



Community Group Leader Training Manual

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Week One: Community Group Basics

Make sure your community group members have a solid hold on the foundations of community group ministry.

Matthew 18:20

What is a community group?

In the most basic sense of the term, a community group happens when two or more believers gather in Jesus' name to live out one or more of a church's core values together. This definition is based on Matthew 18:20: "where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them." When a community group's purpose is rooted in the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, participants will experience life transformation.

Practically, community groups are simply a way to organize and mobilize God's people to do the things he has called us to do through his Word. They provide a biblical strategy for God's people to reveal Christ to others throughout the world (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:42). The goal is for participants to draw closer to God as they grow close to one another in community. These two movements feed into each other; consequently, participants are empowered to make disciples of Jesus Christ, thereby becoming stronger disciples themselves.

What are the benefits of a Community Group?

Community groups bring people together so they can build one another up. As a result, the Church is strengthened. Groups are not the only way of doing this, of course, but they always have been and always will be an essential expression of the life-giving community of the Church. It is noteworthy how the beginning of the Church-and every Christian renewal movement that has followed-relied heavily on small groups (Acts 2:42-48, 4:32-35; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 11:20).

The relational conditions that are necessary for full-bodied discipleship-and the life-transformation that results- are multiplied exponentially through healthy community groups ministries that complement their church's weekend services. Small groups empower God's people to participate in his mission for the world, which was modeled by Christ and is continued through the church today. They are essential to volunteer leadership development and building the necessary support system for your church's staff and congregation.

The life-giving community of the Church is the one thing in the whole universe that encompasses what every believer is to do (make disciples) and how they're to do it (love God and other another). It is how God transforms our lives, and it is how He desires to use us (His

body on earth) to reveal Himself to the world. For example, people see God when believers love one another.

The gospel accounts show us that Jesus is relational. God has called us to meet one another as He has met us in Christ. Salvation is being friends with God and His people, now and for all eternity. Thus, God's kingdom on earth and in heaven is expressed as community. His kingly reign is expanded as we invite people into a relationship with Him and the fellowship of the church.

Community groups are simply the vehicles for helping us build this life-giving community that every person desires, and that God desires for every person. They provide a way for us to get close enough to develop the kind of relationships that make community life-giving and glorifying to God. If community is all of these things, how can a believer not be an active part of it?

The outworking of the New Testament "one anothers" is facilitated by small groups because commands like "love one another" requires relationship with others. They energize the "Body Life" of your church because they help people to develop meaningful connections with each other and use their God-given gifts! This enables people to experience more of God in their lives and apply God's Word to their lives.

Community groups are integral to the organization and operation a community of believers loving one another (Acts 2:42-47). Life-transforming environments are created when this picture of biblical community is realized.

Community groups provide a practical strategy for communicating and living out your church's purposes regardless of its size or the season it may be in. They help believers discover their God-given purpose and strengthen the evangelistic impact of your church! A balanced community group ministry helps people feel more a part of your church community, resulting in greater numbers getting involved, staying involved, and serving together. As it grows, more people are growing together in God's Word, sharing meals with thanksgiving to Christ, praying, worshiping, and effectively living out all the vital functions of the Church during the week.

What is the Role of a Community Group Leader?

A community group leader is a person who takes the lead in creating an environment where biblical community can grow. Notice that the group leader is not responsible for making biblical communities grow. That's God's job (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). The leader simply creates conditions that are necessary and favorable for the life-giving dynamic of an Acts 2 community to flourish within your own church. Lives will be transformed and people will come to Christ when this happens (Acts 2:47).

- **What does it take to become one?** The most important requirement for a potential small-group leader is that they hold in their heart the Greatest Commandment: Love God and His people (Mark 12:30-31). The only way group leaders can be effective in all of their responsibilities is by genuinely loving the people in their group.
- **What do they do?** Practically speaking, the role involves the initial organization of logistics for gatherings, the communication and advocacy of the group's purpose,

facilitating spiritual conversations and Bible studies, and introducing opportunities for participants to take their next steps in growing closer to Jesus Christ.

- Inside an actual group meeting, leaders should view themselves as facilitators-not professors or curriculum experts. Good leaders will take initiative with different parts of the learning experience, but mostly their job is to encourage the group as a whole to carry the times of teaching, prayer and worship.
- What are the responsibilities? In addition to praying for your group members and serving them in love, group leaders are responsible to stay connected with other leaders in the church. In fact, the most important connection group leaders have in the larger community group ministry of your church is with the leadership branch that provides personal prayer and care for those leaders. Most churches refer to people who serve in this branch of leadership as coaches. Therefore, it is vital for the health of group leaders, individual groups, and the larger community group ministry that individual community group leaders connect with their coaches at least once a month.
 - In addition, many churches have discovered the power of clustering similar groups together with the same coach-thereby creating affinity-based community group leadership teams. Many group leaders have found meeting with others on the same team to be enriching and inspirational since they are usually dealing with similar issues.
 - It's also important for group leaders to read leadership resources and other communication pieces. These are often written or assigned by coaches or the pastoral team. This does take a little time, but it enhances the way you lead and the way your church's community group ministry lives out its purposes and fulfills its mission. It also promotes personal skill-development and a healthy, balanced community group ministry.
 - Last but not least, pray for your group, your church, and other community group leaders in relationship with you. Prayer is foundational to the life and healthy growth of the ministry. It's extremely encouraging to know that you will always be upheld in prayer by brothers and sisters who can intercede empathetically and strategically for you because of a common role. This way, each group leadership team serves as an intercessory prayer team-ensuring that every leader is covered, protected, strengthened, and made effective in doing what Christ has called them to do.

