



Group Leader Booklet

Why Groups?

The reason New Covenant exist is to bring glory to God by making disciples. We are disciples of Jesus. At New Covenant, we believe that there are 4 ways in which we accomplish this mission, Christ-centered worship, community, service, and multiplication.

The primary role of Groups at New Covenant is to help people **grow**. A disciple is not just created but cultivated over time. We believe that the single most effective way to make disciples is by creating highly relational, increasingly transparent, unreservedly loving, and Bible-saturated community groups. We believe you can't grow spiritually if you're not connected relationally with God and one another.

What Does a Group Look Like?

At New Covenant, we desire for our groups to reflect the body of our church. This means that we want people, of all walks in life, all ethnic representation, young/old, single/married, kids/no kids, male/female, to gather in homes, cultivate relationships, and challenge one another to grow both in their relationships with Christ and one another. People gather in homes all over our community to share a meal together, encourage one another and pray for one another. Community groups are not about one person ministering to a group of people, but rather a group of people ministering to each other.

What Do Groups Do?

All groups will be different based on the individuals within the group.

Does your group want to eat dinner together? Great! Do you want to include a sharing time each meeting? Awesome!

You can't grow spiritually if you aren't connected relationally. The goal of groups is to provide everyone with the opportunity to pursue authentic community and spiritual growth.

Essentials for Groups

"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!"

ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10

We believe that a healthy group has 3 essential ingredients that create a thriving culture. A successful group will...

Show Up:

To be connected we must be committed to showing up. This takes constant communication, availability, intentionality, and consistency. If we are going to miss, we let someone know. Commitment and consistency are critical.

Join In:

Groups take intentionality and engagement this requires ownership. Everyone takes ownership to contribute to the group by bringing something to eat and having something to say. Meals are inviting, open conversation, and build community. It brings ownership and creates an environment for openness and transparency among members.

Be Real:

Spending time together and building trust are foundational for authenticity to occur. Be open and transparent. Let people know who you really are. Groups that spend time together build trust and can provide a place where life changing truth can be shared.

What Do Leaders Do?

As a group leader, you are responsible for providing your group with direction and support. Leaders are successful when they are personally growing in their relationship with God, with the people in their group, and when they are creating an atmosphere where vulnerability, encouragement, scripture, prayer & accountability are thriving. It's not about what you say but how you facilitate. Below are some leadership essentials for a successful group.

Stay Connected:

The main emphasis is to build relationships that foster connection with Jesus and one another. This requires intentionality and as leaders, it is our responsibility to create environments and opportunities that encourage people to open up – that type of atmosphere can only happen through relationships.

Cultivate Relationships:

Priority of relationship is demonstrated as we intentionally are committed to invest in each other's life. This is the most important thing you do as a leader. Invest the **TIME**, so that you can build **TRUST**, and ultimately share **TRUTH** with others!

Share Ownership:

We all agree to encourage one another to participate in broad ownership of the group. We don't come to consume we come to contribute. Everyone has something to bring and something to share. This the expectation of the group.

Provide Care:

Life happens and groups are committed to be fully present and provide care and support for one another. Mutual care is a way we show love to one another in bearing one another's burden and ministering together for the needs of the group.

Helpful Tips for Group Leaders

How to Cultivate Relationships?

One of the primary things you should be actively doing as a group leader is building relationships with those in your group and helping others in the group build their relationships with each other. There is no magic formula for cultivating relationships, but there are 3 elements that help:

1. Time - We must spend time genuinely getting to know people.

2. Trust - Investing time builds trust.

3. Truth - Where there is trust, truth can be shared.

By putting building relationships at the top of your priorities, you're going to be planting the seeds for Vulnerability and Accountability in your group. You will **NEVER** go wrong by investing in relationships with others in your group.

How to Pray for Your Group?

- Pray for any requests group members share.
- Ask for the presence of the Holy Spirit in you group.
- Pray that God will open people's hearts to hear His truth.
- Pray for authentic community to develop.
- Pray for wisdom and strength to lead your group well.

How To Promote Participation?

People are more open to participate when they feel welcome and comfortable. It is our responsibility as leaders to promote an inviting and hospitable environment. Our main objective as a leader is to facilitate discussion.

Set the atmosphere for participation.

