

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.

1. Launchers: Questions to create reflection and connection

- Who are enemies that have loved you well?
- Who are enemies that God has placed in your life for you to love?
- What would developing the skill of “enemy loving love” mean for your relationship with God and then with your neighbor?

2. Worship: While Enemies, Christ died for us, His Enemies

Worship God for His enemy loving love that first loved you and now is in you loving others.
What a God! What a wonder! What a miracle!

Col. 1:21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him

Romans 5:6–11 (ESV)

⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

3. Sermon Reflection:

Matthew 5:43-48; Romans 12:14-21 (Love Your Enemies)

OUR SELFISH NATURE - How does the world’s penchant for retribution make sense?

- Why is it in our nature to seek revenge or believe in retribution? What is wrong with us?
- Why is it not in our nature to love our enemy? What is wrong with us?
- Why does God’s love include love for all, even His enemies? What is wrong with us?

THE MIRACLE OF JESUS’ LOVE - How has Jesus treated us compared with how we deserve to be treated?

- What did it cost Jesus to reconcile the enemies of God?
- Why is enemy loving love a miracle?
- How were you trained to deal with enemies? Growing up? In business? At school?
- God is the only one who can work revenge cuz he is the only one who can do revenge to His glory. What results from your revenge toward another person or God?

AN UNEARTHLY CALL - Why is God’s call for us to love contrary to the world’s standards?

- What will it cost you to love your enemies?
- Who are the enemies you want to take with you to heaven?
- Critical to the task of loving your enemies:
 - #1 Do you know yourself to have been an enemy of God, now redeemed?
 - #2 Do you view all others as equals?
 - #3 Will you martyr, bear witness, to the love of Jesus and hope of eternity to your enemies?

4. Kingdom Centered Prayer:

YOU CAN PRAY WITH US...

1. Worship the LORD for His gracious love and mercy. Praise Him, Father, Son and Holy Spirit for His immeasurable love toward people like us, especially when we have been so selfish and vile!
2. How have you lived with pride and a lack of mercy for those who have opposed you? Confess your sin to Jesus – *to think more highly of yourself than you should* – asking Him to cleanse you and change you.
3. Give thanks to Jesus for loving us when we were His enemies. Thank Him for the miracle of His free choice *to go down into the depths of our sin, guilt, death and even hell* – in order to save us and raise us up.
4. Who has (or most often has) offended you? Pray for them, asking the Father to pour out His richest blessings upon them, just as He blessed you in Christ even while you were His enemy.
5. Ask the Holy Spirit to work into you a truly merciful heart. Pray that He would help you to live securely in Jesus' mercy, and that you would show that to others as they sin against you.

5. Mission: Developing Our Enemy loving love skills!

Read Paul Miller's quote Tim used in his sermon then think of a long, rich, steady love over a long time strategy for your enemies. List the ways you can love them this week, this month, this year.

Paul Miller, POJ – Lessons 19 & 20: "1) When someone interprets everything we do through a negative grid, we have an enemy... An enemy is like a speed bump on the road of your life; it calls for [slower] more cautious driving. When someone becomes your enemy, he interprets your actions as either stupid or evil. Everything you do is filtered through a negative grid that 'proves' the enemy is justified in his treatment of you. He often gets reinforcement from friends, who hear only his side of the story... [So] we don't stop loving difficult people; we just love them differently – without words... This principle of a loving silence goes against the grain of modern American culture. We tend to want either intense, meaningful dialogue, or to be rid of the person. America's public media culture and pop psychologists tell us that dialogue will solve almost any problem. It does solve many problems, but the belief that it's a universal cure is naïve. When we're dealing with an enemy, dialogue will often aggravate the problem. An enemy needs a steady, quiet love over [a long time]."

Any friend or spouse can be a temporary enemy. A temporary enemy is someone who interprets you through a negative grid. So....

How can you love your enemy spouse this week?

How can you love your enemy child/parent this week?

How can you love your enemy teammate/classmate/workmate this week?

How can you love the enemy political/social/tribal activist opponent this week?

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?