Don't worry! If you hold in your heart a desire to grow in your love for God and people (Mark 12:30-31), you have the stuff that makes for a life-changing community group leader.



Week Two: Community Group Fellowship

creating an atmosphere conducive to healthy relationships

Acts 2:42

Fellowship is a heart attitude that seeks to welcome others just as Christ welcomed you (Romans 15:7). It's an experience of being embraced while at the same time embracing others. Fellowship is more than a social gathering because it's built upon a shared devotion to the Word of God and is "others-focused" by nature.

Before the First Meeting

1. It's best to take some steps toward building fellowship before your first small-group meeting.
2. Throw a party and invite as many of your friends as possible—you can even encourage them to invite their friends.
3. As people do the work of building relationships on a social level, you can invite them to continue to build those relationships in a small-group setting.

After people have committed to attend your group,

1. Call ahead and confirm they are coming.
2. Send out an e-mail a day or two before the first meeting reminding them of the logistics, and tell them you are looking forward to seeing them.
3. Don't be afraid of seeming pesky or pushy. People usually appreciate these thoughtful reminders.
4. Be sure new members know how to get to the host's home.
5. Two seemingly minor matters can play a large role in making sure that people actually show up: food and childcare.
6. Be sure to provide refreshments for the first couple meetings, at least, and ask members if they need any help arranging for childcare.

During The First Meeting

Part of the community group leader's job in building an environment of fellowship is to **create the right atmosphere within the meeting place**. This might sound trivial, but physical space affects people on many different levels.

1. You can help your people feel more comfortable by arranging the seating in a circle.
2. Having snacks and drinks ready before people arrive, minimizing distractions, turning off the ringers on your phones, and even providing soft background music.
3. All these steps should be taken whether you're meeting in a home or part of the church building.
4. The important thing is to have them accomplished well before people arrive. This way you can greet them at the door and spend some quality social time with them as others show up.

and settle in. **Let the first meeting be a time where people get to know each other.** This will take time, so be intentional about it.

5. Facilitate the conversation so that each member has an opportunity to share his or her story. For example, you can ask questions like: **“What brought you to our church?” “What motivated you to check out this group?” “What do you hope to experience in this group?”**
6. After everyone has had the opportunity to respond, share your hopes for the group and thank everyone for coming.
7. It is not crucial that you have worship in the first meeting.
8. Finally, the leader should take the initiative to close the group’s time in prayer, giving thanks for each person present and asking for God’s continued blessing on the group.
9. **Shortly after your first meeting, follow-up with those who said they would come but didn’t. Place a no-pressure call just to let them know you missed them.**
10. Let them know about what the meeting was like, and that you hope to see them next time.

Brief Options for Childcare

A big consideration when bringing families together, especially those with younger children, is childcare. While it’s the parents’ job to make arrangements for their specific children, it’s important that the group leader be ready with several options as suggestions. Here are a few options:

1. Children are integrated into part or all of the group’s life
2. Children gather in a separate room. In this situation, they may entertain themselves (by watching a video, for example) or rotating members of the group may be responsible to provide an activity.
3. Children are watched by a baby sitter outside of the group meeting. There are several options for this. Each family can arrange their own babysitter, or they might pool their resources to hire a common sitter for all of the children.
4. **The most popular option tends to be parents setting up their own childcare arrangements with a babysitter.** Leaders can assist in this process by: providing a list of qualified childcare workers who have gone through an official background check; talk with the Youth Pastors.

Key Skills for Facilitating Fellowship

Community group leaders are responsible for creating an environment where biblical community can grow. **They are not responsible for making it grow-that’s God’s job. The same is true of fellowship.** However, there are bedrock skills any group leader can employ that will nourish its growth.

1. **They can encourage fellowship by looking for points of common ground between people and then connecting them.** This ability grows with practice.
2. Be intentional about involving every person in each aspect of the group
3. don’t allow strays (1 Corinthians 12:12-26). the leader gets better at this each time he observes the biblical commandment not to show favoritism.
4. Remember that group leaders are the greatest influencers of the group

5. If you want a warm and hospitable atmosphere in your group, then you must be transparent and vulnerable yourself. **The more open you are, the more open others will be.** By being real, you help make the group feel safe and inviting you encourage fellowship.
6. **People want to go to a place where they can be themselves.**
7. Next, acknowledge and affirm each person's input. Keep in mind that 90 percent of communication is non-verbal, so watch your body language.
8. **Make eye contact with the person speaking and let them know you hear what they're saying.**
9. You might even restate what they just said to make sure you've heard them correctly.
10. **To the best of your ability, start and finish each meeting on time.** You can alleviate some of the pressure that comes with time keeping by building a cushion into your meeting schedule. **social time serve as bookends to your group format.** This helps the group feel less rushed and more relational.
11. Finally, you don't have to cover every question you plan for each group lesson. This is especially true with opening questions or exercises (like icebreakers). assuming they are needed to overcome some initial barrier to connection and conversation that does not always exist.
12. Simply put, if a question or activity doesn't seem to work for your group or if you don't think they're necessary-ignore them. Release yourself from the unnecessary burden of covering everything that's been prepared. Feel free to skip around. Every group is different and you'll learn what kinds of questions and activities work best for your group in time. Remember, nobody knows your group as well as you.

