



CYPRESS CREEK CHURCH

What are Community Groups?

Community Groups are small communities, within Cypress Creek Church, characterized by Jesus, relationship, and the desire to share Christ's love with others.

Jesus - Community Groups provide opportunities for all people to experience the presence of Jesus through His Word, prayer, and worship. These groups are shaped by making Jesus central. (*GROW*)

Is Jesus the main thing at my CG?

Relationships - Community Groups provide a safe environment to develop relationships that challenge, support, and encourage you to live Jesus-centered lives. Community Groups are the primary source of pastoral care at Cypress Creek Church. (*GATHER, GIVE*)

How well is my group challenging, supporting, and encouraging each other to live Jesus-centered lives?

Mission - Community Groups take seriously Jesus' commission to "go and make disciples." To this end, they meet people wherever they are in life, and encourage each individual to enter into a personal relationship with God while sharing His love with those around them. By looking towards multiplication, these groups are fulfilling Jesus' commandment to go and make disciples! (*GO*)

How is my CG being missional? Who are we inviting, serving, and reaching out to? What are our multiplication goals?

Understanding the 4 Gs

We utilize the 4 G's to accomplish the goal of Community Group

GATHER

Purpose:

- Invite involvement from everyone
- Connect to each other
- Ease into group life

Are group members more comfortable with each other and enjoy being together?

GROW

Purpose:

- Shift focus to God. Spend time in worship and prayer.
- Interact with God's Word
- An opportunity for God to speak directly to our hearts with His Word
- A time to respond to God

Is the group transparent with each other? Does the group apply God's Word specifically to their lives?

GIVE

Purpose:

- Focus on meeting the needs inside the group
- Pray for one another

Is Jesus working through us to reach others?

GO

Purpose:

- Focus outside the group
- Encourage missional living

Is Jesus working through us to reach others?

Healthy Facilitators

Here are a few things that healthy facilitators do out of an overflow of the love in their heart, not as a measuring stick or hoops to jump through.

Pray for yourself, your Community group members and folks not yet in your group.

The basics of organizing a meeting are as natural as breathing

- Asking what this group needs and what I have to give
- Be welcoming
- Basic snacks, unless elaborate meals are your gift from God; if they are not your gift this will become a burden.
- Time awareness, what is your group like? How long can people stay? Are they still attentive? (Typically, 1 ½ hours is the target to hit.)
- Contacting members, how often do they need it?
- Make a plan for your kiddos: What part can they participate in? How can they be included? What needs to be provided for them? This needs to be an experience they enjoy also.

Know how to facilitate a group discussion. As facilitators, we must remember we are modelling how to speak, listen, care, pray and challenge just as Christ did with His disciples. Modelling is a high calling and our number one teaching tool.

LISTENING

- Practice active listening with good eye contact and attentiveness: facing the speaker, not interrupting, not flipping through Scriptures or notes. Acknowledge what they said with nods, paraphrasing or gratitude.
- Active listening
 - ▶ Reflect - what I heard you say was
 - ▶ Question - tell me more about that
 - ▶ Understand - help me understand
 - ▶ Validate - that makes sense
 - ▶ Care - it matters that you feel that way

- ❑ Draw everyone into the dialog, as much as possible, this gives them value, acceptance and challenges them to grow. Ask, “Who would like to build on that?” or “Someone who hasn’t spoken yet . . .”
- ❑ Use silence well. People need time to think. You do not need to fill up all the silent space.
- ❑ Talk less than the others. You are the facilitator, not the answer man.
- ❑ Keep the balance: stay on track but also meet immediate needs. We want the Holy Spirit to lead. Go in with a plan knowing that God may change it. For example, if a member has an urgent circumstance, the group may spend the meeting time praying for or encouraging them. People are more important than agendas. (Guard against one member of the group dominating each week with their personal concerns.) Ask good questions that lead members to seek what God has to say.

RESPONDING

- ❑ Open-ended questions are the best way to facilitate discussion and avoid lecturing. Open-ended questions begin with words like: why, how, when or what if. They are not just yes or no answers. They are designed to stimulate higher level thinking skills. Some examples:
 - ▶ How does it make you feel to know God’s love for you is eternal?
 - ▶ Why do you think God would tell His people to do that?
 - ▶ What is one thing the Holy Spirit said to you in this Scripture?
 - ▶ What is an action God has called you to as a result of this discussion?
- ❑ What not to say: advice giving, Scripture slamming, responding to every answer with your expertise or comments, telling about your own experiences (useful on occasion, but frequently make the conversation about you), phrases that don’t acknowledge their pain like - “God makes all things work together,” or “It’s just God’s will”
- ❑ Self-disclosure sets the tone for transparency. The more you are honest, real and humble, the more transparent the rest of the group will be.

OVER-TALKERS AND NON-TALKERS

- Dealing with talkative people can be a challenge. State boundaries before you ask a question. Like, give us a brief one-sentence answer, or one word thought, or we're going around the circle let everyone have a chance to speak before you speak again. Ask, "Who hasn't shared yet?" or "Let's hear from others." You can even call on a member before asking a question.
- Notice who is not talking. Be sensitive to their needs. Some people are shy, some want to share if they are called on, some might be in a difficult place and just can't share. Draw all people into the discussion but go about it very carefully. Have conversations with this person one on one for coffee or lunch. Give them time and encouragement. Ways to draw them in at group:
 - ▶ Utilize the easy, non-threatening ice breaker questions
 - ▶ Use dyads or triads for share time
 - ▶ Ask members to write their thoughts on paper first
 - ▶ Send out the CG outline out to the group beforehand
- Never call on someone to read or pray without asking them first (unless you know them well)

CREATE A SECURE AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

- Confidentiality is paramount to making this a safe place to be transparent. Emphasize it each time there is a new person in the group. Even prayer needs stay in the group. You may want to use copies of the confidentiality card.
- Part of the Word section is responding to what God is saying to you. This is essential so be intentional about allowing time for prayer (response to God).
- An outline will be provided via email from the pastor who is teaching Sunday. The outline is a starting point. You do not need to use every question on it. Pick and choose what will fit your group.

