

When we become Christians, we join the people of God, the body of Christ, the Kingdom of God on earth! It is an intimate walk with Jesus but intimate together in community. It is “not good for man to be alone”--God is a triune God (Trinity) and made humans in His image as social creatures--persons in communion. Our culture’s vision of humanity is anemic, isolated individuals. God’s vision for His church is as a loving, caring family living life together with Him.

Do you experience church in this way?

Could a once-a-week meeting at the church building be enough to fulfill this vision?

Small Groups:

- A vision of life together as resilient disciples
- Creating environments for meaningful relationships
- Joining into the grand story of the Kingdom of God on earth!

Being His body, the church: the present incarnation of Jesus Christ in the world!

Read Matthew 22:34-40. What are the two great commandments?

***“Relationships are what it’s all about!”***

**Small groups are FOR US as we learn to love God, love each other, love ourselves**

- Get to know and love the person of Jesus (study scripture)
- Get to know ourselves (study scripture)
- Enjoy friendship and community and life together
- Pray for one another and bear each other’s burdens
- Walk with God together in the power and joy of gospel-centered living

**Small groups are FOR THEM as we learn to love our neighbor**

- An end in itself
- Forms us into Christ-likeness
- Loving others is communion with the God-who-is-love
- Obedience to the command of Jesus
- The adventure of being subversive Christians-on-mission
- Winsomely inviting others to join The Way of Jesus
- “Raise the value of loving our neighbor in our church”

## **How does it work?**

Life transformation happens in community.

Small groups are an opportunity for Christian community

**What you can do:** Meet weekly together as a Neighborhood Group

- FOR US
  - Study scripture: Read the scriptures taught in the Sunday sermon and discuss
  - Pray together: Share prayer requests and bear one another’s burdens
  - Live life together: Be friends and enjoy life together. Have fun! Care for each other. Experience the power and joy of the gospel at work in you.
  - Pray for your lost friends, family, coworkers, neighbors

- FOR THEM
  - Write down and learn how to share your testimony
  - Learn how to share the good news. Role play and practice!
  - Create an Oikos map (significant relationships in your influence)
  - Go together and love your neighbors!
    - Walk and pray in your neighborhoods
    - Knock and pray - ask your neighbors how you can pray for them
    - Serve your neighbor's needs (see → compassion → act)
  - Be on the lookout for "God dots" as He answers prayers!

### **What the church can do: EQUIP**

- Train and coach leaders and assistant leaders
- Organize monthly leadership development advances
- Train you to write and share your testimony
- Train and provide tools for sharing the gospel
- Gather and celebrate!
- Provide and organize resources (financial, coaching, help).
- Organize large events for outreach
- Offer classes (Bible training, Financial Peace, Parenting, Support Groups)

### **Primary Elements / Core Values of Neighborhood Groups**

- Gospel-centered living
  - Free from God's judgment in Christ! (Rom 8:1, Phil 3:9)
  - Continual repentance and faith leads to continuous renewal/revival. (1 John 1:9)
  - Joy of living in loving obedience as a child of God! (Rom 12:1, Phil 2:12)
- Prayer
  - Dependent on God's abundant power in the Holy Spirit = faith (Matt 7:7-11)
  - Trusting God to keep His promises (Matt 24:35)
  - Continual communion with God individually and corporately (John 17:20-23)
- Outreach
  - Our purpose: Bring God glory by declaring the praises of him who called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light! (1 Peter 2:9-10)
  - Our identity: we are members of God's church in the world for His missionary purpose (Eph 3:10-11, Matt 28:18-20)
  - Our target: Our friends and neighbors are dying in the effects of sin and need the power of the gospel to bring salvation! Ultimately, they will be eternally lost without Him. (1 Cor 5:16-21)
- Love - each other
  - Love one another
  - Carry one another's burdens
  - Spend time together and live life together
- Love - our neighbors
  - Seek opportunities to care for the people in our neighborhoods
  - Boldly proclaim the power of the gospel for salvation and watch God work
  - Invite those God leads into our lives

### **Neighborhood Groups - Action Plan**

Leader qualifications: Do you have the Holy Spirit? Do you have a Coach to help you?

## **Phase 1 - FOR US - Build community**

- Meet weekly to discuss the sermon
  - Read the scripture passages and discuss
  - Seek to know God, know ourselves
  - What is God asking me to do differently? Obedience is humility and faith.
- Pray for each other's needs, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit
- Pray for lost friends, family, neighbors - and for opportunities to show love and share
- Enjoy community together - might sing worship songs, eat meals together, etc.
- Invite pre-Christians to join your group!
- Look for opportunities to serve together in your neighborhoods
- Growing enjoyment and faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ for life transformation

## **Phase 2 - FOR THEM - Reach out**

- Gain skills for outreach (Church leaders can coach in this step!)
  - Oikos maps, pray for people in your influence that God is leading you to
  - Develop how to share your testimony (60 second, 3 minute)
  - Learn how to use tools to share the gospel! Role play and practice
- Walk and pray for your neighbors (take turns in each member's neighborhood)
- Pray together for opportunities to share the gospel and for receptive hearts
- Knock and pray - plan a time (monthly?) to knock on your neighbor's doors and ask how you can pray for them, and then pray for them!
- Celebrate weekly what God is doing! You know He will be faithful in His ministry!

## **Phase 3 - Grow and Multiply!**

- Over time, the group will grow the group with New Believers
- Members can get involved in mentoring
- Prepare for launching a new Neighborhood Group by developing new leaders

## **Meeting ground rules:**

1. Talk about yourself. Share your own thoughts and feelings.
2. Confidentiality - What is shared in the group stays in the group.
3. Support and encourage each other - Not "fix" or give advice.
4. Stick to the text we are studying - What is God speaking to you about this passage?
5. Share in sentences not paragraphs - everyone has an opportunity to share.

Leaders meet monthly for peer mentoring and skill development.

## **Mentorship and Life Transformation Groups**

- All Christians need help to understand the basic truths of their faith and a community of believers to grow in their spiritual development
- New or returning believers should go through the basics course with a mentor and then join an existing LTG.
- **Phase 1 - Kick start - 1 on 1 mentoring through "basics"**
  - Meet weekly to work through "New Life in Christ" - Nate's 8 week course

- Pray for one another as you begin your journey with Christ
- Pray for who you can also take through the material from the first week
  
- **Phase 2 - Life Transformation Group - 2 to 3 people**
  - Two to three people (of the same gender) meet weekly for personal accountability in the areas of their spiritual growth and development.
  
  - **Sin is confessed**
    - Have you been a testimony this week to the greatness of Jesus Christ with both your words and actions?
    - Have you been exposed to sexually alluring material or allowed your mind to entertain inappropriate thoughts this week?
    - Have you lacked any integrity in your financial dealings this week?
    - Have you been honoring, understanding and generous in your important relationships this past week?
    - Have you damaged another person by your words, either behind their back or face to face?
    - Have you given in to an addictive behavior this week? Explain.
    - Have you continued to remain angry toward another?
    - Have you secretly wished for another's misfortune so that you might excel?
    - Your personal accountability question: \_\_\_\_\_
    - Did you finish your reading this week. Did you hear from the Lord? What are you going to do about it?
    - Have you been completely honest with me?
  - **Scripture is planted: steady diet of scripture**
    - Group decides what to read each week, usually 25-30 chapters
  - **Souls are strategically prayed for**
    - Each member identifies two or three people who are the highest evangelistic priorities that God has laid on their hearts.
    - Each member prays for theirs and the other's names when they do their bible reading.