A Sample Agenda

Schedules will vary from group to group, of course, but here is a reliable format for each meeting that you can use as a starting place:

- Fellowship/social time: 10 to 15 minutes
- Bible study and discussion: 30 to 45 minutes
- Prayer and "one anothering": 10 to 15 minutes
- Closing/Announcements: 3 to 5 minutes
- Fellowship/social time: 15 to 30 minutes

Always remember that fellowship is birthed out of a gathering that exists to do what the Lord has called and commissioned it to do (Matthew 18:20). **The power for life-changing transformation grows as a group lets itself be guided by the interacting between God's Spirit and His Word.**



Week Three: Small-Group Discipleship

1. seek God's vision
2. facilitate discussion
3. manage conflict

Romans 15:14

"I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another" NIV

Introduction:

Healthy discipleship is reflected in how people

1. love God
2. love others
3. use everything the Lord has entrusted to them for His kingdom purposes.

It springs from his grace given to believers, which gives them the desire to sacrificially share their time, treasure, and talents in order to impact the world for Christ and introduce spiritually unconvinced people to Him.

I. Seeking God's Vision for your group

- a. get a picture of what the Lord wants you to do in the group (a vision).
- b. what will your focus be?

There are three general ways a group can decide what its focus will be:

1. **The community group leader decides before the group forms.**
2. **Group consensus-the focus is decided after the group forms.** This is more common with community building groups. (In general, it's best to have 2 or 3 options to present to the group, as opposed to leaving it completely open-ended).
3. **The leader predetermines a list of options,** which the group votes on after a few meetings.

Then choose curriculum or a study that will serve that vision.

Note: If you use curriculum avoid curriculum that is long, has a lot of homework or uses fill-in-the-blanks.

Always be flexible and willing to scrap the curriculum if it does not serve the vision for your group.

Packaged curriculum is meant to serve the group-not the other way around.

4. Find material that is relationally-oriented
 - a. manageable in size

b. takes a creative approach to communicating its material.

c. Good curriculum will reveal two goals:

1. building relationships
2. learning content

The best curriculum uses open-ended questions designed to stimulate discussion.

II. Practical Guidelines for Facilitating Discussion

1. Prayer is foundational to successful community-group leadership. Before a meeting even begins, ask the Lord to impart His wisdom and pour out His peace and power on your group participants as they seek the truth in His Word.
2. establish at the outset of a group that the Bible will be the authoritative source of truth (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

When you are ready to facilitate an actual community group discussion, I like to follow the “4 R’s”:

- **Respond** to each person who speaks or expresses a spoken/unspoken emotion
- **Repeat** what has been said in order to bring clarity for the group, and to be sure that you understand what the speaker is really saying
- **Relate** to your group members by referring to common experiences and emotions-help them see that they’re not alone
- **Re-group** the discussion periodically by summarizing the flow of conversation to that point, and by highlighting recurring themes.
- This is also a good way to help bring meaningful conclusion to the group’s discussion.

- a. As a community group leader, remember that you are a facilitator during group discussions.
- b. Don’t fall into the temptation to “teach,” and don’t feel like you have to deliver all the answers to all the questions that come up.
- c. Your job is to be a conversation starter, not a lecturer.
- d. everyone doesn’t need to share something on every question
- e. it’s important that every person be given an opportunity to contribute during the flow of the discussion.

3. Practical aspects of facilitating discussion on a biblical text

- a. it helps to first read the whole passage slowly and out-loud.
- b. Sprinkle the discussion with a few brief insights, observations or questions that arose in your mind
- c. Leave space for the insights or questions of others.
- d. As you get into the meat of the discussion, ask questions like: **what stands out to you in this passage? What impacted you during the reading? Did you come across something that was new for you, reaffirming, confusing or challenging? How can we apply this text to our lives today?**

4. When you are in an in-depth Bible study be sure to take your time-especially on challenging passages.

- a. Rely on the Holy Spirit to instruct and guide you through the insights others have to offer.

- b. Using tools like Bible commentaries and dictionaries are great for your study, but don't bring them in until after you and the group participants have wrestled with the meaning of the text.
5. Be aware of people with a tendency to monopolize or dominate the discussion time of your Bible study. "talkers" and "teachers"
- a. When either type is allowed to go unchecked they will drain the life of your group.
 - b. If your group is repeatedly bogged down by doctrinal debates, reel the discussion back in by asking "what relevance does this have to our lives today?"

