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# WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

Jesus gave a simple instruction for us to carry on His mission. He said it this way, *“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”* MATTHEW 28:19-20.

If we are to make disciples, we must first understand what a disciple of Jesus is. A disciple is one who puts his faith in Jesus as his Savior and follows His teachings. When we accept Jesus for who He truly is, He begins to change our heart, mind, desires... everything about us! Below are a few characteristics of a person who is experiencing life-transformation after responding to Jesus' call to **FOLLOW ME**:

**Fruitful:** The life of a disciple bears fruit. JOHN 15:8,16

**Obedient:** A disciple obeys Jesus' teaching. JOHN 8:31; LUKE 6:46-49

**Loving:** A disciple loves as he/she is loved. MATTHEW 22:37-40; JOHN 13:34-35

**Listens:** A disciple prays and listens to God. MATTHEW 4:19-20; JAMES 5:16

**Others-focused:** A disciple focuses on serving others. MATTHEW 10:42

**Word-centered:** A disciple centers his/her life on God's Word. PSALM 119:11,105; EPHESIANS 6:17; HEBREWS 4:12

**Multiplies:** A disciple multiplies by making disciples. MATTHEW 4:19, 28:19-20

**Empowered:** A disciple is Spirit-empowered to become Christ-like. ACTS 1:8; ROMANS 12:2; GALATIANS 2:20, 5:25

# TRANSFORMATION GROUPS

At Community Church, we believe the Gospel of Jesus is central to spiritual transformation. In other words, when Jesus said "It Is Finished" on the cross He meant that we are free from trying to be good enough to earn God's acceptance. Our acceptance by God is accomplished by Jesus' life and death in our place. Good deeds by a Christian still matter, but good deeds do not make us righteous. Since Jesus paid the penalty for our sin, we are free, and that freedom produces good things in the person who believes and follows!

This incredible, good news compels us to **"Follow Jesus and lead others to follow Jesus."** As we follow Jesus, study His teachings, and grow in His Word, His Gospel changes us from the inside out. This spiritual transformation happens most effectively when we interact with other people who are also learning and growing.

We have several types of **Transformation Groups**, all having these six key functions:

## I. STUDY THE BIBLE

## II. HELP EACH OTHER

## III. URGE ACCOUNTABILITY

## IV. PRAY

## V. INVITE

## VI. MULTIPLY

Since **Transformation Groups** help us accomplish our mission and vision, we ask that every member of WPCC find a group that fits their needs and become involved. (It may be beneficial to be in more than one group at a time, or to take a few weeks off from being in a group.)

# I. STUDY THE BIBLE

*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17*

**God's Word is authoritative, so I must submit to what it says.**

**God's Word is sufficient to accomplish its purpose in me.**

**God's Word is effective, and God will use it to change me.**

A group leader studies the Bible and directs the group meeting by facilitating meaningful discussion using intentional questions. Effective questions help prompt healthy conversations that lead to life-application.

- Pre-select questions to guide the discussion in a purposeful direction. Start with an engaging question to introduce the study and generate interest in the topic.
- Balance the **types** of questions you ask (i.e., comprehension, open-ended, application, rhetorical, etc.).
- Healthy discussion involves interaction with all members of the group, not just with the leader. Use restraint by not contributing to every topic of discussion.
- Seek to incorporate application throughout your discussion, not just at the end.

## **Things that hinder open discussion:**

- Showing up unprepared (especially in the area of prayer)
- Lecturing without facilitating any discussion
- Following notes mindlessly like a script
- Asking only yes or no questions
- Answering your own questions
- Stating your viewpoint so strongly that other opinions are not voiced
- Focusing only on the **meaning** of the text and never making **application**
- Allowing someone to dominate the discussion or hi-jack the conversation
- Losing track of time and keeping your group later than they want to stay

# II. HELP EACH OTHER

*So, we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. 1 THESSALONIANS 2:8*

## **A healthy group encourages its members to give and receive ministry:**

- Comfort and be comforted 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4
- Counsel and be counseled ROMANS 15:14
- Encourage and be encouraged 1 THESSALONIANS 5:11
- Help and be helped GALATIANS 5:13; PROVERBS 3:27-28
- Correct and be corrected COLOSSIANS 3:16

## **Ministry involves openly sharing your lives with one another:**

- Share testimonies of faith in Christ
- Be honest about joys, transparent about struggles
- Inform others of your needs
- Ask questions and listen to the **heart**, not just words
- Serve others within the group (often outside of 'group time')
- Speak the truth in love
- Follow up during the week
- Carry one another's burdens
- Pray for each other

# III. URGE ACCOUNTABILITY

*But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'today,' so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." HEBREWS 3:13*

**Accountability means asking those who love me to help me do the right thing:**

Effective accountability requires confidentiality and mutuality. Confidentiality means everyone has an equal level of trust; mutuality means everyone has an equal level of transparency.

- **Make it a priority**

Manage your study/discussion time to reserve 30-40 minutes for breakout time. Divide in groups of men and women and guide that time to include meaningful sharing, not just surface conversations.