1. Clean and clutter free
2. Fresh scent
3. Set a comfortable temperature
4. Comfortable seating and arrangement (*think circles, not rows*)
5. Share a meal together or offer light refreshments
6. Distraction free environment (*i.e. Pets, Kids, TV's, etc*)

Use ice breakers to loosen people up and spark conversations.

Don't feel the need to make a big deal out of it, but you will be surprised at how a simple question can get people chatting, which can lead to great discussion later. There is a large list of potential ice breakers later in this booklet.

Make sure everyone is engaged and comfortable.

1. Don't get trapped into just focusing on people you know.
2. Some personalities will take longer than others to engage.

How To Create Good Group Dynamics?

Set Expectations

A key to helping people feel comfortable in your group is to let them know what to expect. Paint a picture for the group you hope you become. Take time to share how the group will flow from week to week. This can include things like explaining the times you will begin and end the group, how discussion or group activities will happen, and how the group will support one another in time of need.

Follow the 70/30 Rule

Give the members of your group room to speak up instead of doing all the talking yourself. About 70% of talking should come from members and 30% from the leader.

Keep the Discussion Positive

If conversation takes a negative or destructive turn, guide it back to a healthy place. If someone needs to talk about a sensitive or complex issue, you can follow up with them after the group or call Matt Dorn to help you respond well.

Keep the Conversation Relevant to Everyone

Remember, everyone in your group will be at different places in their walk with Christ. Be thoughtful when you talk about spiritual concepts or church terms that might be unfamiliar to new Christians or new churchgoers.

Respect Boundaries

Men should minister to men and women should minister to women. A couple may minister to a single person. Be wise & discerning. These boundaries will help protect the leaders and group members from entering into an uncomfortable or inappropriate situation.

Facilitating With Excellence

- Start and end on time.
- Strive to be a good listener.
- Be a facilitator, not a lecturer – your goal is to encourage personal interaction and self-discovery.
- Focus on what scripture has to say, not your own ideas or opinions.
- Maintain an atmosphere of love and acceptance, which will lead to open discussion. Never put down a person's comments or contributions.
- Don't force anyone to talk, but encourage involvement by calling on reluctant participants by name – this is also an effective way to regulate those who want to talk too much.
- Keep the discussion on track. If new issues are raised, suggest that you return to them after the current discussion is completed.
- Ask good follow-up questions to open up the group and to develop relationships.
- Remember, **the goal is to build relationships**, not necessarily to complete the discussion guide.
- Be sure to include fun into your group. Set aside a week to just do something fun as a group.

Deadly Group Distractions

Groups, especially new ones, are like infants. They take care, attention, and nurturing in order to grow and flourish. However, we know that there are things that will stunt growth or cause a group to die completely:

- Inconsistent gatherings
- Not enough members (*open chairs*) or too many members.
- Not addressing a problem member.
- Not communicating with group members.
- Not caring for group members
- Not allowing others to participate by sharing responsibility

Groups are not a place for:

- ◉ Business / Product Sales
- ◉ Offerings
- ◉ Unapproved materials or speakers
- ◉ Politics
- ◉ Drinking Alcohol

Leadership Support

As a group leaders you have us as a church staff and Matt Dorn directly, who will walk and work alongside you to invest in your success –you are never alone! We will be your primary resource and lifeline for having a healthy Group. We are committing to pray for you and communicate with you to ensure that you have what you need to lead your group well.

We will work with you throughout the year to make sure that your group is thriving - don't hesitate to reach out to us if you have any needs, prayer requests, or concerns.

3 Primary Roles

1. Facilitate Conversations and Discussions

- Lead conversations that help people build real relationships and grow spiritually. You're not just keeping the group on track—you're guiding people to experience life change together.

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2. Elevate Prayer, Not Just Solutions

- Create space for your group to pray together regularly. People don't always need quick answers—they need a leader who models going to God first, not just trying to fix them.

3. Cultivate Shared Ownership

- Lead in a way that invites others to contribute. Model care, engagement, and participation—then make space for others to do the same. This isn't a solo act; it's a shared responsibility.

