



A Discussion on Community Groups

Fall 2009

Beginning in September 2009, we will begin referring to our small groups as Community Groups. Before we define what a Community Group is, let's briefly discuss the reason for this change.

Why the Change?

First, Discovery's small groups (**Life Groups**) **have never been fully defined**. We are defining them now. We have arrived at a clearer vision for our church-wide ministry, believe our small groups are central to building the Biblical Community we believe we are to be, and believe the term "Community Groups" more effectively communicates the purpose of this ministry. In defining Community Groups, we will discuss context, makeup, leadership and ministry goals.

Secondly, **Community Groups are NOT a wholesale change in strategy**. We are currently doing some really good, Christ-honoring things in Life Groups. People are connecting and growing and we are seeing lives transformed. However, Community Groups will refocus us and sharpen our effectiveness as we seek to lead people to be more fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. There are two areas we feel we need to specifically refocus on:

- 1) **Community at a Deeper Level**. Rather than be content with superficial relationships, we desire to be meaningfully connected with one another in an authentic Biblical Community of believers.
- 2) **Community at a Higher Level**. We must be continuously refocused in our mission of reaching out to non-believers and making disciples. We fulfill our Christ-given mission in community.

Thirdly, **Community Groups are a vision towards the future growth of Discovery**. Unless we have a strategy that enables us to properly care for and teach people that goes beyond a few leaders, we will lose our effectiveness in making disciples as we grow in numbers. Our leadership has a vision for equipping leaders for the future growth of Discovery. Community Groups will enable us to equip leaders, as well as properly care for people and teach the disciples we are making.

Finally, we want to acknowledge that **this transition is a process**. We are not merely handing down a "formula" for you to follow. Living in Biblical Community is not formulaic, but Spirit-led. This Fall at Discovery, we will be discussing Biblical Community, and we trust and pray that God will impact our hearts on what Community Groups look like practically. As leaders, we will provide some guidelines, and further equip our Community Leaders. We invite our groups to study and discuss through the book of Acts this Fall. Discuss the church, and what it looks like to BE the Church. Throughout this process, our leadership desires your feedback. Our goal is simply to be the church that Jesus died for and God purposed us to be. We believe Community Groups will help us get and stay there.

What is Church?

When we talk about "church" we often use words related to buildings and programs rather than people and relationships. However, if we are going to speak rightly about the church, we must begin by talking about people and about relationships—with God and with one another. Perhaps we can best understand the church in terms of community. We will be talking a lot about community, so let's be clear what we are talking about.

What is Community?

We interact with a number of different communities every day. Our kids go to an educational community called school. Many people are involved in commerce communities called work. We live in communities we call neighborhoods. While composed of diverse individuals, these communities are characterized by the people and the purpose for which they gather. Remove the purpose or the people and suddenly the community ceases to exist. The community at Discovery is no different, we are a people centered on a purpose. Our goal as a church—as a distinct community of people—is to be about one thing: the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What is Biblical Community?

We want to help people realize God’s plan for their life in and through the **Biblical Community** we call church. Since church is not about buildings or programs, church should not simply be a place we go, but a people we live and grow with as we seek life transformation in and through Jesus Christ. The Biblical Community of believers manifests itself as **Gospel Community**, **Loving Community**, and **Missional Community**.

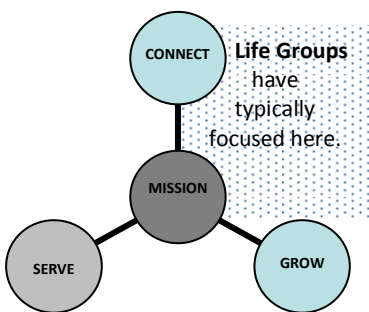
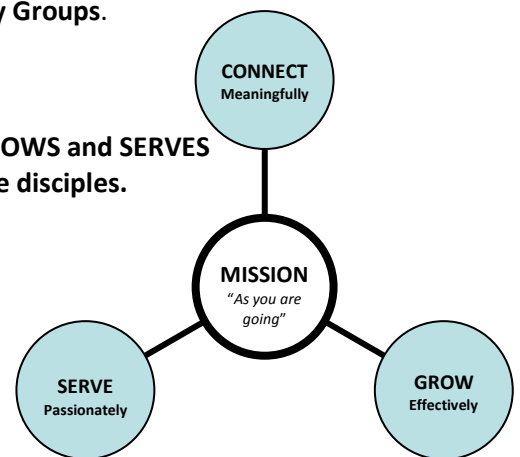
Here at Discovery Christian Church, we are committed to our mission of **meeting people where they are and leading them to be more fully devoted followers of Jesus**. We lead people through **Biblical Community where people can naturally and intentionally CONNECT, GROW and SERVE**. While we are introduced to our Biblical community during our Sunday morning gatherings, we encourage every person we interact with to experience Christ through smaller mid-week gatherings we call **Community Groups**.

What are Community Groups?

A **Community Group** is a small group of people (6-20) that **CONNECTS, GROWS and SERVES** around a common **MISSION** in line with Discovery’s call to go and make disciples.

What a Community Group is NOT:

- Just a support group
- Just a Bible study
- Just a bunch of activists
- Just a series of events
- Just a weekly meeting (its 7 days a week)
- Just “doing life together.”



Life Groups have typically focused here.

Our vision of Community Groups expands our view and understanding of small groups meetings. Traditionally, small groups have the ultimate vision of being “a safe place of friendship and caring” or “to go deeper in the Word.” Perhaps these have been the guiding principle of Discovery’s Life Groups over the past seven years. We focus primarily on relationship and/or Bible study, but fail to see the full expression of these service and mission. Such imbalanced discipleship typically leads to lack of fulfillment or excitement in “doing life together,” and often leads us to abandon our pursuit of Biblical community altogether or settle for its lesser form. Our ultimate goal is to be effective everyday witnesses to the transforming work of Jesus in our lives “as we are going” (i.e. – local missionaries). While our gathering in Community Groups certainly will include Bible study, prayer and fellowship, the ultimate goal is “gospel, loving, missional community”.

So what IS a Community Group? It’s **people** living life together **intentionally** and **purposefully** for **Jesus**. It’s people doing life together as the church - a Biblical Community living to the glory of Jesus Christ. It’s community on a **HIGHER** level, not just a **DEEPER** level. It’s **natural relationships** with **equipped leadership**. Community Groups are the environment where Discovery will be able to make disciples more effectively by:

CONNECTING more meaningfully.

GROWING more effectively.

SERVING more passionately.