



CENTRAL COMMUNITY GROUPS | BUILDING MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS (1)

January 8, 2023

PURPOSE To discover and experience Jesus Christ in our midst
To cultivate mutually encouraging relationships
To participate in God's mission to the world

WORSHIP OPENING PRAYER

5 MIN

God, we are confident you are coming, bringing a world where all will be made right. Calm our anxiety, strengthen our patience, and keep our hope aflame, as we work towards, and wait for, your new day. Amen.

RESPONSIVE PRAYER—Isaiah 35

Strengthen the weak hands,

And make firm the feeble knees.

Say to those who have an anxious heart,

“Be strong; fear not!

Behold, your God

Will come with vengeance,

With the recompense of God.

He will come and save you.”

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,

And the ears of the deaf unstopped;

Then shall the lame man leap like a deer,

And the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

DISCUSSION Summary and Connection

45 MIN

Every Christian is called to be a disciple who makes disciples. Jesus didn't leave any room for confusion. “Go therefore and make disciples” (Matthew 28:19). That includes you. All believers are called to be involved in this process. We participate in and contribute to the discipleship of others as we use our gifts to minister to one another. This does not necessarily mean that all believers will formally teach and mentor others, since all do not possess the requisite gifts for such a ministry. Moreover, much discipleship occurs in group contexts as well as through one-to-one relationships. Nevertheless, all of us are called to build spiritually meaningful relationships with others to spur one another on to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24).

One major goal for any Community Group is for members to get to know one another. Pick two to three questions from each section have members take turns answering the questions so people can find out more about each individual person within the group. If your Community Group is large, you can break out into smaller groups to answer these questions.

Discussion Questions

- **Living and Working**
 - » Where are you living and working?
 - » Do you have a roommate? How well do you get along?
 - » Are you married? Do you have any children?
 - » How long have you lived in the city?
 - » What are some of your vocational goals?
 - » What do you like to do in your free time?
- **Past Community Group Experience**
 - » Have you been involved in a Community Group previously?
 - » What did you most like about it? What would you have changed?
 - » How did you become interested in this group?
- **Life Issues**
 - » What do you expect will be your biggest challenge this year?
 - » What is causing you the most anxiety or stress in your life?
 - » What are some of the more difficult relationships in your life?
 - » What are some of your hopes/dreams?
- **Personal Maturity**
 - » What is the toughest thing you have ever experienced? How did you handle it?
 - » How do you react when things do not go your way?
 - » What do you hope to accomplish in the next few years?
- **Spiritual Maturity**
 - » What do you believe about Jesus?
 - » How do you view the Bible?
 - » What role does reading the Bible or prayer play in your life?
 - » Have you been involved in a church before? Was that a positive or negative experience?
 - » What have been the most significant influences on your spiritual life?
 - » How would you articulate the gospel in your own words?
- **Self-Reflection**
 - » How well do you know the members of your group?
 - » Is the love of Jesus manifest in the way you interact with group members?

KINGDOM PRAYER 40 MIN

Throughout the Scriptures, God calls his people to pray; when they do—he answers those prayers. Witness the prayers of the early church for the spread of the gospel (Acts 1:1-13, 2:42 and 13:1-3) and the subsequent success of the gospel. One of our desires for our Community Groups is that they would be places where people pray. Prayer is without question something that we are not only called to do but have the privilege of doing. As Christians we have fellowship with God, which means that we are able to approach him. He listens to us when we speak to him. It is important to do this as individuals, but it is equally important to do this as a community. God has called us as a community and so we must approach him in prayer as a community. There are many different ways that we can pray and many things that we can pray for.

Let's kick off the new year with a powerful time of prayer. Share your prayer requests, thoughts, hopes and fears for the coming week—and year! If you'd like to try different forms of prayer, use the prayer toolbox below for suggestions.

PRAYER TOOLBOX

Ways to Pray

Split the Group into Smaller Groups of Three or Four

The advantage of this method is intimacy and more time to focus on individuals. The disadvantage is the whole group does not hear what is happening in a person's life.

Split the Group into Gender Groups

This creates an opportunity for men and women to go into the necessary areas that might be inappropriate in mixed gender company.

Take Requests and Pray as a Group

The advantage to this is everyone hears a little bit about what is going on in people's lives. The disadvantage is that prayer time is lost and people cannot go as deep.

Take No Requests: Start Praying, Allowing People to Pray their Requests

The advantage to this is no time is lost—the group just starts praying! The disadvantage is people might have no idea what the person is praying (or, in an effort to counterbalance this, the person praying describes in detail the circumstances of the request).

Pray a Written Prayer Out Loud and Together (a Psalm or Church Liturgy)

The advantage is this is often biblical—we are meant to pray the Bible. The disadvantage is that nothing personal is shared.

Use Paul's Prayers as a Model to Pray

In Paul's letters there are great models of prayer that Community Groups can use to pray either word for word or concept for concept.

Pray Through the Passage You Studied

There is much to commend this method though it requires the prayer leader to be skilled. Or you can pray responsively through a passage of scripture (i.e. leader/all/leader/all).

Leader-Led Prayer

This is when the prayer leader names an area of prayer and the group prays for a period of time (either silently or vocally) and then the prayer leader moves the group on to the next prayer item. This can be a very effective way for a Community Group to pray. The leader can encourage prayer for the church universal, pastors and ministry leaders, those who are without Christ, our government at various levels, those grieved, troubled and sick, etc.