Leader Expectations

- Lead the group by facilitating group meetings, monitoring group health, and promoting participation among group members.
- Commit to engaging in communication with church staff throughout the year.
- Commit to participating in leadership development opportunities provided by the church.
- Identify and recruit future leaders, and embrace their development as a measure of success.
- Rally the group around any member needing care. Use wisdom and be sensitive.

Leader Qualifications

- Be growing in your relationship with Jesus
- Be in a posture of humility, teachable, curious, and intentional
- Be a member of New Covenant
- Be an active member in Community Group
- Be an active supporter with time, talents, and treasures
- Be individuals that promote peace and unity both within/outside the body.
- Have the time, emotional capacity, & moral discernment to lead a group.

- Have the spiritual maturity to create and maintain a safe and confidential environment for the group members.
- Have a safe and stable home life.

Frequently Asked Questions

Meetings

How long is the commitment for leading a group?

Leading a group is a year commitment. After each year ends, it's up to you to decide whether you will continue meeting at the start of the next year.

Why a year commitment?

It allows group leaders and participants to have built-in breaks, and allows them to step out during a particularly busy season of life.

Can the group keep meeting after the year ends?

Absolutely! We recommend that groups meet on a recreational or outreach basis only during the off-time between sessions. This is a great time to do something outside of your regularly scheduled gathering. It's healthy to take a break from the traditional group setting, so for that reason we do not provide curriculum during the off-time. Just because you take a break from regular meetings, doesn't mean that you have to cut off contact with your group members.

What if the group wants to keep meeting, but I want to step out of leading the group?

Whether you continue leading your group or not, you should always have someone in your group that you are raising up to be a future leader. You can either hand your leadership role to the person you have raised up, or if no one steps up to lead the group, your group members can sign up for different groups at the beginning of the next year.

GROUP SPECIFICS

What types of groups are there?

The main types of groups are Couples or Mixed. Groups. Groups primarily follow along with the current message series and seek to take what was taught seek to apply the truths to their individual's lives. Other groups like the Harbor, (young adults group 18-29) meet every Sunday night at 6:00 pm.

What if no one signs up for my group?

Inviting people, you know and people that you meet is the number one way to add people to your group. Don't wait for them to come to you, go to them!

When and where do groups meet?

Groups can meet on any day of the week, just not during church service times. Groups can meet in your home, a co-leader's home, or at a location provided by the church.

Do I have to provide snacks at every meeting?

Having snacks and drinks available during a group meeting can change the whole mood of the group and help put people at ease. If you don't want to provide snacks and drinks for every meeting, delegate some of the responsibility to other people in the group and let people take turns.

GENERAL

What should I do if someone in my group shares something with me (or the group) that requires attention beyond what I (or we) can provide?

If you encounter a difficult situation, please know that you are not alone. If a member is going through a crisis, you can rally the group around them to provide prayer, encouragement, and support. Use wisdom and be sensitive to the situation. Contact Matt Dorn for more help, if needed.

How can I share stories of life change from my group?

We love hearing about lives that are change through your group! You can share your stories with us at office@ncgreenwood.org

OTHER QUESTIONS

Email mdorn@ncgreenwood.org with any other questions.

Your First Group Meeting NOTES FOR LEADING

Your first meeting as a small group is more of a social gathering. You may be eager to jump into the study, but beginning the process of cultivating relationships is essential to the group experience. **The depth of your relationships will drive the quality of your discussions.**

Before the meeting, send your group members an email, text or call confirming the date and time of the meeting and providing them with directions to your meeting place. Let them know the start and end time of your meeting. Letting them know this information helps to create a predictable environment. This first meeting is also the best time for you to set some expectations for your group. Have a conversation about caring for your group. The primary way care happens at New Covenant Church is through groups. Rally everyone around the idea that for the next several weeks, this is our family. When one of the group is going through a circumstance that requires care(hospital visits, prayer, or some other type of support), the group rallies around them and takes care of them.

ICE BREAKERS

On the night of the meeting, your job is to create an environment in which people can begin to connect. If your group members have already met and are comfortable with one another, you may not have to do much more than provide coffee and snacks or light desserts. If your group is meeting for the first time, you may want to use some ice breakers to help people ease into the conversation. Using ice breakers is an essential group leader skill. They aren't required all the time, but the right ice breaker can help to open the avenue for great conversation for the evening. Begin with light and informational questions and then move to deeper and more personal levels as the group progresses together.