- **Cast the vision**

Begin your accountability time by sharing about transparency. Commit to refrain from judging one another and maintain confidentiality. It is important to cast the vision of accountability and model it yourself.

- **Get specific**

Encourage people to move beyond generalities to specific issues. Ask: "How can I pray for you specifically this week?" Most of the time people have not thought through specific steps they need to take. Help them develop action steps by asking, "How do you plan to deal with \_\_\_\_\_?"

- **Follow up**

Faithfully follow up by praying for group members daily. Make a phone call to cheer them on and offer help to them. Then review specific commitments and prayer requests from the previous week at the next group time.

# IV. PRAY

*"Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known." JEREMIAH 33:3*

- God **invites** us to pray: "Call to me"
- God **answers** prayer: "I will answer you"
- God **shows His power** in response to prayer: "Tell you great and hidden things"

**Communicate these guidelines at your first few meetings and refer back to them when necessary:**

- Prayer requests should be personal, not revealing information about others.
- Keep the sharing time brief and to the point (if twelve people each share for five minutes, it will take an hour).
- Take the horizontal (sharing requests) to the vertical (actually praying).

**Pray in different ways each week. Here are a few ideas to help you approach your group's prayer time in fresh ways:**

- Pray throughout (stop in the middle of sharing time to pray for a need)
- Sentence prayers (brief, one-sentence prayers are offered spontaneously)
- Review previous requests (each person can give updates from the last week)
- Model prayers (use WPCC Prayer Booklet to pray from a Biblical model)
- Laying on of hands (have group members grab a hand or touch a shoulder)
- Pray around the circle (each person prays for the individual to his/her left)
- Pray in pairs or groups (split up and pray in pairs or groups)
- Prayer chorus (everyone prays audibly at the same time)
- Posture prayer (ask members to bow, kneel, walk, stand, etc.)

# V. INVITE

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." MATTHEW 28:19-20*

People respond differently to a **push** than a **pull**. Pushing people ("go to that," "attend their group," "find a place where you fit in," etc.) most often results in reluctance or even resistance. Pulling people ("come to **MY** house," "meet **ME** here," etc.) often results in positive reactions, because it lets people know they are wanted. That is why we must move away from pushing people and work toward pulling people. Leaders should become **experts at invitation**.

## **Here are a few ways to create a culture of invitation:**

- Identify a group of people in the community that you want to reach, pray for them, and make a plan to adjust your lives/schedules to reach them.
- Have each person write the names of two or three people to pray for and invite to your group. Spend time each week praying for the list of names.
- When new people attend, have everyone introduce themselves and celebrate them!
- Sundays are invitation days. Challenge your group members to invite at least one family to your group each Sunday after the worship service.
- Have fun! Schedule some fun connecting activities in lieu of your normal group meeting and encourage your group members to bring someone new (especially someone they think would never come...you might be surprised).
- Incorporate invitation/multiplication into your study time. Discuss how your friends outside the church would respond to biblical teachings.

# VI. MULTIPLY

*"Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers." ACTS 9:31*

As we see our friends and neighbors come to Christ, we want to have a structure in place to facilitate numerical growth. Having a plan for multiplication allows us to reach more people and prepare for exponential growth!

**There is a three-step process to launching a new leader:**

## **1. Develop:** "I lead, you watch"

When recruiting a future leader, pray for God to work in their heart and prompt them to take on a leadership role. If they are willing to take the next step, have them observe specific aspects of how you lead the group discussion. Plan meetings to talk with them about what they see and hear and envision themselves handling situations that arise. As you develop a new leader, communicate the information in this booklet, especially WPCC's mission and vision. Each potential leader will complete an application and be interviewed by a pastor or elder.

## **2. Disciple:** "We lead together"

Begin to assign specific tasks to your future leader. While they may not be completely comfortable at first, help them prepare for and execute some small steps of leadership when your group meets. As they become more competent in directing conversations and leading the group, slowly increase their role and follow up with supportive evaluation.

## **3. Deploy:** "You lead, I watch"

After giving a number of leadership roles (and when your new leader is ready), talk with them about a target date for multiplication. Based on relationships and geographic location of families, select which group members will continue with which group. It is best for the leader and new leader to meet and assign the two groups instead of open group discussion. Share the plan with your group, and celebrate the growth that has led to multiplication. As you plan the transition time, include some joint meetings as the two groups adjust to the new format.

# COMMUNITY GROUPS

One of the most effective ways we can accomplish our mission is through Community Groups. Community Groups are not an end in themselves, but a vehicle to help us follow Jesus and lead others to follow Jesus.

## **We are committed to Community Groups because they...**

- Help people use their spiritual gifts 1 CORINTHIANS 12:14-27
- Are available to everyone EPHESIANS 4:11-12
- Encourage us to love one another JOHN 13:35
- Offer fellowship 1 JOHN 1:3, 6-7
- Help disciples make disciples MATTHEW 28:18-20
- Multiply gifted leaders 2 TIMOTHY 2:2

## **Some key distinctions of Community Groups:**

- Facilitator/Group Member setting
- Study of Scripture prompts open conversation
- Relationship driven
- Based on the needs of the group
- Discussion oriented
- Has a start date but no finish date
- A limited number of participants (5-15 is ideal)
- The GOAL: disciples make other disciples through invitation and multiplication

# BIBLE STUDY GROUPS

Bible Study Groups help us follow Jesus and lead others to follow Jesus by: (i) exploring the deeper meanings of Biblical teachings, and (ii) challenging us to adopt these principles into our daily lives.

