

Group Life

...what happens when a group of 8-12 people gather frequently and commit to loving God and others with abandon. **Group life** is based on **5 core practices: unity, mission, scripture, worship and transformation.** These practices are worked out in unique ways based on the individual make-up of each group. The sum of the group's experiences together makes up **group life.**

5 Practices

We believe that, rather than giving groups a list of things to do, it is far more effective for groups to have a set of **core practices to live by.** This gives groups great **freedom** to live life together in ways that are creative and diverse, while being **intimately meaningful** for each individual group.

Pursue Unity

Be devoted to God and the fellowship of believers.

“My prayer is not for them alone, I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

John 17:20-23 (NIV)

Some ways in which a group might practice **pursuing unity** could be...

Join the Mission

Humbly proclaim the gospel in both words & deeds of justice & mercy.

“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

Micah 6:8 (NIV)

“But he’s already made it plain how to live, what to do, what GOD is looking for in men and women. It’s quite simple: Do what is fair and just to your neighbor, be compassionate and loyal in your love, and don’t take yourself too seriously—take God seriously.”

Micah 6:8 (The Message)

Some ways in which a group might practice **joining the mission** could be...

Live the Scripture

Engage scripture and integrate it into life.

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.”

James 1:22-25 (NIV)

Some ways in which a group might practice **living the scripture** could be...

Offer Worship

Bring all the spheres of life under God.

“Therefore I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”

Romans 12:1 (NIV)

“So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering.”

Romans 12:1 (The Message)

Some ways in which a group might practice **offering worship** could be...

Be Transformed

Prioritize character development and faithful living at all times.

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:2 (NIV)

Some ways in which a group might practice **being transformed** could be...

Forming Groups

We believe that God is the ultimate expert in putting us into meaningful relationships with each other. Our goal is to humbly **partner with Him** to help groups form in the most organic way possible. There are two distinct formational tracks we see groups taking: **guided** and **invitation**.

Guided Track

We expect many groups to form this way. On the **Guided Track**, we come alongside people who desire to be in a group and help connect them with others. In some cases, aspects of geography, stage of life, and potential chemistry will aid in the process. Our periodic **Gathering Points** will be used as a venue for **Guided Track group formation**.

Invitation Track

There will be some groups who form on the **Invitation Track**. This pathway opens up to people who may already have an **existing relationship base** that they want to bring into their **group life**. These groups will “invite” others to **join that circle of relationships** to fill out a group of 8-12 people.

Living in Groups

Once groups are formed, **Group Life** begins. While each group will live out their experience in a way that is unique to them, there are some commonalities that will keep us all grounded and moving in the same direction.

5 Practices

Group Life always originates from and points back to the **5 Practices**. This allows us to stay focused in the same direction (Christ), while having unique experiences.

Phases of Group Life

We expect groups to go through 4 **phases** of life together.

Phase 1: Stories

This phase is an introductory one, focusing on the simple sharing of life stories. We recommend all groups begin with a meal together, then several subsequent sessions where people have a chance to just share their life stories. Once this phase is completed, groups have a chance to either make a firm commitment or rejoin the process for linking to a new group.

Phase 2: Group Life in Action

This phase is the “meat” of group life (or the “tofu” if you’re a vegetarian ☺). During this phase, the group studies material on the **5 practices**, and cultivates a lifestyle of serving. Groups may also study other materials that point to the **5 practices**.

Phase 3: Testimonies

This phase comes some time after the group has been together living out the **5 practices**. It is a deeper level of sharing than the initial **Story Phase**, and requires some intentionality of purpose. Some of this may unfold as the group lives in **Phase 2**, but **Phase 3** is meant to be a deliberate point of sharing and listening.

Phase 4: Regroup or Common Destiny

Once a group reaches this point, one of two things will happen—either the group will decide it is time to **Regroup** (disband and link into other groups), or perhaps the group will have found a **Common Destiny**. This means that the group has come into something that seems to have a larger or more long-term purpose.

When this is the case, the group has the option of continuing to go forward and pursue the **Common Destiny** they have found.

Group Guides (G²'s)

A **G²** is someone who guides the group. **G²'s** may be known before a group forms, however many will be chosen from within the context of the group. **G²'s** should be chosen by the end of **Phase 1** at the latest. Groups will be given information on what the role of a **G²** involves, and some suggestions on how to select one.

Gathering Points

These will be times to “gather all the tribes” and bring groups together to celebrate, share stories, pray, and otherwise connect in meaningful ways. **Gathering Points** will also be open to anyone in the church who might not be involved in **Group Life** yet. **Gathering Points** will also provide a vehicle for those who are not in groups yet to join one.

Gathering Points will happen 8 times per year, the first Thursday of the following months: February, March, April, May, June, September, October & November.

Gathering Points will begin at 7 p.m., and will be coordinated with **Celebrate Recovery**[®] for the evening. **The first Gathering Point will be on Thursday, April 2nd, 2009.**