

| Why Groups? |

Ever since Adam and Eve rebelled, the world has been devastatingly marred by sin and death. Jesus came to reset what was broken and conquer sin and death on humanity's behalf through his finished work on the cross. From there his plan was simple: take a group of men, show them how to follow him, and send them out to proclaim this news while teaching others how to follow, too. Basically, "Go do with others what I've been doing with you. Make disciples and represent me to the rest of the world."

The Church is God's plan to change the world. He accomplished our salvation through the cross and has commissioned his people, the Church, to spread the message that hope is found in Jesus alone (Matthew 28:18-20, 2 Corinthians 5:14-21). The church fulfills this mission by making disciples - genuine followers of Jesus who live out the gospel in relationships on mission in everyday life. We believe that we can best fulfill this call in Community Groups.

Most people are familiar with some type of group that exists in a religious context - Sunday School, bible studies, women's groups, men's groups, youth groups - but often the examples we are familiar with are a hollow reflection of what we see in the early church.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers...and all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. - Acts 2:42-47

God designed the Church to be so much more than a once-a-week meeting. Through the gospel, Jesus has radically changed us and brought us into a new family. This changes everything. Community Groups are the core of our church family. They are where we live out our vision of being a gospel-centered community on mission. We believe being part of a Community Group is the best way to experience the gospel no matter who you are, so we want everyone to join one.

When we apply the **gospel** of Jesus to all of life, we begin to take part in God's work to redeem the earth. When we join in genuine **community**, made into a new family by what Jesus has accomplished for us on the cross, we are taking part in God's ultimate reconciliation of sinful man with himself. When we join **on mission** to see people come to know Jesus, we are helping change the world. Jesus is working to redeem and save the world. He doesn't need us, but by his grace, he has chosen to use the Church to accomplish his mission for his glory.

| Disciple Making |

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

Go and Make Disciples

This is why we are here. This is why the church exists globally and specifically, why this church exists in West Columbia, South Carolina. Being gospel-centered and being community are only fully implemented when they do not terminate on us. Those characteristics should naturally lead to mission. Being gospel-centered leads us into the belief that we need community; being gospel-centered in the context of community focuses us outward into God's mission. People who have been changed by the gospel and invited into a new family should reach out to share that joy and bring others in. If we are satisfied with insular behavior where we only grow deeper as a group without multiplying out as well, we have missed the point altogether.

Making disciples involves more than just converting non-Christians - in order to *make* disciples, we have to *be* disciples. So what is a disciple?

A disciple is a genuine follower of Jesus in everyday life. Jesus is our Teacher so we apply the gospel to all of life. This means, as we study his word, we follow in repentance and obedience. God is our Father, therefore- we love his church, which consists of our new brothers and sisters, as we seek to foster relationships with fellow believers while sacrificing our time and money for the benefit of the Church both locally and globally. The Holy Spirit has filled us and empowered the Church for God's work, so we love his mission and live to point others to him while making more disciples.

Disciples are Made in Community

We believe that Community Groups form the best context for being disciples and making disciples. Group members should help one another grow by pointing out giftedness, encouraging one another, and confronting sin.

In our intense devotion to groups, we are trying to emulate the way Jesus made disciples and the way the early church spread after his resurrection. Discipleship in the early church was life on life - eating together, worshiping together, walking together - and our goal is to be the same. Mission certainly includes inviting your coworkers to a gathering on Sunday, but it is much more than that - it is being invested in their lives and consistently pointing them toward Jesus in daily conversations. As a group leader, through practicing and modeling faithfulness, your goal is to help people genuinely follow Jesus in the everyday stuff of life - having their wallets, schedules, and life goals all dramatically affected by the

gospel. Remember: you are not alone. We make disciples in the context of community, so invite your community group in on what you're doing to build relationships with those around you.

The Multiplication of Healthy Groups

Making disciples means making genuine followers of Christ who pursue other people in their daily lives. It involves spurring fellow Christians on toward Jesus and pushing non-Christians closer to beginning their relationship with him. We believe that the best way that we can fulfill the call of making disciples is through the multiplication of healthy groups by more people meeting Jesus and more group leaders being trained. The multiplication of healthy groups is how we fulfill the call placed on us by God. This is the point of everything else we do. We exist as a gospel-centered community on mission for the sole purpose of making disciples of Jesus. If we fail to make disciples, we cease to be the church.

| Community Group Leader Job Description |

What are the characteristics of a Group Leader?

Here is what we'll be looking for throughout this process:

Character

Do you love Jesus and hate sin? Are you actively praying and reading scripture? Is your life characterized by repentance? Do you love Jesus' Church? Do you love Jesus' mission? Group Leaders serve in a deacon role in our church family; as a Leader-in-Training, you will be tested as a deacon (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Capacity

Do you have the time? Do you have the mental/emotional energy?

Competency

Do you have the necessary skills? Can you articulate the gospel? Are you a good model of discipleship? If people joined you in life would they learn what it means to be "gospel-centered community on mission"?

Calling

Do you feel a desire to do this? Do you see the value in it? Are you willing and excited to serve here or are you dragging your feet?

What does a group leader do?

Model

Jesus says, "Come follow me..." Paul says, "Follow me as I follow Christ" - this is the heart behind group leading. You are following Jesus and inviting others to come along with you. In some ways being a group

leader is like having a cooking show. You know how to cook (follow Jesus for our purposes) now all you have to do is narrate what you're doing. "Here's what I'm doing - here's why we do this." You follow Jesus and you set the table and prop the door for whoever wants to join. If they join you, they'll grow and they'll learn how to follow Jesus too. As a group leader, you get to set the example. Your primary role is to model the life of a Jesus follower.

