

Opening: Open Each Community Group Meeting by Reading the Community Grp Summary

What is a Community Group at Trinity Presbyterian Church?

Community Groups are basic Christian communities. Believing that getting to know Jesus and falling in love with him are activities best carried out in a community context, Community Groups provide that context. They are gatherings of 6 to 12 people meeting in homes and apartments throughout the city during the week. In Community Groups, people come to know God and to experience His presence, community is developed and fostered, and people are nurtured, equipped and released for God's work in the world. They provide an opportunity for intimacy, mutual support, practical love and service, learning about the Christian faith, prayer, and sharing of what we see God doing in our midst.

What is the Purpose of Community Groups?

A place to meet and experience Jesus Christ in our midst through mutual ministry

A place for fellowship and friendship

A place where gifts are exercised

A place to discover Christianity

What happens during a Community Group Meeting?

Worship – Experiencing the Worth of God and freely giving ourselves to Him

Sharing – Learning to tell the story of our journey with God

Sermon Application – Reflecting together on what God has given us from His Word during Corporate Worship

Prayer – Talking with God

Mission – Having experienced God's love, we now go to love our neighbor with the love we have from God

How do they fit in at Trinity as a whole?

Community Groups are the *primary place for pastoral care at Trinity*. Churches do one of two things: They either practice systematic care and encouragement of the congregation or systematic neglect of the congregation. Our network of community groups is the means through which we seek to practice the former. While some congregations may have small groups, our congregation is small groups. Our network of Community groups serves as the nervous system of our church. In them, the gospel is used to motivate people towards a richer relationship with God. In them, the gospel is used as a balm to apply to the wounds we incur in this broken world. In them, the gospel is used to call and motivate people into the service of God's kingdom: In response to God's grace, people are urged to develop lives of moral beauty, integrity and other-centeredness and to discover and use their gifts to carry out ministry both within the congregation and to the world.

The Context of Change: The Worshiping Community

Worshiping God enables us to see the beauty of God and the beauty of godliness. When we worship, we find that our love for God deepens and the hold that other things have on us loosen. When we worship, we find that it changes what we want: we want God and we want to please him more than we want and desire other things. Regularly worshipping God with the larger church, in small groups and on a daily basis as an individual is indispensable if our lives are to change.

Growth by Multiplying New Groups

Trinity's primary vision is that by multiplying groups we are able to increase our capability as a church to care for people. When people are not involved in significant Christian relationships, like Community Groups, it greatly inhibits Christian maturity. Currently many of our friends at Trinity fall outside this kind of caring and encouraging community. For this reason, we consider it imperative to develop new leaders and expand the number of groups. We are not concerned with multiplying groups as an end in itself. We want to increase the number of groups because we want to provide quality personal care and community life for those who are part of our network of friends. As long as we have too few groups, Trinity, Lakeland and Polk County will fail to be as effective as we might be. If we are going to be successful at multiplying groups, then we will need to cast a vision that will make people enthusiastic and committed to these things. If this vision casting is neglected, the resistance to multiplying groups will prove too strong to overcome.

Warm Up (OPTIONAL) - Read Sermon Passage and Corporate Worship Themes

We read the sermon passage, storyline and themes to warm our hearts and minds to remember what God has spoken to us in our time together Sunday morning.

The Storyline – From Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret - (pp. 159-161). Kindle Edition.

I love this book and this particular section changed my life.

The joy that had come to Mr. Taylor in his spiritual experience seems to have been deepened rather than hindered by the exigencies of the time. His letter-book reveals not so much the pressure of difficulties and problems as the full tide of blessing that carried him through all. To Miss Desgraz he wrote, for example, in the middle of June, after carefully answering her letter about Yangchow affairs:

And now I have the very passage for you, and God has so blessed it to my own soul! John 7:37-39 - “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.” Who does not thirst? Who has not mind-thirsts, heart-thirsts, soul-thirsts or body-thirsts? Well, no matter which, or whether I have them all “Come unto me and” remain thirsty? Ah no! “Come unto me and drink.” What, can Jesus meet my need? Yes, and more than meet it. No matter how intricate my path, how difficult my service; no matter how sad my bereavement, how far away my loved ones; no matter how helpless I am, how deep are my soul-yearnings - Jesus can meet all, all, and more than meet. He not only promises me rest - ah, how welcome that would be, were it all, and what an all that one word embraces! He not only promises me drink to alleviate my thirst. No, better than that! “He who trusts Me in this matter (who believeth on Me, takes Me at My word) out of him shall flow ...”