Since this is your first group meeting, you probably want to stick mostly with **Level 1** questions, maybe adding in a few **Level 2** questions near the end of the evening. **NOTE:** The **Level 3** ice breakers are here for you to use later in the life of your group and as you move into future studies.

ICE BREAKERS (CONT.)

Level 1: Information (*What You Know*)

- What is your favorite movie? Why?
- What is your favorite city? Why?
- What day of your life would you most like to relive? Why?
- What does your name mean? Why were you named that?
- If your house were on fire, what three items would you try to save?
- What is the best gift you ever received as a child?

- If you suddenly lost your eyesight, what would be the thing you would miss seeing the most?
- What was your first job? What do you remember most about it?
- Tell the group a brief story from your wedding day.
- If you could go to college (again), what would you study?
- You have been given a one-year sabbatical from work. What will you do?
- What has been one of the greatest adventures you've ever been on?

Level 2: Opinion (*What You Think*)

- Who is one of your heroes? Why?
- Who is your number one advisor in life? Why?
- My favorite way to spend time is _____.
- Just for the fun/thrill of it, before I die I'd like to _____.
- I was (or would have been) voted "Most Likely to _____" in high school.
- Before I got married, I wish someone had told me _____.
- If you could leave the world one piece of advice before you died, what would you say?
- Who was one of the most interesting people you've ever met?
- Who was the best boss you ever had? What made him or her so good?
- People might be surprised to find out that I _____.
- Describe a grade school teacher that made a big impression on you (for good or bad).

Level 3: Feelings (*Who You Are*)

- What is your biggest fear about death?
- What do you miss most about childhood?
- I am most like my mom/dad in that I _____.
- One of my biggest pet peeves is _____.
- When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?
- For what do you want to be remembered?
- An emotion I often feel but don't usually express is _____.
- Where do you go or what do you do when life gets too heavy for you? Why?
- In what area of life would you like to have greater peace? Why?
- What is one of your biggest fears about the future?
- When you were a child, what was your favorite time of day? What did you like about it?
- In general, I worry too much about _____.

ENDING THE MEETING

Before you end the meeting, ask your group members this question:

What do you hope to get out of this group experience?

Let them know what you hope to get out of the experience of leading the group. Then, close with a brief prayer asking God to bless your efforts to grow intentional community and that he would help it to flourish.

Helpful Scripture References

At New Covenant Church, we believe ministering through the Word of God is the most powerful way to care for people. As you pray over a group member, try inserting that member's name in the Scripture to make it more personalized. As a leader, we encourage you to find and memorize at least three

Scriptures, which will help equip you to walk through a tough situation with someone, as well as provide you with strength as a leader throughout the session. Here is a list of powerful Scriptures that you can apply to any situation:

"And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." **MARK 12:30-31**

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." **PHILIPPIANS 4:13**

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight." **PROVERBS 3:5-6**

"My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the LORD. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts."

ISAIAH 55:8-9

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him.” **1 JOHN 5:14-15**

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.”

EPHESIANS 6:10-28

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.”

ROMANS 8:28

“No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me,” says the Lord.

ISAIAH 54:17

“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago. “

EPHESIANS 2:10

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

JEREMIAH 29:11

“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your Heavenly Father. “

MATTHEW 5:14-16

“No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

ROMANS 8:39

“Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”

HEBREWS 13:5-6

“Don’t be afraid, for I am with you. Don’t be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.”

ISAIAH 41:10

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

JAMES 1:2-4

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

ROMANS 10:17

“The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” And the Lord said, “If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.”

LUKE 17:5-6

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”

HEBREWS 11:1

“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”

JAMES 1:5

“Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.”

PROVERBS 11:14

“So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to Him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.”

ROMANS 8:1-2

*“Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the Lord.
“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”*

ISAIAH 1:18

“Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him.”

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-14

Suggested communication schedule:

We are here to love and care for one another, not to “fix” one another. These are some suggested ways to communicate to your people in group and demonstrate love toward them. Take time to call them, check in on any serious prayer request issues, ask about family members, invite them to Sunday brunch, and express sincere interest in their lives. Let them know you enjoyed getting to know them and look forward to seeing them the next time you meet!

