

# Why are community groups important?

Community groups are essential to the Christian life because we were created for community.

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*We believe that discipleship, formation, and mission all happen best in the context of shared life with others. Community groups are not an optional program or a side ministry—they are one of the primary ways we follow Jesus together.*

## Community Reflects the Nature of God

God exists in community—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in perfect unity. And being made in His image, we were created to live in relationship with Him and with one another. From the beginning, God designed humanity for life together, not life alone. Community, therefore, is not a human invention but a reflection of who God is. It is an expression of the trinitarian life of God and a testimony to His love in redeeming us through Jesus. To live in Christian community is to mirror the relational nature of our Creator.

## Discipleship Happens in Community

Discipleship is not a solo journey. It's a community project. When Jesus called people to follow Him, He formed them into a shared life. After His resurrection, He gathered His followers as a body and commissioned them together—not as isolated individuals, but as a people. The New Testament assumes that Christians are growing in faith side-by-side with other disciples. At Reality Ventura, our Sunday gatherings and community groups form the main highway of discipleship. These are our primary rhythms—where we worship, study the Word, apply it to life, pray, confess, serve, and hold one another accountable. Events, classes, and retreats may serve as important “rest stops,” but the road we travel week after week is life together in community groups. This is where the habits of spiritual maturity are formed.

## Mission Flows From Community

Living in gospel-centered community is a tangible demonstration of the grace of God to the world. Community groups are not insular Bible studies where we hide from the world—they are families of disciples on mission with Jesus. In a divided and lonely world, reconciled relationships point to a greater reality: the power of the cross to unite what sin

has fractured. Our love for one another becomes a living proclamation of the reconciling work of Christ. Community groups put the Gospel on display not just in what we say, but in how we live—with open homes, open lives, and open hands.

## **What is a community group?**

A community group is a small gathering of people committed to growing in Christ together through studying Scripture, building meaningful relationships, and living on mission in their city.

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*We often say that the “DNA” of community groups is theological, relational, and missional—or, put another way, to love God, love one another, and love our city.*

### **Theological, To Love God**

We are sons and daughters of God (2 Corinthians 6:18). Community groups are first and foremost about worship—honoring God with our lives and growing in our knowledge and love for Him. We do this through prayer, studying His Word, and responding to His grace with obedience, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Our goal is not merely to learn about God, but to become people who love Him with heart, soul, mind, and strength.

### **Relational, To Love One Another**

We are brothers and sisters in Christ (Matthew 12:48–50). God has saved us into a family, and our spiritual formation happens in the context of committed relationships. Community groups provide the space for us to bear one another’s burdens, confess sin, encourage faith, and grow in Christlike character together. In a world marked by isolation and individualism, gospel-shaped relationships offer a powerful witness to the love of God.

### **Missional, To Love Our City**

We are servants and stewards of the Gospel in our neighborhoods (Galatians 5:13). Community groups are not insular or inward-focused—they are outposts of the kingdom, participating in what God is doing in our city. This means living with gospel intentionality in all of life: serving our neighbors, sharing the Good News of Jesus, and embodying His grace in tangible ways. We are not just called to gather but to go—together.

# How do we do this?

Modeled after the early church, community groups prioritize studying scripture, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer—simple rhythms that form us into Christlike people.

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*Acts 2:42-47*

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

## Scripture

The early church devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching. We believe, as Hebrews 4:12 says, that the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, and has the power to change and transform lives.

## Fellowship

Empowered by the Spirit, the early believers devoted themselves to one another. Their love was deep, sacrificial, and supernatural—a reflection of God's presence among them. While we can't manufacture authentic connections, we can create space for them. Through Scripture-guided conversations and shared stories, we grow in Christ and closer to one another.

## Breaking of Bread

The early church devoted themselves to the breaking of bread—a shared meal in remembrance of Jesus' broken body and His shed blood on the cross. We see in the Gospel accounts that Jesus himself shared meals regularly with others—both believers and unbelievers. What better way (and most natural) to foster community than with a meal? Meals are featured throughout scripture as a meaningful environment that promotes community.

## Prayer

The early church knew they couldn't move forward without prayer. For God's power to be at work among us—for transformation, renewal, and mission—we must be devoted to it. Prayer connects us to God and to each other, forming the foundation of our shared life.

## Who is a community group leader?

A community group leader is not merely a facilitator or Bible teacher; rather, their primary role is to care for and protect the flock entrusted to them, guiding people toward worshiping Jesus and growing in Christlike maturity.

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*1 Timothy 3:8-13*

*<sup>8</sup> In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. <sup>9</sup> They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. <sup>10</sup> They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. <sup>11</sup> In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.*

*<sup>12</sup> A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well.*

*<sup>13</sup> Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.*

### Qualifications for leadership

Though a community group leader is not technically a Deacon in the church, we believe that the list of qualifications for a Deacon (1 Timothy 3:8-13) serves as an excellent standard of accountability for all leaders in the church.

- Worthy of respect
- Sincere
- Not indulging in much wine (self-controlled, without addictions)
- Not pursuing dishonest gain
- Keeping hold of the truths of faith with a clear conscience
- Tested and affirmed

### Additional qualifications include the following

- Mature and growing disciple of Jesus and well grounded in Scripture
- Committed to the vision, mission, and values of Reality Ventura
- Regularly attends Reality Ventura Sunday Gatherings

- Genuine love for people along with demonstrated relational skills
- Ability to both challenge and encourage others in their walks with the Lord
- Humble demeanor and teachable spirit; consistent and reliable
- Good verbal skills and the ability to communicate with warmth and graciousness in such a way that is clear and understandable
- Solid reputation inside and outside the church
- Willing to be judged with greater strictness as a leader in the church (James 3:1)
- Ability to lead 8 – 15 people

## Logistics?

Some helpful logistics...

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### What does a 'season' look like?

Roughly, we follow the school year rhythm. We suggest a summer break in June and July and a winter break in December. Of course, each group has the freedom to take breaks here and there for the health and longevity of the group and the leaders.

### How will sign ups work?

We'll be using Planning Center to help keep communication and administration for community groups simple and streamlined.

All community groups will be listed on our website alongside an interactive map, allowing people to browse and select a group based on its general location. Each group listing will include a photo of the leaders and a short bio that highlights any specific details about the group—such as whether kids are welcome, if there are household pets, and so on.

When someone signs up for a group online, the group leader will receive an email notification, prompting them to personally reach out, invite, and welcome the new member.

Group sizes will range from 8–15 people, with a cap of 15. Once a group reaches its limit, it will automatically be marked as "FULL" on the website.

### What is taught? What is discussed?

We desire to take a holistic approach to the way we "do" church—one that connects the gathered church on Sundays with the scattered church throughout the week. Our hope is to see the life of the church expressed through two primary, interwoven rhythms: Sunday

gatherings and community life. Together, these form a pattern that leads to spiritual transformation.

The first rhythm is our Sunday gathering, where we proclaim the Word through preaching and respond in worship. This space invites both believers and nonbelievers into conviction through the Holy Spirit.

But conviction alone isn't enough—we need a place where it can lead to repentance, growth, and change. That's where Community Groups come in. These groups provide the relational context for transformation to take root. This is why they're essential to the life of the church.

Each group will reflect on the Sunday sermon with a few intentional discussion questions designed to take us below the surface—encouraging honest conversation, mutual encouragement, and spiritual growth.