## **We are committed to Bible Study Groups because they...**

- Study the Bible in depth 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17
- Encourage application of Scripture JAMES 1:22
- Develop teachers EPHESIANS 4:11-16
- Provide a place for mature believers to teach newer believers TITUS 2:3-5

## **Some key distinctions of Bible Study Groups:**

- Teacher/Student setting
- Digs deep into Biblical teachings
- Subject driven
- Based on the material studied
- Lecture oriented
- Has a start date and finish date
- No maximum number of participants
- The GOAL: Believers gain a better understanding of Scripture and learn to live out their faith

# DNA GROUPS

DNA Groups are made up of three or four men or women who meet regularly to disciple and make more disciples. Since DNA Groups are the most effective form of discipleship and accountability, we want to encourage and assist one another to get plugged in to a DNA Group.

## **We are committed to DNA Groups because they...**

- Are the best way to build accountability GALATIANS 6:1-5
- Study the Bible in depth 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17
- Encourage application of Scripture JAMES 1:22
- Provide a place for mature believers to mentor newer believers TITUS 2:3-5
- Are the most effective way to multiply disciples MATTHEW 28:19-20

## **Some key distinctions of DNA Groups:**

- Mentor/partner setting
- Best environment for accountability
- Relationship-based
- Has a start date and multiply date
- Triads or Quads (3-4 people)
- The goal: intimate mentoring relationship where disciples make disciples who make disciples

# MEN'S/WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

Men's and Women's Ministry Groups are similar to Bible Study Groups in that they focus on studying the Bible for a specified time and can have a wide range in number of participants. These ministries simply take discipleship to men and women, and add a few retreats and events along the way.

## **We are committed to Men's and Women's Ministries because they...**

- Study the Bible in depth 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17
- Develop teachers EPHESIANS 4:11-16
- Allow a place for men to be open with other men and women with other women about real life issues and how to apply the Bible to those situations JAMES 1:22
- Provide a place for mature believers to teach newer believers TITUS 2:3-5

## **Some key distinctions of Men's and Women's Ministries:**

- Can implement DNA setting or Bible Study setting
- Dig deep into Biblical teachings
- Study driven
- Have a start date and finish date
- No maximum number of participants
- The goal: build relationships and grow in faith

# SAMPLE OUTLINE (for any group)

## Opening Time (10-15 minutes)

**Goal:** Introduce one another

**Gathering Together:**

- Get-to-know-you activities and questions
- Celebrate answered prayer and victories
- Build community through food and fellowship

**Opening Prayer:**

- Ask God to encourage, teach and challenge each person

## Bible Study (30-45 minutes)

**Goal:** Read the text and apply it

**Discussion-based learning:**

- Preparation maximizes the impact
- Have questions ready (see page 4)

**Key:**

- Discussion helps members discover and apply truths
- God uses His Word to shape our hearts and change our actions

## Ministry (20-30 minutes)

**Goal:** Encourage one another to "live it out"

**Accountability and encouragement:**

- Men meet with men and women with women to promote transparency
- Develop action plans and ask to be held accountable
- Pray together
- Provide counsel if needed; may need follow-up instead

# BASICS OF DISCIPLING

## I. Identify someone who is ready for discipleship:

A helpful acronym in identifying a discipleship partner is **H.E.A.R.T.\***

- **Hungry:** a desire to grow in their knowledge of Jesus
- **Engaged:** participates in spiritual conversation
- **Available:** able to free up time to make DNA Group a priority
- **Reliable:** consistency in following through with commitments
- **Teachable:** a heart to explore God's Word and learn

\*Notice that none of these attributes are based on someone's experience level or gifting, but are traits even unbelievers can possess. These are simple ways to identify God working in someone's life, and reveal an openness to be discipled.

## II. Establish a schedule to meet together

- Breakfast, lunch, coffee meetings
- Be open to including families occasionally
- Bring them into conversations about your ministry role(s)
- Invite them to community group meetings and worship services

## III. Build a relationship of accountability

- Study the Bible or a book based on Scripture
- Aim to discuss character, gifts, calling, and doctrine
- Help assess next steps toward leadership

## IV. Give leadership opportunities

- Set them up for success by planning and preparing well
- Develop, disciple, deploy (page 8)
- Remember failure can be a great teacher, so coach and correct
- Continue to expand their role and stretch them by delegating responsibilities
- **Be their number one encourager!**

## V. Release gradually

- Once they are taking on a new role, continue to meet and assist
- Challenge them to invest in a transformation group of their own
- Remind them they are fulfilling the Great Commission! MATTHEW 28:19-20