III. The Basics of Handling Conflict

Community is messy business. Differences, disappointments, hurt feelings, and frustrations are all part of moving toward a deeper maturity in community and Christlikeness. In fact, conflict can be the very thing that helps your group break out to new levels of honesty and freedom in Christ.

1. The key to handling conflict constructively is open communication. **Ephesians 4:25-27 shows us the way: "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 'In your anger do not sin.' Do no let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold."**
 - a. Notice how open communication involves speaking the truth, not stuffing down feelings, and doing so in love.
 - b. Grace reigns over judgment. Love overcomes the temptation to condemn.
2. Open communication seeks mutual growth and takes steps toward reconciliation.
 - a. It acknowledges difficult situations and feelings and does not try to avoid or cover up conflict.
 - b. Conflict-avoidance is easy, but has a way of **decimating relationships** and **destabilizing the development of biblical community**.
 - c. Open communication is hard work, but it encourages realness and respect, which you have got to have for biblical community to grow.

Note:

Matthew 18:15 is probably the most violated principle in handling conflict: **"if your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you."** The first thing believers are instructed to do when they have a problem with another person is to directly and privately address the matter with that person. When people skip this first step in favor of gossip- or to stew in their feelings-they tumble into trouble, and disagreements escalate into tragic relational fractures and fissures.

2. Your job as a leader/facilitator is to diffuse the conflicts that so easily arise from miscommunication and misunderstanding.
 - a. make it your goal to understand where the other person is coming from and what they are actually saying.

- b. Begin by asking questions to clarify their perspective: “When you say _____, does that mean _____? Am I understanding you correctly?” If you are frustrated or offended, non-defensively share how you are feeling
- c. Next, evaluate whether your disagreement is about something essential to your life and faith. In Romans 14, Paul reminds us that there are few things that should create division between Christians.
- d. When you feel like you have arrived a solution, say so.
- e. Make sure the other person sees the solution the same way you do and feels that a resolution has been made.
- f. Finally, look for an opportunity to seal your conversation and decision through prayer.

Biblical Principles for Dealing with Conflict

- **Don’t tolerate gossip.**
 - Gossip is a sin that betrays another.
 - It is divisive, destroys trust, and deeply affects even those who only listen to it.
 - its presence will significantly reduce the level of trust in your community group. (Prov. 18:8, 1 Tim. 5:19)
- **Expose and eliminate dissension.**
 - get to the root of it immediately and address each person involved (Prov. 6:16-19).
 - The Bible says that hatred, a hot temper, perversion, greed, and anger all stir up dissension.
 - If a member of your group acts out any of these, go to them privately and get to the bottom of it.
- **Watch the joking.**
 - Don’t allow the enemy to gain a foothold through misplaced or misinterpreted words.
 - Remember these three points when it comes to joking around: **1)** “just having fun” should not be used as a justification for making other people feel bad, or for using them as the butt of a joke (Prov. 26:18,19). **2)**Joking does not give someone license to use slander, gossip, filthy language, impure images, or obscene references (Eph. 5:4). **3)**Addressing inappropriate joking is a powerful demonstration of your love, both for the person making the joke and the audience (Prov. 27:5). If something is said that another person might mistake as a personal attack or criticism, clear up the matter at once.
- **Watch the sarcasm.**
 - Even if sarcasm is delivered in good humor, it can rouse anger (Prov. 25:23). If someone makes a slick comment about another community-group participant, ask the speaker to clarify what was just said. Sometimes this is enough to mend the matter
 - other times, situations may make it necessary for you to mediate between people.
 - In either case, deal with sarcasm immediately in your group before it deposits a virus that develops into a plague.
- **Nip quarreling in the bud.**
 - don’t allow theological arguments over non-essential doctrinal issues to threaten the health of your group.
 - This kind of quarreling leads no where and only frustrates those who have to listen to it (2 Timothy 2:23,24).
- **Don’t fall prey to “artificial niceness.”**
 - Keep in mind the distinction between quarreling and conflict.
 - A healthy community group does not mean an absence of conflict.

- If you sense anger stirring within your group-or between members of your group-don't try to cover it up or avoid dealing with it. Call it out.

- 1. seek God's vision**
- 2. facilitate discussion**
- 3. manage conflict**



Week Four: Community Group Ministry

Empower your members to use their gifts for the Kingdom of God

Romans 12:6-8

At its most basic, ministry is loving others. It is serving others with our God-given gifts and abilities. People receive more of God's grace when they let the time, talents, and treasure given to them flow out to others. When this happens, community groups- and by extension, the larger Body of Christ- are strengthened and supported.

Spiritual Gifts in Your Small Group

A spiritual gift is a special enablement that God gives each believer, according to His grace, for the development of the Body of Christ. But these gifts aren't given for our benefit. We are called to share them with others (Rom. 12:6-8). Consequently, whatever spiritual gifts you have been given, God has already commissioned you by His Holy Spirit to give them away.

Spiritual gifts help believers discover their function in the overarching Body of Christ-their unique capacity to serve God and effectively advance His purposes in this world. Within a community group, the collected gifts of all the participants create a roadmap detailing how the group can best experience God's power, and how to ministry most effectively. They also help community group leaders empower participants to share the responsibilities for the group and turn its energy and focus outward, which keeps it healthy.

