

| Groups on Mission |

Go Together

A common misconception of being on mission is that you as an individual are solely responsible for reaching everyone around you as a renegade cowboy Christian. Thankfully, this is not the case. Jesus has given us each other. The church is God's means to save the world, and we are a body with different skill sets and opportunities. This is where our Community Groups come in. Community Groups allow us to approach building relationships together in much the same way that Jesus did. As we see opportunities in our everyday lives, we can invite others in our group to tag along. And as those relationships grow stronger with non-believers, you have an easy invite into the rhythms that your Community Group has already established. The "go-to" and "invite-in" model of Jesus can be accomplished through our groups.

We simply work together. You may be socially awkward, but Tom is great at having conversations with complete strangers. He is an amazing listener and conversationalist that always makes people feel welcome. You may not be comfortable inviting friends to hang out at a Fireflies game, but Courtney always works to bring people with her. But Tom and Courtney both may feel very inept to share the gospel with people, but you love to tell people about Jesus in a way that regularly sees people become Christians. We aren't meant to do mission alone. Sometimes we have to, and God empowers us for those moments. But God's primary design is that the church moves forward as our gifts complement each other when we reach out to our city as a community in the normal rhythms of life.

Rhythms and Mission

Rhythms are the intentional ways that you share life with your group in a given week or month. This will include attending the Gathering together and having a group meeting time, but it may also include a monthly guy's poker night, a Thursday lunch for all the girls in the group, and regularly eating at Reggae Grill to build relationships with each other and the staff at that restaurant. Not only are rhythms helpful for building strong, family relationships among the people in your Community Group, but they are excellent avenues for inviting the people that you interact with in normal, everyday life to spend time with you. This is where being groups on mission allows each person to use their natural giftings. Here is an example shared from one of our Community Group Leaders:

"Phoebe and Dalton worked together at Booster and through getting to know each other, Dalton shared how his girlfriend, Cassie, was struggling with needing a solid community. Dalton connected Phoebe and Cassie and the two started meeting up and getting to know each other. Eventually, Cassie started coming to Phoebe's Community Group and their girls nights. Through this she started building more relationships with the girls in the group and began opening up about some serious anxiety issues. Cassie had grown up in church and was raised as a Christian but she was struggling with applying her faith in Christ when issues would arise. KD and Kelly, two other girls in the group, had also struggled with anxiety and together got to walk

her through how to surrender and trust Jesus through the trials she was facing. Through Community Group, Cassie learned how to walk in vulnerability and victory over her anxiety. When it came time to choose a job, she had two options: to teach at a school back home in Spartanburg or at a school in Columbia. She chose the school in Columbia and ended up moving two houses away from Phoebe and Kelly because she saw how important and vital community was to her walk with The Lord. At her new school, she met another teacher Katie and started inviting her to Community Group. Katie and her husband had moved to Columbia from Charleston and have been looking for a community for over a year now. Katie realized that Phoebe was also in her Adult League Soccer Team and started coming to Community Group. Cassie remains excited about inviting people into her life and church family to see what God has done through her by walking in vulnerability with her community.”

By having regular and impromptu rhythms, this Community Group had several avenues to invite both Cassie and Katie to spend time with them. Then, everyone in the group was able to use their giftings in unique ways to help both of them take steps towards Jesus. ***See the “Rhythms” section for more help***

Serving and Mission

The reason that we stress the importance of everyday mission for our church family is because often people in Christian circles only view mission as serving, like helping at a soup kitchen or volunteering at the local Boys and Girls Club. Being on mission certainly includes serving, but it is not disconnected from the normal rhythms of everyday life for you personally or your group. If the goal of our mission from Jesus is to make disciples, it will be difficult to do so by simply handing somebody a bowl of soup. We truly believe that serving is a good way to make disciples, but it likely will not be of the people that are being served. It will actually be the people in your group or that you have invited along to help that will be growing as disciples. Helping teachers oversee a study hall at a local school once per week might not make disciples of the students, but the people who volunteer will certainly be growing. This is how we see Jesus making disciples - those being served didn't always stay with him or grow as his disciples, but those who served alongside of him certainly did.

If a Community Group commits to serving a specific group of people or location on a continual basis, they will then have the opportunity to begin walking in the normal rhythms of life with them. At this point, all of the same principles from the above “Rhythms and Mission” section get to take effect. Rather than just helping the teachers oversee study hall to serve the students, by intentionally serving for an extended period of time, you can now invite them to have dinner with you and your roommates, who just happen to all be a part of the same group. Serving long term leads to relationship building.

Having a Who

To help our groups have tangible handles for mission, we encourage all of our groups to have a

“who” - some group they intentionally focus their time and energy on for the purpose of mission. Serving your “who” could be volunteering at a soup kitchen, food bank, or children’s hospital. It could be hanging out at a specific place on a regular basis. It could be simply all the members of a group leveraging their time to build relationships with non-believers you already know in the context of community (for example: if a person in your group is very relational and has twenty-five friends who don’t know Jesus, rally behind them to throw parties and build relationships with their friends). Ideally though, these groups would include people your Community Group members can build relationships with and begin to walk through life alongside. Some real examples include the faculty, students, and parents of Glenforest School, the tenants at Canalside Lofts, a kickball team, and the new construction neighborhood where a Community Group is hosted.

Here are three ways that your group can begin to have a “who”:

1. Choose a Place/People to Serve - Glenforest School, Local Apartments or Elementary School
2. Have a Third Space - Local Restaurant, Skate Park, MUV Fitness
3. Rally Behind Group Relationships - Throw parties to invite friends, Intentional meals together

Helpful Tip: When “Reviewing the Mission” with your Community Group, two helpful questions to ask are: “Who are you building with? How can we help?” This ensures that your group is emphasizing the need to be actively seeking to build relationships with people around them while also providing the chance for others in the group to help out.

Pray - Build - Invite - Engage

As your group seeks to be everyday missionaries in our city, it is helpful to lay out steps for your Community Group to take as they build relationships with their friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers.

1. Pray

- Pray for all the people you interact with in normal, everyday life.
- Pray for specific people that your group knows who need Jesus.
- Pray that God would open doors for the gospel to be shared.
- Pray for direction on how to best engage people around you.
- Pray for the hearts of those in your group to have compassion on the lost.

2. Build

- Go out of your way to build relationships with the people you see at work.
- Speak to your neighbors when you see them in the neighborhood.
- Spend your time at school intentionally trying to make new friends.
- Look for open doors in small encounters (waiter at a restaurant, gas station attendant, person standing beside you in line at the DMV).
- Meet the needs of the people around you as a way to serve.

- Rally behind the people in your group who are natural connectors (lots of friends and outgoing).

3. Invite

- Throw parties that your group can invite the people they've been intentionally building relationships with.
- Ask them to come hang out during your group meeting time or a Gathering.
- Invite people into the established and impromptu rhythms of your group.
- **See the "Rhythms" section for more help.**

4. Engage

- Actively seek to help non-believers take their next step toward Jesus.
- As a group, share the gospel and disciple them as a new believer.
- Encourage the people you are building with to invite their friends into what you are doing together.