

## GROUP VALUES AND PRACTICES

### WHAT IS A COMMUNITY GROUP?

A family of disciples who are committed to sharing life and mission together as they seek to love Christ, His Church and our city.

### THREE CORE-CONVICTIONS THAT DRIVE COMMUNITY



**THE GOSPEL:** is the unveiling of God’s grand redemptive plan in Scripture. While everything in the Bible is not the gospel, the gospel is the “everything” of the Bible. The gospel announces that God is reconciling men and women to himself and making all things new in Christ. All of Scripture points to Christ and either builds up to or flows out of what he has accomplished on our behalf through his life death and resurrection.

The gospel is not about what we do for Christ, but how we respond to what Christ has done (continues to do and will ultimately do) for us. Nothing in our life falls outside the scope of the gospel nor are there any life situations the gospel does not directly or indirectly address. The gospel, through the power of the Spirit, shapes, informs and empowers the Christian community to be everything God created us to be as agents of reconciliation and redemption in a lost and dying world.

We respond to the gospel by turning from the things we once looked to for purpose and meaning in life (repentance) and place our full confidence in the sufficiency of Christ as the sole source of everything we need for life and godliness (belief).

While our initial response to the gospel brings us into a right relationship with God our continued response to the gospel leads to far greater depth, joy and effectiveness in the Christian life (gospel transformation).

**COMMUNITY:** is the visible expression of Christ's presence in the world, and in and through the body life of the local church. The quality of our relationships in the body of Christ will dramatically impact the quality of our relationship with Christ and the quality of our witness in the world. The three are so inextricably intertwined that one does not exist without the others.

Throughout the New Testament we are encouraged to be meaningfully engaged with other believers by accepting one another, loving one another, serving one another, praying for one another, teaching and admonishing one another, being kind to one another, being tender-hearted and compassionate, forgiving of each other (just as Christ forgave us), to bear each other's burdens, to build up one another, to speak the truth in love to one another, to encourage one another, to show hospitality to one another (without grumbling), to confess our sins to one another and to spur one another on to love and good deeds, just to name a few.

Community is not only where we find our anchor to the local church, but where we are known, cared for and challenged in our pursuit of Christ. It is where we develop meaningful relationships and encourage each other to apply the truths of the gospel as everyday Christians in the ordinary events of life.

**MISSION:** is our active participation in God's redemptive plan as we reflect the heart and character of Christ where we live, play and work and build relational bridges that lead to meaningful gospel conversations (with believers and non-believers alike).

As the gospel's transformative power takes root in our lives we increasingly live for Christ in the hope that His message will flourish in and through us, and that those around us will ultimately "be reconciled to God." Mission happens when ordinary Christians are being transformed by the gospel and live their everyday lives with gospel intentionality.

## GROUP VALUES

**LIFE TOGETHER:** as we open our hearts and lives to one another and enjoy each other's company.

**BIBLICAL CONTENT:** as we engage with God and one another through the study of Scripture and prayer in order to know Christ more deeply and follow Him more faithfully.

**GOSPEL TRANSFORMATION:** as we walk through life's difficulties together seeking to apply the truths of the gospel to our own life while encouraging genuine gospel transformation in the lives of others (this usually takes place when men and women meet separately to apply the gospel on a deeper level).

**MISSIONAL LIVING:** as we share the love of Christ and the hope of the gospel with our friends and neighbors, co-workers and casual acquaintances, and those in our community whom the world has forgotten.

## GROUP PRACTICES

**FAMILY GATHERINGS:** where we meet to enjoy each other's company and share everyday life together. The early church "broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts" (Acts 2:46). The value of sitting around the table and sharing a meal is something we should never dismiss. We even see rhythms in the Old Testament of people sharing meals together as a celebration of God's goodness in their lives.

Family gatherings are usually ordinary and some are better than others, but are nonetheless very important to biblical community. Don't be afraid to invite non-believers to these gatherings or take these gatherings where non-believers live and play.

**LIFE ON LIFE:** as we bring each other into the personal and intimate details of our fears, failures, addictions, anxieties and unbeliefs. Life on life is where we disciple one another with the gospel as we share our insights from the Word, confess sin, check our heart's motivations, speak hard truths into each other's lives and spur one another on to greater faithfulness and Christlikeness. Sometimes Life on Life happens in a large group setting, but it usually happens best in smaller groups of two or three people of the same gender. We always encourage authenticity in the larger group settings, but more often than not it is more appropriate to do deep gospel work outside the large group setting.

**MISSIONAL FOCUS:** where we naturally and regularly use the ordinary events of everyday life to represent Christ and build bridges for the gospel to be displayed and declared.

We encourage every group to build its community around a missional focus, such as: reaching a neighborhood, adopting a local family to bless or by joining together to support one another as missional opportunities make themselves apparent in the ordinary course of life.

Having a missional focus reminds us that being a missionary is not somewhere we go or somewhere to be, but something we are no matter where we are.