The following truths about spiritual gifts can help you discern their presence, develop their practice within your group, and deal with any misuses that spring up.

- **Love is the source, substance, and goal of all spiritual gifts.** It's interesting that the "love chapter" (1 Corinthians 13) is couched right in the middle of the apostle Paul's discussion about spiritual gifts. So if you sense that a group member is exercising his or her spiritual gift in a non-loving way-such as being self-serving or manipulative-you have good reason to exercise caution and dig deeper.
- **Spiritual gifts are best cultivated and best used within the environment of the Fruits of the Spirit.** This fruit includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. When your group demonstrates these ideals, each member will find it much easier to identify and use their spiritual gifts.
- **Spiritual gifts are not for our glory.** Spiritual gifts should not bring attention to the people exercising them, but only to the giver of those gifts: Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 2:1,2).
- **The use of spiritual gifts should produce peace and understanding.** When used properly, these gifts will not "overtake" anyone or become a distraction within the group (1 Corinthians 14:30-33).

- **Sowing spiritual gifts produces a harvest of community.** There is a gathering effect in the use of spiritual gifts. When exercised properly, they bring people together and bring them to God. The fruit of spiritual gifts should be harmony, peace, clarity, and empowerment. If you don't see this good fruit in your group, you'll need to examine the tree more closely (Luke 6:43,44).

Empowering Group Members to Minister

Empowering your group members means helping them do what God has created and commissioned them to do. It's like holding a mirror up to their faces allowing them to see themselves the way the Lord sees them: as his own children. It means constantly making them aware that you are with them and for them.

A primary way you can empower your group members to minister is to ask each person (or couple) in the group to champion a specific aspect of community group life in keeping with their spiritual gifts. Think of yourself as a synergist who is deploying gifts in such a way that people are built up and God's purposes are fulfilled within your group.

To do this, begin by asking these questions:

- What aspects of our community group (e.g. prayer, Bible study, evangelism, and so on) are active and functioning well?
- What aspects do we need to bring to the surface and strengthen?
- What help is needed for our group to continue developing the active elements?
- What must we do to cultivate the aspects of group life that are presently inactive?
- As the group leader, what responsibilities can I safely release to others?
- Which spiritual gifts are represented in my group members?

As you begin formulating a plan to empower your group members, it's best to categorize the separate responsibilities of group life into broader divisions. For example, the following group responsibilities can be funneled into the broader category of "fellowship": sending reminder e-mails, organizing a rotation for meals or snacks, planning birthday celebrations, and coordinating social outings (see the chart below for more examples).

Once you've categorized all the functions of group life into broader divisions, the next step is to compare those divisions with the spiritual gifts of your group members to see where people are best equipped to serve. For example, if a member has the gifts of service and administration, he or she would fit well into the "fellowship" division of ministry within the group (again, see the chart below for more connections between gifts and ministry opportunities).

Your end goal is to develop group members to "champion" an entire division of responsibilities within the group. This way, one person oversees all the fellowship activities, another oversees the group's evangelism, another oversees discipleship between group members, etc. Still, be cautious of moving too quickly. When empowering your members for service, it's best to start them off with shorter-term responsibilities that you both know they can handle. Hopefully, these responsibilities will evolve into longer-term goals.

Roles
Role: Fellowship Champion (e.g. a host, or a liaison with the church community)
Spiritual gifts: Helps, mercy, service, administration Samples Responsibilities: host meetings; send reminder e-mails/calls; manage phone lists; organize meals (hospitality); plan celebrations for birthdays and anniversaries; coordinate social activities; set up the home/refreshment rotation
Role: Discipleship Champion (e.g. a co-leader, worship leader, prayer coordinator)
Spiritual gifts: shepherding, teaching, wisdom, knowledge Samples Responsibilities: perform research on topics for Bible study; function as a resource-provider to help people grow; regularly help facilitate Bible studies and discussion; encourage prayer, worship, and spiritual encouragement; highlight other growth opportunities within the church
Role: Ministry Champion (e.g. group ministry connector)
Spiritual gifts: exhortation, giving, administration, wisdom Samples Responsibilities: uphold the application of learning to real life; encourage the discovery of each participant's spiritual gifts and involvement in fitting ministry teams; enlist participants for serving opportunities within the group.
Role: Evangelism Champion (e.g. group outreach coordinator)
Spiritual gifts: evangelism, service, apostle Samples Responsibilities: encourage and equip participants to invite unsaved friends to the group; spearhead outreach events or gathering; integrate prayer for the nations and cultivate an external-focus within the group.

The goal is for every group participant to be engaged in a role where they are championing an aspect, value, or purpose of community group life. When every member owns a role that contributes to the overall health of the group, their calling to be a minister is awakened.

As you lead your small group on this path of spiritual-gift discovery and deployment, the commitment level of your group members will rise dramatically. Your group will become more outwardly-focused, selfless, and effective in sharing Christ through their words and actions. Participants will experience personal spiritual growth and the blessings that come with being a functioning part of biblical community. You are also creating a built-in system for leadership development, which will ensure balanced and healthy growth for your group-and your church-in the future.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind when empowering your group for ministry:

- It's best that you share with the group what you are doing and why. Explain what you hope to see accomplished, why you want to see it accomplished, ways you plan on helping, and how each group member can control the process.