Encourage everyone to be a part of the whole

- Encourage others to participate in leading (discussion, worship, ice breakers, contacting, hosting, bringing food, organizing ministry needs, participate in ministry opportunities, discipling others) because this is not about you. In fact, you will quickly burn out, if you do it all.
- Find someone who will partner with you in facilitating, so that you are not alone. As you see someone emerging as a leader, pray and plan with Jose.
- Are people becoming folks who love God, themselves and want to grow in Him and in community? As they participate in the whole, this is what you want to see.

Being part of the whole by hosting

- When group members participate in hosting, the group becomes *their* group not *your* group. This gives others the opportunity to feel ownership and share responsibility. It also gives the group the chance to better get acquainted with the host by seeing their style, their family photos, and the way they do life.
- If you have several hosts homes, keep a clear schedule for both the host homes and the group members. You may have someone in your group who has the ability to keep things organized. That is the person to put in charge of the calendar.
- Each host home needs to provide a clean, comfortable home; a warm and friendly environment and support for the leaders.
- Key questions to ask as a host: Is my house clean and picked up by meeting time? Do I have enough comfortable chairs? Do I have enough lighting? Is my house free of dog and cat odors?

Keep your group aware of the Disconnected, the person who needs what we have.

- Be an inviter. People need to be pursued.
- From the beginning, talk about how healthy families are close-knit and at the same time they grow; they cling together and reach out all at the same time.
- On occasion, mobilize the group to serve folks outside of group.
- The point is to keep people looking outside themselves; we are all healthier when we can get outside ourselves.
- As you do this, remember you cannot be all things to all people.

Because you are not a Counselor

At times a member of your group who is dealing with a tough issue will approach you. Because you are not expected to be a counselor, these four questions are what you will need when approached. Your job is only to ask questions, not give answers. Simply ask these four questions during the conversation and contact someone on the pastoral team for guidance. Getting the facts and context of the situation will usually make the next steps relatively straightforward.

- How long have you been dealing with this? You are looking for the duration of this issue. (One day? One year?) Is this an immediate need or an ongoing situation?
- Who else knows? You are looking for the involvement/support of others -- have you talked to anyone else about this? If so, Who? How often? When was the last time you talked to someone about it? How did they respond?
- Have you received any advice or counsel on how to deal with this? Many times they already know what they need to do.
- Do you have any plans for your next steps? This prompts them to begin to make a plan. If they have no plans, you might ask: Would you like me to check on some other resources? Do not make calls for them but find referrals and let them make the calls.

Oftentimes, you will find that the person simply wants to talk about their situation and is not necessarily looking for answers. However, if you feel that the situation is an immediate crisis or dangerous in some way, contact a CCC pastor right away!

Stay connected

- Provide consistent feedback to the pastoral team. If anything is out of the ordinary, report it to Jose.
- Attend Leadership Gatherings in order to receive encouragement from other leaders and stay connected to the heart of CCC.
- You will receive a weekly eNewsletter designed specifically for the leaders of Cypress.
- Plan Mid-sized community gatherings with other HEART groups to keep your group members from being isolated or use other groups to help you accomplish a task too big for your group, if this is useful for your group.

Kids in Community Group (Take Two!)

1 Corinthians 12:12,21 v12 *For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many are one body so it is with Christ. v21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you" nor again the hand to the feet, "I have no need of you". On the contrary the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable".*

As you consider your kids, how often do you consider them "weaker" and "indispensable" to the body of Christ? The truth is that without them we are incomplete; without them, there are parts of the body missing.

When large numbers of small children are part of your Community group family, you will likely need to provide a separate experience for them. There are several things to think through.

Who will care for them?

- Hire a CCC approved and background checked kids team member
- Or rotate group members to care for the children (must be background checked)
- Or a combination of both

How do we arrange it?

- When there are children ages 6 and under present, there needs to be one childcare worker per 6 children.
- The shepherd or designated point person needs to arrange for adequate childcare.

How do we pay for it?

- CCC will provide for the first kids team member
- If a second worker is needed, due to the number of children present, the group will have to pool money to provide funds for that.

What does the Take Two look like?

- Contact Scarlett our Kids Pastor to receive the Take Two resources!

Children have the same needs as adults in many areas of their lives:

To meet with Jesus; Fun; Friendships; Encouragement; Unconditional love and acceptance; Accountability; Support in reaching unsaved friends, etc

- Use easily understood language, children (and adults) will understand better
- Check in with children (and adults) before moving to assure they have understood
- Ensure that no child (or adult) is excluded from conversation and interaction
- Follow up a child's comments, treat their input seriously
- Ask for their opinions and ideas, just like you do with adults
- Follow up any problems they may have much like you do with adults
- Have expectations and standards relevant to their age
- Support and encourage children like you do adults
- Raise them as a generation who are discipled and know how to win and disciple their friends, just like you do the adults

With this in mind:

- What would I do in a cell meeting if a child is reluctant to take part?
- Break into twos or threes so they can speak in a smaller setting, which is also helpful for adults

- What would I do if a child is sick?
- Visit them, pray for them and take them an appropriate gift to show you care. Adults would like that too!

- How can I build friendship with a child?
- Spend time with them, visit them in their home, remember their birthdays, take an interest in things that are important to them, speak to them when you see them, sit next to them.