Can it be? Can the dry and thirsty one not only be refreshed - the parched soil moistened, the arid places cooled - but the land be so saturated that springs well up and streams flow down from it? Even so! And not mere mountain-torrents, full while the rain lasts, then dry again ... but “from within him shall flow rivers” - rivers like the mighty Yangtze, ever deep, ever full. In times of drought brooks may fail, often do, canals may be pumped dry, often are, but the Yangtze never. Always a mighty stream, always flowing deep and irresistible!

“Come unto me and drink,” [he wrote in another June letter]. Not, come and take a hasty draught; not, come and slightly alleviate, or for a short time remove one’s thirst. No! “drink,” or “be drinking” constantly, habitually. The cause of thirst may be irremediable. One coming, one drinking may refresh and comfort: but we are to be ever coming, ever drinking. No fear of emptying the fountain or exhausting the river! How sorely the comfort of Christ would be needed by his own heart that very summer, he little realized when writing; but the One he was trusting in a new and deeper way did not fail him.

Themes

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|--------------|-----------|
| • Invitation | • Garden |
| • What | • Seek |
| • Who | • Call |
| • Come | • Forsake |
| • Buy | • Return |
| • Eat | • Listen |
| • Rich Food | • Pride |
| • Desert | • Fear |

1. Launchers:

- Where do you seek comfort?

2. Worship God – As He reveals our need and we seek His plan.

God is gracious to discover our need and His solution. Read this letter written by Jack Miller. Reflect on God's work to humble and bless you. Seek Him. Turn and return to Him. Pray to Him. Listen to Him. Follow hard after Him.

Where do you seek comfort? A Letter from Jack Miller to a friend whose husband has been fired from his position of pastor at their church.

Dear Pam,

This Saturday morning, I have been praying for you and for your family. I want to be able to pray effectively for you, and I think I can pray most effectively if I share with you what I have been asking from God. The first thing I have been asking is that all of you may have unity, and oneness as a family in discovering God's purpose in what has happened. But I think that a great hindrance in discovering and following God's will is our difficulty in believing that His will is good-and good for me. We need to learn to love God's will if we are to be mature believers, but we can hardly love His will if inside ourselves we have not been persuaded that His will is for our good and is itself a good will.

I was in a very shattering experience in Uganda a few months ago, lost in the dark in a small boat during a storm on Lake Victoria. The whole thing seemed senseless, going from bad to worse, without prayers being answered. In the blackness and the rain and the utter misery of the cold, my last comfort was the sound of the Johnson outboard motor. I asked God to keep it going, and hardly asked for it when off it went. We were adrift, very literally powerless, directionless, and exposed to who knows what, including pirates who prowl the seas of the lake. There was just God, seemingly battering us. I don't know how to interpret it all, but I do know that as the water sloshed over my feet, there was a kind of message in it, one that I didn't like. It was simply that God was still a God of infinite love and compassion, but not according to my ideas, but to His; and I had to see that I was not in any way in the same league with Him. Only as I submitted my proud heart to His Bigness and Majesty and Will could I really experience His love.

I don't know if any of that makes sense to you, but it comes down to God's insistence that He is God and only in my accepting that can I know Him. What this has led me to see is a second thing. It is the necessity of stopping, being patient, waiting, listening to God, right in the circumstances that overwhelm, right where I am tempted to feel left out and hurt. There I meet His grace as He meets me in silence. I need the silence; I need the time without easy answers that I may see that God's Fatherhood is not something simply for me to use, but a love of heart to heart and the willingness to walk with Him no matter what is happening.