- Make it clear that there is a role for each person, and that any role can be shared or split up over time. Present small responsibilities at the beginning and let them grow into roles over time.
- Let people know that it's okay for them to "test-drive" a role for a season and then shift to another, if desired. In fact, this is a great way to help participants find the right fit. Start functionally and formalize the roles over time-communicate that nobody needs to worry about getting locked into a role they don't really enjoy.
- Spiritual maturity will factor into what roles members will gravitate to. It will also factor into their rate of growth. Give it time-ownership is an organic process.
- Be conscious of your own expectations about members' progress and performance in their respective roles. Instead of pushing maturity, just be ready with lots of affirmation and grace-especially as people take new steps.



Week Five: Subject: Community Group Evangelism

Object: well balanced groups

1. **Evangelism**
2. **Evangelism Through Community Groups**
3. **The Power of Servant Evangelism**
4. **Spiritual gifts in your community group**

Keep your group healthy by remaining outwardly focused.

1 John 3:16-19

Have you ever seen or heard a washing machine that is out of balance? It's loud, irritating and it jumps all over the place.

1. **Evangelism** is sharing God's grace with others just as he shared it with us through his Son, Jesus Christ.
 - a. His journey to the Cross prepared a road for us to go and tell others the Good News.
 - b. His bodily resurrection provided the long lasting encouragement on our hearts so that we **must go**
 - c. making the life of a "non-going believer" not only contradictory, but unthinkable.

Note with me that: evangelism is both a heart attitude and a lifestyle.

Question: In Matt. 28:19 it says we should "go" Why should we "go" out?

- d. We go because God first sent.
- e. We reach out because He first loved us.
- f. We become all things to all people so that by all possible means some might be saved.

I Corinthians 9:19-23

g. Those who desire to share the gospel with others are responding to the heart of our Heavenly Father who is constantly in search of lost ones. **Luke 19:10**

2. Evangelism Through Community Groups - How does that look?

Question: Did you know that over 80 percent of all new church members began attending their church because of a friendship with a member of that church?

- a. Relationship are the leading factor in bringing people to a place where their lives can be touched by God's grace and changed forever.
- b. community groups play a key role in reaching spiritually-unconvinced people with the gospel.
- c. Think of community groups as ready-to-go outreach teams.

- d. They serve as training grounds for believers - empowering them to grow in their faith and equipping them with the tools they needed to be witnesses for Christ
- e. I want to encourage you to teach a module on how to share your faith - Ray Comfort
- f. teach them the power of their own testimony - people can argue over many things but it is hard to argue your own experience with God
- g. Community groups also provide visitors with more chances to develop relationships and connection within a church.
- h. CG's not only multiply a church's outlets for evangelism, but they also multiply the entrances into that church's life-changing community.
- i. Another advantage of community group evangelism specifically is that more people will engage in evangelism as a part of a team rather than alone.
- j. It is easier to take risks within the company and support of friends.
- k. Jesus gave us an example of this when he sent the disciples out in pairs to share the Good News (Luke 10:1,2).
- l. Finally, community groups can be the launching center of outreach for many believers who would have otherwise become stagnant if left on their own.
- m. They provide a natural way for believers to engage in relational evangelism with
 - n. friends
 - o. neighbors
 - p. coworkers
 - q. and family members already within their sphere of influence.

3. The Power of Servant Evangelism

Note: Servant evangelism is the practice of reaching people for Christ through loving acts of service.

- a. Generally, these acts are given as gifts to people within the community who lack the time, physical ability, or finances to accomplish them alone.
- b. They are rarely accompanied by specific presentations of the gospel.
- c. Instead, receivers of servant evangelism witness the love of Christ demonstrated through the lives and work of the believers who serve them.
- d. This non-threatening approach to sharing the Good News is conducive to community groups because the scope of many projects requires a team of participants.

deciding projects

- a. the basic idea is to match the specific resources and talents within your group to a specific need in your group's community.
- b. Some projects work better than others depending on the size and personality of the group
- c. so start by presenting a list of viable options to your members. Working together, come to a consensus on what will work best for the group as a whole.
- d. ideally it should take about as long as one of your usual gatherings.
- e. When the day of your project arrives, **remind your members to be real and communicate that what they're doing comes with no strings attached.**

Note: Because discipleship necessarily involves commitment to others, servant evangelism is a great way to prevent a group from turning in on itself and degenerating. It has been observed that "Groups that don't reach outside of themselves don't last long."

They typically turn inward and become consumed with the stress of their own interpersonal problems.

Relational conflict will eventually erode a group from the inside out.”

- f. when your group takes seriously Jesus’ command to love others, they will experience greater connection.
- g. Evangelism leads to great group cohesion and helps increase the faith of group members.
- h. As the leader, if you don’t take the lead in cultivating an outward-orientation to your group’s life, it is very unlikely that somebody else will.
- i. The responsibility to get things started falls to you. So let people know from the beginning that evangelism will be an important part of your community group’s life that will make sure everyone’s experience in the group is healthy and life-changing.