DAY AFTER GROUP

- Follow up with individuals/couples that didn't make it to group, to let them know you missed them & ask them how you could be praying for them.
- Encourage the entire group to come to church Sunday morning.

BEFORE THE NEXT GROUP MEETING

- Pray for individuals in your group and let your group know that you are praying for them.
- Contact all other group members to follow up from specific accountable request. The key here is to understand how your group communicates. (Phone calls, text, email Facebook etc.)
- Here are a few tips to follow up with someone:
 - Call the individual.
 - Don't follow up the next day, give people a chance to change. Follow up two or three days after group.
 - Pray before you end the follow up.
- Invite one person or a couple out to dinner once a month

DAY BEFORE GROUP

- Contact group and invite them to come tomorrow. Let them know you want to see them there. Remind them that if they didn't get a chance to hear the sermon they can go to <http://ncgreenwood.org/sermons> to listen.

DAY OF GROUP

- Pray for individuals and the group discussion tonight
- If you are seeing God move in the life of a couple or individual, encourage them to share their story with others and with us.

Remember our goal in communicating is to connect beyond the group context with the intention to cultivate community by inviting others into our lives to share, serve, and care for one another.

Use this activity to help connect relationally to people in the group:

How do you Connect Relationally?

Indicate where you fall on the scales below. There are no right or wrong answers. Just think about your tendencies when it comes to connecting with others.

In order to relax and re-energize...

5	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5
I prefer to be alone						I prefer to be around people				

In a group conversation...

5	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5
I am the last to speak						I am the first to speak				

When processing new ideas...

5	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5
I need time To process						I process out loud				

When experiencing emotions...

5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5

I am reserved

I am expressive

Additional Questions:

In order to relax and re-energize...

How did you rank yourself?

How does this play out in your life?

In a group conversation...

How did you rank yourself?

In this group, how can we make sure everyone has the chance to speak?

When processing new ideas...

How did you rank yourself?

In this group, how might this affect you when you're studying something new?

When experiencing emotions...

How did you rank yourself?

When you're excited about something, how will the group know?

Another Group of questions to connect relationally:

Complete 3 rounds of questions below, inviting each person to answer one or more questions from each round.

Round 1- Sharing the Basics

- Where were you raised?
- How long have you lived in this area?
- What do you like to do in your spare time?

Round 2- Church, Groups, and Expectations

How long have you been connected to New Covenant Church?

Have you ever been in a Community Group/Small Group etc.? If yes, what was your experience.

In your opinion, what would make this a great group experience?

Round 3- Getting to Know One Another

If you could take a vacation tomorrow, where would you go and why?

If you were the brand representative for a company or product, what would it be and why?

If you could have dinner with any famous person in history, who would it be?

Ways to pray in community group

Community Groups should avoid closing in prayer the same way week after week. Keep your prayer time fresh by varying your practice of prayer. Here's a list of ideas to get you started:

- Have one person close in prayer by praying for each individual need shared.
- Have Community Group members write out a prayer and bring it to read at the next Community Group.
- Pray throughout the Community Group time as needs surface.
- Have each person write prayer requests on a 3" x 5" card. Then exchange the card with someone else in the Community Group or have them give all the cards to you.
- Lay hands on the individual while interceding in prayer for them—one-on-one or several-on-one.
- Pray for each other with eyes open, looking directly at the person one is praying for.
- Review prayer requests from previous weeks by referring to your Community Group Journal. Have Community Group members share updates.

- Set a “theme” to guide the prayer request time: “Let’s limit our prayer requests tonight to _____ as an application to the main theme of the night.”
- Encourage members to pray for the person on their left as you go around the circle clockwise. Be sure the members in your Community Group feel comfortable praying in front of others.
- Divide members into pairs to pray for each other. Use popcorn prayer. The Community Group Leader opens with a short single-thought prayer and others who desire to pray simply “pop” in at an available pause. Members are encouraged to pray several times before the Leader closes in prayer.
- Encourage members to pray in a variety of postures—standing, kneeling, holding hands, palms up, walking, etc.
- Follow a pattern for prayer—P.R.A.Y. (Praise, Repent, Ask for others, You) or A.C.T.S. (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication).
- Allow each member to pray audibly at the same time.
- Allow everyone who wants to pray to take a turn. Not everyone needs to pray.