Train and Disciple

As a group leader, your role is to make disciples who make disciples. Your primary role is to equip your Leader in Training (LIT). If you don't no one will. Then, along with your LIT, you work so that all the elements that lead to health are present in your group. Your role is not to do everything by yourself. You actually hinder the growth of your LIT and the other people in your group by doing everything. It's good to let people take responsibility (and even fail) as they grow in what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. You may not always facilitate discussion, lead the charge on care issues, or organize all the group mission efforts - you get to empower others to use their gifts in the context of your group and ensure that your group has the environment in which to be a gospel-centered community on mission.

Build with those who want it

You can't make people follow Jesus. So you model it. You set the table and prop the door - then whoever wants to join will get the opportunity to grow. You pour your time into them. They get your extra time. Whoever wants to be around, take part in group rhythms, join you on mission - that's who you'll equip and train. One of the ways we communicate this idea is "You don't get seconds until you've had firsts" which means: If you won't come to something as simple as our group meeting time you won't get any extra time.

Guard the Vision

Your job is to lead in what it means to be a follower of Christ. In connection with your LIT, you model for your group what being gospel-centered community on mission looks like. As a group leader, you will help lead and shepherd 4-20 adults as they seek to follow Jesus in normal everyday life. You facilitate and organize your group in a way that fosters health and flourishing. You serve your group in the midst of sin, drama, and pain, caring for those in your group and leading your group to care for one another. You will invite your group to join you as missionaries in our city.

Lead

Leaders lead. It is not your job to do everything, but you are supposed to make decisions, cast vision, plan for the future of your group, speak up, and wade into relational drama. Your job is to love Jesus, his church, and his mission enough to fight for the health of your group.

Shepherd

Groups are the frontline of pastoral care. This is not your primary role, but it is the job of all Christians to love and care for one another. You'll lead your group in this. Your group will be the first responders when it comes to pain, sin, repentance, and interpersonal conflict. Christians are designed to serve one another and shepherd one another. As a group leader, you will walk with people through the normal

messes of life while pointing them to Jesus and rallying your group to be family for them in the midst of struggle and pain.

Repent

Your job isn't to be awesome. You need Jesus just like your group does. Your job isn't to have it all together or to be the hero. You're going to sin. You're going to struggle. You're going to have doubt, and that's okay. You are going to lead poorly. Don't hide or pretend around your group. Just be you in love with Jesus and thankful for his grace provided through the gospel. This is part of how you teach your group what the gospel is and how it applies to their lives.

Expectations:

Leading Your Community Group

- **Be gospel-centered:** Point group members to Jesus in everything
- **Set the culture of confession and repentance:** Make confession and repentance a normal rhythm for your group. Go first and set the example. Give the gift of going 2nd.
- **Rhythms:** Develop and Maintain healthy group rhythms
 - **LIT Meeting (1x month):** Intentional time spent with your LIT to pray, plan, and coach
 - **Group Meeting Time (1x week):** Have a regularly set time to share a meal, study the Bible, repent, and care for one another
 - **Gatherings (1x week):** Be regular and committed to Sunday Gatherings
 - **Family Rhythms (1x month):** Have fun together outside of group meeting time
 - **Mission Rhythms (1x month):** Have a group of people you are intentionally pursuing and set your rhythms around them whenever possible

Pray regularly for each of your group members

Leader Meetings

- Attend Community Group Leader Meetings.
- Come prepared by reading any books/articles assigned.

Coach Relationship

- Have regular meetings with your Coach
- Be in communication with your Coach about what is happening in your Community Group.
- Make sure your Coach is your first point of contact for most Community Group situations.
- Be open and honest with your Coach about wins/struggles.

Training Community Group Leaders

- Build up leaders who can lead Community Groups.
- Spend extra time with them outside of your group meeting time.
- Bring them to Community Group Leader Meetings.
- Go over the Leader-in-Training process with them.

All group leaders are considered Deacons for our church family. Therefore as a group leader you will be expected to meet and maintain Deacon qualifications:

| Deacon Qualifications |

Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 3:8-13

- *Deacons* - literally means “Servants” - your primary role in our church as a Group Leader is a servant
- *Dignified* - honorable, easily looked up to, not crass or vulgar, a role model
- *Not Double-tongued* - not saying one thing to someone and another to someone else, not trying to make yourself look better or wear a mask, when you confess sin you confess fully without trying to put spin on it
- *Not addicted to much wine* - any current addictions?
- *Not greedy for dishonest gain* - not focused solely on money, upright in your approach to it, currently giving to Mill City, actively being generous to others
- *Hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience* - understand the gospel, be willing to have disagreements over minor issues - i.e. allow for some mystery
- *Let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless* - take some time to let them walk in the given role prior to it becoming official
- *Their wives likewise* - or “women likewise” - same word in Greek given the context we believe this is a better rendering
- *Must be dignified* - see above
- *Not slanderers* - talking about people behind their backs, lying about people, gossip
- *Sober-minded* - rational, not flighty, not overly emotional
- *Faithful in all things* - life characterized by faithfulness, commitment, and diligence
- *Husband of one wife* - or “one woman man” - flirty? struggles with pornography and lust? pursuing your spouse?
- *Managing their children and their own households well* - children are disciplined and household isn’t characterized by drama or chaos
- *For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus* - this is worth giving energy and effort towards