Note: Don’t just give permission to group members to invite their friends-tell them you want them to invite their friends.

Explain how community groups can be crucial in helping each member fulfill his or her calling to make disciples and bring biblical truths to life (1 Peter 2:9-10).

- j. Prayer builds care, and is a great way to encourage evangelism and turn the attention of the group away from its members on a regular basis.
- k. Focus especially on praying for people who already are in the relational circles of group members.
- l. Learn about and pray for the neighborhood where you meet
- m. the needs in your community
- n. ways your church is already reaching out to meet those needs.

4. Spiritual gifts in your community group

- a. a spiritual gift is an empowerment that God gives each believer, according to His grace, for the development of the Body of Christ
- b. we need to remind our group of what ministry is - at it’s most basic it’s loving others
- c. it is serving others with our God-given gifts and abilities
- d. these gifts that God gives us aren’t given for our benefit.
- e. We are called to share them with others (**Rom. 12:6-8**)
- f. so whatever spiritual gifts you may have been given, **God has already commissioned us by His Holy Spirit to give them away**
- g. knowing your spiritual gifts help believers discover their function in the Body of Christ
- h. in a community group, when people know their gifts and use them as a team, they will see God’s power within the group
- i. as group leaders you need to empower your group to use their gifts
- j. to share responsibilities for the group
- k. help them to turn these gifts outward to their neighborhoods, work places etc.
- l. this will help keep the group healthy and balanced

Note: Four passages speak of spiritual gifts:

Romans 12:3-8

I Corinthians 12:4-11 and verse 28

Ephesians 4:7-16

I Peter 4:10, 11

Let's list things that have to happen every time your group meets
room set up - snacks - reminder emails - phone calls - birthdays & anniversaries - clean up - teaching - ministry - prayer - worship

Empowering Group Members to Minister

- m. Empowering your group members means helping them do what God has created and commissioned them to do
- n. A great way you can empower your group members to minister is to ask each person (or couple) in the group to oversee a specific aspect of community group life in keeping with their spiritual gifts.

Here are some things to remember when empowering you group for ministry

1. Explain what you would like to see accomplished
2. why you want to see it accomplished
3. make it clear that there is a role for each person
4. give small responsibilities at first and let them grow into roles over time
5. let people know it is ok to "test drive" a role for a season then change to something else if they want
6. be conscious of your own expectations - instead of pushing, be ready with lots of affirmation and grace

1. **Evangelism**
2. **Evangelism Through Community Groups**
3. **The Power of Servant Evangelism**
4. **Spiritual gifts in your community group**

community groups

definition & purpose

a calvary nexus community group is four to fourteen people with a leader connected to calvary nexus. the group gathers at least every two weeks (optimally every week) to study God's word, worship the Lord, care for one another, love their neighbors and relate as friends. scriptural basis for community groups are in Acts 2:42-47 where we see people gathering together in community, worshiping, learning and changing the world around them.

process

each group leader will select an assistant community group leader. the assistant will lead the group when the leader is not available.

when a group consistently has sixteen people it is time to birth another group. the assistant and several core members will birth another group keeping each group as equal as possible in size.

to promote unity within the groups and church, leaders will be asked to go through a specific topic, study or book during the first part of the calendar year. the topic will be determined by the pastor that oversees community groups.

establishing new groups

new groups will be established through community group sign up opportunities in september and january.

additional sign up opportunities will occur periodically through grow cards and as leaders or specialty groups become available. groups such as dave ramsey financial studies, parenting, marriage, celebrate recovery and foundation of the faith studies.

qualifications of a community group leader

1. demonstrated faith in Jesus Christ
2. working knowledge of the bible and agreement with the distinctives of calvary chapel
3. weekly participation in worship at calvary nexus camarillo
4. teachable spirit and responsiveness to church leadership
5. spiritual, social and emotional well-being
6. facilitator not a lecturer
7. shepherd's heart, cares for his flock

training of a community group leader

1. a six week training course to prepare individuals to lead a community group of their own.
2. the training will help alleviate any fear answer any questions and provide hands on experience.
3. training will consist of 1 1/2 hours per week of class time for six weeks. after training the prospective leader meet with the community group pastor to evaluate the next step in leading a group
4. after completing the requirements the new community group leader will lead a group of his own or if one is not available they might have opportunity assist a group until one is available.
5. each student will be required to read Calvary Distinctives by Chuck Smith and Spiritual Leadership by Henry Blackaby



Seven Mistakes of New Community Group Leaders

And how to avoid them when you're in the hot seat
1 Corinthians 3:6-7

Below you will find seven common pitfalls that new group leaders often encounter along the life-changing path of community group leadership. Just know that mistakes are bound to happen- and that's okay. God is not looking for "perfect performance," but rather hearts that want to love Him and others.

1. Not Being Yourself

Authenticity is the key to success as a community group leader. In general, people won't put up for long with a small group where members aren't genuine with each other-we all have better ways to spend our time each week. And the greatest influence on the authenticity within a community group is arguably how real the community group leader behaves within the group. Does he confess sins and admit faults, or does he try to project an image of perfection? Does she ask for help when times are tough, or does she try to soldier on?

