-ups, etc. etc. Spread the responsibility for this out to others... and who knows, you may find your next Leader In Training this way.

# HOW TO ACCOMPLISH MEANINGFUL PRAYER

*Community Group Leader, you need to understand this: The way you think about group prayer and speak about group prayer will greatly impact the quality of your Community group's prayer time. If you're a leader struggling with getting your group to pray in a meaningful way, first examine how you have been thinking about the time, how you introduce the time to your group, and what your intentions are. If you feel something is missing or lacking from the time, you better bet your group feels something is missing too.*

Meaningful prayer requires undoing certain dispositions or tendencies, including:

- *Focusing on the physical needs of others (sickness of a family member, a new job for a friend)*
- *Vague language that does not really reveal someone's heart*
- *Run on prayer requests that are ultimately stories without anything specific to pray about*
  
- *Avoiding phrases like "Let's pray real quick", "Before we move onto-- (accountability, discussion), will someone pray?" and generic statements like "Does anyone have anything to bring up to pray about?"*

## PREPARE FOR GROUP PRAYER AHEAD OF TIME

When preparing for Community group, do not stop at thinking through the questions you're going to ask, things you want to say, and what you want to do in accountability time. Exert serious mental effort thinking through group prayer time! Whether you utilize something from the sermon and turn it into a topic of prayer, or decide to just do prayers of praise and thanksgiving, or ask someone to read a Psalm or a prayer from Paul (Ephesians 1, 3, Philippians 1, etc.) then jump into prayer. Your intentionality as the leader with group prayer time will put every Community group member on alert that this isn't a rote exercise; it is a highlight for the group to pray together in the name of Jesus and a part of the group's discipleship.

## 3 WAYS TO DISCIPLE YOUR GROUP TOWARD MEANINGFUL PRAYER:

1. **Make prayer a priority in group time, but not an obligation**  
If prayer is a priority, it's more than what you do to open and close the night. Figure out where meaningful prayer is most likely to happen in your group (beginning, middle, end), and emphasize it.
2. **Make prayer fresh, not routine**  
Is prayer time predictable in your group, meaning it always happens at a certain point in the night? Change it up! Does your group fall into a lull for prayer because it's always the same? Do something different!
3. **Make prayer requests meaningful, not superficial.**

# HOW TO ACCOMPLISH MEANINGFUL PRAYER

## "GROUND RULES" FOR GROUP PRAYER

Create a short, memorable list of "rules" regarding Community group prayer time. Tell them to the group and return to them from time to time. Don't be the "prayer time police", but show how serious you take it.

Consider the following:

- Prayer requests need to be personal as much as possible, related to you and not always others
- Keep the sharing brief. What are you praying about? The back story is usually not necessary.
- Move from horizontal (talking about the request) to vertical (seeking God together) as soon as possible

## REAL WORLD EXAMPLES

The following are practical suggestions to bring change to your group prayer and go deeper together:

- "As we transition to praying together, let's keep it really personal. How can we pray for one another right now?"
- "In light of everything we've been discussing, let's go straight to God and ask him to work on our hearts".
- "Tonight, let's pray about the theme of X" (create it, or base it off your curriculum discussion)
- Instead of always taking requests, just go straight to God in prayer together from time to time.
- Popcorn prayers: Explain that the goal is short prayers, 1-2 sentences, thanking and praising God for something or bringing a need to him briefly. Encourage people to pray multiple times about different things.
- Review the previous week's prayer requests and make continued prayer the theme of the night. Keep praying for the same people or items for a few weeks in a row.
- Focus your prayer time on a couple, or an individual. This is particularly powerful before a major life decision, or change like a baby being born, getting married, or taking a big step of faith. Ask everyone to pray for that person, sharing your thanks to God for them and asking for His help in their life. Consider laying hands on the person as you pray for them.
- Go straight to prayer, with each person praying for the person to their left, for whatever comes to mind.
- Split the group in half and pray together in Communityer groups
- Encourage members to pray in a variety of postures: standing, kneeling, holding hands, palms up, etc.
- Divide into Communityer groups (groups of 2, 3, 4), spread out around the house you are in, and set a specific amount of time (i.e. 20 minutes) for prayer as a Communityer group. You may also consider doing themed prayer, with each group taking a certain theme.

## KEEP TRACK OF YOUR PRAYERS

Figure out a way to chronicle the prayer requests, (large group and accountability time). Keep a list on your phone, or in a journal, or have a diligent note taker do it for the group. This helps you...

- Send the list of requests to the group later that week (or have the note taker send it)
- Follow up on the prayer requests the following week
- Provide opportunity to rejoice over answered prayer

# COMMUNITY CARE

THE PLACE OF CARE IN COMMUNITY GROUPS IS EARLY DETECTION AND PROVIDING HOPE AND DIRECTION.

