

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 - 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.

Proclamation of God's Word

Text: Hebrews 11:4; Genesis 4:1-13 (ESV) **Title:** By Faith: Abel

Teacher: Tim Rice

By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. ... Genesis 4:1-13. Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD." ² And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. ³ In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴ and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. ⁶ The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it." ⁸ Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. ⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" ¹⁰ And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. ¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." ¹³ Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear ..."

The Storyline

"Believer" is who we are. "Believing" is what we do. It is our design, and we are gloriously fashioned after our creator God. The decision each of us make is *what or who* we trust. God offers Himself to be the person in whom you trust. God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit and you are invited to believe, to love and to follow Him. It is simply the greatest invitation to the greatest relationship that leads to the greatest adventure that never ends.

Everyone's life speaks. Everyone's faith is a story to be told. Every person's faith tells us a story of their approach to God. Some too good and some too ill but both for us to believe more and more. Everyone's choices tell a story. Every moment a story is being told to grow our faith in God.

God is committed to manifesting his person, purpose and plan. He gives us Cain and Abel to help us believe, trust and rely on His Good design. It is not of us, in us or through us. It is of Him, in Him and through Him that we have been, are and will be saved. Now and forever more. So in whom are you trusting, like Abel are following your own design then you will lose that is what Abel's blood speaks. But if like Cain you trust the way of God and his work you will be saved by the blood that speaks a better word or tells a better story by scrubbing you clean in forgiveness and a flesh torn that declares you righteous.

Themes:

- Faith
- Cain and Abel
- Blood
- Performance vs Grace
- Design
- Stories
- Acceptance
- Approach
- Guilt
- Warning
- Gift / Grace
- Jesus Blood speaks a better word

1. Launcher:

(10 min)

- Who are 5 people in your Hall of Faith? Dead? Living?
- How does their blood (life) still speak to you?

2. Worship: Worship God for His Mercy for Sinners Like US (10 min)

Using the confession from “*Samson Meeting Format” read the highlighted portion together then read and pray praising God for his mercy.

Facilitator: We are a company of Christians and also:

Natural *loners* — who are learning to recognize the dangers of isolation and are determined to escape them,

Natural *wanderers* — who are seeking spiritual peace and prosperity at home,

Natural *liars* — who are now finding freedom in the truth,

Natural *judges* — who are seeking wisdom and discernment,

Natural *strong ones* — who are experiencing God’s strength as we admit our needs and weaknesses.

Psalms 51:1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin... 7 Purge me... and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow... 16 For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

*Samson Society is a fellowship of Christians who are serious about authenticity, community, humility and recovery. Serious, not grave.

Meetings: Days and Times

Men – Mondays and Tuesdays 4p @ Trinity open to all men

Women – Saturdays 10a @ Trinity open to all women

3. Sermon Reflection: (10 min)

Introduction: Context of Hebrews is Jews pressuring Jewish Christians to come back to Judaism

- How does each life, Cain and Abel, encourage Jewish Christians to stay the course of faith in Jesus?

An Already Established Norm – Stories from Parents around the Dinner Table

- What was already known and what stories told (that tells me something):
 - From the Garden
 - Man being alone not good
 - Serpent
 - God’s questions after the fall
 - Weeds
 - Animal Sacrifice
- What is performance faith that fails? What is performance faith that is accepted?
- Motive and Matter – Where are you violating God’s design by doing it your way?

The Problem of Performance – what ripples out when we break from design?

- Where is God speaking to you words of caution and warning but you aren’t listening or can’t hear?

- What area of your life, passions or desires have you gone to God and his response of lack of it has caused your face to fall? What is there to be thankful about in this reaction from God?
- Am I my brother's keeper?
 - How is your sin causing others to sin?
 - How is your faith calling others to faith?

The Sacrifice We Trust – My Guilt to Great to Bear/Bare

- How does the life, death and resurrection of Jesus give you confidence in your approach to God, Our Heavenly Father?
- How does it humble you?
- How does it give you confidence?
- What story does Abel's blood speak?
- What story does Jesus' blood speak?

4. Kingdom Centered Prayer: You Can Pray With Us... (10 min)

1. Adoration: Worship the LORD for His trustworthiness and graciousness to reveal Himself to us. Praise Him, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for His kindness to make known to us His holiness and how we may approach Him!
2. Confession: How have you lived as if your imagination and performance should be good enough for God? Confess your pride and presumption to Jesus, asking Him to forgive you and heal you to trust His word and His work.
3. Thanksgiving: Give thanks to Jesus for His mercy to not crush us in our guilt, but also His holiness to insist that God's justice be satisfied. Thank Him for loving us enough to wash us *and* restore us to the Father's good design.
4. Supplication Others: Who do you know that is demanding or presumptuous? Pray for them, asking the Lord to help them see the folly of their pride, and that He would help them repent and trust Him instead.
5. Supplication Personal: Ask the Holy Spirit to bear in you His fruit of love and faithfulness. Pray that He would secure you by Jesus' commendation (blessing) and empower you with joy to offer His grace and mercy to others.

5. Mission: Do this in remembrance of Me! (10 min)

Jesus' blood cleanses us and our relationships. Jesus' body is energy for the work.

- Think of the week ahead, what relationships need to be cleansed with the blood of Jesus? What guilty memory needs to be scrubbed clean with his blood?
- Think of the work ahead, when will you need strength to endure the race that is set before you? Remember in Jesus' flesh you have right inside you the great "snickers bar" snack that changes everything.

6. Jesus From Others (10 min)

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?