The health of the small group is directly linked to the degree of freedom that members have to be themselves, and that starts with the leader.

John Ortberg states it well: "You cannot be fully loved if you are not fully known. You can only be completely loved if you are completely known." People want to go someplace where they are loved for who they are rather than who they feel they have to be. Group participants follow the lead of the community group leader in this way more than they realize, so demonstrated vulnerability from leadership has tremendous "imprinting power" that can ensure the health of the group for the life of the group.

2. Carrying Too Much

The greatest preventable mistake made by community group leaders comes when they try to carry too much-the "I'll just do it myself" syndrome. There are three main ways this happens:

- Not identifying a co-leader. We must follow the examples of Jesus and the apostle Paul by developing co-leaders to help us ministry (Luke 6:12-13; 2 Timothy 2:2). Simply put, the impact of your leadership is increased exponentially with the support of co-leaders. They lighten your load and provide backup and perspective in facilitation. Additionally, other leaders are needed if a group plans to

manage their growth by sub-grouping or multiplying so that more people can be reached and included

-Not asking participants to take ownership of different aspects of the community group's life. Group leaders can save a lot of time and mental energy just by finding an administratively-gifted member to take care of follow-up phone calls, contact information, and tracking birthdays and anniversaries.

-Not facilitating discussions. Group leaders can fall into a trap when they define themselves as teachers-as someone charged to become an expert on a subject and then create an interesting and educational "lesson" for each group meeting. Instead, group leaders should view themselves as facilitators. They need to be prepared, yes, but the entire burden for working through a curriculum should never rest on one set of shoulders.

3. Failure to Cultivate an Outward-Orientation to Group Thinking.

The vast majority of community groups are naturally introverted-they are self-focused. This can be healthy when strong interpersonal bonds are developed. But group leaders make a mistake when they fail to see how critical it is to be *intentional* about directing people's awareness *outside* of the group.

A group that is turned in on itself for too long becomes ineffective not only in discipleship, but also in evangelism. There are two main reasons for this. First, prolonged introversion dries out a group's dynamic, breeds interpersonal conflict over trivial issues, and results in an unhealthy self-centeredness. All of those things can paralyze group outreach. Second, theologically speaking, discipleship and evangelism feed into each other (Matthew 28:19-20). If the community-group leader is not deliberate about nurturing an outward-orientation to the group, the bond of community slowly atrophies and eventually the group implodes.

A simple way for a group to start becoming more outwardly focused is to intentionally pray for the unsaved friends and family of group members. Such prayers stimulate God's grace, and groups that serve as conduits for an outward flow of that grace remain healthy. Conversely, groups that hoard God's grace turn sour.

4. The Need to Finish Bad Curriculum

Sometimes community group curriculum kills small groups. Here's a rule of thumb: if something is not working, can it. Move on to something else. When you do move on, it is important to explore as a group what people are interested in and what will work.

I recommend avoiding community group curriculum that is voluminous, that requires a lot of "homework," that is corny or one-dimensional, or that is chalk-full of leading questions and fill-in-the-blanks. Instead, look for curriculum that engages people's minds, stimulates interaction, and builds relationships. Here's another rule of thumb: if you're not getting feedback on a specific study, people probably don't like it. Most group members who don't like a community group curriculum tend not to tell the small-group leader-they grin and brea it, or else vote with their feet and stop attending.

5. Losing the Creative Edge

Don't lose your creative edge when leading a small group-keep things fresh. Be spontaneous in changing your group's routine. Be sure to have social outings together that are just for fun. Find ways to mix things up with each new season.

It's also important to continually develop all of your church's core purposes or values in our group's life together. You will never be able to perfectly balance or experience all of them in every gathering, but as you grow them together over time, your group will grow in new and healthy ways.

6. Being Inflexible

If you could view a chart of your group's growth and connection over time, you wouldn't see a straight line. The ups and downs of life would have had their impact, creating starts and stops. Let them. There's no schedule you have to keep, so take the time to let your group members love on each other instead of rigidly trying to stick with a pre-planned agenda.

For example, when members are going through a hard season, your group should take the time to stop, listen, and pray for them. When crises come, call an emergency meeting. Or cancel an existing meeting to celebrate a triumph. By allowing for a natural ebb and flow to when and how your group gathers, you build its resiliency and create an organic structure that fits in with your participants' lives. In turn, they'll sense what you're doing, appreciate it, and make more room in their lives for the group.

7. Failure to Recognize Your Group's Uniqueness

As a leader, it's vital that you take the time to learn who is in your group. This starts with your first gathering when you talk about what you'll be doing together as a group and learn about those who came. Here are some questions keep in mind for each group member:

- Who are they? What are their personal passions, professions, and other interests?
- How long have they been at your church?
- What are they hoping to gain from the small group?

This initial conversation influences the way in which your group engages with your upcoming study. Always be listening to what people have to say and where they're at spiritually.

Remember the basic principle: Your community group will be healthy when people feel loved. This isn't all up to you as the leader, but you are a primary catalyst for it. And don't forget about God. A community group leader is the person who takes the lead in creating and maintaining an environment where biblical community can thrive, but it's God who does the actual growing (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).