## EARLY DETECTION

***"FOR FREEDOM CHRIST HAS SET US FREE; STAND FIRM THEREFORE, AND DO NOT SUBMIT AGAIN TO A YOKE OF SLAVERY.  
-GALATIANS 5:1***

***FOR YOU WERE CALLED TO FREEDOM, BROTHERS. ONLY DO NOT USE YOUR FREEDOM AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE FLESH, BUT THROUGH LOVE SERVE ONE ANOTHER  
-GALATIANS 5:13 "***

***"MY BROTHERS, IF ANYONE AMONG YOU WANDERS FROM THE TRUTH AND SOMEONE BRINGS HIM BACK, LET HIM KNOW THAT WHOEVER BRINGS BACK A SINNER FROM HIS WANDERING WILL SAVE HIS SOUL FROM DEATH AND WILL COVER A MULTITUDE OF SINS."  
-JAMES 5:19-20***

***"BROTHERS, IF ANYONE IS CAUGHT IN ANY TRANSGRESSION, YOU WHO ARE SPIRITUAL SHOULD RESTORE HIM IN A SPIRIT OF GENTLENESS. KEEP WATCH ON YOURSELF, LEST YOU TOO BE TEMPTED. BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS, AND SO FULFILL THE LAW OF CHRIST"  
-GALATIANS 6:1-2***

COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER: YOU HAVE AN AMAZING OPPORTUNITY TO DETECT SERIOUS SIN ISSUES THAT, IF LEFT UNCHECKED AND UNCHALLENGED, WILL LIKELY LEAD TO MASSIVE CONSEQUENCES IN THE LIFE OF A COMMUNITY GROUP MEMBER. ON THE NEXT PAGE ARE A FEW SIMPLE YET CRUCIAL PRACTICES THAT YOU NEED TO DEVELOP AND MASTER TO BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER YOU CAN BE.



# COMMUNITY CARE

THE PLACE OF CARE IN COMMUNITY GROUPS IS EARLY DETECTION AND PROVIDING HOPE AND DIRECTION.

WITH YOU GROUP...

## WATCH

- What is their tone, countenance, and/or body language telling you?
- When what they say ("No, I'm not angry") does not match how they look (they look angry!), a good leader compassionately follows up

## ASK

- Ask questions that expose motives and desires, not just behavior.
- Examples of good questions to memorize and learn to use:
- I'm sensing that you are discontent right now. Am I right about that? What are you discontent about?
- What is that one thing that, if you had it (or more of it), you believe you would be happier?
- What do you want most in Life?
- What would upset you the most if you lost it?
- (After sin is confessed) What were you believing in your heart that led to that sinful action/word/thought?

## LISTEN

- Before presuming anything, listen intently!
- Do not move onto the solution too quickly
- When listening, seek to understand their problems and their view of God in the trial

## KNOW

- Get to know what they need... both their felt needs and their true needs
- Know the person well enough to speak to them in a manner that will get through to them.
- Seek to understand the severity of the issue being raised. Is it a massive issue they are minimizing, or a smaller issue they are exaggerating?

# COMMUNITY CARE

## PROVIDING HOPE AND DIRECTION

You're a Community group leader, not a professional counselor or pastor. Still, YOU can make a profound difference in the lives of your Community group members to get them unstuck and moving again.

## 5 TOOLS AT A LEADER'S DISPOSAL TO PROVIDE HOPE AND DIRECTION

### Authority of God's Word

*2 Timothy 3:16 "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness"*

- Always rely on God to work through the Word to change a person, opening their eyes to their sin and their great Savior
- Anytime the Word speaks clearly to a situation or sin, read from it together. Confirm that the person believes it is GOD'S Word for their good.

### Power in the Spirit of God

*2 Peter 1:3-4 "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakes of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire."*

- Encourage one another that God has given us everything needed to live a life of consistent obedience, deepening love, and godliness despite all of life's temptations.
- This means it isn't you and your daily text messages that will help them avoid sin... in Christ they have the power and you need to drill that into them!

### Compassion in the Community of God

*1 John 3:23 "And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he commanded us"*

- Do your members know you're there for them? Or do you detach and act as a therapist to the group? Show genuine love as fellow disciples by loving one another and emphasizing your own need of God's grace.

### Prayer

Philippians 4:5b-7 "The Lord is at hand. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let our requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Do everything you can to create and maintain a culture of prayer in your group! Do not let a night go by without earnestly praying together, and don't let an accountability time go by without coming to God for his help, strength, peace, and power to change you and your group.

### Gospel focus

Romans 1:15 "So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome"

No matter the sin confessed, the struggle discussed, or the unbelief shared, the gospel is the answer! Remain focused on the perfect, finished work of Jesus on their behalf. Make a bee line straight to Jesus' righteousness, his shed blood, his death, and his resurrection. The hope and power are in God's gospel, not your clever words as a Community group leader. Hammer away at the nail of the gospel, always!

