

Community Groups

Recommended practices

Objective: God has called the church to be a new kind of people, a 'holy nation' in the midst of this 'present evil age.' This is biblical community, and it is seen in passages like Acts 2:42-47. The elders believe **Community Groups** are a helpful vehicle for encouraging this community, enabling the church to **share life together** beyond Sunday mornings (1 Thess 2:8). As we grow into these groups, know that the elders exist to equip and encourage you. Please let us know if you have any questions. What follows are suggested **principles** and **practices** to regularly integrate into your gatherings:

Discipleship: Our growth in grace and truth is not mechanical. It is pursued purposefully, through means proscribed by Scripture, and in community. A maturing disciple is one who believes in the Lord, is faithfully following Him, becoming more like Him, and is making other disciples. Community Groups are one vehicle at Mulford for pursuing discipleship.

Scripture: Scripture is the foundation of our faith and is sufficient for the Christian life (Rom 10:17, 2 Tim 3:16-17). Discipleship begins and ends with the Word of God. We want the groups to be a place where believers encourage one another to apply the truths of Scripture. We hope that our groups forge deeper bonds of fellowship as through study the Word. Possible resources include:

- Leader-guided discussion of books of the Bible.
- Study-guide assisted studies of books of the Bible. e.g., *N. T. Wright for Everyone*, *MacArthur Bible Studies*, *Knowing the Bible* series from Crossway, *For You* series from The Good Book Company.
- Book studies, e.g., *Knowing God* by J. I. Packer, *Multiply* by Francis Chan.
- Video Studies, e.g., *Secret Church* w/ David Platt, *Gospel in Life* w/ Timothy Keller
- Please let the elders know what your group is studying.

Fellowship: Fellowship goes beyond a social connection: it is a mutuality in Christ, a sharing of our time, goods, and lives with one another (Heb 10:24-25). It requires a unity in both the love and cause of Christ. Fellowship opportunities may include:

- Community group, itself, as an expression of fellowship.
- Serving one another, and serving alongside one another.
- Social events, like going out to eat or attending an event.

Prayer: God speaks to us in his Word, we speak to him through our prayers (Luke 18:1). In prayer, we give thanks to God, ask for his will to be done, and cast our worries upon him. Some suggested methods of prayer include:

- Traditional time for individual prayer requests and corporate prayer.
- Praying Scripture or using prayer books like *Valley of Vision*.
- Breaking up into smaller groups for prayer (e.g., one-on-one, men and women, etc).

Accountability: Accountability is the mutual commitment to encouragement, spiritual discipline, and sanctification (Gal 6:1-2). It is rooted in the recognition that we are prone to be lax in the practice of our faith and need encouragement from one another. Some possible accountability questions to ask, perhaps when the group divides into men and women, include:

- In what particular ways have you grown in your understanding of the Christian life since we last met?
- How have you grown in your practice of the Christian life since we last met?
- Are you disappointed in your own pursuit of holiness? If so, explain?
- Have you had time of regularly private worship in God's Word?
- How, specifically, can I pray for you?

Missions and Evangelism: The aim of missions and evangelism is to share the Good News of Jesus Christ, that God may be glorified among the nations (Mt. 28:18-20). The gospel calls for all believers to be engaged in this work, not merely those in pastoral ministry or with particular 'spiritual gifts.' We desire to see the church doing the work of the ministry, with much of this ministry carried out at the Community Group level. Possible outreach opportunities:

- Taking a Community Group mission trip, domestically or internationally.
- Coming alongside a para-church ministry like Pregnancy Resources or Fellowship of Christian Athletes.
- Actively engaging your friends, neighbors, or co-workers through Community Group hosted functions.