How to accomplish meaningful prayer?

Community Group Leader, you need to understand this: The way you think about group prayer and speak about group prayer will greatly impact the quality of your Community group's prayer time. If you're a leader struggling with getting your group to pray in a meaningful way, first examine how you have been thinking about the time, how you introduce the time to your group, and what your intentions are. If you feel something is missing or lacking from the time, you better bet your group feels something is missing too.

Meaningful prayer requires undoing certain dispositions or tendencies, including:

- Focusing on the physical needs of others (sickness of a family member, a new job for a friend)
- Vague language that does not really reveal someone's heart
- Run on prayer requests that are ultimately stories without anything specific to pray about
- Avoiding phrases like "Let's pray real quick", "Before we move onto-- - (accountability, discussion), will someone pray?" and generic statements like "Does anyone have anything to bring up to pray about?"

Prepare for group prayer ahead of time:

When preparing for Community group, do not stop at thinking through the questions you're going to ask, things you want to say, and what you want to do in accountability time. Exert serious mental effort thinking through group prayer time! Whether you utilize something from the sermon and turn it into a topic of prayer, or decide to just do prayers of praise and thanksgiving, or ask someone to read a Psalm or a prayer from Paul (Ephesians 1, 3, Philippians 1, etc.) then jump into prayer. Your intentionality as the leader with group prayer time will put every Community group member on alert that this isn't a rote exercise; it is a highlight for the group to pray together in the name of Jesus and a part of the group's discipleship.

3 Ways to disciple your group toward meaningful prayer:

1. Make prayer a priority in group time, but not an obligation If prayer is a priority, it's more than what you do to open and close the night. Figure out where meaningful prayer is most likely to happen in your group (beginning, middle, end), and emphasize it.
2. Make prayer fresh, not routine Is prayer time predictable in your group, meaning it always happens at a certain point in the night? Change it up! Does your group fall into a lull for prayer because it's always the same? Do something different!
3. Make prayer requests meaningful, not superficial.

"Ground Rules" for group prayer

Create a short, memorable list of "rules" regarding Community group prayer time. Tell them to the group and return to them from time to time. Don't be the "prayer time police", but show how serious you take it. Consider the following:

- Prayer requests need to be personal as much as possible, related to you and not always others
- Keep the sharing brief. What are you praying about? The back story is usually not necessary.
- Move from horizontal (talking about the request) to vertical (seeking God together) as soon as possible

Real world examples:

The following are practical suggestions to bring change to your group prayer and go deeper together:

- "As we transition to praying together, let's keep it really personal. How can we pray for one another right now?"
- "In light of everything we've been discussing, let's go straight to God and ask him to work on our hearts".
- "Tonight, let's pray about the theme of X" (create it, or base it off your curriculum discussion)
- Instead of always taking requests, just go straight to God in prayer together from time to time.
- Popcorn prayers: Explain that the goal is short prayers, 1-2 sentences, thanking and praising God for something or bringing a need to him briefly. Encourage people to pray multiple times about different things.

- Review the previous week's prayer requests and make continued prayer the theme of the night. Keep praying for the same people or items for a few weeks in a row.
- Focus your prayer time on a couple, or an individual. This is particularly powerful before a major life decision, or change like a baby being born, getting married, or taking a big step of faith. Ask everyone to pray for that person, sharing your thanks to God for them and asking for His help in their life. Consider laying hands on the person as you pray for them.
- Go straight to prayer, with each person praying for the person to their left, for whatever comes to mind.
- Split the group in half and pray together in Community groups
- Encourage members to pray in a variety of postures: standing, kneeling, holding hands, palms up, etc.
- Divide into Community groups (groups of 2, 3, 4), spread out around the house you are in, and set a specific amount of time (i.e. 20 minutes) for prayer as a Community group. You may also consider doing themed prayer, with each group taking a certain theme.

Keep track of your prayers

Figure out a way to chronicle the prayer requests, (large group and accountability time). Keep a list on your phone, or in a journal, or have a diligent note taker do it for the group.

This helps you...

- Send the list of requests to the group later that week (or have the note taker send it)
- Follow up on the prayer requests the following week
- Provide opportunity to rejoice over answered prayer