



INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY GROUPS (1)

September 7, 2025

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Discussion Questions

- Where are you living and working?
- Do you have a roommate? Are you married? Do you have any children?
- How long have you lived in the city?
- What do you like to do in your free time?

WORSHIP PLEASE OPEN IN PRAYER

RESPONSIVE PRAYER – Psalm 73

Nevertheless, I am continually with you;

You hold my right hand.

You guide me with your counsel,

And afterward you will receive me to glory.

Whom have I in heaven but you?

And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

My flesh and my heart may fail,

But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first Community Group meeting! We have provided an excerpt from the CG manual explaining what Central community groups are and our heart for them.

STUDY Community Group Vision Statement

We come together as a community:

*To **discover** and **experience** Jesus Christ in our midst,*

*To **cultivate** mutually-encouraging relationships centered on Jesus, and*

*To **participate** in God's mission to the world.*

Purpose of a Community Group

At Central, the main way in which we practice community is through our Community Groups. While some churches may have small groups, we aim to be a church that is small groups. While we incorporate community in all areas of our church, throughout our various ministries and programming, Community Groups should be one of the primary ways in which we are connecting to one another in authentic relationships and participating in God's mission in the world.

The purpose of Central's Community Groups is to:

1. Provide an opportunity for people with different backgrounds and perspectives to build relationships,
2. Study the Scriptures together,

3. Pray with and for one another, and
4. Experience the transforming power of the gospel so that they might become more like Christ and participate in God's mission in the world.

For all these reasons, we hope that everyone will be involved in a Community Group!

- Each Community Group is a gathering of (ideally) 10 to 15 people who meet in individual apartments throughout the city during the week.
 - » All groups are led by trained lay-leaders from the congregation who are given continued oversight and support from Central's pastors and staff.
- Each group is committed to multiplying so that more people can experience meaningful community and become active members in the life and mission of the church.
 - » To that end, each group is dedicated to encouraging new leaders to identify and use their gifts to serve our church and the world.
- Each Community Group should incorporate the three essential dimensions of Christian community.
 - » The Community Group moves "**Up**" in worship of God, "**In**" to fellowship with other believers, and "**Out**" in mission to the world around us.

Our Community Groups serve as the nervous system of the church. In them, the gospel is used to motivate people toward a richer relationship with God. In them, the gospel is used as a balm to apply to the wounds we incur in life. In them, the gospel is used to call and motivate people into the service of God's kingdom. In response to God's grace, people are urged to develop lives of moral beauty, integrity and other-centeredness and to discover and use their gifts to carry out ministry both within the congregation and to the world.

Defining the "Win"

To determine whether a Community Group is functioning well, it is necessary to define the "win." What should we seek to foster and cultivate within our groups? How would we know whether a group is thriving? In response, this is what we should see happening in a healthy group.

1. We Should See People Discovering and Experiencing Christianity

Community Groups are an ideal setting for people to come to know Jesus and experience his presence. At the beginning of every meeting, leaders should reiterate that no background knowledge of the Bible or experience with Christianity is necessary. Our expectation is that people who are not yet Christians will be invited to participate in a group on a regular basis. Our Community Groups should provide a place where people may read the Bible or pray with others for the very first time in their lives.

Though many New Yorkers are familiar with the basic tenets of Christianity, fewer and fewer people seem to have grasped the true message of the gospel. Many have dismissed Christianity without adequately comprehending it. Central's Community Groups thus provide a context for people to consider the person of Jesus and explore his claims in a welcoming and open environment. Moreover, contemporary people (for better or worse) tend to be compelled by conversation rather than lecture, narrative rather than argument, experience rather than knowledge, process rather than decision, and relationship rather than anonymity. The format of a Community Group plays to these realities perhaps even better than Sunday worship services.

In sum, Community Groups **create** a setting where individuals who are seeking truth can be **invited** and **encouraged** to enter into a relationship with Jesus. In addition, they serve as a place where we can **remind** one another of our call to share the gospel and **pray** for those with whom we are sharing the good news that God has reconciled himself to us in Jesus Christ.

2. We Should See People Sharing Christian Fellowship

Meaningful fellowship is vital to the Christian life because following Jesus is far too difficult and counter-cultural to live out on our own. We need authentic relationships in order to work out the implications of the gospel in our lives. With that goal in mind, Community Groups create a context in which we can encourage, serve, instruct, correct, build up and love one another by sharing our lives, studying the Scriptures and serving together. The small size of Community Groups enables people to connect with one another and develop friendships based on intimacy, mutual support, practical love and genuine care.

3. We Should See People Growing in Faith and Serving the World

People grow as they learn about their Christian faith, as they pray with and for one another and as they serve the city together. As a result, Community Groups enable people to discover who they are and use their gifts to build up the church and serve the world. Community Groups are a place where a vision for ministry and service are developed. Through these groups, we can provide the watching world with a glimpse of what the world might be like when Jesus renews all things.

4. We Should Expect it to be Messy

Community Groups are, by their nature, messy because community is complicated. Each week as we gather in kitchens, living rooms, and common spaces, we are bringing our joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, gifts and quirks to one another. Oftentimes we will let our guard down and offer something honest about what we think, feel, and believe in front of others. While this is part of the point of Community Groups, it also means the community we create will be messy. This is not something you need to overcome or fix but rather a reality you need to bring to Jesus, so that we will all be transformed more and more into his likeness. It is in the complexity of Community Groups and the relationships we form that we will find the power and presence of Christ to forgive, restore, and renew us. That is a win.

Discussion Questions

From the reading

- What stands out to you? Is there anything that you found particularly interesting?
- Did this change your understanding/expectation of the Community Group?

Previous CG 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?

For the year ahead

- What values and vision do you have for your Community Group?
- How do you hope your CG will grow or look this year?
- What specific things could you commit to praying for together in the coming year?

PRAYER Pray for each other

- Share any prayer requests you have.

Pray for Community Groups

- Pray for all the Community Groups launching this week. Ask that the leaders would be strengthened and filled with God's love, growing in deeper dependence on Him.
- Pray that each group would remain centered on the gospel, filled by the Spirit, and used by God for His kingdom and glory.