

INTRODUCTION

Community isn't just a nice option; it's a need—like food, water, and shelter.

God created in us a need for him and for other people. We're relational beings because he is a relational being. Our community with others becomes the real-world setting where we practice the love that relationship with God produces in us.

**HE USES OTHER PEOPLE TO GROW US,
AND HE USES US TO GROW OTHER PEOPLE.**

Over the next eight sessions, we'll explore the connection between **relationship with God** and **community with other people**. We'll talk about how the two are essential components of growing spiritually and living life to the full.

The central purpose of this study is for you to get to know one another so you can set a firm foundation for a great Community Group experience.

You'll spend three of the eight sessions just telling one another your stories. But before you do that, we'll spend a couple of sessions talking about why community is important, why your stories matter, and how to best tell your stories.

WEEKLY READING: WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE GROUP EXPERIENCE

Community can be challenging because it's organic—every Community Group is different. Each is made up of different people with different backgrounds and experiences. But the very thing that can make community challenging can also make it great. As we get involved in real people's lives, faith leaves the realm of religious information and becomes a vibrant part of life in the real world. Jesus didn't give us a specific system or program with which to grow in our relationship with him. He gave us each other. He gave us community.

Life is better connected because connected people go further, faster.

Though the need for community is universal, there's a difference between what every person needs and what every group will provide. All groups are not equal at delivering community because all relationships are not equal at providing it.

FOUR KINDS OF RELATIONSHIPS

Our relationships fall into one of four categories:

PUBLIC

Connections through outside influences like a shared taste in music or a love of the same sports team.

SOCIAL

First-impression relationships based on surface-level interactions—acquaintances but not necessarily friends.

PERSONAL

Closer connections forged through shared experiences and feelings—friends.

INTIMATE

Real and raw connections—inner-circle friends. These relationships happen through our most closely shared experiences and feelings.

Most small groups are comprised of social and personal relationships. The deepest community happens through personal and intimate relationships. We hope this group will provide you with deep community. Whether it does will be partly determined by factors outside your control, like personal chemistry among the group members.

But some things *are* under your control. We'd like for you to do three things:

1. Show up.

Make a commitment to be at group meetings. You can't form community with other people if you aren't around enough for them to get to know you.

2. Join in.

Take part in group discussions. Listen to what others have to say. Be part of the community you're trying to form.

3. Be real.

Let the people in this group know who you are. Be authentic and transparent. You don't have to reveal all your deepest, darkest secrets. But be open to the possibility that you may eventually form the kind of deep relationships in which you can share those secrets.

ONE THING IS CERTAIN:

God has a purpose for this group and for everyone in it.

It may be a good experience for you or it may be a great experience. It will definitely be a place of growth and ministry if you pay attention to what God is doing through your relationships with one another.

YOUR FIRST GROUP MEETING

During your first session, you'll meet socially to begin to get to know one another. It's a good idea to commit to coming to the meeting with an open mind. Pray that God will use the group to grow his relationship with you and the other members of the group.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:24-25