I hope this makes sense. Life is inescapably a way of pain. The only question finally is where we seek our comfort. If we seek our comfort in the Father of Lord Jesus Christ, then we will know joy and fulfillment beyond anything we ever imagined. In the darkness a plan will begin to emerge. The plan must not be rushed, but it will come. It is much too early for me to presume to suggest what I believe it maybe for your family, but be sure it is there, waiting to be discerned through a time of learning to wait and listen to His teaching voice.

I know that an earthly mind cannot grasp heavenly dealings, and my prayer is that you will together be given a mind that understands heavenly dealings.

Cordially in Christ,
Jack Miller

3. Sermon Reflection:

Title: Isaiah: His Miraculous Invitation

Text: Isaiah 55

Introduction:

- What are your can't miss invitations?
- What are your automatic throw away invites?

His Beautiful Invitation –

What makes an invitation important? The who and the what

- In Isaiah 55, who is doing the inviting?
- What is He inviting you to?

What do the gifts signify?

- Water
- Milk
- Wine

How do these block us from accepting His offer?

- Pride
- Fear

Our Foolish Deviation

Where do you seek pleasure and comfort?

- When you seek pleasure or comfort in what God has made or in your own pursuits what are the results? What do you become?
- When you seek pleasure and comfort in God what are the results? What do you become?
- Are you hungry for righteousness?
 - Will you seek Him?
 - Will you call to Him?
 - Will you forsake all others?
 - Will you return to Him?
 - Will you listen to Him?

The Promise of Transformation

Where has God turned a garden to a desert to get your attention?

Where has God turned a desert into a garden to demonstrate His transformative love?

4. Kingdom Centered Prayer:

You can pray with us:

1. Worship the Father for His beautiful invitation! Celebrate His kindness, mercy and compassion.
2. Do you see your need for Him? In what ways are you investing your time, talent and treasure in what is temporary? Confess your desire to spend and save on that which will not last.

3. Give thanks to God for His merciful pardon. Celebrate that His ways are not like ours! Thank Jesus for the gift of repentance.
 4. Who do you know that is not satisfied? Who do you know that is needy? Pray for them and ask God for an opportunity to tell them about God's miraculous invitation.
 5. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see your need. How can you prioritize listening to His Word this week? Go out in joy and peace for His promise of transformation!
5. **Mission:** Christians on mission pray. They pray for everyone, non-Christians and enemies most of all. Make a list of your not-yet-Christians and then pray for them using the list provided below.

What To Pray For Non-Christians

Ammunition for the most important battle in Evangelism

1. That God draws them to Himself

John 6:4 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him..."

2. That they seek to know God

Acts 17:27 "God did this so that men who seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us."

Deuteronomy 4:29 "But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul."

3. That they believe the Scriptures

1 Thessalonians 2:13. "And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God..."

Romans 10:17 "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."

4. That Satan is bound from blinding them to the truth

Matthew 13:19 "When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart..."

2 Corinthians 4:4 "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

5. That the Holy Spirit works in them

John 16:8-13 "When (the Holy Spirit) comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgement... He will guide you into all truth."

6. That God sends someone to lead them to Christ

Matthew 9:37-38 "Then he said to his disciple, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into the harvest field.'"

7. That they believe in Christ as Savior

John 1:12 "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

8. That they turn from sin

Acts 17:30-31 "... (God) commands all people everywhere to repent."

Acts 3:19 "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord."

9. That They confess Christ as Lord

Romans 10:9-10 "...if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord', and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

10. That they yield all to follow Christ

2 Corinthians 5:15 “And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”

Philippians 3:7-8 “But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ....”

11. That they take root and grow in Christ

Colossians 2:6-7 “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught with thankfulness.”

6. Jesus From Others

Close your time together in letting each person share something they came to love about Jesus from something someone in the group shared during your time together.

- What do you love more about Jesus from what someone shared during our CG tonight?